

## INTERNET RADIO IN EGYPT

BADR

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LEAD-IN: Internet radio is an emerging trend in Egypt. Some radio platforms managed to succeed but others were shut down because of funding problems.

*(Music fade-in: Home Style Mandolin at 0.00 and fades-out at 0.08)*

*Voices of different people saying: "Internet radio, internet radio station, online radio station, internet radio station." (:04)*

Whether you call it internet radio or online radio, it doesn't really make a difference.

*(Music fade-in: Home Style Mandolin at 0.17)*

Online radio is an emerging media platform in Egypt that not many people know about.

*(Music fade-out: Home Style Mandolin at 0.22)*

*Sound clips of different people saying: "Mmmmm, what is internet radio", "No, I know nothing about it, no", "I only know the radio, the normal radio through FM", "Yes, I know what internet radios are and example is Nos El Kobaya", "Are you talking about FM radio?" (:27)*

A great amount of online radios have come recently but the first online radio can be traced back to 2007 with radio Horytna, translated into "Our Freedom".

*(Music fade-in: Horytna Jingle by Lefty-M at 0.48 and fades-out at 0.56)*

Horytna is a cultural, social and news radio that is concerned with human rights, democracy and citizenship. Bearing in mind the difficulty of getting a frequency radio in Egypt due to the high prices of getting one and due to licenses issues, the idea of having an online radio came to mind. After the success of Horytna, other online radios appeared on the scene.

*(Sound effect fade-in: FM Flip at 01.16 and fades-out at 01.22)*

*(Music-fade in: Solo Trumpet. Music is played when the word "Under" is said and fades-out after the word "Of")*

With Sotkom in 2008. Sound of Sakia, Radio E7na, Radioand Mahatet Masr in 2009, all under the slogan of "The Voice of The Youth". At that time up till 2010, online radios were not so popular. Online radios in Egypt started to become popular in 2011.

*(Music fade-in: Mellow Plagasul Guitars at 01.40)*

*AKRAM: "Internet radio started to be more popular in the last period, specifically in Egypt after the revolution." (:07)*

That was Akram Kassem, the Marketing and Production Manager at Sound of Sakia Online Radio.

*AKRAM: "It's the first cultural and art online radio target and supporting the underground scene and independent artists." (:07)*

*(Music fade-out: Mellow Plagasul Guitars at 02.04)*

Akram explains that the revolution has positively affected the Sound of Sakia project.

*AKRAM: "We got a very strong feedback and more attention to the project when the revolution happened in Egypt. Before that the project was operating but the traffic increased dramatically after the revolution immediately." (:13)*

*(Chanting fade-in: Girls and Women Leading the Chants at Tahrir Square Protest at 02:16 and fades-out at 02:21, chanting is played when Akram says "The revolution happened" till the end of the sound bite)*

*(Music fade-in: Ezai by Mohamed Mounir at 02:22)*

*MOHAMED: "Radio El Tahrir started at the end of January. The idea came to me once the revolution started." (:07)*

The revolution pushed some people like Mohamed Youssef to open new online radio platforms. Mohamed Youssef is the CEO and President of Ramasside Travel Agency and the founder of Tahrir Radio. He lives in Alexandria but was able to manage the radio with the help of volunteers in Cairo.

*MOAHMED: "So I was asking my friends and colleagues who are on Cairo in Tahrir Square to record some of the demonstrations and to make interviews with the people who were on Tahrir Square during the revolution time." (:15)*

*(Music fade-out: Ezai by Mohamed Mounir at 02.57)*

Here's a part of an interview conducted with a female activist in Tahrir Square.

*(Interview from YouTube fade-in: Interview with Pro-democracy Activist at Tahrir Square at 03.18 and fades-out at 03.25). The activist says that the Ministry of Interior was behind the release of the thugs.*

*MOHAMED: "They were just sending this by email or as a videos on YouTube and then we broadcast those videos and records on our online radio." (:10)*

Mohamed didn't have a studio, he goes on explaining that he wanted something:

*MOHAMED: "New, new in technology that doesn't need studio and doesn't need all the equipments. The very expensive equipments. It was like an idea for me so I wasn't ready to pay for a studio and a building and employees and all of this and I found on the online the solution. Because you know it's very easy on the online to buy a studio program.*

*There are many programs called studio." (:27)*

So the recording materials that they used were:

*MOHAMED: "The Smartphone." (.01)*

But other radio stations would prefer having studios. I went to a studio of an online radio and took a tour around the facility with Mostafa Fathi, the Sound Engineer at Sound of Sakia.

Mostafa described to me some of the equipments available at the studio.

*NATSOUND of me on my way to the studio played when I say " I went" till the word "Sakia"*

*MOSTAFA: "We have hear PC and it is just for having a software that you can edit what you recorded and it's connected via a USB to a mixer and here we have two microphones, they are on two stands. Okay, and they are professional microphones." (:17)*

*NATSOUND of mouse clicks and microphone static under what Mostafa is saying*

The reason for having professional microphones is to guarantee good audio quality when they upload materials on the internet. They also have something called Sonics covering the ceiling, the walls and the doors. Sonics are basically soundproofing materials that eliminate echo and isolate the whole room.

*NATSOUND of another microphone static played when I say "Microphones"*

That's all you need to have to open an online radio.

*(Music fade-in: Dandelion at 05.10)*

*SARA: "The good thing about online radio it's cheaper and it is easy to establish it, it's not that hard as the frequency." (:05)*

Sara Alaa is an A-U-C student who came up with the idea of establishing an online radio at A-U-C.

*SARA: "Nos El Kobaya is an online radio. I worked at Cairo University and they had a very good experience and ideas while AUC had ideas besides resources I had this belief why not to link both like why not to exchange ideas with resources, why not to cooperate and give something more and produce more so I thought the most suitable thing is to establish a radio online without having to travel one hour and a half to reach Cairo University or vice versa." (:25)*

*(Music fade-out: Dandelion at 06.07)*

Nos El Kobaya radio mostly tackles social issues. Here's a portion of a program produced by Nos El Kobaya team in which they talk about Aliaa El Mahdy. The A-U-C student who posted nude pictures of herself on her blog.

*(Nos El Kobaya presenters getting messages from listeners saying what they think of Aliaa's action) (:27)*

*(Music fade-in: Morenita at 06.48)*

Besides interactivity of online radios, Sara speaks about other advantages of this platform.

*SARA: "Online radios are so close to personal channels. Personal channels the good idea of it is that everyone express his creativity or her creativity through their channel. This is the advantage of online radios. You can listen to different content; variety of contents." (:17)*

*AKRAM: "Online radio gives you more space of freedom of expressing yourself, it's much more experimental projects where it gives an opportunity for young youth people to work on these projects. It's more straightforward, short to the point and it has to deliver whatever you wanna as messages you wanna deliver to the listeners in a very short briefed way." (:23)*

Despite the many advantages of online radios, online radios in Egypt are facing some serious challenges.

*SARA: "Usually people listen to radio at their car or at transportation, when they are at the car, transportation, moving from place to another, sitting outside home so outside home is usually there is no internet there so people prefer to listen to no.90 FM rather than listening an opening online radio because they don't have access to it." (:19)*

*(Music fade-out: Morenita at 07.57)*

*(A part of a YouTube video is played: Egypt's Internet Revolution): "In Egypt, the current protests began early last week announced on Facebook." (:04)*

*MOHAMED: "Although they say that the revolution started by Facebook and YouTube and all of this but I think the majority of the people who are working until now in the media, they are not believing one hundred percent on the online." (:15)*

Mohamed elaborates why online radios in Egypt are not gaining attention.

*MOHAMED: "It's not that important in Egypt because of the number of the people who are using the internet. You have a maximum of 18 percent of the Egyptian people who are using the internet so imagine what is the percentage from the 18 percent who are listening to the online radio so if you calculate it, you will find it very little." (:20)*

There are other challenges facing online radios in Egypt. Radio El Tahrir just lasted for a year and a half. Mohamed tells us about his sad story.

*(Music fade-in: A Bird Came Flying by Anne Van Schothorst at 9.09)*

*MOHAMED: "That's very sad but to be honest the reason, main reason was the fund. I was paying for this system and for the hosting around 200/250 US dollars per month. It*

*was okay at the beginning but after one and half year that I pay monthly I pay monthly and I get nothing from this radio not even one pound." (:12)*

*(Music fade-out: A Bird Came Flying by Anne Van Schothorst at 9.38)*

Mohamed finds it ironic that Radio El Tahrir attracted international media rather than Egyptian media.

*(Music fade-in: Candlelight by Jahzzar at 09.44)*

*MOHAMED: "Many international channels contact us, they made interviews with us and they were very welcoming but no one in Egypt gave us any attention or any help or any support. I found for example a popular channel in Italy coming to interview me and help and all of this but no one in Egypt for example asked me how they can help me or support or fund me." (:26)*

*AKRAM: "The investors are not seeing yet how this industry is spreading. Because for them the digital platform and the digital industry is new." (:04)*

Although not many sponsors support online radios, new online radios are still evolving.

*AKRAM: "There is Wasla just opened up couple of months ago and there is also Cairo Capital which was previously called Masr El Gdeida and there is a lot of other online radio stations that are becoming more successful in this region." (:15)*

*(Music fade-out: Candlelight by Jahzzar at 10.52)*

All these radios present different content. Sound of Sakia does not only broadcast musical concerts, it also presents social programs. I attended a recording session of a promo at Sound of Sakia to get an idea of how the recording goes at online radio stations. The process is very simple. They adjust the microphone then open a session on Adobe Audition and click on record.

*(A recording session of a promo is played) (:26)*

So to guarantee the sustainability of those programs and the whole platform, Akram tells us about the effort done to attract sponsors.

*(Music fade-in: Before After by Jahzzar at 11.52)*

*AKRAM: "We're trying to convince people that we actually on your target segment and you should consider having your brands on these radio stations not only on frequency.*

*It's a main role for the digital agencies and the digital advertising agency to push these radio stations and to push these brands to at least go for a try to see if this is on your target segment or not." (:24)*

Despite all the challenges and difficulties online radio platforms in Egypt are facing, they still see the future of online radios in Egypt with an optimistic eye.

*(Music fade-out: Before After by Jahzzar at 12.32)*

*MOHAMED: "I'm sure that the online radio will be number one soon in Egypt and it's very close to us in Greece or in Italy, the online radio there became number one." (:12)*

*SARA: "It will be more accessible and more successful. As a future, we will have more access to the internet. Even governorates at Egypt will have interne." (:06)*

*(Short music fade-in: Make your own melody at 13.56 and fades-out at 13.57)*

Just as any innovation in the emergence phase, online radio platforms are still striving to be on the scene but with the many people turning to the digital world. It is expected that online radio platforms in Egypt will have a promising future.

I would like to give a special thanks to all my interviewees: Akram Kassem, Mohamed Youssef, Mostafa Fathi and Sara Alaa.

Voices of people are taken from YouTube channels of Lockergnome, DLTV and About.

Egypt's Internet Revolution is taken from CBS YouTube channel.

Horytna Jingle by Lefty-M and Ezai by Mohamed Mounir are taken from YouTube.

Chanting is taken from Lorenzkh YouTube channel and Interview with the activist is taken from YouGertTube YouTube channel.

"Home Style Mandolin", FM Flip, "Solo Trumpet", "Mellow Plagasul Guitars", "Make Your Own Melody", "Dandelion" and "Morenita" are taken from freesound.org

"Before After", "Lemonade" and "Candlelight" by Jahzzar as well as "A Bird Came Flying" by Anne Van Schothorst are taken from freemusicarchive.com

Radio program is taken from Nos El Kobaya and "Be Good Be Happy" Promo is taken from Sound of Sakia.

The documentary was presented and produced by Linda Badr, thanks for listening.