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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

Credibility of Online Political News among Egyptian Youth

A Thesis Submitted to the

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

By Dalia ElAbd

under the supervision of Dr. Rasha Abdulla

December 2015

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Credibility of Online Political News among Egyptian Youth

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Supervised by Dr. Rasha Abdulla

ABSTRACT

This study confirms previous literature discoveries that perceived credibility of medium, source and message have a direct influence on the perceived credibility of online political news. Each credibility factor is examined separately to identify its influence and strength on the dependent variable. Medium credibility, Internet, is considered the factor that has the strongest influence on perceived credibility of online political news, followed by the source then finally message of online political news. Consumption of online political news has also a direct influence on perception of credibility of online political news but to a much lesser extent. Timely coverage, freedom of speech and dynamic representation are Internet's inherent features and are highly recognized by Egyptian youth as credibility factors. As for other credibility factors related to believability, objectivity and balance youth become more skeptical about credibility of online political news. Many reasons led to this doubtful view but the most apparent reason in this study is attributed to the abuse of Internet as a communication tool for online political news and lack of regulation. Hence, the uncontrollable freedom of publishing and commenting on political news stories by average citizens who could be politically ignorant, with personal agendas and without any media knowledge.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND GRAPHS

I.   INTRODUCTION

The Egyptian media scene has witnessed significant changes in the past two decades, particularly since the introduction of social media. Today Internet has proliferated into homes and lives of more than half the population to reach 46 Million Egyptians (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2014). It is evident that the speed of internet proliferation is unmatched by any other communication tool Egypt has ever witnessed. Internet has also become the main media vehicle for youth as they are behind its exponential proliferation; 70% of online users are youth (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2014). Moreover, according to recent Internet media habits research conducted by IPSOS- research agency- Egypt, Internet is the number one media source Egyptian youth select for political news and information (2014). It was clearly witnessed in Egypt during 2011 and 2014 political turmoil where online social media played an unprecedented role in youth empowerment and organizing revolutions. Social media specifically through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were the main sources of political updates. Social media also paved the way for consumer generated political content i.e. citizen journalism that has attracted youth to politics in general and online political discourse in specific.

'Citizen Journalism' a term that evolved and gained credibility through a series of radical events that took place in Egypt and shaped up the average Internet user's behavior in terms of information reception and dissemination. In one way, the act of being a citizen journalist basically came into life to respond to the prejudiced and brutal feat of state media and the difficulties journalists had to face in doing their jobs while reporting and accessing information. The idea was to distribute bona-fide news material and that included footage, videos and other information that mainstream media were not covering. The group is considered to be one of the very successful 'citizen journalist' moves where they used basic

tools and equipment to distribute authentic information to the public in the streets. Download a DVD from Mosireen, get a screen rent a projector and speakers and the event is simply for the masses to watch and see (Abdulla, 2014).

In an eye-blink, unparalleled amount of information was available for the use of the masses of the Egyptians acting as a "new democratic agent in the region". The decentralized in nature framework of the Internet and the infinite amounts of information, carried the idea of 'public sphere' to a new level in Egypt. With the introduction of Web 2.0 technology - defined as *"A set of next-generation Internet technologies. These protocols and tools make it easier to create online applications that behave dynamically, much like traditional PC-based software. They're also highly social, encouraging users to manipulate and interact with content in new ways."* (Wolcott, 2007)- in the mid-1990s, not only the accessibility of the average internet user has jumped into a total different level but it lead to the emergence of the internet activism concept early in Egypt because of its interactive nature. An example of that would be the prevalence of blogs with political focus that have been noticed around 2005, in which few Egyptian bloggers ventured –with honesty and bluntness- into topics no one dared to address before (Abdulla, 2007). The Web 2.0 technology signifies an important shift in the way digital information is *"created, shared, stored, distributed, and manipulated,"* (Wolcott, 2007) bringing that to application, the average internet user can publish a newsletter of his own instead of simply reading one, which offers a great level of interactivity, leading him/her to be a 'content provider' him/herself (Abdulla, 2007) through the so called Social Media which take on so many different forms, Blogs is one of them.

Another spectacular aspect of the Web 2.0 technology is that it *"allows groups of people to work on a document or spreadsheet simultaneously, while in the background a computer keeps track of who made what changes where and when"* (Wolcott, 2007) adding to its credibility dimension.

Social Media, a product of the Web 2.0 technology, and a term that is used to describe *"Web-based tools that harness the power of collaboration and group interaction"* such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flicker, etc. (Wolcott, 2007). Because of these applications interactive nature, social media, the relatively new, yet well embraced new mediums have influenced the masses during critical times. For an instance, Facebook-one of its very popular products-has played an enormous role in *"transform organized groups and informal networks, establishing external linkages, developing a sense of modernity and community, and drawing global attention."* (Zhuo, Wellman, & Yu, 2011 p. 6). The importance of Social Media is derived from the fact that it offers an unparalleled channel for the voice of an oppressed people against an autocratic regime (Sheedy, 2011). Having the previously said, it is of immense importance to shed the light on previously mentioned terms like Blogs, a term that refers to *"simple content website created with inexpensive self-publishing tools."* originally derived from the word "Weblog" (Welcott, 2007)

Blogging played a no small role in intellectually mobilizing the masses pre, during and post one of the major political events in Egypt- 25th Jan Revolution in 2011 as it created a sphere for political awareness and discussion, a culture that was new to the region. It attracted more followers compared to the conventional news media as some of Egyptian blogging stars were surprised to know that their followers surpassed the circulation figures of some of the major Egyptian newspapers, which encouraged them to try widening their influence. (Abdulla, 2007). Blogging is a form of writing and news circulation, a trend that is picking up, which justifies why people are turning to while losing faith in mainstream media. Cases similar to the one Wael Abbas-Egyptian star blogger- handled yet it was gone unnoticed in conventional media, where *"police tortured and sodomized a microbus driver"*, his action, in fact the power of his written words helped in bringing the officers to court where two of them were sentenced to three years in jail. That in fact doesn't only proof how online news sources

specially blogging has become one of the main news sources to the Egyptian population but an *"acknowledgment that good citizen journalism is in fact journalism"* (Abdulla, 2007). It is now obvious to the reader of this paper the immense role that New Media's interactive tools have played in influencing, consequently- mobilizing the masses. Therefore, it is substantially important to investigate on the different characteristics that contribute to the credibility aspect of an online news source versus its equivalent traditional media.

Credibility, defined as the *"perceived quality based on multiple factors, including trustworthiness and expertise"* (Chung et. al, 2012) this paper aims at investigating the factors contributing to credibility perception among the Egyptian youth regarding online news sources versus its traditional equivalent. Most credibility studies that dealt with the subject matter have disregarded Egyptian youth's motives and drives. To fill this gap in the literature this paper will be focusing on the different relations between the different factors; the relation between content provider and source of news, as well as transparency, openness and content provider. It is conventional wisdom that transparency and openness of the content provider have proved to be some of the main criteria that a source gets wide public acceptance as mentioned: Most Egyptian political bloggers chose to blog under their real names rather than anonymously, which gave their posts more credibility and made the bloggers more admirable in the eyes of their followers. (Abdulla, 2014) Questions on expertise, trustworthiness, transparency, and interactivity will be raised in order to gain a fully-fledged view on the matter.

In conclusion, the fact that autocratic regimes limiting freedom of expression, frustrating critical views, controlling the narrative in Egyptian media led Social media outlets to continue to offer a platform for otherwise marginalized views, acting as the exit door (Abdulla, 2014). In this vein, social media is viewed at as a topic of interest to all mass media

researchers to investigate its dimensions. The linear direct model of sender, message, and receiver then feedback no longer exists, it has become multidimensional in which the receiver has become the sender and feedback has changed to the message. This paradigm shift in the communication model, ignited by social media, has caused myriad advantages as well as disadvantages in the media system. In this study the researcher is particularly interested to investigate credibility of online political news as one of the constructs that has been affected by this paradigm shift. Online political news credibility is scrutinized in this research to find out Egyptian youth perception of credibility and the factors that influence their perception.

II.   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Witnessing the exceptional proliferation of social media in Egypt and its pivotal role in attracting Egyptian youth to online political discussion, raised many credibility concerns about online political news. The unprecedented speed in news coverage, consumer generated political content, freedom of speech coupled with limitless accessibility are only a few among many other advantageous the Internet has granted online users of political news. But at the same time these advantageous put credibility of online political news at risk. This research study aims to investigate the perception of credibility of online political news among Egyptian youth as well as identify the different variables that influence their perception. Finally, sort influential variables to find out which independent variable has the strongest influence on perceived online political news credibility.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Credibility studies in mass media were developed more than sixty years ago and were initially linked to persuasion research (Self, 1996). Researchers' primary concern was to find out which communication vehicle; newspaper, television or radio had the highest credibility among publics. Not only to explore the effectiveness and/or the persuasion power of news sources but also because this piece of information was crucial to media owners in order to market their very own channels as the most trustworthy news source among advertisers. The theoretical framework of these credibility researches was based on the highly popular communication model at that time; hypodermic needle. Known as the magic bullet theory, it recognizes mass media as credible with immediate and powerful impact on audiences (Pornpitakpan, 2004). During the 1950's when television was at its peak researchers concluded that it was perceived as the most trusted news medium in comparison to radio and newspapers. However, earlier during the radio era audiences perceived radio as more credible and trusted than newspapers (Self, 1996). Noticeably, the more recent media vehicle was introduced the more it was perceived as the most credible and trusted news source.

Paying tribute to our recent and most innovative addition to mass media in the 21st century, the Internet and particularly web2.0, it will be naïve of researchers to still apply the hypodermic needle in their credibility studies. Hence, the core objective of this research is to identify and scrutinize the process of evaluation Egyptian youth apply when assessing the credibility of online news sources and the message it carries. Then identify the type of verdict these youth release of whether to accept or reject the political news and/or information. This process of evaluative analysis and judgment encompasses a cognitive route in which the two adopted mass media theories of this research aim to explain. The theoretical framework is twofold composed of, cognitive dissonance and schema theory as two complementary communication models and the diffusion of innovations theory to elucidate the interaction

between technology (internet; online news) and the adopted cognitive route of credibility analysis by the Egyptian target segment in the research.

The researcher of this study perceives cognitive dissonance and schema theory as two complementary models that serve the purpose of this research. In other words, audiences think in a schematic way to protect them from the distress of cognitive dissonance. After message reception one's brain begins information processing in which detection of this newly received message takes place. And if the new detected message was contrary to preexisting beliefs and/or stored concepts the recipient will be in a state of dissonance that exemplifies a cognitive and psychological discomfort (Festinger, 1957). These stored concepts against which the brain evaluates against the new information are simply the schemas. Denis McQuail basically explained schema as, "a preconceived frame or script… It is an aid to communication and understanding because it provides some wider context and sense making." (2005) Conversely, Fiske and Kinder (1981) criticized schema as, "imperfect devices for coping with complexity," because they imply that schema make people 'cognitive misers' who escape complexity of new information processing by simply retrieving their stored simplified records. To put schema in concrete media context that would specifically serve the purpose of this study, Mead (1934) defined schema as, *"an aspect of information processing through which a media consumer internalize a part not the whole of the media content as relevant to him either socially or culturally and also a process of retrieval of information that is stored when similar information is presented in the future."*

Therefore, during information processing the mind acts the same way immunity system of the human body reacts to foreign objects. The immunity system with its antibodies acts as schemata to scrutinize new messages so that if they are reasonable to stored concepts (schemas) then they will be integrated but if not new messages will be discredited and/or rejected. In some cases new messages present a satisfying fit to preexisting schema in the

sense that it can be incorporated to upgrade and build on preexisting beliefs. Metaphorically, one can consider schema the immunity system of the human mind that fights to protect it from the disease of cognitive dissonance, the most undesirable state of cognition. So this act of classification occurs inside our minds in order to identify a logical relationship between the consonant versus the dissonant (Festinger, 1957) messages/ information to pre-existing stored concepts mirrors the stages of the schema theory of information processing. Moreover, the schema theory is not only limited to processing information but also for storing and retrieving information (Mead, 1934). It operates as a mental catalogue to organize schemata in a particular way hence ensures stability of the mind and easiness of information retrieval. This catalogue is what Fiske and Kinder (1981) referred to as 'stored simplified notes' that the human brain constantly retrieves to resolve complexities during information processing. For both scholars the human mind is an archive of catalogues and that is why they believe people are 'cognitive misers' because when faced by a complex situation the human brain would simply pull out one of these archived catalogues and search for a know-how to resolve the complexity - a short-cut to complex resolution - rather than investing time and effort to analyze the situation and logically and systematically reach plausible assumptions. But what if a person received a new piece of information that is incompatible to pre-existing notions and has no match whatsoever in the different sets of schemas - catalogues - yet the new information is very attractive to the mind. In such situation Festinger (1957) explained that the human state of psychological discomfort is heightened and cognitive dissonance will be amplified. Therefore, the human brain in order to get out of this distress it will either reduce the importance of this dissonant new message and/or add more weight to the existing schema to outweigh dissonance or make modifications to the new message hence smoothly fit into existing schemas. The most difficult dissonance resolution that the brain avoids at all costs is to actually change and/or replace an existing schema. It requires a strenuous mental struggle

to reach an entire disposal of the present schemata and replace it by new interpretations. The cognitive dissonance theory also explains that in order for the brain to refrain from any possible dissonance individuals actively attempt to avoid exposing themselves to messages that may threaten their mental preconceptions. In this act of protection schemas are enforced via the limitation of cognitive dissonance hence both theories shall achieve their common goal of perpetually maintaining cognitive equilibrium. The figure below has been constructed to illustrate the interdependence between cognitive dissonance and schema theory.

Illustration 1: Cognitive Dissonance and Schema Theory Interdependence

Receive a new message

Schema	Cognitive Dissonance

Process of filtering new information to identify a logical relationship of consistency or inconsistency with preexisting schemas

Does it fit?   Does it conflict?   Is it worth it?

Reach a judgment

Consonance	Dissonance

Integrate

Discredit/ Reject	Modify	Alter

Enforce old Schema	*Upgrade existing Schema*	*Create new Schema*

Dissonance Reduction

Achieve consistency within cognition

In this research paper the goal is to identify the thinking process based on the criteria of evaluation youth apply when they receive online political news. In this particular cognitive process the preconceived definition of credibility will be explored. With reference to the schema theory the researcher will investigate the exiting schema related to the term credibility of online political news. Hence, determine the perceptions of credibility inside target audience minds and pin-down the operational definition of the credibility schemata. Subsequently, understand how Egyptian youth weigh online political news and information and make decisions of whether the newly received messages are consonant or incongruent with their credibility schemata. Accordingly, the decision of acceptance or resistance of online political news will be made to achieve internal comfort and refrain from cognitive dissonance. Finally, both adopted theories will profoundly support the reasoning route of this study thus arrive at a clear explanation of the various variables involved and attributed to the receiver's assessment of online political news specifically the credibility of the medium (internet), source and the news piece itself.

Diffusion of innovation theory as developed by Rogers (1962), is adopted in this research to explain the interrelationship between Egyptian youth who were introduced earlier as active online media users and the Internet that represented in this study as political online news. The diffusion of innovations theory investigates the variables, motivating drivers, which encourage audiences to adopt new notions (innovations) via new communication vehicles. Rogers (1962) provided a clear definition for diffusion as, "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system." In the most recent decade audiences have adopted different types of communication technologies gathered under the name 'new media' and most importantly those provided by the Internet encompassing also online news (Deuze, 2003; Bimber, & Davis 2003). Moreover, it is conventional wisdom that different segments of audiences react

differently when exposed to innovations and/or new ideas. Some would directly accept the innovation without reluctance while others would either reject it entirely or become skeptical about parts of it that would be discarded and carefully accept the remaining parts. In this sense Rogers (1983) categorized recipients of innovation into five groups based on their reaction to whether or not adopt the innovation and when they will adopt it. First group is called the innovators, described as the risk takers who are mostly youngest in age compared to the other four groups and they are also the most knowledgeable to the innovation itself and its owned types of communication channels that reflect the information about innovation. In this study innovators are lucidly reminiscent of those Egyptian youth who are considered as citizen journalists and political activists reporting political news and videos online via Twitter, Facebook and/or YouTube. Second group is early adopters, they are the catalyst that makes innovation spread and become more popular among the majority. Early adopters are defined as educated and well informed about the innovation due to their inquisitive minds that make them value new information and ideas. Third and fourth groups are early and late majority respectively they form the mass audience in the society. The latter group is more cynical when it comes to adopting the innovation due to their weaker financial and social status so they would not accept the innovation until they witness real examples of average people adopted the new idea and benefited from it. Finally, laggards are the oldest age group and belong to lowest socioeconomic standard in the society and they are protective of their comfort zone that is formed of their very own old ideas, values and beliefs. Thus they are obstinate and resistant to change so mostly likely they reject innovations and are not the target for new ideas (Rogers, 1983). Furthermore, Rogers scrutinizes the process of diffusion of innovation into the five following steps: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption. Later in the year 1995 he conceptually explained each step according to its cognitive route that leads to the other step and all cumulatively reaches adoption. These cognitive steps are as

follows: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation (Rogers, 1995). Firstly, knowledge, the human brain seeks to acquire more information about the innovation or new ideas presented to it. Second during the persuasion phase individuals become more intrigued about the innovation and gain more information after that a decision is made which is phase three. During the decision stage the innovation or new ideas become fully comprehensible to individuals accordingly they decide whether or not to adopt or reject it; depending on weighing the factors that could be beneficial or ineffectual. The fourth stage is to execute the taken decision, implementation, and it is important to mention that different people decide to implement the innovation based on different perspectives and circumstances. In other words, every person has his/her very own interests and needs about the innovation or new ideas that triggers him/her towards implementation. Finally, confirmation is the last phase upon which a decision is made to whether or not the innovation will be adopted and used repetitively, of course depending on gained benefits and also future benefits sought.

In our digital age the Internet has proven to be one of the most rapid diffusion of innovation (Dutton, Rogers, & Jun, 1987; Garrison, 2001). On an international level Internet users' percentage growth has reached 676.3% during the past fourteen years since 2000 (http://www.internetworldstats.com). In December 2013 total number of Internet users were 2.8 Billion of the world's total population 7 Billion and that calculates almost 40% Internet penetration. In light of these figures one can make an educated predication that Internet use will continually escalate and this innovation will be the fastest diffusion and most widely adopted. Media researchers particularly those specialized in communication technology noted online news as the dependent variable to the popularity of Internet among users (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2006; Nguyen, 2008 & Garrison, 2001). Therefore, the innovation of online news has also been diffused and adopted as Internet proliferates. The Pew Research (2006), has released a confirmation about the direct relationship between Internet use and

online news consumption revealing the following figures of online news increasing popularity from the year 2000 until 2005; 19 million users (2000), 25 million (2001), 27 million (2002), 34 million (2003), 35 million (2004), 44 million (2005).

Now in the year 2015 it is crystal clear that people have successfully passed through Roger's (1995) decision innovation process from awareness to confirmation and Internet use along with online news are now competing with mainstream media and more (Althaus, & Tewksbury, 2000 Bimber, & Davis, 2003). This smooth and swift diffusion of the Internet followed by online use is attributed to their advantageous and also the demographical and societal contributing factors that encourage such expansion. Nguyen and Western (2007) provided a non-exhaustive list of factors that directly influence individuals' adoption decision that is related to the innovation itself, richness of content, user friendly and convenient, timely information and continuous updates, value for money (cost-effective), multi-media effects and its versatility online (multi-functions). Regarding demographical factors i.e. age, income, education, gender and area of residence they vary according to Rogers's previously classified five adopters (innovators, early adopters, early minority, early majority and laggards). As for the societal factors that may or may not encourage the diffusion of Internet and/or online news the government and its media laws plus the level of freedom of expression and censorship the society lives in. for example some communist regimes and highly conservative Islamic states, china and Iran respectively, impose restrictions on internet use and limit accessibility of certain searches and websites. Egypt even though is neither a communist country nor a highly conservative Islamic state it drew a lucid example on how the government can directly impede diffusion of innovation. In 2011 during the Egyptian mass upheaval the government in its attempt to distract protestors and control their anger it has decided to cut off Internet connection to impede the diffusion of online news and information.

Finally, the theoretical framework in this research study is twofold: cognitive dissonance and schema theory and diffusion of innovation. The former is more focused on online media users with emphasis on the consumption of online news to scrutinize the cognitive process upon which individuals decide whether or not online political news is credible thus worth adoption. The latter concentrates on Internet use and/or online news as a form of innovation and examines its diffusion among different segments in the society. The integrated theoretical framework supports this research's main quest of credibility perceptions about online news among Egyptian youth.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

 Credibility of online news and information is one of media researchers' myriad concerns accompanied by our 21st century's massive Internet explosion. The Credibility of news is a decision the recipient make in order to accept or reject the information; therefore, for this decision to be made a person has to go through a cognitive and psychological processes where he/she analytically as well as intuitively evaluates the news. In this sheer evaluation procedure various variables are involved such as the context from where the news messages have been received, psychological readiness of the receiver, perceived credibility of the sender or the source, preconceived thoughts about credibility of the medium carrying the news, the message itself that comprises the information etc. (Sabigan, 2007) In this literature review the researcher will has classified past credibility studies according to the three most researched variables within credibility; source, vehicle (medium) and the message itself. Every variable will be tackled separately demonstrating and explaining results of its respective studies that dealt particularly with its definition, progression and interaction with the concept of credibility.

Online Political news

The definition of political news is universal among all media vehicles, it is reflected in the content that carries nonfictional messages about political events, issues, institutions or officials (Peiser, 2008). In this study online political news is resembled through the political content and information that exit on the Internet.

Source Credibility

Studies that focused on source credibility investigated in depth the characteristics of the sender of the message i.e. communicator and how these characteristics influence the perception of credibility among audience (Kiousis, 2001). Underneath this overarching notion of influence the source's traits are thoroughly scrutinized as they represent the independent

variable(s) that directly influence information processing of news message that is considered as the dependent variable. In simpler communication words the receiver processes the message whether favorably or unfavorably according to the perceived credibility of the sender (Hovland et al., 1953; Pornpitakpan, 2004). It is conventional wisdom that different personalities have their different special impact on audiences. Every person carries his/her very own charismatic qualities that influence others. At the same time a single person can be perceived as charismatic for a group and not for another. The most classic example of this notion is Adolf Hitler; Laurence Rees in his book 'the Dark Charisma of Adolf Hitler' demonstrated how charisma is such a fluid concept and relative. It utterly depends on the eye of the beholder of whether or not the speaker is believable and has emotional sincerity (2012). In one of the interviews Rees (2012) conducted with Hitler's former supporter Emil Klein about how Hitler can be perceived as both 'genuine' and 'actor', Klein said; "the man gave off such a charisma that people believed whatever he said and when someone today says that he was an actor then I have to say that the German nation must have been complete idiots to have granted a man like that such belief." (31-32) In this vein, source credibility is a complex independent variable that media researchers had to operationalize to break it down into measurable units. Majority of past researches highlighted two basic source qualities that form credibility, trustworthiness and expertise (Hovland et al., 1953). The latter is achieved when the speaker has the ability to competently send correct and accurate messages in his/her area of specialty (Sternthal et al., 1978). Moreover, the degree of expertise one source can realize is dependent on the following three criteria, age, social background and leadership. Regarding age, the older the speaker is the more he/she is perceived more experienced and wiser hence more believable. The social background of the speaker reflects how far he/she is specialized in their field. With reference to Al Ries and Trout (1994) book '22 Immutable Laws of Marketing' law number five, the Law of Focus, is paramount in persuasion. The

more products or services are focused in their communication on a single area of expertise i.e. strength point in their features the more convincing they become and faster in triggering trial and later creating loyalty. For example the law of focus is applied in automotive brands such as Volvo cars for safety, Mercedes for luxury and BMW for engineering, McDonald's on the other hand identified its expertise as the fastest delivery on the planet (Al Ries & Trout, 1994). This analogy indicates that source credibility is susceptible to how focused and defined the source is in his/her social background thus considered expert in this particular sphere. Last but not least is leadership, expertise and leadership are considered to sides of the same coin simply because leaders are defined as such by the people who believed and continually believe in their expertise. I here again recall Adolf Hitler as one of the world's greatest propagandists who was an expert in leading millions of Germans to believe in him as their savior. Once he became Germany's official leader expertise was inevitably attributed to his leadership and his perceived source credibility reached maximum levels. Hitler as a high credible source was believed to have a "more accurate perception of reality" (Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991, p.40). However, in Rees study (2009) Adolf Hitler was characterized by dark charisma that managed to lead millions into the abyss.

Source credibility is also highly dependent of the perceived trustworthiness of the speaker. The conceptual definition of trustworthiness is honesty and integrity of the source (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). For the speaker to be considered trustworthy he/she ought to refrain from any personal gains and/ or hidden agendas. Audiences tend be easily persuaded by an altruistic character and not only through words during speeches but also and more importantly actions (Sabigan, 2007). The source should be unconditionally honest and integral so that his/her message would come across as credible. Otherwise, audiences who are today characterized as more cynical as they have ever been would disregard the message and disdain the sender. McGinnies and Ward (1980) discovered in their research on source

19

credibility that trustworthiness is more important and valued by audiences than expertise. Additionally, a trustworthy source that is not an expert has a more persuasive impact than an expert who is less trustworthy. In another study on trustworthiness Hovland and Weiss (1951) examined the differences in sources' personalities and how such differences inflict opinion change among the same target audience. In their experiment they exposed audiences with the same demographics as well as psychographics to exactly the same message (information) but delivered by two different sources: first is perceived by the selected audience as trustworthy and second as not trustworthy. Results showed that there is no relationship between source's trustworthiness that is considered as independent variable and acquirement and retention of the message. Nevertheless, trustworthiness had direct and significant effect on opinion change of respondents. The more trustworthy the source is perceived to be among respondents the more he/she has the capability to change their opinion with regards to the communicated message. Later to this study many researches were conducted to dig deeper into the relationship between source credibility and attitude and behavior change of audiences (Harmon & Coney, 1982; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Self, 1996). In most researches sources that are qualified as highly credible by audiences were proven to be more effective than average or low credibility speakers. In this positive relationship between variables other intervening variables were discovered that somehow lessen the strength of source credibility as an independent variable. Preconceived thoughts of recipients regarding the message, if these thoughts were already positive then low credibility sources are found to be still effective in influencing respondents' attitude and behavior. At the same time, sources that enjoy high credibility have a greater impact on audiences attitude and behavior change even if the latter carries negative thoughts about the communicated message. Communicators that proved to their audiences in both actions and words that they are credible, have a substantial direct impact on message believability and opinion change (Hovland et al., 1953; Strenthal et al.,

1978). The personality of the communicator along with the aura that surrounds him/her plays a vital cognitive role in audiences conscious hence acceptability of the communicated message (Lee, 1978). Even before Lee's research the two researchers Andersen and Clevenger (1963) investigated the influence of the source's spirit and character on the message; they proved in their research "the ethos of the source is related in some way to the impact of the message" (p.77). There are other external factors that affect source credibility itself, factors that are related to culture, receivers' temperaments and level of involvement with the message itself (Sternthal et al., 1978; Chebat et al., 2001; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Self, 1996). Communicators cultivate their credibility within their very own societies. It is important to highlight that credibility is a granted quality given by the people to the communicator. Therefore, source credibility is dependent on this particular decision taken by audiences and they bestow the credibility title only to those communicators who earned it. In this realm different societies have different criteria of credibility that they evaluate communicator candidates against for example a communicator who is enjoys a high level of source credibility within his/her society may not necessary be perceived as such in a different country. Still it is universally agreed, "the communicator's power and his credibility are important in all societies" (Hovland et al., 1953, p.21). A classic example about how different cultures influence perceptions of source credibility is in Islamic Shariaa' Law hence woman's testimony is valued as half to that of man. Gender bias is explicit and the justification lies in the emotional nature of females that according to Islamic cultures cloud their reasoning and judgments. Consequently, the perceived credibility of female communicators is dropped to half in these Islamic societies simply due to gender discrimination. Male communicators on the other hand do not face any gender barriers in their attempt to earn source credibility. This predicament women face in Islamic states is nonexistent in other foreign cultures where women are perceived equal to men and both genders stand at par next to each behind the start

21

line of the source credibility race. It is crystal clear now in our 21st century how Islamic culture has a direct influence on perceived source credibility that favor men in politics and law for example Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan is the one and only female Prime Minister in the Middle East. Source credibility in communication is not only dependent on the sender and how he/she can affect the acceptance of a message but also the receivers' temperaments such as their affection, admiration, fears, prejudices etc. (Hovland et al., 1953; Self, 1996). The acceptance or rejection of the source as well as his/her communicated message is related to the psychological status of receivers. For instance post the First World War and the influenza epidemic tragedies and fears filled populations' of all countries particularly Germans who faced a dreadful defeat. So according to Rees (2012) Adolf Hitler credibility and charisma were fostered by the fear among German people, they were in dire need of positive words showing them there was hope for a better tomorrow. So Germans granted Hitler credibility because believing in his glorious dreams lifted them up from drowning in their miseries and psychological despair. Source credibility was like an inflatable life raft that the German had no choice but to get on hoping that it will take them to shore, but it did not.

Other studies examined the association between source credibility and the message itself (Chebat, Filiatrault, & Perrien, 2001; Pornpitakpan, 2004) and results proved that there is an indirect connection between both variables. In this research endeavor the consideration of source credibility is the dependent variable and the message itself in terms of its level of importance to the audience is the independent variable. The more audiences are involved in the message and perceive it of high importance the less they will need to inspect the credibility of the source and will directly and actively process new information. Similarly, if the communicated message is of low importance to the audience, considerations of source credibility will be heightened and the message may get rejected if the source is proven to be not credible. Sabigan (2007) in his scholarship confirmed this finding as he claimed, "high

involvement with the message may encourage central processing and ignore peripheral cues like the message source" (p.15). Source credibility is one of the three variables that impact audiences' perception of news credibility; perceived medium credibility as well as message and information credibility are equivalently impactful and crucial to this research study. Medium credibility has a direct effect on the impact of the message on audiences. For example, the same news piece published in a widely circulated newspaper with high readership is more likely to be accepted than if it appeared in a tabloid considered among yellow press publications.

Medium Credibility

The communication vehicle that carries news to the public i.e. channel of communication ought to also be perceived as trustworthy hence positively influence the perception of news credibility (Bucy, 2003). In majority of credibility studies media credibility has a single and consistent conceptual measurement, "most consistently operationalized as believability" (Bucy, 2003, p. 249). Believability of the medium is an indispensable characteristic to credibility of the message and its acceptance by audiences. Different communication mediums have different levels of perceived credibility. Myriad research studies were conducted to find out the medium that is perceived the most and least credible (Jacobson, 1969; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Anderoli & Worchel, 1978; Abdulla et al., 2002; Johnsin & Kaye, 1998; Sundar, 1996; Kiousis, 2001; Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Before the rise of Internet majority of studies indicated that credibility of mass media as a news source started by television as the most believable by audiences followed by newspapers then radio (Jacobson, 1969). Television has limitless powers of persuasion; it is considered the most effective communication tool in changing public opinion (Andreoli & Worchel, 1978). The intrinsic characteristics of television i.e. live coverage, special effects, mass reach, numerous channels etc. make audiences more involved with the content and also more susceptible to its

persuasion techniques. It was researched and proven that television is the number one communication medium that highlights the communicators' characteristics. Hence both the positive and negative characteristics of a communicator become crystal clear in front of the television camera. And also television owns the option of either amplifying or muting such characteristics to audiences hence creating successful or unsuccessful speakers. For example a trustworthy communicator would be more obvious in television than any other medium and he/she will enjoy more persuasive powers paying tribute to the technical support he/she received from television. Likewise, communicators with negative characteristics i.e. untrustworthiness will suffer from unpopularity and their lack of persuasion while presenting on television (Andreoli & Worchel, 1978; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Therefore, based on this interpretation there is a direct relationship between perception of source credibility and medium credibility. Both variables are in a dynamic positive relationship where the degree of source credibility is affected by the medium's credibility. In the same study an intervening variable was discovered the influences both the credibility of medium and source which audience's level of involvement with the message. In this sense if audiences were initially not involved in the message the credibility of the medium had no effect on them (Andreoli & Worchel, 1978; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Audiences predetermined interests are key to any media researcher before conducting his/her credibility study because if audience are not interested in message content then they won't be involved in it. Consequently, an artifact will appear and disrupt the relationship between variables then perception of both source and medium credibility will be misread. For instance selecting female respondents with no interest in football to test credibility of English premiership league news in different communication mediums (television versus radio versus newspapers). The credibility of both source and mediums won't be fairly assessed and comparisons between the three communication vehicles will be made in a superficial way without basing judgements on

solid grounds. Female respondents are more likely to apply the schema theory in this situation where they use mental shortcuts to retrieve schemata that will somehow fit the current circumstance and accordingly give in subjective answers to the researcher based on their irrelevant experiences and imprudent opinions.

At the beginning of the 21st century news media credibility rating started sloping downwards as per Gallup poll in September 2004, it had reached an unprecedented low reading in 30 years (Geary, 2005). In August 2014, almost ten years later, Egyptian Centre for Opinion Polls (Baseera) in collaboration with UNESCO research division, reported that media credibility has reached its lowest in Egypt, only 9% of Egyptians perceive news media as credible and 65% perceive it as sometimes credible and 26% believe it is not credible at all. These figures are alarming to media practitioners, politicians, advertisers and all other stakeholders. It is worth to mention that this study did not include the Internet as a news media source, so the reported credibility rates are confined to television, newspapers and radio but the latter samples are marginal due to lack of exposure. In any case, this lack of trust in conventional news media is an important topic of investigation to identify the factors that lead to that loss of credibility and also to find solutions to regain it and rectify the relationship between audiences and news media credibility. It is clear that audiences are moving away from conventional news media, i.e. television, newspapers and radio and targeting online news instead. Internet usage is on the rise not just in Egypt but worldwide, sometimes at the expense of other conventional media vehicles. In the past decade newspaper circulation dropped significantly due to many reasons among which it has lost its objectivity, "…because newspapers had traditionally taken editorial positions that were not necessarily in consonance with the readers' beliefs or positions" (Sabigan, 2007, p. 17). Regarding radio even though in the past and before the rise of television it was perceived more credible than newspapers it is now nearly an insignificant news source to majority of audiences. Evidently,

whenever a new news source is introduced to the media system it influences the existing mediums and audiences' credibility perception about them (Liu, 2003). The advancement in communication technology and the rise of interactive communication (web 2.0) had let radio sink into oblivion among all target groups and particularly the youth. Nevertheless radio is perceived as credible and objective in covering news but not preferred or convenient anymore for audiences to follow and fit in their fast paced lifestyles. Hence, it cannot be claimed that perceived credibility of news source is directly related to its popularity. In other words, audiences do not necessarily use a certain news medium because of its perceived high credibility. There are myriad factors involved in the selection and attachment to the news media among different audience groups. Every group has their very own selection criteria where each criterion is given a weight according to their preference. For example, in a qualitative study conducted by IPSOS in June 2014 to investigate news media exposure habits among different demographical target groups, young age audience who has an upbeat lifestyle their uses and gratifications of news media is completely different than senior audiences whose lifestyles are quite slow and laid back. The former group consumes news media on the go and are attracted to innovations in communication technology for example new mobile applications that display real-time news bites, video streaming i.e. vine etc. and their motivation to use news media is mostly related to social factors. Credibility ranked low in their list of their news media selection criteria; the top three most important factors are constant availability of the medium, how far it is user-friendly, present all needed information in a capsule and lastly the information it presents is real and not fabricated. Conversely, the senior group had different criteria selection of news media; they were interested in the credibility and objectivity of news presented and more importantly the analysis of news. The senior group are highly involved in source credibility that according to them is more important than medium credibility in the sense that if the source is perceived as credible then

he/she adds credibility to the medium itself. One of the respondents in the senior group confirmed by saying that, "credible communicators i.e. Bassem Youssef or Lamis elHadidy are followed wherever they speak be it the Internet, television, newspaper or even radio" (IPSOS Qualitative Media Study, 2014). However, the importance of credibility escalates among younger groups when the message communicated is of high involvement. For instance, topics of high relevance to young males are sports, cars and technology and news related to these fields should be characterized as highly credible in source, medium and message in order to be accepted and later followed for future use. Gratification of the media in this situation is directly related to trust and believability because in the same study, IPSOS (2014), the young group acknowledged that they use sports news and other specialised news to show off among their friends and become more popular. So they actually research the credibility of news before sharing it and select the most credible source, medium and news information, only because they care so much about their image among their friends, "last thing I want to do is look like an idiot among my friends" (IPSOS Qualitative Media Study, 2014). Finally, the level of involvement and/or interest of audience in the message are paramount factors in credibility study. The perception and importance of credibility varies according to whether or not the message is of high or low involvement to audience. In this vein the message content has a fundamental effect in the reading of media credibility. The receiver scrutinized the message content to find out if it is reliable and logical thus accept or reject it (Markham 1968), and this process of scrutiny becomes more diligent when the message is of high involvement. Media credibility is now viewed as, "a relative attribute dependent on perspective and not an attribute inherent to a source, person or information object" (Tseng & Fogg, 1999, p.80).

Message/Information Credibility

It is inevitable in a message credibility discourse to mention information quality online. The explosive growth of Internet usage is unrivalled, there is no communication medium in history has spread faster than the Internet not even cellular phones (Fogg, 2003). One of the main assets of the Internet is the freedom it provides to both the sender and receiver. Online any person can post and/or access any type and amount of information without censorship, filtering or even verification. This absence of traditional gatekeepers in digital technology has caused a paradigm shift that "led to an unprecedented amount of information available online and to a qualitative change in the information ecosystem" (Gasser et. al, 2012). Those entities that fill in the role of gatekeepers in the online world such as information intermediaries and websites' admins they run low standards of quality control and evaluation (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Hargittai, 2008). Consequently, this attribute inherent to the Internet (freedom) puts message credibility in jeopardy. The more freedom in accessibility and availability of online news the more online information quality will be tainted with concerns (Abdulla, 2013). Internet freedom is both a blessing and a curse to the media system as a whole. It has put the most fundamental media entity (newspapers) nearly out of business and reconstructed television's exposure habits. Freedom of the Internet has also created the world's richest library where education becomes free and accessible to people from all walks of life. An entire paper can be written about advantages and disadvantages of Internet freedom but in this study the researcher has a particular interest in online credibility and the factors influencing it and also influenced by it. Nowadays, this excessive freedom of the Internet accompanied by information overload increased the importance of credibility among Internet users while selecting content online (Schweiger, 2000). It is a serious issue particularly in important areas of life such as health, education, politics and financial matters because for Internet users online information has a substantial role in their decision-making

(Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, (2005). At the same time, fabrication of online information has become easier than ever and its know-how is freely accessible to all people. So online message/information is continuously and rigorously under scrutiny by users hence select the content with highest credibility. In this sheer act of scrutiny Internet users become more skilful researchers and find out more about information fabrication techniques hence how to instantly filter out false information while surfing the Internet (Wathen & Burkell, 2002).

The perception of online news credibility is considered as one of the most recent topics in the credibility scholarship. Hence media credibility research was introduced before the rise and popularity of online news so most of credibility studies were more focused on comparisons between television, newspapers and radio in terms of source, medium and content (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001). Later when online news consumption increased among audiences scholars have inserted it in their list of credibility comparison among other conventional communication vehicles. Results came out in different directions and Internet usage has introduced many more variables and artifacts into credibility research. Some researchers found out the online news credibility was an issue among audiences and rated it lower in credibility than newspapers; however, it is perceived at par with television's credibility (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Kiousis (1999) research discovered that online news credibility perception supersedes that of television but still lower than newspapers. A couple of years later the Internet has become more popular and important in users' lives as a news source so the research results conducted by Finberg, Stone and Lynch (2002) indicated that the public's perception about online news credibility has significantly increased to the extent that they accept it fully as a credible news source without any credibility issues. Furthermore, in Abdulla ET, Al. (2002) credibility research done on a representative probability sample across 50 states, a total of 536 respondents, overall readings showed that online news scored the highest in credibility compared to television and newspapers. It is evident that online

news credibility is on the rise eating up from the exposure share of other traditional news media i.e. television, newspapers and radio. There is a growing reliance on the Internet in general and online news in specific yet it is also accompanied by serious credibility issues regarding false information, fabrication and many other forms of information counterfeit on the Internet (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). There is paradox in this intriguing relationship between users and the Internet as an online news source; it is quite illogical and raises many questions. Questions that are related to online privacy issues, credibility and also reliability of online news that as predicted by many media scholars (Abdulla, Garrison, Salwen, Driscoll & Casey, 2002) will face serious setbacks in the future. Almost all media credibility studies confirmed that audiences rely on media they perceive credible and there are not any unique cases in which audiences are more likely to rely on media that they do not perceive as credible (Johnson & Kaye, 1998). One must admit that the relationship between users' perception of credibility of online news and their reliance on it defies common sense. How come people rely on online media for news and information when they think that it entails unbelievable information? Has the new interactive ecosystem of online information clouded audiences' judgement about credibility? Or audiences have grown to be self-conceited that they no longer worry about false information online because they think they are able to detect it and filter it out? Or the Internet flashy features are too attractive and exciting to abandon to search for credible news elsewhere i.e. traditional dull media? So hypothetically one can state that audiences won't trade Internet's interactivity and its extraordinary features to credibility of news. They adopted the Internet with its online news as one package inclusive all its advantages and disadvantages. But is it plausible that audiences would compromise online news credibility? I do not think so, or even if it has happened already it will certainly not last for the future.

The abundance of news and information on the Internet and its ease of accessibility and continuous availability (Lu & Andrews, 2006), have brought down barriers that used to exist in between both the sender and message as well as the message and the receiver. Nowadays, sending and/ or receiving online news and information are at click of a button. Therefore, credibility concerns are critical for the Internet (Johnson & Kaye, 1998), and for the entire mass communication scholarship in general. In the past the definition of credibility was comprehensible as it was relatable to traditional media. Credibility was simply defined as, "judgements made by a perceiver concerning the believability of a communicator" (O'Keefe, 1990, pp. 130-131). But after the Internet's explosive growth media credibility will never be defined the same or defined through the use of simple terminologies. Moreover, credibility of information can no longer be referred to as how Fogg et al (2001) suggested it to be, believable information, neither Eisend (2006) who stated that credibility was the person's perception of the truth in face of new information. Personally, I believe that what the Internet has done to media credibility is similar to what Beethoven did to classical music. Beethoven is known to be, the man who has changed everything in classical music, his revolutionary ideas freed classical music from the small diameter circle of rules and representations. Beethoven was also the first recognized composer who introduced voices to a symphony; hence Beethoven's 9th symphony presents the first choral symphony in the history of classical music. The same effect the Internet had on media credibility studies, the latter will never be the same again. Now media researchers studying credibility are aware that it is no longer a simple concept but rather complex, interdependent as well as multidimensional (Burgoon, Burgoon & Wilkinson, 1981). For example in Flanagin and Metzger (2000), even though they were researching the differences in perception of information credibility between media channels and found out that Internet is as credible as television yet there was also another level of finding. The perception of internet- based

31

information credibility among audiences changed as per the type of information they were seeking. It also changed according to audiences' level of interest and involvement in the uploaded message. Besides, the type of relationship between the user and the Internet as a news source had also an influence on how credible online information was perceived. Many scholars investigated the interaction between media sources and their users and to understand whether or not this users-sources relationship had an influence on the perception of media credibility (Lu & Andrews, 2006; Bracken, 2006; Choi, Watt, & Lynch, 2006). The majority of studies depicted a positive relationship between media consumption and its perceived credibility. In other words, the more users of a particular medium increase their frequency of exposure the more likely they will perceive this medium as credible (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987). Similarly, it is not logically correct that a person will spend his/her time seeking news and information from a media source that he/she does not trust or perceive as less credible. It is important here to recall that audiences seek information for, "comfort, empowerment, learn and knowledge to act" (Mehrabi, Hassan & Ali, 2009), so for these reasons credibility is paramount. But the Internet challenges this natural positive correlation because usage of Internet is indeed increasing without a matched increase of perceived Internet credibility (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). In an attempt to explain such uncanny relationship between Internet use and its perceived credibility Rimmer & Weaver (1987) pointed out the difference between frequency of media use and its level of preference. Some audiences may get attached to a certain medium however it is not their most preferred medium when they are in search of news and information. So the high frequency of media exposure is not necessary an indicator of its level of preference. Specifically, when audiences are seeking news and information Bucy (2003) signified that past studies of media use have predominantly shown that traditional media i.e. television and newspapers are primary news sources while online news is less important or complementary. In this vein, one can contemplate that media credibility

cannot be measured as an absolute value attributed to a single medium during a single search. Today we are fiddling with myriad communication tools in a highly fragmented media system and during a single search for a particular piece of news and/or information the receiver finds himself/herself surrounded by countless news sources both from the traditional and digital world all sending their very own messages. An avalanche of messages that carries contradictory information as well as confirmations and audience carries the burden of finding the truth. The audience summon confirmations they receive from all news media sources including newspapers, television, radio and online then assume that this piece of information is credible. In this sense, credibility of the particular message that has been filtered out is a result of the total perceived media credibility used to attain this piece of news. Other studies suggest that perceived credibility of both the message and the medium is directly related to reliance on the media source of information (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). Generally audiences become more reliant on mass media when there are turbulences in their countries and there is an urgent need of gaining information (Wanta & Hu, 1994). For example, in Egypt during the days of political turmoil between 2011and 2013 people were extremely dependent on mass media particularly television to follow latest proceedings. But this situation presents the reliance on television as a source of news and information under unnatural circumstances. Therefore, it is not plausible to generalize findings of such situation and claim that because audiences living in Egypt rely on television during political unrest then they perceive it as a credible news source. The perception of media credibility cannot be associated with its reliance during unnatural media behaviour of audiences. Media reliance can only be an indicator of media perceived credibility when firstly media exposure patterns are identified for a long period of time covering a truthful slice of life of audiences. Secondly, a clear distinction between frequency of media use and reliance should be made (Mingxin, 2006; Rimmer & Weaver, 1987), hence frequency of exposure only quantitatively determines the

33

number of times audiences switch on a certain medium but it does not reveal reliance that needs to be examines through measures of preferences and not simple behavioural measures. A most recent study of media reliance and credibility in our digital age (Johnson et al., 2008) revealed that Internet blogs credibility is perceived high among those who rely on blogging information as a news source. This finding is somehow contradictory to previous statements made by media researchers who think that the Internet credibility is facing serious concerns today and will face more credibility issues in the future. However, Johnson et al. (2008) result is common sense because those who rely on blogs for news and information have trust in not only the medium but also the message and more importantly the source. The source i.e. blogger is now face-to-face with the receiver and in most cases the blogger is personally known to those who follow him/her. So media credibility of Internet blogging is driven by the blogger's credibility and that is the main motivator that followers rely on to meet their information needs. In another research (Johnson & Kaye, 2004) the credibility of weblogs are perceived high by those who minimally rely on traditional media as their news source. So the less people rely on traditional media for new and information the more they perceive weblogs are credible. One can assume that people are seeking alternative news sources to replace traditional media and as the saying goes 'the grass is always greener on the other side.' So those who started to rely little on traditional media think that weblogs- the alternative news source- enjoys high credibility and will probably better meet their needs and expectations from a news source that is now perceived as non-traditional. Finally, there is numerous media credibility researches conducted nowadays attempting to clarify the complexity of Internet perceived credibility as well as its influence on the perceived credibility of other traditional media. This study will strictly investigate the perceived credibility of online news among Egyptian youth. Hence find out the key criteria of online news credibility and whether or not online news is perceived as credible among the given target audience.

34

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions and Hypothesis

In this online news credibility study the researcher identifies and applies the following variables and attempts to answer and support the here below research questions and hypothesis.

Research Questions

1. What are the variables that determine the perceived credibility of online political news?

2. What is the variable that has strongest influence on perceived credibility of online political news?

Hypothesis

1. There is a positive relationship between perceived credibility of source, message and medium and the perceived credibility of online political news among Egyptian youth.

Independent Variables

1. Perceived source credibility

2. Perceived medium credibility

3. Perceived message credibility

4. Demographical characteristics of target audience

5. Online political news consumption patterns

Dependent variable

A. Perceived online political news credibility

B. Research Design and Methodology

This research study is based on positivist epistemology. The researcher will adopt a scientific structure where objectivity and the use of rationale, logic and statistical approaches are imperative. In the past two decades and with the rise of online news and information various credibility concerns have emerged that motivated many media researchers to investigate its levels of trust and believability (Johnsin & Kaye, 1998, 2000; Sundar, 1996; Kiousis, 1999; Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Ognianova, 1998; Gaziano & McGrath; 1986). Therefore, different credibility scales were created and employed; most widely used is Gaziano and McGrath (1986)[1] Likert 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with neutral as midpoint, and the same credibility measure will be adopted in this study's quantitative phase. Also the semantic differential scale was commonly used but mainly to measure source credibility as Infante (1980) applied it to identify perceived source credibility through trustworthiness, expertise and dynamism. The research design for this study is triangulation, based on both qualitative as well as quantitative research methodologies. The qualitative phase is exploratory and precedes the quantitative that is more descriptive. The main objective of qualitative is to tap into target audience insights and understand their views about online political news credibility in general and also to operationalize credibility and break it down into measurable units that can be later measured in the questionnaires. Two focus groups (6-8 respondents per group) will be conducted among a volunteer sample of Egyptian youth between the ages 18 and 35 years. Groups are administered by a moderator (researcher of this study) who will run discussions that will last for approximately 70 minutes per group via a designed discussion guide[2] including a carefully selected set of projective

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[1] "The scale was chosen because of its high reliability (Cronbach α of .92 was reported by Newhagen & Nass, 1989)." Abdulla Et Al. (2004)

[2] See appendix (A)

techniques. Both groups are analysed and supported by verbatim from respondents in a separate qualitative report[3].

Quantitative methodology[4] is applied as the second and last phase of data collection. It is based on 470 questionnaires[5] disseminated among a non-probability quota sample of Egyptian youth with the following eligibility:

- Nationality: Egyptian

- Gender: males and females (equal split)

- Age: 18-35[6]

- Area of residence: Cairo

- Online news consumption: at least once per week

- Socio Economic Segment: Upper (A), Middle (B) and (C1/C2) (50% upper (A)& middle (B): 50% (C1/C2))

    o The SES of respondents is determined according to their level of income. And the level of income is defined based on IPSOS- Egypt national study on profiling and segmentation as shown in the table below;

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[3] All ethical considerations of qualitative research are reviewed by the AUC Institutional Review Board
[4] All ethical consideration of quantitative research are reviewed by the AUC Institutional Review Board
[5] See appendix (B)
[6] This age bracket has been specifically selected to represent Egyptian youth as per previous researches' definition conducted in Egypt; Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries, http://www.euromedyouth.net/IMG/pdf/02-EuroMedJeunesse-Etude_EGYPT.pdf, The National Council of Youth in Egypt,http://www.aucegypt.edu/research/gerhart/Documents/Youth%20Activism%20and%20Public%20Space %20in%20Egypt.pdf, The Revolutionary Promise: Youth perception in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/britishcouncil.uk2/files/revolutionary-promise-summary_0.pdf,Egypt's Ministry of State for Youth in its Participatory Development program in Urban Areas, http://egypt-urban.net/pdp-signs-cooperation-agreements-with-ministry-of-state-for-youth-and-cairo-governorate/

Table 1: Socio Economic Standard Segmentation in Egypt

SES	Income/ monthly EGP
E	Less than 500
D	Between 500 and 1,500
C2	Between 1,501 and 3,000
C1	Between 3,001 and 6,000
B	Between 6,001 and 12,000
A	More than 12,001

The questionnaire design is dependent on pre-set research questions to ensure high levels of internal validity and also taking into consideration the qualitative findings to effectively measure credibility levels of political online news with respect to Egyptian youth understanding of the term credibility. Estimated length of questionnaire ranges from 5 to 7 minutes. Fieldwork is conducted Face-to- Face (FTF) through Pen and Paper Interviews (PAPI) with selected respondents based on the below quota.

Table 2: Research Sample

Age	18-22	23-28	29-35	Total
Sample (%)	33.25%	33.5%	33.25%	100%
Sample (n)	**158**	**159**	**158**	**470**

* Sampling Error Calculator at 95% Confidence Level (p ≤.05)

The researcher employs the most widely used scale in credibility studies, Likert, to find out perceived credibility level encompassing all variables of online news. The scale is adopted from Gaziano and McGrath (1986) and adapted according to the focus groups report. It is constructed on the following 12 basic credibility components; trustworthiness, currency, bias, fairness, reporting the whole story, objectivity, honesty, up-to-date, believability, balance, accuracy and timeliness and only focusing on online news (Gaziano & McGrath; 1986). The Semantic Differential scale will also be utilized in the questionnaire to separately identify respondent's evaluation of online source, medium and message credibility each via its own scale. Prior getting into respondents perceptions on credibility of online political news respondents will be asked about their online media consumption habits so as to identify various levels of medium use[7]. Hence determine and differentiate between heavy, medium and light users of online political news that will be later used in cross-tabulations. Finally, the analysis plan of questionnaire is based on three key components: patterns and habits of online political news consumption, general perceived online news credibility and specific perceived credibility of online source, medium and message. Following the common practice of social science research analysis the SPSS software is used to analyse the data. The researcher will construct and encode variables on SPSS, complete the data entry phase then run analysis-using frequencies, mean scores, cross-tabulations and correlation coefficient. The technical aim of this quantifying phase is to achieve a high level of internal validity and provide statistically valid results thus draw scientific conclusions.

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[7] All respondents in this study are Internet and online news users

VI. FINDINGS

A. Qualitative Analysis

Applying the volunteer sample two focus groups were conducted[8] among Egyptian young adults living in Cairo who belong to the age bracket 18 to 35 years[9]. The main purpose of this qualitative phase is to obtain a broad understanding of the relationship between online political news and young adults' perceptions of its credibility. It was also important to dig deeper into target audiences' minds and extract insights about their cognitive routes that they embark upon when analyzing a piece of online political news with respect to their very own credibility components. Here below are research specific objectives for the qualitative phase:

1. Determine generally the sample's online media habits and specially political online news exposure patterns

2. Identify sample's perceptions about political online news

3. Explore sample's factors of definition for online news credibility

4. Determine sample's insights about credibility for the following three components of online political news; source, medium and message

The analysis of these two focus groups will guide the researcher to the quantitative phase. The credibility questionnaire will be modified according to the analysis of focus groups where questions and the provided options for answers are going to be changed according to respondents' feedback on online media credibility and online political news.

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[8] Focus groups were conducted after the approval of IRB committee at the American University in Cairo and all respondents in both groups have signed the documents of informed consent for participation in this research study.

[9] Total number of respondents in groups was 14 (7 respondents per group) and groups were heterogeneous in terms of gender yet keeping a total equal spilt of participation (7 female respondents and 7 male respondents). The first group's age bracket was between 18 and 23 and the second group's was between 24 and 35.

Section (1): General Online Media Habits

The sample target seldom watches television. Particularly the younger age group who majority of respondents agreed that they watch television only during the month of Ramadan, *"television has become so boring, we only watch it in Ramadan because of the series and comedy shows."* (First focus group, male, age 18-23) Very few respondents in this group mentioned that they only turn on their television sets to watch Turkish drama; they admire the romance and social issues addressed in series. According to the second focus group with older age bracket, television is mainly watched to follow up on the latest political and social news so after they return from work they turn on their Television sets to catch up on daily news and events. This is a habit they do on regular basis but it only lasts for maximum 20 minutes of channels surfing trying to find new information across different channels in order to be in touch with latest happening and also form their very own opinions about certain political, economic and/or social issues. Most respondents of this older age segment reveled that they do not like to appear oblivious to Egypt's currents affairs in their social circle, *"when I am among my friends I want them to know that I am aware of latest news and ignorant or living in my own bubble."* (Second focus group, male, age 24-35) At the same time television is also watched because of its movies and drama series, but the latter depends on preference. Television movies, both Arabic and English, are popular between both focus groups. However, the timing factor was brought up, as there aren't always good movies when they are home and decide to watch TV. And that is why almost all respondents turn to their computers or laptops where all their most favorite movies are available. One female respondent in the younger focus group said, *"My laptop is my personal television; I can watch anything I want anytime I want."*

Online media is the most desirable mean of communication among the sample. Both groups made it clear that online media either via their laptops and/or smartphones are an integral of their daily lives. It was explicitly said in the two focus groups that, *"There is no way possible I can imagine my life without the Internet."* When the moderator started asking about how often they log on the Internet and from which devices, majority of respondents could not really grasp the question because nowadays there is no such thing as logging on hence they are always connected to the Internet via their smartphones. Actually, the first focus group that belonged to a younger generation joked about it saying, *"I go to an internet café to get Internet."* (Female, age 18-23) This means the concept of going to an internet café to no longer exist among this sample simply because Internet proliferation is massive in homes, schools, and most importantly smart phones. It was made clear between the two groups that they are always connected to the Internet 24/7 via their mobile phones but depending on their needs they choose the device through which they use to surf the net. For example one respondent said, *"My iPhone is like an extension of my hand I am always on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and everything else but when I need to research a paper for example I use either my laptop or iPad… it depends on what I want to do online."* (First focus group, male, age 18-23) The second focus group and because they are older they are working from 9am to 5pm so besides online connectivity through their smartphones they are always online at work through either their desktops or work laptops. But during working hours some respondents complained that their companies' block social media sites from the network so they use Internet for work only yet still remain connected with friends through their mobile phones.

Top of mind awareness of Internet sites is common between both age groups; hence, social media take the lead then followed by search engines. Below is the list of sites mentioned[10]

- Facebook

- Youtube

- Instagram

- Google

- Twitter

- Yahoo

- Torrents *(kickasstorrents & isohunt)*

- Wikipedia

- LinkedIn

- Sound Cloud

- Pinterest

The main reasons respondents are attracted to these particular sites are because they bring them closer to their friends (in and outside Egypt) and help them stay in touch with their old mates from school and/or university. Females in focus groups confessed that they sometimes use social media to track special persons thus find more about their lives and also one female respondent was admitted that, *"Facebook and Instagram give us excellent gossip materials especially about our ex- boyfriends or potential ones"* (Second focus group, age 24-35). The two other popular types of sites i.e. search engines and music/ movies sharing are logged on to either search for information that can be used for university assignments or at work
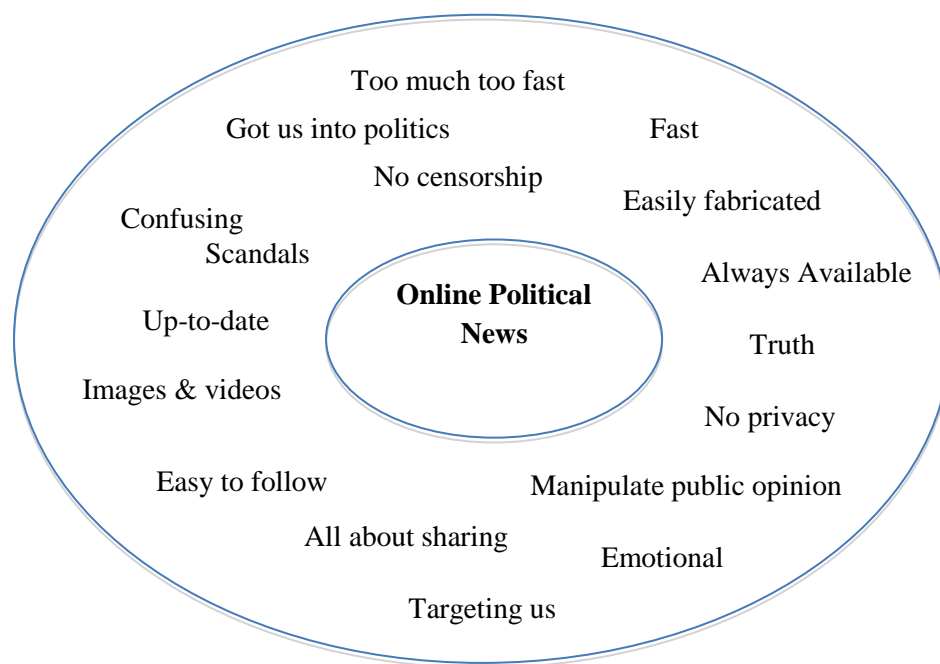
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[10] WhatsApp mobile application that is used for instant messaging was mentioned among the top three

presentations. The download of movies and music from torrents is so common between both focus groups and for them this free availability of movies, series and music makes them no longer need to sit and watch TV. One male respondent from the first focus group confirmed that, *"I have my own movie and music library that has all my favorites so there is no need whatsoever to sit inform of the TV waiting for my favorite movie or series."* (Age, 18-23) It is evident that majority of respondents seek the Internet for social purposes, only a few number of respondents in the second focus group mentioned (unaided) that sometimes at work they log on online news websites or via their smartphones they have already downloaded news applications i.e. Al-Youm Al-Sabe'a to keep up to date with latest happenings- this finding will be tackled in depth in section (2) of the discussion guide. With regards to the duration per session all respondents agreed that it is highly variable, mainly depending on the new information that falls into their hands, if it is exciting then they will click on further links to know more and their session can last up to 20 or even 30 minutes. But if there is not anything there in social media that grabs their attention then the session can range between 5 to 10 minutes. However, if they are working on a paper for university or trying to finish a work presentation they can stay on line for hours researching and gathering information. Finally, the sentence completion projective technique that has been used in this section is indeed consistent with previous analysis as out of the 14 respondents 11 confirmed that, *"I mainly access online media to stay in touch with my friends and with the world."* The three remaining respondents had three different reasons; one uses online media to promote his/her private food business, the second to share his music with large audiences and the third to express his/her political views freely.

Section (2): Exploring Credibility of Online Political News

The word association projective technique used in this section was mainly to identify where online political news exists in respondents' minds and all the associated feelings to it. The diagram below encompasses all the words mentioned in both focus groups when the moderator said, 'online political news.'

Illustration 2: Top of Mind Awareness of Online Political News

Too much too fast

Got us into politics   Fast

No censorship

Easily fabricated

Confusing

Scandals   Always Available

**Online Political
News**

Up-to-date   Truth

Images & videos   No privacy

Easy to follow   Manipulate public opinion

All about sharing   Emotional

Targeting us

Online political news for the sample represents a mixture of attitudes as well as feelings. As presented in the diagram above political online news can be both at the same time truthful and easily fabricated. It can also be easy to follow and too much too fast that makes it hard to grasp. But for both groups they have given credit to online political news to be the reason why they started becoming interested in following the news and forming their very own political opinions as well as sharing them. It was evident that both groups do not particularly search for political news online, in other words it is not their primary motivation why they access the Internet. Unless there is a major political happening in the country that they need

to understand and follow, most respondents log on their social media networks and if any of their friends or any of the pages they liked shared a post that carried new political information, they may or may not click on it depending on how interested they were about the topic. So when the moderator asked about specific sites that respondents usually visit to access online political news, the younger generation focus group admitted that all their political online news and information they get from social media networks predominately Facebook. When the moderator tried to find out about the links shared on Facebook wall and whether or not they would recall the name of websites they were directed to, not a single respondent in the group managed an unaided recall. So the moderator aided respondents with few names of online news portals and newspapers but they were nodding their heads agreeing to the names mentioned claiming that they have heard about them before. It seemed that this young sample do not pay much heed to the source of news, the content itself is what matters the most, one male respondent confirmed by saying, *"names of sources are not important, I mean what will I benefit if I know the names of these online political sites?"* (First focus group, age 18-23) On the contrary, the second focus group that belong to an older age bracket managed to recall the following online political sites, Al-Youm Al-Sabe'a, Al-Masry Al-Youm, Masrawy, and Akhbarak.net. In addition to other international news sources like Google news, Yahoo news, BBC World News and Huffington Post etc. *"there are so many news pages I like on Facebook to receive news feeds on my timeline but I can't remember their names because they are so many for example (The) New York times, Gulf news, Guardian, stuff like that."* (Second focus group, female, age 24-35) It was clear that the act of accessing political online news is a rather complicated process that involves many links and websites hopping. There isn't one single identified website that respondents regularly access to read online political news. They click on many links with articles and videos because, *"no*

one single site can provide me with all the information, and everybody talks politics from their own agenda." (Second focus group, male, age 24-35)

The second projective technique used in this section is also word association to find the top of mind awareness of online news credibility and all its associated thoughts and feelings. The two focus groups shared the same top of mind awareness and that is, *"it depends."* All respondents agreed that credibility of online news is highly variable depending on who is sharing the news online and the content of news item itself. The moderator probed further to obtain respondents' thoughts of online news credibility and both groups confirmed that they are fully aware there are so many fabricated online political stories, *"it has become so easy to fabricate a news story and share it online, I can create a video right for the president saying anything I want."* (Second focus group, female, age 24-35) Another respondent mentioned the latest videos of ISIS terrorist group saying that, *"there is no possible way these videos are real, it is like watching an action/horror movie on mbc2."* (First focus group, male, age 18-23) Even though respondents were complaining in the groups that online political news is filled with untruthful information they still prefer it to traditional news sources like television, newspapers or radio, *"there is no way I can read newspapers or even watch TV news casts, they are boring like hell."* (First focus group, female, age 18-23) So there is a common understanding that credibility of online political news is shady; however, respondents believe in their analytical abilities to detect fabricated stories and filter them out. And this is why during online political news search they click on so many links and compare and contrast information till they form they very own credible news version. This is a common practice between the second focus group of older age bracket as for the first group when they find themselves confused about the credibility of a certain political news piece they lose interest altogether about the topic and switch to something different. One respondent in the first

group clarified by saying, *"when there are so many links about a topic and each is saying a different, then this is when I know I will never know the truth about this issue so I drop it and just go ask my parents."* (First focus group, male, age 18-23) When the moderator asked why they think that there are many fabricated online political news stories in the first place, here are some of the answers shared in both groups; *"Because they can be easily fabricated and people are just goofing around thinking it is funny, it is like an online prank."* (First focus group, male, age 18-23) *"Because the government is trying to manipulate people."* (First focus group, female, age 18-23) *"Because some people would do anything to be famous so they use social media through forging political stories to grab public's attention."* (Second focus group, female, age 24-35) *"Because sometimes the opposition parties or minority groups would falsify political news to serve their own hidden agendas." (Second focus group, male, age 24-35) "Because simply online reporters have become lazy verify news plus they need to upload many stories in very a short time, so it has become now all about quantity news items and not quality." (Second focus group, female, age 24-35)*

In an attempt to identify respondents' thinking scheme while detecting the credibility of online political news the moderator simply asked them on what basis they accept or reject a news story online. There was a general attitude between both focus groups that showed how self-confident respondents were in this matter, *"you can easily know when a news story is untrue."* (First focus group, male, age 18-23 & Second focus group, female, age 24-35) and here below respondents revealed the questions they ask themselves that represent their checklist according to which they find out if an online political news story is credible:

- Who has shared the link of this news item? (Source of the message, is it coming from the government, opposition, independent or international sources? the international independent source like BBC world news is perceived as the most credible)

- Who is the friend that shared the link? (the higher the reputation of the friend the more credible online news is perceived to be)

- What is the number of likes to this news item? (The more number of likes the higher credibility)

- What are the types of comments made by friends and others to this news item? (If previous comments reveled it is fake then this news item will most likely be rejected)

- Does the online news item contain images and/or videos or it is only text? (If it is only text then it is most likely rated as low credibility because for respondents seeing is believing)

- How high or low the quality of images and videos used in the news item? (Very high quality images or videos are perceived as less credible because it shows how special the production is so the creator of this news item has spent a lot of money trying to make it look real and credible. At the same very low quality production becomes unclear and blurry to audience to detect credibility)

- Is the topic of this political online news item also covered in traditional media i.e. television and newspapers? (If traditional media is also talking about the same topic in the same way then it is more likely to be perceived as credible)

The last projective technique in this discussion guide was role-playing. Moderator asked the respondents to imagine themselves as online media owners and they have a responsibility to upgrade the credibility of online political news. The first reaction to this assignment in both focus groups was really positive as they agreed that this task is highly needed nowadays. The three ideas respondents' thought about in both focus groups in order to upgrade credibility online are (listed in order); 1. Create a website or a mobile application that acts as a fraud detector, this way people will never share fabricated news knowing that online users

will find out it is a sham. So if there is online news piece that you doubt its credibility, all you have to do is copy its URL link to this fraud detector and it will calculate its credibility rate for you. *"This way articles with zero or low credibility rates will be mocked and shared as fraud, same thing we have at torrents percentage of rotten tomatoes."* (First focus group, male, age 18-23) 2. Online political news should be accredited from a source that guarantees its credibility to audiences. And this source should be independent from politics, it acts as a purely media professional source that releases accreditation and credibility recognition certificates all based on professional media standards. 3. Educate the people about how to search the media for credible political news and what are the most credible news sources, this way fabricated stories won't be shared and die out.

B. Quantitative Analysis

Description of the Sample

Respondents for this quantitative research were targeted based on the non-probability quota sampling at a total sample size 470. Age brackets were assigned the following given quota; (18-22) n= 158, (23-28) n= 159, (29-35) n=158. The median age is 26 years and that represent the target Egyptian youth living in the capital, Cairo. Majority of respondents have either received a bachelor degree or are university undergraduates and 4% pursuing their post graduate studies or have already attained a master degree. They have a diverse field of study ranging from science to fine arts but the majority are in business at 35% followed by literature at 12%. Since this study aims to investigate online political news so it is important to find out respondents' educational background to avoid artifacts that may arise from respondents whose educational backgrounds are political science and/or law. Hence this research sample is quota so the researcher was keen to capture Cairenes socio economic segments A, B, C and D to obtain a full and balanced spectrum of opinions. The monthly household income level starts from less than 2,000 EGP[11] to 45,001 EGP and above. This study runs at an equal gender spilt to impartially represent both genders' opinions, plus the gender spilt in the Egyptian population is almost equal[12].

Table 3: Age
How old are you?

N	Valid	470
	Missing	0
Mean		26.02
Median		26.00
Std. Deviation		5.326

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[11] The wide range of socio economic segments in which the researcher selected respondents with monthly income lower than 2,000 EGP did not compromise the eligibility criteria of the weekly access of online political news.
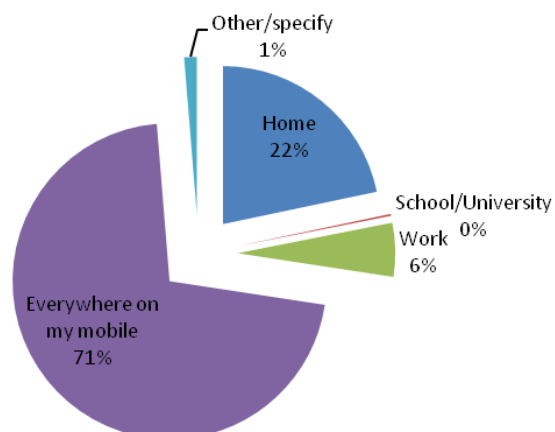
[12] According to CAPMAS the ration between males and females is 51% to 49%

51

General Online Media Consumption

Graph 1: Internet Consumption
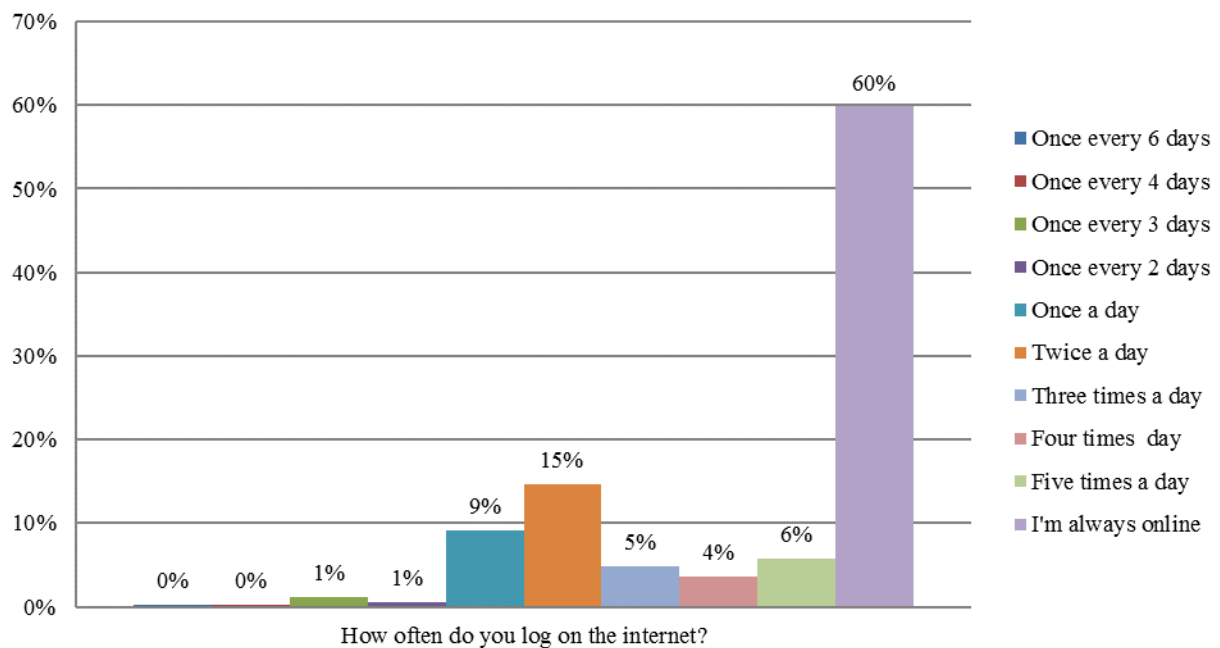
Graph 2: Common Place of Internet Access

Majority of the sample are heavy users of the Internet hence 60% when asked how often they log on the internet answered by saying that, "I'm always online." It is evident that Internet log on habits have immensely increased over the past decade to the extent that it has become automated routine and people no longer need to make an effort to log on the Internet, people are always connected to the World Wide Web. Paying tribute to mobile smart phones that removed boundaries of time and place to make Internet connectivity all the

time and everywhere[13]. The table 4 below shows that also the majority at 71% of the sample connects to Internet everywhere on their mobile phones. This means that mobile phones have become the primary communication tool youth use to log on the Internet in comparison to computers, laptops and iPads.

The average spent time online per day as shown in the table below ranges from minimum one hour to a maximum of 10 hours per day. Calculated Mean is 4 hours, which indicates the average number of hours, spend on the Internet per day among the selected sample. In this research respondents who spend less than 4.20 hours are considered light Internet users and those spend more than 4 hours are heavy users. Accordingly, medium users of the Internet comprise almost 26.4% as for light and heavy they represent 32.9% and 40.7% respectively.

Table 4: Average Time Spent on the Internet

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
On average, how much time do you spend online per day? (Hours)	470	1	10	4.20	1.778

'Facebook' when respondents were asked to rank their top 5 frequently visited sites online, out of the 470 respondents 416 (88.5%) chose 'Facebook' as number one and 9.4% of the remaining sample chose 'Facebook' as their second choice. 6 respondents (1.3%) out of the total 470 sample did not include 'Facebook' in their ranking.

'Twitter' rank among the top 5 most frequently visited websites is presented in the table below. Twitter was chosen by 4.5% and as the second and third choice 22.3% and 20.6% respectively. 'Twitter' was not selected by 26.2% of the sample in their ranking.

'YouTube' popularity among the sample target is relatively high, as 26 respondents only out of the 470 excluded YouTube from their top 5 ranking. It is selected by 87.7% as their second, third or fourth choice. It is important to note that the 5.8% respondents who did not

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[13] Mobile phones penetration in Egypt has reached 120% in 2014, http://www.egyptictindicators.gov.eg.

selected YouTube do not necessarily mean that they do not access YouTube through other social media sites via shared links i.e. Facebook or Twitter.

'Google' is most selected as the second choice among the sample by 29.4%, 24.3% selected 'Google' as their third rank and 19.8% chose it as their fourth option and 6.2% did not include 'Google' in their ranking at all.

'Instagram' popularity is below average among the selected sample as 43.8% only mentioned Instagram in their ranking. It has zero mentions as the first choice and 7.4% selected Instagram as their second choice and 32.6% chose it as their third and/or fourth choice.

'Yahoo' has been selected by only 5.1% among which 2.6% chose it as their fifth rank.

'Blogs' are least selected among the list of options as 4% of the sample selected Blogs and ranked them mostly as their fourth choice.

'Other' mentioned websites in ranking are presented in the table below with a wide range of online newspapers names. Al- Youm Al- Sabe'a reached 5.8% and Al-Masry Al-youm 5.6% followed by Al-Watan 4.3%. Torrents (movies and music free download) was selected by 2.8%

Online Political News Consumption

In this section respondents were asked to rank their top 5 most frequently visited websites to access online political news. **'Facebook'** ranked the top (first choice) by 62.3% so that means 293 respondents out of 470 access Facebook firstly when they seek online political news. 31.1% selected it as their second choice and 1.3% excluded 'Facebook' from the rank altogether.

'Twitter' as presented in the table below is mostly selected by respondents as third choice at 43.6% and 30.2% do not access 'Twitter' for online political news.

'**YouTube**' is logged on by 47.2% of the sample to access online political news. Majority of respondents have ranked 'YouTube' as their second, third or fourth option. There are 248 respondents (57%) who did not select 'YouTube' in their ranking but that does not necessarily mean that they do not access 'YouTube' via other websites to play videos with political news content. It only reflects that they do not log on 'YouTube' website but they can be diverted to it to watch the video of the political news story they were reading about on another website.

'**Google**' was chosen by 47.2% of the entire sample to be among their ranking of websites that they most frequently visit to access online political news. 'Google' is mostly ranked as the fourth option by 17.2% followed by third choice at 14 %.

'**Online newspapers**' are highly popular among the sample to access online political news. Almost 72.8% has chosen 'online newspapers' to be among their ranking and 32.8% select it as their first choice and 31.9% second choice. 'Online newspapers' are considered the closest competition to 'Facebook' at a first rank selection.

The average time spent per day browsing online political news is presented in minutes and the average time spent by majority of the sample is 24.65 per day. Therefore, light consumption of online political news is represented by respondents who spend less than 24.65 minutes per day and similarly heavy consumers of online political news spend more than 24.65 minutes per day. The minimum recorded minutes are 5 minutes of browsing online political news per day and that was only mentioned by 5% of the same. As for the maximum record of minutes 3% mentioned that they spend 60 minutes per day browsing political news on the internet.

Table 5: Average Time Spent Browsing Online Political News

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
On average, how much time do you spend online per day browsing online political news? (Minutes)	470	5	60	24.65	14.072

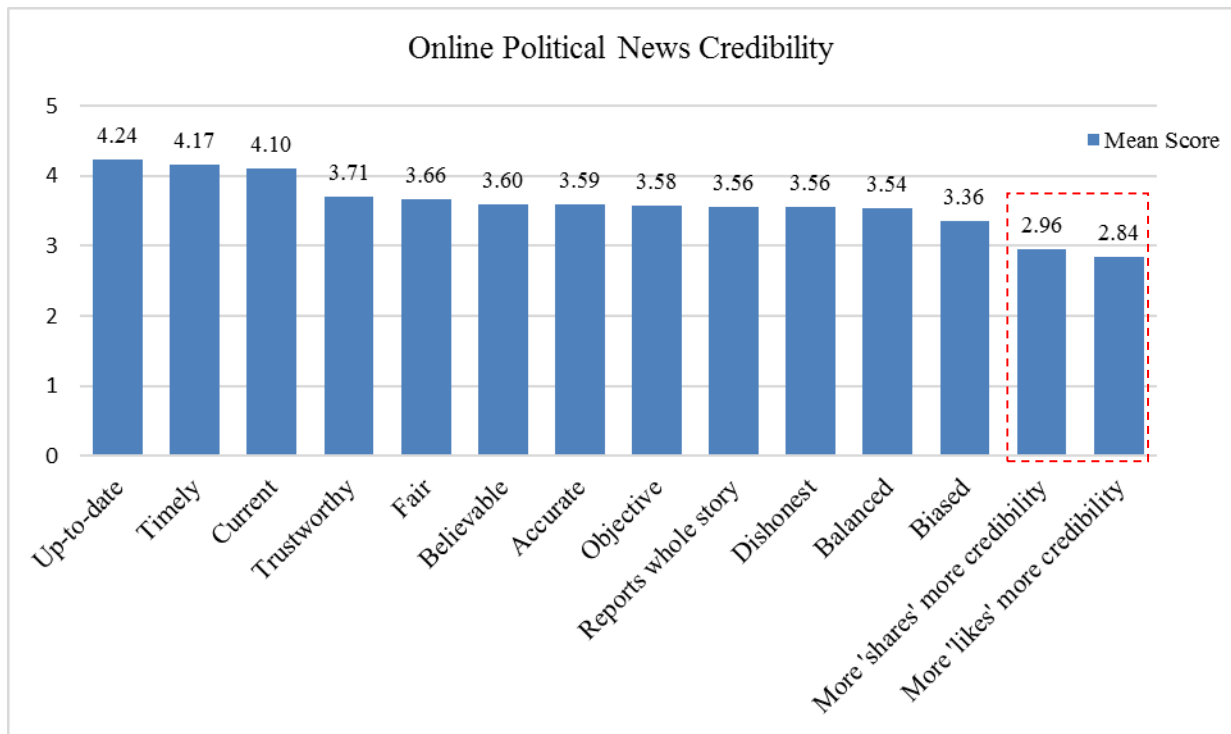Graph 3: Average Time Spent Browsing Online Political News
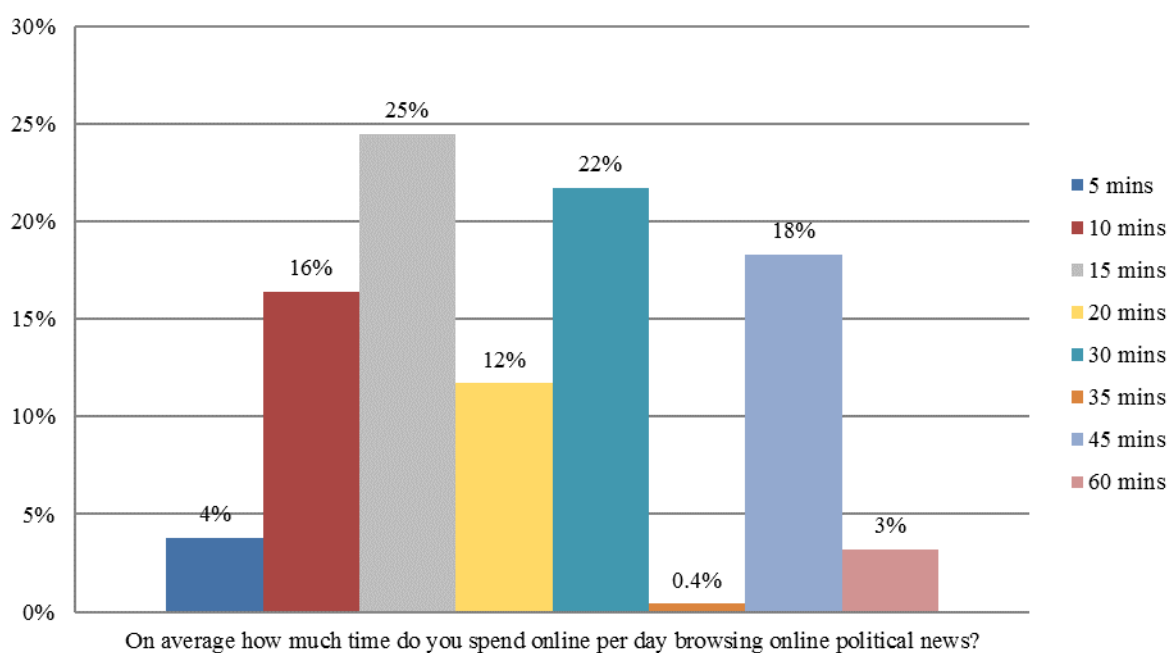
RQ1: what are the factors that determine the perceived credibility of online political news?

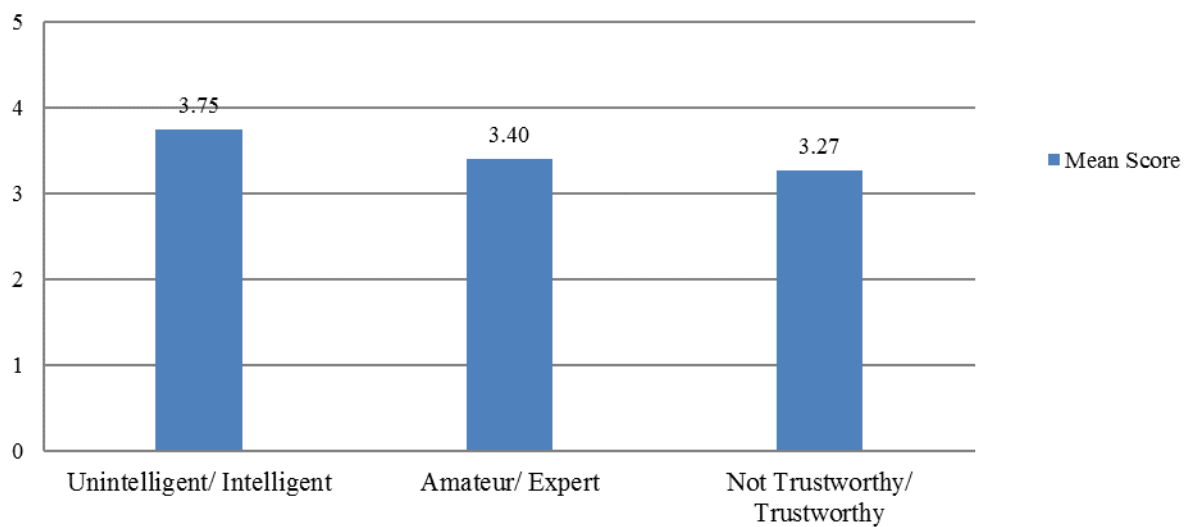**Perceived Online Political News Credibility**

The bar chart below (graph 4) displays the means of credibility factors based on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In the qualitative phase respondents in focus groups highlighted the importance of 'like' and 'share' an online political news item receive in how they perceive the credibility of this news link. According to the data displayed below, respondents do not strongly support this notion as 'shares' mean = 2.96 and 'likes' mean = 2.84, which indicate that they are almost neutral. Thus, the shares or likes online political news receive are not indicative of its credibility. The perceived credibility of online political news demonstrates a moderate mean reading particularly in the 'believability' factor as it scores 3.60 which is more skewed towards the high end of 'neutral' option in Likert scale than 'strongly agree'. It is evident that online political news is highly recognized for its 'currency' hence the mean of all the factors related to this concept i.e. up to-date mean = 4.24, timely mean = 4.17 and current mean = 4.10. As for the mean of 'balance' concept related factors; fair mean= 3.66, accurate mean = 3.59, objective mean = 3.58 reports the whole story mean= 3.56 and balanced mean = 3.54. The 'honesty' attribute mean = 3.56 in which respondents are above neutral and tend to agree that online political news are dishonest. Trustworthiness mean = 3.71 is the second highest score after currency mean scores that range from 4.10 to 4.24. Finally when respondents are asked if online political news is biased the mean = 3.36, so the majority is slightly above neutral about this attribute. The bar chart ranks online political news credibility statements. So online political news is highly recognized as up-to-date, a tribute to the speed of uploading and sharing news on the internet.

Graph 4: Online Political News Credibility Mean

Online Political News Credibility

Mean Score: Up-to-date 4.24, Timely 4.17, Current 4.10, Trustworthy 3.71, Fair 3.66, Believable 3.60, Accurate 3.59, Objective 3.58, Reports whole story 3.56, Dishonest 3.56, Balanced 3.54, Biased 3.36, More 'shares' more credibility 2.96, More 'likes' more credibility 2.84

Perceived Source Credibility of Online Political News

Graph 5: Source Credibility Mean

Mean Score: Unintelligent/ Intelligent 3.75, Amateur/ Expert 3.40, Not Trustworthy/ Trustworthy 3.27

Respondents evaluated **source** credibility of online political news through Semantic Differential scale. The higher the mean score the more it is inclined towards the positive adjective use in the bipolar scale. Intelligence of the source mean = 3.75 is highly recognized among respondents followed by expertise mean = 3.40 and then finally trustworthiness at mean = 3.27. It important to highlight that according to previous results in this study, the source of online political news in this research is considered by majority of respondents to be the sharer of political news on Facebook as 62.3% of sample access Facebook as their first choice when browsing online political news. Online newspapers come in the second place at 32.8% but it was also deduced from the qualitative focus groups conducted in the exploratory phase in this study that online political news coming from online newspapers are accessed by the target Egyptian not via their websites but rather as promoted posts that appear on news feed page of their Facebook.

**Perceived Medium Credibility of Online Political News**

Graph 6: Medium Credibility Mean
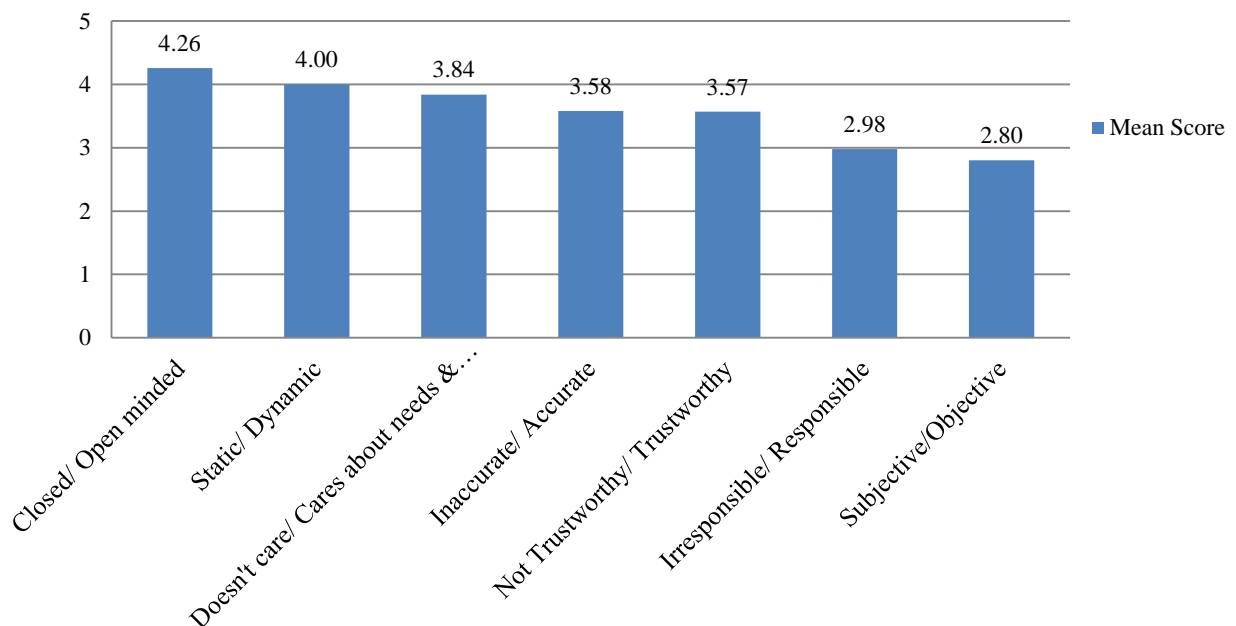
Using the Semantic Differential scale respondents evaluated Internet's credibility as a **medium** for online political news. The Internet as a medium is viewed as highly open minded, mean = 4.26 and its lowest score is at objectivity mean = 2.8. Internet is also recognized by its dynamic nature mean = 4.00 but at the same time it is perceived as a medium with low responsibility towards the audience mean = 2.98. Nevertheless, respondents perceive the internet as a medium that cares about audiences' needs and interests mean = 3.84 this contradiction in responses is clarified in the following **content** credibility question. The presented bar chart of mean scores shows in an ascending order the top rated characteristics of the internet as a medium for online political news are mostly defined via open minded, dynamic and that it cares about audiences' needs and interests. However, it isn't viewed as medium that presents political news objectively mean = 2.80 neither it is responsible towards its audience mean = 2.98. As for trustworthiness, the mean score was = 3.57 and accuracy mean = 3.58 that represent slightly above neutral mean scores.

Perceived Content/Message Credibility of Online Political News

Graph 7: Content/Message Credibility Mean
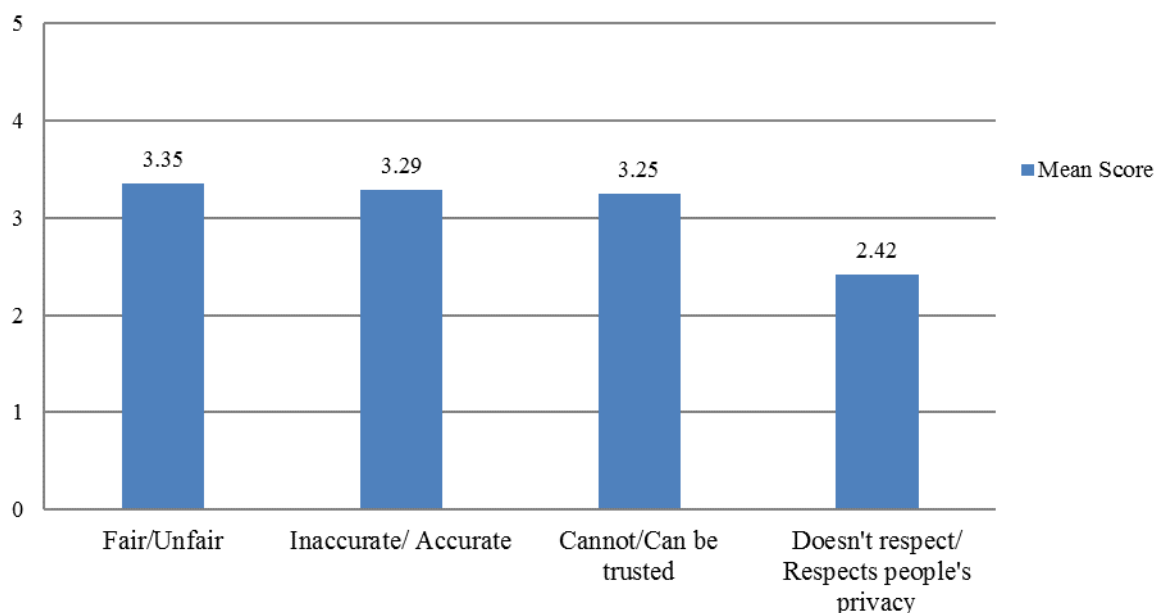
Respondents evaluated the credibility of content of online political news via a semantic differential scale. The least favored factor is respecting people's privacy mean = 2.42 which means that people view content of online political news is invading people's privacy. Fairness is the most acknowledged factor at a mean = 3.35 followed by accuracy mean = 3.29. Respondents revealed their neutrality when it comes to trusting the content of online political news, mean = 3.25. So it neither carries a positive nor a negative perception of credibility. But it also highlights the credibility issue that online political news might be suffering from nowadays. Regarding the contradiction pointed out in the medium credibility question above it is cleared here as respondents disagree that the online content respects people's privacy. Therefore, the perceived low responsibility, mean = 2.98, of the Internet could be driven from the perceived lack of respect to people's privacy, mean = 2.42. Finally, after calculating the summated means of credibility for source mean = 3.47, content mean = 3.077 and medium mean = 3.57, it is noticeable that credibility of content of online political news is perceived as lowest followed by the source. The main attribute that negatively influences content's credibility is its lack of respect to people's privacy.

Correlation between: independent variable: demographical characteristics and dependent variable: perceived credibility of online political news

A) Gender (Males *vs.* Females)

Table 6: Online Political News Credibility and Gender Independent Samples Test

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | | |
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
									Lower	Upper
Online news credibility	Equal variances assumed	.409	.523	.290	468	.772	.02836	.09787	-.16397	.22069

An independent samples *t*-test is conducted to examine whether or not there is an influence from the independent variable, gender, on the perceived online political news credibility. The results show that at a degree of freedom of 468, the $t = 0.290$, $p = 0.772$. These figures indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between tests. Accordingly, there is no relationship between gender as demographical characteristic and perceived credibility of online political news.

B) Age

Table 7: Age and Online Political News Credibility Correlation

		Online news credibility	How old are you?
How old are you?	Pearson Correlation	-.075	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.105	
	N	470	470

Age is the second characteristic examined within the demographical characteristics (independent variable). As shown in the Pearson correlation above, $p = 0.105$, so there is no significant correlation between age and perceived online political news credibility.

C) Income

Table 8: Income and Online Political News Credibility ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	51.167	14	3.655	3.496	.000
Within Groups	475.696	455	1.045		
Total	526.863	469			

Income is the third characteristic examined in demographical characteristics. The researcher applied one way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). The independent variable (monthly income) is represented through 16 income brackets. The results are significant with $p = 0.000$ After ANOVA, the researcher conducted independent samples t-tests for all 16 income brackets. Not all groups depict significance, the significant p values existed between income levels that are far from each other. The wider the gap is in income levels the more likely the groups will be significantly different. So, there are differences between the poorer and the richer with regards to their perception about online political news credibility. The high incomes have higher credibility than low incomes. Total number of groups that have significant p values are 23 and here below in table 11 are few significant examples.

Table 9: Income T-Test Examples

	t-test for Equality of Means				
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
(2,001-3,000) (more than 45,001)	-4.522	21	.000	-1.38093	.30540
(3001-4,000) (40,001-45,000)	-3.486	72	.001	-.91818	.26338
(6,001-7,000) (35,0001- 40,000)	-2.776	66	.007	-.68639	.24729
(6,001-7,000) (30,001-35,000)	-2.474	66	.016	-.62167	.25129

D) Education

Table 10: Education and Online Political News Credibility ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.240	2	5.120	4.628	.010
Within Groups	516.623	467	1.106		
Total	526.863	469			

Level of education is the fourth characteristic of examined demographical characteristics, for which the researcher has applied one way ANOVA. Education is represented via; high school, bachelor degree[14] or master degree. Results indicate significant difference between examined variances, $p = 0.01$. After ANOVA, the researcher conducted independent samples *t*-tests for the three education levels. There is a significant difference between high school and bachelor degree with p value = 0.007, table 12 below shows the mean scores where the high school mean = 4.7 higher than bachelor degree. There is also a significant difference between high school and graduate degree with $p = 0.031$, table 13 below shows the mean scores graduate degree mean = 4.0 slightly lower than high school. As for the differences between bachelor degree and graduate degree *t*-test score is not significant at $p = 0.15$.

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[14] N of bachelor degree = 443 and it comprises 94% of total sample.

Table 11: High School and Bachelor Degree Group Statistics T-Test

	What is your level of education?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Online news credibility	high school	8	4.7083	.09956	.03520
	bachelor degree	443	3.6906	1.06874	.05078

Table 12: High School and Graduate Degree Group Statistics T-Test

	What is your level of education?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Online news credibility	high school	8	4.7083	.09956	.03520
	graduate degree	19	4.0482	.80620	.18495

Correlation between independent variable: online political news consumption vs.

perceived credibility of online political pews

Table 13: Online Political News Consumption and Perceived Credibility of Online Political News Correlation

		Online news credibility	Online political news consumption (Minutes)
On average, how much time do you spend online per day browsing online political news?	Pearson Correlation	.311	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	470	470

Respondents are asked the average time they spend per day browsing the internet for online political news and as previously mentioned the average mean score is 24.6 minutes. The positive correlation in table 12 (r=0.3) represents a significant correlation at p value = 0.000 between the average time spent online (online political news consumption) and perceived credibility of online political news.

As a result, not all of the examined independent variables have an influence on the perceived credibility of online political news. The medium, source, message as well as online political news consumption have a direct correlation to online political news credibility. But, demographical characteristics variables are not all correlated to the dependent variable. Gender and age are excluded due to their high p values. Income and education are independent variables with numerous groups that are not entirely correlated to perceived online news credibility. In income 23 groups depict significant t-test scores that show the differences between lower and higher income levels and if the gap between income levels decreases the p value increases. Education groups of high school with bachelor and graduate degree are significant but the group of bachelor degree and graduate is not significant.

Hypothesis

There is a positive relationship between perceived credibility of source, message and medium and the perceived credibility of online news among Egyptian youth.

Correlation between independent variables: source, medium and message credibility vs. dependent variable: perceived credibility of online political news[15]

Table 14: Online News Credibility, Source, Medium and Content Credibility Mean

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Online news credibility	3.7224	1.05989	470
Source credibility	3.4733	.99682	470
Medium credibility	3.5767	.76429	470
Content credibility	3.0777	1.18192	470

Table 15: Online News Credibility, Source, Medium and Content Correlation

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[15] Perceived credibility of online political news is realized via calculating the summated average mean score of Gaziano and McGrath (1987) 12 credibility statements at Likert 5 point scale. Correlation (Bivariate), t-test and One Way ANOVA are conducted against independent variables summated mean scores then Linear multiple regression analysis is conducted to answer research questions and support hypothesis.
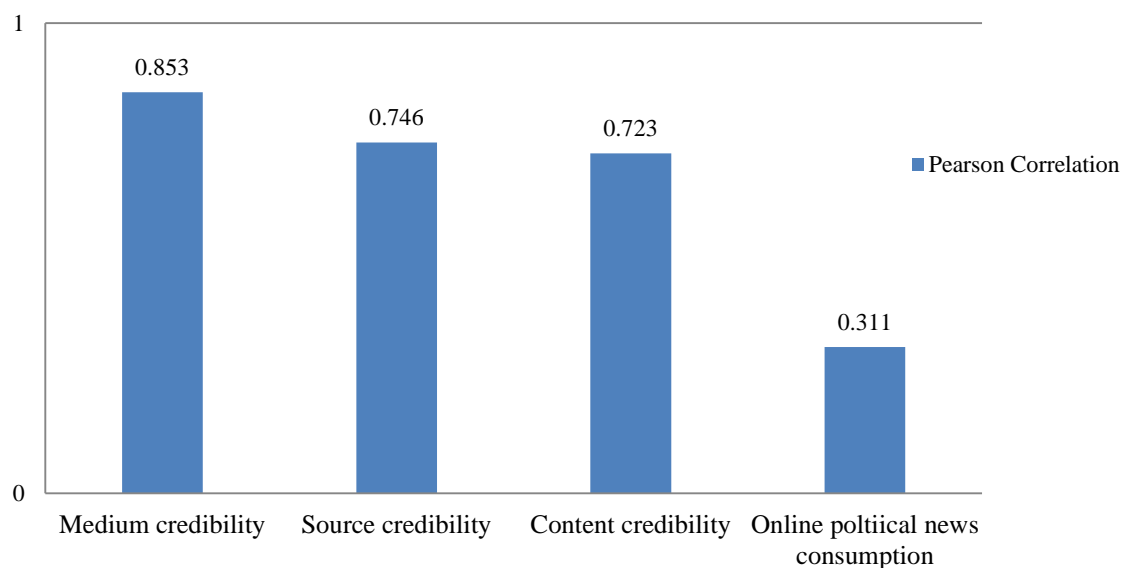
		Online news credibility	Source credibility	Medium credibility	Content credibility
Online news credibility	Pearson Correlation	1	.746	.853	.723
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	470	470	470	470

The correlation between the perceived source, medium and message credibility and the perceived credibility of online political news is statistically significant at their $p = 0.000$. The correlations signify a positive correlation. Regarding the strength of correlation, the three independent variables show a strong correlation with perceived online political news. The strongest positive correlation comes from medium credibility 0.853 followed by source credibility 0.746 and finally message/content credibility 0.723. The conducted Pearson (Bivariate) correlation depicts a statistically significant positive and strong correlation between perceived credibility of medium, source and message and online political news perceived credibility. The perceived medium credibility scores the highest in terms of strength of correlation with the dependent variable. It is also evident in the descriptive statistics table 6 above that the summated mean score of online political news (dependent variable) = 3.72 and the closest is medium credibility mean = 3.57 followed by source credibility mean = 3.47 then content/message credibility mean = 3.07. It is important to note that the lowest mean score recorded was in the message/content credibility variables, Does/not respect people's privacy mean = 2.42. Therefore, respondents' strongly think that online political news content invades people's privacy and that has a negative effect on their perception about credibility of online political news in general. Moreover, this low mean = 2.42 has brought down the entire summated mean of content credibility to reach mean = 3.07 and become lowest among the two other independent variables; medium credibility mean =

3.57 and source credibility mean = 3.47[16]. Finally, there is a positive relationship between perceived credibility of source, message and medium and the perceived credibility of online news among Egyptian youth. Additionally, the perceived credibility of the medium which is the internet has the strongest positive influence on the perception of credibility of online political news.

RQ 2: What is the variable that has the strongest influence on perceived credibility of online political news?

Graph 8: Medium, Source, Content and Online Political News Consumption Correlation

Perceived medium credibility has the strongest correlation and online political news consumption has the weakest correlation with online political news credibility. Perceived credibility of medium which is the Internet has the strongest factor in determining the credibility of online political news. It worthy to mention that also perceived source credibility and content credibility have high correlations and significantly influence the perception of online political news credibility among Egyptian youth.

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[16] The lowest reached mean score in medium credibility is subjective/objective = 2.80 and source credibility is trustworthy/not trustworthy = 3.27

Supplementary Statistics

Linear multiple regression analysis is conducted to find out the degree of influence independent variables have on the dependent variable. The independent variables selected in this analysis are; perceived medium credibility, content credibility, source credibility and online political news consumption. The linear multiple regression is done through 'Enter' method and here below in tables 13, 14 and 15 are the results;

Table 16: 'Enter Method' Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.880	.774	.772	.50568

The regression depicts a high adjusted R square = 0.772 hence the regression analysis is accepted and has a strong predicative power. In other words, the selected independent variables; medium credibility, source credibility, content credibility and online political news consumption have a strong effect on perceived credibility of online political news i.e. 77% the total variability of dependent variable can be explained by these selected independent variables.

Table 17: 'Enter Method' ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	407.956	4	101.989	398.838	.000
	Residual	118.908	465	.256		
	Total	526.863	469			

The next step of linear regression analysis is to check the significance of ANOVA, $p = 0.000$ there is a statistical significance between variables then the regression assumption is accepted. Therefore, further analysis can be applied to determine Coefficients per independent variable as well as their p values.

Table 18: 'Enter Method' Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.311	.115		-2.710	.007
	source credibility	.072	.042	.068	1.720	.086
	Medium credibility	.862	.050	.622	17.193	.000
	Content credibility	.263	.034	.293	7.627	.000
	On average, how much time do you spend online per day browsing online political news? (Minutes)	-.004	.002	-.060	-2.203	.028

When using the 'Enter' method table 15 reveals coefficients and p value of all independent variables. It is clear that all independent variables have significant p values except for source credibility = 0.086. This low significance is due to the fact that other independent variables particularly medium credibility and content credibility have high t values as well as coefficients in this regression analysis so there is nothing much left for source credibility to regress over the dependent variable, online political news credibility. The researcher ran the regression analysis again using 'Stepwise' method where independent variables are entered according to their statistical contribution in interpreting the variance of the dependent variable. The 'Stepwise' method eliminates the high correlation predictors have with the dependent variable as well as among each other. Particularly among medium credibility and

content credibility which results in decreasing the p value of source credibility as there is not much left to explain for it regarding variations in the dependent variable.

Finally, using linear multiple regression has added a new layer of analysis to this study hence it revealed the direct and strong dominance medium credibility has not only on Egyptian youth perception of online political news credibility but also on their perception of online source as well as content/message credibility and the former to a greater extend.

VII. DISCUSSION

This study was designed based on support from the diffusion of innovation theory along with obtained insightful understanding from cognitive dissonance and schema theory. The constructed theoretical framework paved the way to examine perceived credibility of online political news among Egyptian youth as well as determine the factors that influence this perception. Moreover, the study highlighted the adopted cognitive route of credibility youth walk through to reach the conclusion of whether or not a piece of online political news is credible. There is a mental checklist through which Egyptian youth pass the online political news content. This checklist resembles the cognitive route and mental catalog of both cognitive dissonance and schema theory. For example, examining the credibility of sources, youth ask themselves various questions related to the credibility of sources. This is followed by a careful examination of political news content and quality of production of images and/or videos attached. The aggregate answers to this mental checklist either qualify or disqualify online political news to be perceived as credible. The diffusion of innovations theory highlighted the role of the use of technology i.e. Internet as a medium for online political news. It was evident in the high correlation (r=0.85) conducted between perceived online news credibility and medium credibility, which was the highest among all examined independent variables. Additionally, the diffusion of innovations five stages for adoption, namely awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption, guided the discussion during focus groups in the qualitative stage. Hence, respondents articulated the different stages they go through, most importantly the evaluation stage, when browsing online political news to finally adopt and label it as credible. Youth are the first and foremost users of the Internet in Egypt and as described by the diffusion of innovations theory, they are innovators who become new media ambassadors and most knowledgeable about this new media technology.

In Egypt the Internet significantly empowered youth and has given them freedom of speech, confidence, as well as courage, and that forever changed the face of the Egyptian society. Evidently, mass upheavals in 2011 and 2013 were predominately fueled by youth utilizing the power of the Internet. The Internet was the gateway to politics for youth, but now in 2015 politics is becoming less popular. Egyptian youth have spent more than three years in an intensive political discourse online until they got saturated. Today, the perceived credibility of online political news is on the verge of decline. As presented in previous sections of this thesis; literature review, qualitative and quantitative analysis, online news credibility is facing some issues. There are myriad reasons that can be associated to this credibility decline for instance; lack of control over uploaded news content, technological advancement and accessibility to fabricated news, fast-pace reporting that leaves minimal time for verification etc. At the same time Internet users have become more skeptical and cynical about online content in general and political news in specific. So they constantly assess credibility of content online and run their very own validity checks using cross sectional analysis from different news links. Quantitative results highlighted this issue, as in Gaziano's twelve credibility statements respondents did not feel strongly about any of the credibility factors of online political news except currency, i.e. up-to date, timely and current.

Having said that, Internet users, mainly youth, became more aware of credibility standards and are technically equipped to both identify fabricated news and also fabricate news themselves. So it is a double-edged sword, being able to technically detect fabrication gives you the know-how to fabricate content yourself. Youth are highly aware of that hence the mean score among perceived online political news credibility of content was the lowest mean = 3.077. There is a clear trust issue related to content/ message itself of online political news, unlike the perceived credibility of medium mean = 3.57 and source mean = 3.47. It is

worthy to mention that in the qualitative-exploratory phase of the research, respondents revealed that one of the main reasons why they distrust content of online political news is because it is user-generated content. So the perceived source credibility is directly related to content credibility. In other words, the source of online political news that create the content is youth who are also the consumers of this content themselves. The lack of perceived credibility of content of online political news is a reflection of the lack of perceived credibility of the source i.e. sharer of news. Hence, more than 60% of the sample check their Facebook accounts when they are seeking online political news. So basically the political news that pops up on their Facebook news feeds was either being shared by their friends and/or online news Facebook pages that they follow.

This study confirmed previous studies, mainly that there is a positive influence of perceived credibility of medium, source and content on the general perception of credibility of online political news, as well as online political news consumption. The strongest factor of influence is the medium, Internet, (r=0.85) which indicates that the target segment values the Internet as a communication vehicle for political news. The sheer presence of political news in the Internet adds to its credibility because youth are aware that more alternatives are available online, unlike television or newspapers where news items pass through many gatekeepers before reaching the audience. The problem today is that due to clutter credible news is buried among piles of false information and fabricated news stories. Perceived source (r=0.74) and content (r=0.72) credibility also have a direct correlation with the dependent variable but not as strong as the Internet. Online political news consumption was also examined and a correlation was indicated (r=0.3) yet at lower extent. As for demographical characteristics of the sample, age and gender were excluded from the analysis due their high *p* values. Income and education depict significant correlation through one way ANOVA but

when the researcher delves into *t*-tests, results show that not all groups are significant. Only Income groups that are far from each other represent a significant difference but when the groups become adjacent their *p* values automatically increases. As a result, there is a significant difference only between lower and higher income level groups with regards to their perceptions about online political news credibility. Education group between bachelor degree and graduate degree doesn't have a significant *p* value. However, high school groups between bachelor degree and graduate degree represent significance. These variations within levels' of income and education create opportunities for researchers to investigate how different groups have different perceptions of online political news credibility.

Admittedly, there are credibility challenges online that media practitioners as well as online users themselves face nowadays and will continue to face in the future. As youth moved away from traditional mass media and all their media exposure patterns were directed online and that led traditional mass media to follow youth online by presenting online versions of their content i.e. online newspapers. According to research results, online newspapers are somehow popular among the Egyptian sample as they are searching for online political news, 32.8% chose online newspapers as their first choice when they are browsing for online political news. There are many successful examples of online newspapers that enjoy high readership i.e. Al- Youm Al-Sabe'a, it exemplifies an optimum blend between traditional and digital news media. Due to the success of media convergence numerous online news sources emerged that claim credibility. In addition, the online operated news sources no longer abide by journalistic standards and ethics of reporting simply because there is no time for validation. Online news world is at a click of a button and competition has never been more aggressive with the unlimited number of URLs available on the Internet.

Additionally, the unprecedented freedom of speech and media accessibility have in fact decreased credibility of online political new.

Ultimately, this thesis has contributed to the body of knowledge of a crucial media topic yet still needs further studies to help understand and predict the future of online political news credibility. Among the many required areas of research, it is important to investigate the credibility of new trends in online news reporting i.e. citizen journalism via social media and find out if this trend in news reporting influences the credibility of online news. The future of online news media is being led by consumer generated content that have become powerful topic in media effects. Social media is people powered media and that is the reason why social media is at center of the scene today for both social as well as political news. Additionally, as this research found out there is a significant difference between lower and higher income groups with respect to perceived online political news credibility, more investigations are required to examine this difference.

VIII. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The best effort was done to create a comprehensive and scientific study on the perception of credibility of online political news among youth. Nonetheless, due to several limitations this study may not be fully representative of the Egyptian youth segment. Here below are some of those limitations:

The field work of this research is based on a non-probability quota sample, which means that the results cannot be generalized due to its low external validity. The researcher was constricted with limited time and resources from using a probability sample selection technique where demographical data of the entire population is required.

The Egyptian youth sample is selected from the Capital of Egypt, Cairo, excluding the country's other governorates, due to researcher's limited time as well as financial resources.

The review of literature is predominantly reliant on international academic sources due to the few number of relevant Egyptian academic sources.

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1. **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

Questions	Objectives
Introduction	**5 Minutes**
• Moderator self-Introduction • Explain purpose of the research and the focus group	Introduction
Section 1: Warm up, group introduction and online media habits exploration	**15-20 Minutes**

1.   Let's start by getting to know each other. Could you tell me your name and a little about yourself and family?
 	
2.   What do you normally do in your typical day? What else? Where do you go?
 	
3.   What do you normally do in the weekend? And how is it different from weekday?
 	
4.   What about your interaction with media?
 	
  a. When do you watch TV? What do you usually enjoy watching on TV? What else? Which channels do you enjoy watching most? Why?
 	
  b. What about online media? When do you usually logon? And from which devices do you usually logon: mobile, laptop or desktop? And from where do you usually get online: home, university, club etc.
 	
  c. When you are online what are the first websites you logon to? What else? Why? What exactly are in these sites that attract your attention?
 	
  d. For how long do you usually stay online per session?
 	
  e. If we need to complete this sentence to understand why we access online media, your answer will be, 'I mainly access online media to……….'
	Warm up and online media habits understanding

Section 2: Exploring Credibility of online political news	40-45 Minutes

Now we are going to specifically talk about online political news:
 	
1. What are all the thoughts and ideas that come to your mind when I mention online political news? What else? Anything else?
 	
2. Please describe to me your very own online session when you are in search of political news, what else? Probe on ranking the accessed websites.
 	
3. Why do you particularly access your mentioned sites? Anything else?
 	
4. Now I am going to say a word and I want you to tell me what the first thing that comes to your mind 'online news credibility.' Probe on to gather all thoughts
 	
5. From all your mentioned thoughts about online news credibility lets discuss your evaluation of online political news based each thought
 	
6. During you online search of political news please describe to me your thinking process to accept or reject a new story. Please explain using a real life example when you actually rejected a piece of news thinking that it was fabricated. What else?
 	
7. Let's imagine ourselves now as online media owners and we need to upgrade the credibility of online political news, what will be the first thing we do? Why? What about the second and third?
 	
8. Now let's give ratings from a scale one to ten for the following criteria based on our experiences so far with online political news;
 	
    a. The Internet as a news medium is it, accurate? Dynamic? Care about audiences' needs & interests? Close-minded? Irresponsible? Objective?
 	
    b. Online news reporters are they, experts? Trustworthy? Intellectual?
 	
    c. Political news stories online are they, fair? Respect people's privacy? Well presented? Can be trusted?
 	
    MODERATOR WRAP UP AND THANK RESPONDENTS
	Understanding credibility perceptions of online political news

XI. APPENDIX B

2. QUESTIONNAIRE

Part One: Introduction and online news consumption habits

My name is Dalia ElAbd; I am journalism and mass communication master degree student at the American University in Cairo. I am carrying out this survey as part of my thesis to investigate online media habits, and would appreciate your valuable input. Filling the questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes.

1. How often do you log on the Internet?

a. Once every week	b. Once every six days	c. Once every five days	d. Once every four days
e. Once every three days	f. Once every two days	g. Once a day	h. Twice a day
i. Three times a day	j. Four times a day	k. Five times a day	l. I'm always online

2. On average, how much time do you spend online per day?

……………………………………………………………...

3. From where do you most frequently log on the Internet?

a. At home	b. At school/university	c. At work	d. Club
e. Everywhere on my mobile	f. Other/specify …	g. Other/specify …	

4. Please rank from 1 to 5 the top 5 sites you frequently visit online (1 is the most frequent)

Facebook	
Twitter	
YouTube	
Instagram	
Google	
Yahoo	
Blogs you follow	
Other/specify…	
Other/specify…	
Other/specify…	

5. Please rank from 1 to 5 the top 5 sites you frequently visit to access online political news (1 is the most frequent)

Facebook	
Twitter	
YouTube	
Instagram	
Google	
Yahoo	
Blogs you follow	
Online newspapers	
Online TV news channels	
Other/specify…	
Other/specify…	
Other/specify…	

6. On average, how much time you spend per day browsing online political news?

…………………………………………………………………………..

Part Two: Credibility of online news

7. On the scale below, please mark how far you agree or disagree with the following statements

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I think that online political news is trustworthy					
b. I think that online political news is current					
c. I think that online political news is biased					
d. I think that online political news is fair					
e. I think that online political news reports the whole story					
f. I think that online political news is objective					

g. I think that online political news is dishonest					
h. I think that online political news is up-to-date					
i. I think that online political news is believable					
j. I think that online political news is balanced					
k. I think that online political news is accurate					
l. I think that online political news is timely					
m. I think that the more 'shares' a political news item has online the more credible it is					
n. I think that the more 'likes' a political news item has online the more credible it is					

Part Three: Credibility of online news source, medium and message

8. Please think about online political news **sources** and on the scale below please indicate how far you evaluate them based on the following criteria

	1	2	3	4	5	
Amateur	1	2	3	4	5	Expert
Unintelligent	1	2	3	4	5	Intelligent
Not Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	Trustworthy

9. Please think about the Internet as a **medium** for political news and on the scale below please indicate how far you evaluate it based on the following criteria

Inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	Accurate
Not Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	Trustworthy
Irresponsible	1	2	3	4	5	Responsible
Subjective	1	2	3	4	5	Objective
Does not care about audiences' needs & interests	1	2	3	4	5	Cares about audiences' needs and interests
Static	1	2	3	4	5	Dynamic
Close minded	1	2	3	4	5	Open minded

10. Please think about the **content** of political news items uploaded online and on the scale below please indicate how far you evaluate them based on the following criteria

Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	Fair
Does not respect people's privacy	1	2	3	4	5	Respect people's privacy
Cannot be trusted	1	2	3	4	5	Can be trusted
Inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	Accurate

Part Four: Demographics

11. Please provide information about yourself by marking next to each item that describes you best
    a. How old are you?
       …………………………..

    b. What is your level of education?

High school	Undergraduate Degree	Graduate Degree	Other/Specify …

    c. If you are an undergraduate or have a university degree, what is the field of your study?

Science	Engineering	Business	Law	Literature	Music	Medicine
Politics	Mass Media	Sociology	Psychology	Computer	Fine Arts	Other/specify……..

d. Where do you live in Cairo?

   …………………………………………………………….…

e. Approximately what is the average income of your household in EGP per month?

Less than 2,000	2,000-3000	3,001-4,000	4,001-5,000	5,001-6,000
	6,001-7,000	7,001-8,000	8,001-9,000	9,001-10,000
	10,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,001-25,000	25,001-30,000
	30,001-35,000	35,001-40,000	40,001-45,000	More than 45,001

f. What is your gender?

Male	Female

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

استبيان

الجزء الأول مقدمة وعادات الاستهلاك الاخبارية على الانترنت

انا اسمى داليا العبد طالبة في الجامعة الأمريكية في القاهرة قسم صحافة و إعلام. هذا الاستبيان جزء من رسالة الماجستير للتحقيق في عادات وسائل الاعلام على الانترنت. ملء الاستبيان سوف يأخذ حوالي 10 دقائق.

1. كم مرة غالبا ما تقوم بالدخول على شبكة الإنترنت؟

مرة كل أربع أيام	مرة كل خمسة	مرة كل ستة أيام	مرة فى الأسبوع
مرتين في اليوم	مرة واحدة فى اليوم	مرة كل يومين	مرة كل ثلاث أيام
أنا دائما على الانترنت	خمس مرات في اليوم	أربع مرات في اليوم	ثلاث مرات في اليوم

2. في المتوسط كم من الوقت تقضي على الإنترنت في اليوم الواحد؟

....

3. في أغلب الأحيان من أين تدخل على شبكة الإنترنت؟

فى النادى	في مكان العمل	في المدرسة / الجامعة	في المنزل
أخرى/حدد.......	أخرى/حدد.......	أخرى/حدد.......	في كل مكان على موبايلي

4. أرجو ترتيب من 1 الى 5 المواقع التى تقوم بزيارتها بشكل متكرر على الانترنت (1 هو الأكثر فى عدد المرات)

	الفيسبوك
	تويتر.
	يوتيوب
	إينستاجرام
	جوجل
	ياهو
	المدونات التى تتبعها
	أخرى/حدد.......
	أخرى/حدد.......
	أخرى/حدد.......

5. أرجو ترتيب من 1 الى 5 أعلى 5 المواقع تقوم بزيارتها بشكل متكرر للوصول إلى الأخبار السياسية عبر الإنترنت (1 هو الأكثر فى عدد المرات)

	الفيسبوك
	تويتر.
	يوتيوب
	إينستاجرام
	جوجل

ياهو	
المدونات التى تتبعها	
الصحف الكترونية على الانترنت	
القنوات الإخبارية على الانترنت	
أخرى/حدد.......	
أخرى/حدد.......	
أخرى/حدد.......	

6. في المتوسط كم من الوقت تقضيه في اليوم الواحد في تصفح الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت؟

....

الجزء الثاني مصداقية الأخبار على الإنترنت

7. أرجو ضع علامة لتبدى الى اى مدى توافق أو لا توافق على العبارات التالية

أوافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة	العبارات
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت هى جديرة بالثقة
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت تغطى الخبر فى حين حدوثه
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار منحازة
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار عادلة
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت تغطى الحدث بأكمله
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار موضوعية
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار غير أمينه
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار حديثة
					أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار ممكن تصديقها

						أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار متوازنة
						أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار دقيقة
						أعتقد أن الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت أخبار تعرض فى حينها
						أعتقد ان كلما كثرت عدد ال "شار""share" للخبر السياسى على الانترنت كلما زادت مصداقية هذا الخبر
						أعتقد ان كلما كثرت عدد ال "الايك" "like"للخبر السياسى على الانترنت كلما زادت مصداقية هذا الخبر

الجزء الثالث مصداقية الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت المصدر / الوسيلة / المحتوى

8. يرجى التفكير فى **مصادر** الأخبار السياسية على الانترنت و يرجى الإشارة إلى أي مدى تقيمها على أساس المعايير التالية

هاو	1	2	3	4	5	خبير
غير ذكي	1	2	3	4	5	ذكي
غير جدير بالثقة	1	2	3	4	5	جدير بالثقة

9. يرجى التفكير فى الانترنت **كوسيلة** للأخبار السياسية و يرجى الإشارة إلى أي مدى تقيمها على أساس المعايير التالية

غير دقيق	1	2	3	4	5	دقيق
غير جدير بالثقة	1	2	3	4	5	جدير بالثقة
غير مسئول	1	2	3	4	5	مسؤول
غير موضوعي	1	2	3	4	5	موضوعى
لا يهتم باحتياجات ومصالح الجماهير	1	2	3	4	5	يهتم باحتياجات ومصالح الجماهير
غير متحرك	1	2	3	4	5	متحرك
منغلق	1	2	3	4	5	منفتح

10. يرجى التفكير في **محتوى** الأخبار السياسية على شبكة الإنترنت و يرجى الإشارة إلى أي مدى تقيمها على أساس المعايير التالية

عادل	5	4	3	2	1	غير عادل
احترام خصوصية الناس	5	4	3	2	1	لا يحترم خصوصية الناس
يمكن الوثوق بها	5	4	3	2	1	لايمكن الوثوق بها
دقيق	5	4	3	2	1	غير دقيق

الجزء الرابع الخصائص الديموغرافية

11. كم عمرك؟ ؟...............................

12. ما هو مستوى التعليم الذي تلقيته أو تتلقاه حاليا؟

مدرسة ثانوية	شهادة جامعية	دراسات عليا	أخرى/حدد.......

13. إذا كنت طالب جامعي أو لديك شهادة جامعيه ما هو مجال دراستك؟

علوم	هندسة	تجارة	حقوق	آداب	فنون جميله	طب
أخرى/حدد......	أعلام	علم اجتماع	علم نفس	علوم الحاسب الآلي	موسيقى	علوم سياسية

14. ارجو تحديد محل الإقامة في القاهرة؟

....

15. تقريبا ما هو متوسط دخل أسرتك بالجنيه المصرى فى الشهر؟

6,000-5,001	5,000-4,001	4,000-3,001	3,000-2,000	أقل من2,000
10,000-9,001	9,000-8,001	8,000-7,001	7,000-6,001	
30,000-25,001	25,000-20,001	20,000-15,001	15,000-10,001	
أكثر من 45,001	45,000-40,001	40,000-35,001	35,000-30,001	

16. أرجو تحديد الجنس

ذكر	انثى

شكرا جزيلا على مشاركتكم