CYBERACTIVISM IN A NON- DEMOCRATIC CONTEXT: SOCIAL CAMPAIGNING IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Dedication

Dedicated to

My parents

Mosaed and Badriyh

My first mentors, who inspired and encouraged me.

Thanks for your love, support, and prayers

My wife

Hela

This thesis has been completed

Thanks to your sacrifice, understanding and encouragement,

My brothers and sisters

Who supported and encouraged me during my PhD journey

My son

Faisal

Who never stopped asking: “When will you finish your studies?”

I can now finally answer:

“I’m finished!”

Abstract

There has been a growing literature concerning the role of online technologies in fostering collective action in democratic countries (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012, 2013; Bimber et al., 2005). However, studies in non-democratic settings have tended to focus on high profile but often relatively short-term mobilisations. Longer-term online activism and campaigns outside democratic settings have remained relatively under-researched and difficult to analyse. This thesis, therefore, seeks to examine some of the existing assumptions around collective action, derived largely from experiences in democratic countries, by focusing on a country with no tradition of collective activism. It draws on Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) framework of connective action logic, to analyse two case studies from Saudi Arabia:the Women's Right to Drive Campaign (October 26th campaign), and the Teachers' Rights campaign.

In particular, this study examines the role of the Internet in three areas: (a) mobilising support for campaigns; (b) shaping the organisational structure of collective action; and (c) challenging the systemic environment. In order to address these issues, the thesis draws on two types of data: firstly, extensive interviews with campaigners and international journalists and secondly, social network analysis.

Final results indicate that Internet technologies have help to create a new space, allowing social campaigners to express themselves without significant disruption and to achieve some of their goals, although the social and political context plays an equally important role in shaping campaigns as technology does. It has also proved a useful tool for countering media hostility and negative coverage. The Internet did not affect the organisational structure of either of these campaigns, which still followed a hierarchal structure even though some started as 'connective action'.

1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore the increasing role that Internet technology is playing in social activism in Saudi Arabia, which in terms of its political system, is considered to be a non-democratic (ND henceforth) nation. More specifically, it focuses on examining the Internet's role in three principal areas: mobilising popular support for campaigns; shaping the organisational structure of collective action and the reshaping of the systemic political environment.

This introductory chapter maps out the key areas and concerns dealt with in this thesis, situating them within the overall framework of this study. The chapter begins by describing the rationale for, and the significance of, the research. It will then present the research aims and the specific questions which it seeks to address, indicating how these fit within the theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis. Finally, it concludes by outlining the research design and methodology used in this study.

1.1. Rationale for the Study

In 1999, at the start of my undergraduate studies at Imam Mohammad bin Saud Islamic University, I remember reading in the newspaper that the Internet had become available for public use in Saudi Arabia. I went to one of the few Internet cafés in the city. I was asked to provide a copy of my national identity card, and to fill in a form stating my purpose for using the Internet. I had come, not simply to explore this new technology, but to visit one particular discussion forum. I was amazed by the ease with which people engaged in online discussions and the subjects they chatted about; even more so by the numbers of readers for whatever was posted. Anonymous individuals were talking freely about different issues, including government ministers and the political system; all topics that I had never seen in the Saudi press.

I started to notice that Saudi citizens were using the Internet for discussion to a greater extent than for any other purpose. Discussion forums started to boom throughout the country (Sait et al., 2007; Al Nashmi *et al.,* 2010). People paid to subscribe to some, whilst in others, there was a black market in usernames. Forums covered diverse issues, from politics to hobbies.

The sudden growth of a social phenomenon of this kind raises many different questions, but research has tended to focus on the Internet as a media platform, rather than as a communication tool. In Saudi Arabia in particular, scholars were interested in the emergence of online newspapers and how news organisations would adapt to these new technologies (Alaskar & Alhmoud, 2002; AlShehri & Gunter 2002; Alzaid 2009), perhaps due to the sensitivity of this subject with regards to freedom of expression. Outside the Kingdom itself, Internet scholars with an academic interest in Saudi Arabia, tended to focus on political oppositions like Fandy (1999) and Alahmed (2014).

As an academic and a journalist therefore, I felt that there was a knowledge gap which concerned our understanding of the impact that new communication technologies might have on a society that had existed for a long period of time with a restricted public sphere and a closely controlled media system. In particular, there was a need to explore how the Internet might influence the emergence and growth of social activism in a ‘closed society’, as Saudi Arabia is commonly referred to. This was the original idea which inspired the research for this thesis.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Unsurprisingly, in the pre-Internet era, a great deal of the research on social movements and campaigns was concentrated in democratic countries. This was perhaps only to be expected given that this type of activism had originated in that context as part of more general concerns relating to the freedom of speech and political participation since the 1960s onwards (Diani, 1992). In contrast, those studies conducted in the ND context had tended to focus on much larger scale campaigns, in particular, radical change movements such as the Iranian Revolution in 1979 (Mowlana, 1979; Kurzman, 1996).

When researchers started to look at the role being played by the Internet, they also initially focused on campaigns in the democratic context, most notably anti-globalisation and anti-war movements (Van Aelst & Walgraave, 2004; Clark & Themudo, 2006; Stein, 2009; Della Porta & Mosca, 2005), as well as the two contrasting scales of local and global campaigns (Pickerill, 2001; McFarlane, 2006; Borge-Holthoefer *et al.*, 2011; Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2013; Gillan & Pickerill, 2008). The focus on ND countries has again tended to concentrate on large-scale, dramatic activism, including Iran’s Green Revolution during 2009 and the events of the Arab Spring in 2011 (Burns & Eltham 2009; Eltantawy & Wiest 2011; Khamis & Vaughn 2011; Starbird & Palen 2012). However, there is also a growing body of literature about using the Internet as a space and a tool in ND countries, especially following the Green

Revolution in Iran, the Arab Spring and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, (see for example Howard *et al*., 2011; Cannistraro, 2011; Al-Rawi, 2014; Ahy, 2014; Bruns *et al*., 2014; Anderson, 2011; Goldstein, 2007; Aday *et al*., 2010; Wojcieszak & Smith, 2014).

Perhaps inevitably, the vast majority of research on ND countries focused on the use of the Internet for instigating major political change, studying Internet campaigns that were specifically aimed at challenging and/or changing existing political systems. It is noticeable that researchers tended to ignore Internet use by activists working on smaller-scale, social justice campaigns. These were not aimed at overthrowing political regimes but rather at groups wishing to claim the rights which they believed were due to them as citizens, within the existing political system, by making use of the Internet and the degree of freedom which it provided.

Studies in this field have tended to ignore this practice in ND countries, as by definition, it cannot exist in such political systems. Activism, or collective action, may not be part of political participation in ND countries, as it is in democratic countries where such activity is legal and part of the political deliberation. In some cases, this may have been the result of certain preconceived ideas held by researchers from democratic countries, and the sensitivity of the subject for the researchers from ND countries. For example, Kalathil and Boas (2003), ignore the use of the Internet by citizens of the Emirates and Saudi Arabia for political discussions. Instead, they repeat the usual assumptions about the governments of those states, their vast wealth and the role of tradition and religion in social culture. Ironically, however, they do mention the use of cassettes by certain groups to deliver political material in 2003, whilst at the same time, clearly stating, "There has been no use of the Internet for political participation" (Kalathil & Boas, 2003:117). They appear to have been totally unaware of the fact that online forums for political participation were already flourishing at that time, the best example being www.alsaha.com, which started in 1997, even before the Internet was officially launched in Saudi Arabia. The scholars who studied Alsaha.com at that time, for example, Thomas (2003) and Weimann (2004), only focused on the possibilities of cyber-terrorism. Moreover, the study by Kalathil and Boas (2003), like some others, was based only on data from international organisations and news articles, as their list of references demonstrates. This also highlights some of the methodological difficulties for researchers, especially non-Arabic speaking western researchers, in gathering accurate data. Philip

Howard, who wrote extensively about the Internet and politics with specific reference to Islam and Middle East agreed:

> Politically, the Internet is an important object of inquiry, and many of the existing approaches to such inquiry have been biased by the tendency to be more interested in Islamic fundamentalism than civil society, (2011:33).

In other cases, research has covered cyberactivism in a very superficial way, such as the article by Chaudhry (2014), whose analysis of the hashtag #Women2Drive, aimed to answer the question, "Can Twitter usage promote social progress in Saudi Arabia?" His analysis of data from the hashtag makes it clear that his approach is not methodological and the quotes used are taken only from individuals who post in English (rather than the native Arabic language), to make it easier for the Canadian-based researcher to study this subject. In doing so however, some of the contextual and cultural understanding is lost. Furthermore, the contextual information provided about Saudi Arabia often seems inaccurate or misunderstood in many cases. For example, Chaudhry argues that Saudi Muslim scholars ban women from driving because it, "Requires women to unveil themselves, and this often uncovers certain shameful parts of the body" (2014: 953). Yet this is not the actual *fatwa* originally issued by the clerics (which can be found online). Similarly, he quotes a so-called Saudi psychologist as commenting that, "Women who drive are putting themselves at risk of negatively impacting their ovaries and pelvis" (Chaudhry, 2014:953). This same quote has been repeated on numerous news websites, despite the fact that the 'authoritative source' in question has no qualifications in psychology and is certainly not qualified to give medical opinions on gynaecological matters.

This kind of misunderstanding of activism in Saudi Arabia is not limited to individual researchers only, but can even be found at major Internet research institutions, such as the Berkman Centre for Internet and Society at the University of Harvard. A search for information regarding events or publications about Saudi Arabia on the Berkman website shows that the focus is on filtering systems in Saudi Arabia, religious uses of the Internet in Saudi Arabia or the democratising role of the Internet in ND countries.

Such studies show the inevitable need to research the uses of the Internet beyond the stereotypical assumptions about such contexts in order to understand the role of the Internet in political participation and in social activism in particular. It is true that political participation in Saudi Arabia is very limited and collective actions are restricted in the country, but that does not mean it is not there. According to the work of Schumpeter (1943), the opportunity for people to vote is just one third of democracy, whilst the other two-thirds are about the existence of political rights and freedom of expression, as well as the freedom of association (Schumpeter, 1994).

Hence, this research intends to provide an in-depth study of the online activism from civil society and political participation aspects, as the Internet can provide citizens in such countries with opportunities to participate in online activism where it is often hard or impossible to do so in the offline space.

1.3. Research Objectives and Questions

The research questions for this study arose from reviewing the literature on activism and on cyberactivism in particular. In a country such as Saudi Arabia, where the freedom of expression is limited and activism is restricted by law, the Internet could potentially have a key role to play in supporting activism within the state. This research therefore, aims to achieve three objectives when studying cyberactivism in Saudi Arabia. These aims are:

- To examine the impact of Internet technologies on social campaigning in a non-democratic context.
- To analyse the development of cyberactivism in Saudi Arabia in terms of issues relating to mobilisation, organisation, communication and relations with the existing political and media systems.
- To establish what the Saudi case can add to our understanding of the notion of cyberactivism and social protest in the digital age.

These overarching issues have been distilled into three areas in particular: (1) The mobilisation of support for campaigns; (2) The shaping of the organisational structure of collective action; (3) The role of the systemic environment for online social justice campaigns.

The first area focuses on the individuals who are the base of activism. Mobilisation of individuals is essential for collective action as it aims to engage members of the public/citizens to participate in the required actions. More specifically, the first research questions focus on mobilisation at the individual level:

What role do Internet tools play in connecting and mobilising activists and how does this contact originate?

Mobilising citizens can then create a network or organisation for communicational and organisational purposes. There are different types of networks and organisations in collective action, and arguably the Internet has influenced the organisational structure of collective action. In this case, the research question aims to discover whether the Internet lends itself to grassroots/participatory self-organising campaigns or not. Specifically, then, the question is:

What sort of models of collective action are facilitated by the Internet?

Clearly, collective action must work, and interact with, and in, different contexts. The systemic environment may influence and be influenced by activism, as the campaigns aim to achieve their goals within these contexts. This being the case, the question here is:

How does Internet campaigning challenge the systemic environment and vice versa?

Therefore, these research questions cover three different levels of activism: the individual; the organisational and the systemic which includes the political, social, and religious environments. Addressing all three levels will help to multi-dimensional view of cyberactivism in Saudi Arabia. The research will answer these questions by studying social campaigns in Saudi Arabia, although it could be argued that these campaigns could also be considered to have a 'political' dimension, in the broader sense of the word. This study, therefore, defines social campaigns as those that aim to demand rights which are considered necessary for full participation in the life of a society. In this case, this does not include full political rights, such as the right to participate in the establishment or administration of a government. This definition is based on the '*Compass-Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*' by Brander *et al.* (2012).

In terms of its key theoretical framework, this study draws inspiration from Bennett and Segerberg's '*Logic of Connective Action*' (2013), a choice which is fully discussed in the following chapter. The LoCA framework which emerged from empirical studies that analysed campaigns from around the globe in different contexts, is the most recent frameworks which tries to understand the collective actions that are driven by digital communication.

1.4. Original Contribution made by this Research

By taking insights from the literature on digital protest and collective action, which has largely focused on democracies, and applying these to a Saudi context, which is considered to be a non-democratic country, this study helps to fill in the previously identified gaps in knowledge. In-depth data collected in the field is used to advance our understanding of the role of the Internet in supporting social cyberactivism in Saudi Arabia. Currently, just a handful of studies (Fandy, 1999; Karolak, 2013; Alahmed, 2014; Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2014; Yuce *et al.*, 2014) have focused on the Saudi context in term of cyberactivism, with little consideration of social activism, and some of these have failed to fully understand the context as a result of methodological shortcomings or cultural barriers, as previously discussed.

The present study thus makes an important contribution in the field of cyberactivism by analysing its growth and development in Saudi Arabia, with particular reference to questions concerning mobilisation, organisation and their relationship with political, social and media systems. In more specific terms, the original contribution of this research can be demonstrated in three main areas: empirical, theoretical and methodological.

Empirically, the research conducted here provides new and original data from a country which has thus far received little serious consideration and indicates that the Internet has created a relatively free virtual public space where active citizens can campaign. The study highlights that Internet-based social activism in Saudi Arabia is involved in a growing number of campaigns, attracting a new generation of individuals who have never previously engaged with activism, but who have found, in the Internet, an alternative space in which to demand their rights. Using the Internet for activism in this ND country has empowered citizens who wish to demand their rights within the current political system.

For Saudi women in particular, the Internet has offered the opportunity of an enhanced presence in a male-dominated community, giving them the space to participate and voice their opinions with the same force as their male counterparts, without disrupting traditions and customs in a country which holds these in high esteem. By using the Internet, campaigners are able to engage with conventional media and influence its coverage of social campaigns. The research indicates that self-censorship and intentionally vague legislation are that main threats facing cyberactivists in Saudi Arabia, rather than government-sponsored, technological restrictions. Moreover, in general terms, the state appears to have partially benefited from the cyberactivism focused on social issues, since this helps to limit activism on the Internet, making it easier for the government to monitor this and respond to it.

The research provides a theoretical contribution to a number of areas of cyberactivism studies and to conceptualising the potential role of the Internet in democratisation. Despite the fact that a number of scholars have claimed that the Internet is responsible for decentralising campaigns (see Chapter Two), this study reveals that citizens need to be socialised by hierarchical, collective action before moving to decentralising campaigns, but in the Saudi context, this socialisation cannot happen without the Internet. The current findings add to a growing body of literature concerning the potential role of the Internet in democratisation and it argues that the Internet has different implications for different ND countries.

Finally, the research also provides insights into the methodological challenges posed by conducting research on activism in a ND context. It illustrates that researching cyberactivism in a ND context requires an in-depth understanding of the context since cyberactivism as a phenomenon cannot be segregated from its social context. Furthermore, this phenomenon is better studied by using interviews as a tool for data collection. Using online content studies only may not provide a full understanding of the phenomenon due to the Internet censorship in these countries (see chapter 5).

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into three main parts.

Part one (Chapters two-four), contextualises this research, discussing the existing literature on cyberactivism in addition to establishing the framework and methodology for the thesis.

Chapter two covers two main issues, beginning with the philosophical basis of the role which technology plays within society, as well as establishing the theoretical framework for the thesis which draws on Bennett and Segerberg's '*Logic of Connective Action*' (2013).

Chapter three focuses more specifically on providing an overview of the Internet's role in ND countries, examining the implications of its uses in the context of activism, mobilisation and organisational structures. It also explores issues relating to contextual and wider, systemic research questions, including how ND governments respond to the Internet.

Chapter four examines the operationalisation of the research, presenting the research methodology and detailing research procedures, including data collection and data analysis methods. It also acknowledges the limitations of the research, highlighting the problems posed by data collection and the sensitivity of researching activism in a ND context.

The second part of the study (Chapters five-eight) focuses on the Saudi Arabian context. Chapter five and six analyse the political, social media and technological environment in Saudi Arabia, and how regulation constructs the systemic environment of activism in the country. These chapters also shed light on the different meanings of activism in the Saudi context, tracing the history of pre-Internet activism and charting the general rise of the Internet and its specific role in cyberactivism, as well as describing attempts by the state to control its political and social influence, including blocking, monitoring and censorship.

Chapters seven and eight present the analysis of two detailed case studies of online social activism in Saudi Arabia. The first of these is the so-called '*October 26th Campaign*' which supports Saudi women's right to drive. Drawing on interviews with activists and journalists, together with analysis of two Twitter hashtags, this chapter shows how technologies are used to mobilise and organise activists and supporters. It also demonstrates how activists can use the Internet to challenge the Saudi authorities. The second case study examines the teachers' rights campaign which started in 2007 and are recognised as one of the first online campaigns conducted in Saudi Arabia. Findings in this chapter are based on interviews conducted in 2013 with core activists in the teachers' campaign as well as analysis of an online discussion forum during the period 2009-2015.

Finally, the third part of the thesis reflects on the research findings and presents the research conclusions. Chapter Nine discusses the key findings of this research in the light of the literature critically examined in the earlier chapters of the thesis. It also summarises the theoretical contribution of the thesis and concludes by recommending areas for future research. Chapter Ten sheds light on the general empirical findings, and theoretical implications of the thesis, and provides recommendations regarding future research.

2. CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUALISING ACTIVISM IN THE INTERNET ERA

2.1. Introduction

Before examining the role of Internet technologies in social campaigning in a non-democratic (ND) context, it is necessary to discuss the relationship between technology and social phenomena in general, as well as to consider the actual role of the Internet in political participation and activism in particular.

Hence, this chapter focuses on three main topics. First, it examines the links between technology and social phenomena and whether it is exogenous or not. It has been argued that technology can influence social phenomena but humans have the power to control this influence. Second, it reviews the relevant literature concerning the role of the Internet in facilitating activism, particularly mobilisation and organisation of activism. More specifically, it argues that the Internet has positively influenced mobilisation since Internet activism can help campaigners to reach wider audiences than was previously possible. Moreover, it can also deepen their levels of engagement with campaigns by more actively involving them. Thirdly, the chapter will conclude by establishing a theoretical framework for this thesis which is inspired by Bennett and Segerberg's 'Logic of Connective Action' (2012;2013). They claim that the Internet and new technologies have created a new logic of collective action which makes it possible to campaign on the basis of shared goals without formal organisations and with little or no co-ordination. Effectively, the means of communication has become the organisation. This conceptual framework will then be used to analyse the role which the Internet plays in activism in the later case study chapters (see Chapters 7 and 8).

2.2. The Internet: Between Technological Determinism and Social Constructivism

Studying social action within a technological environment raises a longstanding philosophical question concerning whether humans are driven and directed by the technology, or whether they themselves control that technology, meaning that it is 'socially constructed' (Misa, 1988). Scholars are broadly divided into two camps regarding this philosophical question and can be categorised as either technological determinists or social constructivists.

In general terms, technological determinists view technology as the main controller or driver of social phenomena (Misa, 1988) and also consider that technology develops separately from social phenomena. They also believe that technology creates social change which is beyond human control (Smith & Marx, 1994; MacKenzie & Wajcman 1985, cited in Misa, 1988; Heilbroner, 1967). It is important to note here that technological determinism cannot be considered to be a single theory; rather it is a range of theories which share a similar philosophical outlook (Williams, 1974, cited in Barnes, 2000). Smith (1994:38), defines technological determinism as, "The belief that social progress is driven by technological innovation, which in turn, follows an 'inevitable' course." McLuhan (1967), famously shared the same view, as reflected in his much-quoted phrase, "The medium is the message." Explaining his view within the framework of the new media technology of the 1960s, he argued:

> The medium, or process, of our time - electric technology - is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate practically every thought, every action, and every institution formerly taken for granted, (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, cited in Larson & Sung, 2009).

Importantly, the technological determinist approach can be said to range from 'Hard' to 'Soft' determinism. Hard determinism argues that social phenomena are simply the result of technology (Bimber, 1990:341). By contrast, soft determinism claims that technology facilitates social change or action (Finnegan, 1988:38). MacKay (1992), gives an example of this when he points out that, "A new device merely opens a door; it does not compel one to enter. Technologies facilitate, they do not determine" (cited in Baillette & Kimble, 2008). Similarly, he notes, "Technology […] shapes the structure of the battle but not every outcome" (Pool, 1983:251). Thus, technology provides the opportunity for social phenomena to be introduced or to occur, but it does not necessarily create the social phenomena themselves.

According to Raymond Williams (1974), social constructivism offers the opposing view to technological determinism (cited in Yearley, 2008). It is an overarching philosophy consisting of different theories which include: Social Construction of Technology (Pinch & Bijker, 1984); Critical Theory of Technology (Feenberg, 1991). Doolittle and Hicks (2003), claim that technology and its effects are not an exogenous agent since technology is created and shaped by human power and is, "Social through and through" (Herrera, 2003:592). It is socially constructed in the same way as the economy or power. The social constructivist approach to technology argues that the success of technology depends on how it is exploited by social groups who can use it to promote their cause. Technological constructivists tend to assume human agency, and not technology, has the upper hand in producing social phenomena. Human action is the context wherein technology can develop and work (Bijker *et al.,* 1993). In short, technology is just another tool used by humans.

Social Construction of Technology (SCOT), shares the same basis as social constructivism but focuses on the social group as a way of analysing and understanding social phenomena and their relationship with technology.

Pinch and Bijker (1984), key theorists of SCOT, outlined four main components of social constructivism. The first is ‘Interpretive Flexibility’ which means that technology is an open process that can produce different patterns of social action, which may vary depending on a group’s usage. The second component is the social group. Pinch and Bijker argue that, “All members of a certain social group share the same set of meanings, attached to a specific artefact” (Pinch & Bijker, 1984:30) but they may have different interpretations of the same technology or machine. Thus, the same set of artefacts may take on different meanings, depending on the groups within that society and according to group assumptions. The third component is ‘Stabilisation’. Pinch and Bijker claim that artefacts are socially developed. In other words, in its final version, a machine will be developed to fulfil the needs of different social groups. Artefacts in societies develop over time until they reach a stabilisation phase, at which point they will also be socially constructed. The fourth component is the wider socio-cultural and political context and Pinch and Bijker argue that artefacts develop through interaction with other social actors in the environment. In other words, there is a need, “To relate the content of a technological artefact to the wider socio-political milieu” (Pinch & Bijker, 1984:46).

Importantly, the literature stresses that the Internet does not have only one symmetrical structure whereby every act obtains the same result (Carty, 2010). These results depend on various systematic inputs, including the national context and the aims of the action. Crediting technology, or the Internet, with responsibility for activism is to make the Internet into a fetish of collective action (Gerbaudo, 2012). Geographical location and different cultures must be considered when discussing the role of the Internet in activism (Gerbaudo, 2012) since, as Bennett (2003:146) noted, uses of the Internet, “Depend heavily on social context.” Similarly, Castells (2001:50) observed that, “The Internet is a particularly malleable technology, susceptible to being deeply modified by its social practice, and leading to a whole range of potential social outcomes.”

In short, technology cannot be an exogenous agent that differs from other agents such as the economy or politics. Technology is simply a tool like any other that can be used for social action. Moreover, social activism existed long before the Internet. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that using a particular type of technology will undoubtedly influence and shape the form of social action and the Internet has changed the ways and means of organising and mobilising groups, as we shall see below.

That is said, the two approaches, technological determinism and social constructivism alone might not help to understand the role of technology in the social life. This research therefore adopts the affordance concept to understand the interaction between the technology and social phenomena. Scholars such as (Hutchby, 2001a & 2001b; Kavada, 2012) argue that particularly with the Internet, platforms help in the development of such communicative phenomena, platforms do not determine them. Both scholars suggest that the concept of affordances which stemmed from Gibson (1979 cited in Hutchby 2001a) can be useful to help understand the interaction between the technology and humans. Affordances in this context can be defined as "the action possibilities manifest (and possibly latent) in a technology. Affordances have scope, which interacts closely with their limits." (Ahy 2014:16). According to Hutchby (2001b) not all technologies have the same affordances, different machines and objects have different affordances. The concept of affordance could be considered to be a 'third way' between technological determinism and social constructivism. In this approach "technologies can be understood as artifacts which may be both shaped by and shaping of the practices humans use in the interaction with, around and through them" (Hutchby 2001b:444). As such, Kavada (2012: 35) argues that the:

> the material or design characteristics of social media platforms enable and constrain their use by different actors. However, these affordances also depend on the skills, goals, and culture of their users who may employ platforms in ways that were not expected or intended by their designers.

Hutchby (2001b: 444) similarly claims that this third approach "opens the way for new analyses of how technological artefacts became important elements in the patterns of ordinary human conduct".

2.3. Activism Terminologies

There are myriad terms which encompass aspects of the kind of collective action and activism which are dealt with in this thesis, including grassroots campaigns, social movements and single-issue campaigns. Diani, for example, has acknowledged the difficulty in defining collective action and prefers to refer to the overarching concept of 'social movement'. He states that:

> Social and political phenomena as heterogeneous as revolutions, religious sects, political organisations, single-issue campaigns are all, on occasion, defined as social

> movements, (1992: 2).

Charles Tilly agrees that, “The most persistent problem we will face in analysing collective action is its lack of sharp edges” (Tilly, 1978:11).Thus, exploring some definitions of these terms is a useful step in pinpointing what is meant by online collective action.

One of the shortest definitions of the term ‘movements’ is offered by Blumer, who described this as a, “Collective enterprise” (Blumer, 1969:99, cited in Crossley, 2002:03), whilst Tilly characterises social movement as, “An invented institution.” which he stresses, “Could disappear or mutate into some quite different form of politics.” (1978:14). In this definition, Tilly views social movement as either being short-lived, ceasing to exist when it has served its purpose or transforming into an entity which becomes part of a more established political process. Eyerman and Jamison (1991: 4, cited in Crossley, 2002:04) also stress the possibly ephemeral nature of social movements, describing them as, “Temporary public spaces, […] moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities, and even ideals.” This is a definition which is similar to that used for collective action or activism.

Tilly (1978), identifies three components of social movements, namely: programme, identity and standing, whereas Della Porta and Diani (2006), argue that they typically share four characteristics: 1. They are informal networks; 2. They are based on shared beliefs and solidarity; 3. They mobilise conflictual issues; 4. They frequently use a range of forms of protest.

It could be argued that all these definitions of the term ‘social movement’ are also applicable to activism or collective action dealt with here. However, in the Saudi context the use of such terms built largely on Western experiences of collective action are more problematic. Saudi Arabia has little or no tradition of the type social movement or protest campaigns seen in Western democracies. Moreover, there are also sensitivities in using the terms themselves caused the restrictions imposed on activism by the authorities (see Chapter 5). Indeed, some of the activists interviewed here disavowed terms such as protest or movement and certainly wanted to avoid any overt political implications to their activities.

In light of such issues, and the difficulties using social movement language in the Saudi context, the study has adopted the arguably more neutral term “campaign”. This is more limited in terms of focus, time-frame, aims and audiences compared to social movement activity (Gajewska & Niesyto, 2009). Baringhorst (2009:10), for example, defines a campaign as:

> “a series of communicative activities undertaken to achieve predefined goals and objectives regarding a defined target audience in a set time period with a given

> amount of resources" (Baringhorst, 2009:10)

Others, such as Rottger (2006), whilst agreeing that with time and theme limitation have suggested that campaigns also encompass communicative strategies which have "staged theatrical elements… and strive for the generation of public attention" (Rottger (2006) cited in Gajewska & Niesyto, 2009). Whilst not all-inclusive, both these definitions do underline key elements of the case studies here. Notably, the Teachers Rights campaign (see chapter 7) which at the outset had clear target audience and predefined goals whilst the Women driving campaign could be seen as using theatrical staged activities (see chapter 8). Whilst the term campaign has been used to define the case studies, the research was also interested to detect whether (and how) the campaigns were evolving perhaps into something more permanent or widespread in the Internet era perhaps akin to the expectations of the social movement lifecycle model discussed below (see pp.43-44.)

2.4. Activism in the Internet Era

Since the emergence of the Internet, activists have used it extensively to achieve their goals relating to various issues in different political systems. Various examples can be used to illustrate this. These include the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Mexico (Ghobadi & Clegg, 2015), the transnational Global Justice Movement which was born in Seattle (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010), the Green Revolution in Iran (Etling *et al*., 2010) and the April 6th Youth Movement in Egypt (Saleh, 2012). During the last decade, many online campaigns have been examined as the focus of academic studies in this area.

This raises the issues of how the use of the Internet by activists could change the nature of activism and in which ways post-Internet activism differs from pre-Internet activism. Uses of the Internet, as a new pattern of communication, have influenced societies in general. Lievrouw (2013:12), points to:

> The seeming presence of new media everywhere, all the time, which affects everyone in societies where they are used, whether or not every individual uses them directly.

Scholars, including Bach and Stark (2004), Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010), Carty (2010), Bimber *et al*. (2010), Theocharis (2011) and Chen *et al*. (2015), have argued that this effect also extends to activism as well. The impact of the Internet on activism has been related to three principle reasons: interactivity (Theocharis, 2011; Oser *et al*., 2012; Land, 2009), the need to reduce the costs associated with activism, and the desire to empower individuals. As Earl and Kimport (2011), explain:

> The Web has two primary affordances of relevance to a study of online protest: sharply reduced costs for creating, organizing, and participating in protest; and the ability to aggregate people's individual actions into broader collective actions without requiring participants to be co-present in time and space (and sometimes also allowing solo organisers to create and run movements). (Earl & Kimport, 2011:10)

Generally speaking, scholars who explore the overall impact of computer-mediated communication on collective action have shown that there are a number of uses for the Internet in mobilising collective action. For instance, the Internet can be used to help disseminate the message of activists (Margolis & Resnick, 2000), facilitate communication among campaigners (Caiani & Wagemann, 2009; Aday *et al*., 2010; Laer, 2010), and with local and international audiences (Tarrow, 2005; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Gillan & Pickerill, 2008; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Glenn, 2015). Moreover, the Internet also helps activists by providing ready access to information required, thus creating a more knowledgeable activist class (Myers, 1994; Smeltzer, 2012; Kurniawan & Rye, 2013). It can also help activists to recruit new members or supporters more easily (Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Gunitsky, 2015). Finally, it acts as a forum for developing agendas for political action (Nip, 2004; Dahlgren, 2005; Tang & Huhe, 2013).

Summarising these types of uses, Castells (2012), has identified eight key characteristics of collective action in the wake of the development of the Internet:

- Online, collective action networks can take multiple forms of connection, online and offline, local and international and so on.
- Movements are both local and global at the same time.
- Movements are largely spontaneous in their origin and have usually been triggered by a single expression of indignation.
- Movements are viral. Similar movements can be seen everywhere. When a campaign emerges in one country, a similar campaign can be seen in another country.
- Decisions concerning online collective action are taken without leaders, not because of the lack of leaders but because online activists do not want a leader.
- Movements are highly self-reflective; online activists describe themselves as a movement but when it comes to what they want or who they are, they describe themselves as individuals.

- Movements are rarely programmatic, except when they focus on one clear, single issue.
- Movements aim at changing the values of society (Castells, 2012:221-228).

However, many 'traditional', pre-Internet activist movements share some of the characteristics of their Internet-based counterparts highlighted here by Castells. For example, it is obvious that such movements take multiple forms in order to conduct actions. Moreover, some traditional social movements are often the result of spontaneous reactions and are not programmatic. They are often loosely structured, and all these movements aim to change society, as Turner explains, "All definitions of social movement reflect the notion that social movements are intrinsically related to social change." (Turner, 2013, n.p.).

Nevertheless, the Internet has arguably had a more specific influence on the mobilisation and organisation of collective action. The impact of the Internet on both these areas takes different forms. Before considering the nature of these influences, it is necessary to examine exactly what is meant by these two terms, distinguishing between them by making use of Tilly's (1978) definitions. He defines mobilisation as a, "Process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action." (Tilly, 1978:07). These might include, "Labour, power, goods, weapons, votes, and any number of other things, just so long as they are usable in acting on shared interests." (Tilly, 1978:07). Organisation, on the other hand, refers to an, "Aspect of a group's structure which most directly affects its capacity to act on its interests." (Tilly, 1978:07).

Drawing on Tilly's definition, the following sections will consider the impact of the Internet on mobilisation. This includes the role of the Internet in widening and deepening activism mobilisation. This will be followed by a discussion on the erosion of the organisation as a result of Internet use.

2.4.1. The Internet's role in mobilisation

Tilly's definition of mobilisation highlights a number of issues relating to the process of mobilisation in activism. However, many scholars are sceptical about the Internet's role in mobilisation or political participation[1] on the grounds that online activities may not lead to offline participation. Bimber (1998;1999;2001), for example, claims that increasing communication capacity has not significantly affected levels of political engagement since the 1950s. For example, he suggests that, "Internet access is not predictive of voting or other

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[1] Sidney and Norman (1987), define political participation as consisting of four activities, namely: voting, campaign activity, contacting officials, and collective activities.

forms of political participation." (Bimber, 2001:61). However, he agrees later that the Internet has changed the informational environment for individuals and can help to accelerate the process of group formation and action. Yet the key problem relating to low levels of interest in political participation, as Bimber sees it, is that it is, "Limited by the willingness and capacity of humans to engage in a complex political life." (Bimber, 1998).
Similarly, a meta-analysis carried out by Boulianne (2009), found that the Internet does not inevitably reinforce political participation, rather it, "Does not establish that these effects are substantial." (Boulianne, 2009:205). For example, this study found that while a number of threads in a discussion on an online forum debated the need for protest, "None of these discussions moved beyond a discursive level of civic engagement." (Byrne, 2007:319). That means the Internet has not reinforced or encouraged political participation.

On the other hand, research reviewing the data on the role of the Internet in encouraging voting, (Bimber *et al*., 2014:33) in three British Elections (2001, 2005, and 2010), concluded that, "Internet use for political information increased the likelihood of voting among those less interested and reinforced this inclination among the more interested." This result contradicts the earlier argument by Bimber (2001), as shown earlier.

Rainie *et al.*'s (2012:03) findings from the U.S., based on authoritative Pew Research studies, also point to the fact that information gleaned from the Internet enhances political participation, as 25% of social media users said the Internet makes them more active in regards to a political issue after discussing it online or reading posts about it on websites. In addition, 16% of the sample stated they had changed their views about a political issue after online interaction or reading the opinions of others on the topic, and only 9% of those surveyed said they had become less involved in a political issue as a result of online discussions or website posts.

Further studies from a range of countries found similar positive findings regarding the relationship between the Internet and political participation. For example, Holt *et al*., (2013), note that during the Swedish national elections in 2010, there is evidence that frequent social media use among young citizens motivated political participation. Similarly, a study of young people in Hong Kong also confirms that exposure to political information on Facebook made them more likely to participate in political activities, (Tang & Lee, 2013).

However, most studies depend largely on measuring one variable when studying the role of the Internet in political participation. The aforementioned studies, which are mostly quantitative, measure Internet use or exposure and then link this with levels of offline political participation. Moreover, the majority of these studies focus on young people only. There are other factors which should also be measured when studying the role of the Internet in offline activities, including demographic and socio-economic variables, which are crucially associated with political activities. In contrast, Scherman *et al.*'s (2015) study on the role of social media in student and environmental protests in Chile, has measured five further variables that might influence the participation. The study, which revealed a positive relationship between the use of social media and participation in movements, measured the following variables: (1) uses of media, online and traditional, this includes consumption hours; (2) students' presence on social media; (3) students' values and ideology; (4) political and social variables, like trust in institutions; (5) socio-economic and socio-demographic variables, (Scherman *et al.*, 2015).

In practical terms, when the Internet is used by activists to support collective action, it can influence two specific aspects of mobilisation. Firstly, it can widen participation, helping campaigns to reach broader audiences than traditional mass media. Secondly, it can deepen participation, by improving the level of engagement/the quality of participation of the targeted audience, taking it to a higher level of activism.

2.4.1.1. *Widening participation*

Reducing the cost of communication, empowering individuals and interactivity features have all improved the communications which are vital for the mobilisation of collective action (Kiss & Rosa-García, 2011), particularly among existing sympathisers (Diani, 2000). This allows for the targeting of wider audiences than was possible using traditional tools. Scholars such as Steinberg (2015), emphasise that online political participation can engage more people because the socio-economic factors traditionally associated with offline political participation (such as education and/or income), are not strongly linked with online participation. This means the number of participants is broader and includes those who have not previously participated. Norris (2000), observes:

> The strongest claims of mobilisation theories are that Net activism represents a distinctive type of political participation [...] By sharply reducing the barriers to civic engagement, levelling some of the financial hurdles, and widening the opportunities for political debate, for dissemination of information, and for group interaction, it is said that the Net may reduce social inequalities in public life, (Norris, 2000:121).

However, it could be argued that Internet skills may simply replace the socio-economic boundaries which have traditionally prevented people from offline participation. In reply, Oser *et al*. (2012), argue that:

> Even without universal prevalence of Internet access and use, these mechanisms [lowering the cost of participation, interactivity, increasing population of Internet users] have been identified as potential supporting factors for the political mobilisation of previously disengaged and disadvantaged populations, (Oser *et al.*, 2012:92).

Thus, the Internet has the potential to increase and diversify political engagement, as concluded by Lusoli and Ward (2004). Feenberg and Friesen (2012), have also emphasised that:

> Politics is no longer the exclusive affair of traditionally, constituted political groups debating the traditional issues. The range of issues and groups is constantly widening in the most unpredictable ways, (Feenberg & Friesen, 2012:16).

Clearly, one way in which the Internet can widen participation is by providing activists with the ability to address people, regardless of the geographic boundaries involved (Gillan & Pickerill, 2008; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012;2013). Scholars such as McLaughlin (2003) and Tarrow (2005), have highlighted the fact that the Internet allows activists to engage with international audiences as well as like-minded activists at a national and local level. Tarrow (2005), argues that the Internet facilitates contact with what he called, 'Transnational Activists', a term he uses to refer to, "People and groups who are rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in contentious political activities that involve them in transnational networks of contacts and conflict." (Tarrow, 2005:29). This means that, "Activists in remote areas can easily imitate the actions organised elsewhere and join the movement by setting up their own actions." (Kavada, 2014:358).

One of the most recent examples of successful, transnational activism began in August 2015, when an Icelandic journalist, Gissur Simonarson, saw a photograph of a distressed man, selling cheap pens and carrying his daughter on his shoulder. This was widely circulated on social media. Simonarson created a Twitter account '@Buy_Pens' and a hashtag '#BuyPens' to ask for people's help to try and trace the man in order to help him. A few hours later, Simonarson announced that the man and his daughter had been located. He then launched a crowd-funding campaign to raise 5,000 dollars to help the pen seller, Abdul Halim Attar, a Palestinian refugee from Yarmouk in Syria who had fled to Beirut. Within 24 hours, campaigners had managed to collect over 70,000 dollars from 2,445 people in various countries (Gunter, 2015; Simonarson, 2015). This example illustrates how the Internet can be used to mobilise action on an international scale to campaign on an issue in one country. Although the pen seller was in Lebanon, the campaign initiator was in Norway, and the campaigners who found the man were in Lebanon, they were able to target a global audience to reach their goals.

In a similar fashion, activists are able to address and link to citizens who are living abroad to maintain ties concerning homeland issues (Hiller & Franz, 2004). The Taiwanese 'Sun Flower' movement, investigated by Chen *et al.* (2015), is a good example of this type of cross-national mobilisation. Their study showed that the Internet helps to mobilise Taiwanese citizens in diaspora, leading them to both participate online through discussion and act offline in demonstrations.

Both these cases illustrate that by using the Internet campaigners can attract a wider audience, even beyond national borders, mobilising them by using messages which the activists themselves have formulated, greatly reducing the need for intervention by traditional mainstream media to spread their message.

Widening without traditional media

It is clear that before the advent of the Internet, collective action relied on mass media to mobilise individuals. In theory, activists can use mass media to engage people by providing them with information, since in modern societies, citizens have tended to depend on the media for news (Rubin & Windahl, 1986; Castells, 2009). However, commercial advertisements and low-cost content have reduced the space for news, even in mainstream media (Bennett, 2003; Koopmans, 2004). Moreover, there is often a negative relationship between activists and mainstream media, as the interaction between them can sometimes create a conflict of interest[1] (Gamson & Wolfseld, 1993). According to Koopmans (2004), this conflict of interest means that negative coverage is 'pre-determined' and social movements are often denied mainstream media access or representation at critical moments in their development (Andrews & Caren, 2010).

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[1] A number of theorists have addressed the issue of the conflict of interest between media and society. For example in their work *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy Of The Mass Media* Herman and Chomsky (2010), identify five boundaries which can prevent media from doing its job, one of which is that media cannot cover some stories because they conflict with the interests of advertisers.

Generally speaking, movements need the news media for three major purposes. Firstly, for mobilisation, since movements can recruit more people by using media effectively. Secondly, for validation, as media coverage can legitimise movements and reassure the audience about them, by publishing or broadcasting news about them. Thirdly, scope enlargement; movements can use the media to gain momentum and help activists to reach their goals (Gamson & Wolfseld, 1993).

The Internet gives activists an alternative medium to achieve these ends. They can deliver their messages widely for mobilisation purposes and for providing information, explaining themselves directly, not only to their targeted audience, but also to the general public, international audiences and interested parties. In this way, activists can avoid the frustration caused by previously negative media coverage and/or mass media 'tampering' with coverage of their activities, stories and news (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002; Theocharis, 2011; Kavada, 2010; McCaughey & Ayers, 2013; Scherman *et al.*, 2015).

However, some researchers, such as Gibson and Kelly (2000, cited in Bennett, 2004) and Micó and Casero-Ripollés (2014), argue that traditional media is still crucial to activism as it provides visibility, as well as helping to widen participation, since relying on the Internet alone may not be sufficient.

Other studies such as that by Theocharis (2011) have highlighted the important role that traditional media can play in attracting more people to campaigns. Significantly, Chadwick (2013) and Papacharissi (2015) assert that there is a strong relationship between the new and traditional media and society in general.

According to Chadwick (2013) a hybrid media system is emerging and this author emphasises that new technology, and the novel forms of media in particular, have the power to re-arrange all the relationships which previously existed. Social, economic, political, spatial and temporal relationships have all been changed, offering the opportunity to 'flatten out' the old normative situation. What was a pyramid topped by social elites, speaking via media elites, dictating to the public, becomes an open field for engagement (Chadwick, 2013).

Similarly, Papacharissi (2015) argues that newer media gives the public and marginalised voices the feeling and experience that they are part of society. Papacharissi argues that digital media links people in politics and the mainstream media. Notably, she argues that:

> Twitter serves as a platform for complex emotional expression, facilitating the emergence of a discussion that integrates facts, thoughts and sentiments, with threads originating in new media and old. (2015:133).

Validation might also still be needed in some countries because assumptions about the credibility of the Internet as an information source may differ from one culture to another. For example, a study by Choi *et al.* (2015) on media credibility across news platforms in the United States and South Korea, among American and South Korean college students, found that TV and newspapers are still judged to be more credible than radio stations, online news websites or mobile devices.

Activists can now interact with mainstream media in ways that were not possible without the Internet, targeting them with information about campaigns which they are running. Bennett (2003:33), highlights the example of how an online social campaign, being conducted against the Nike Corporation, due to its record of poor labour practices in its factories, managed to get its message from the, "Remote spheres of micro media (e.g. email) […] to mass media." and succeeded in changing Nike's image from positive to negative in leading US newspapers. Given the advertising revenue that Nike brings to the US press, it is unlikely that newspapers would have covered this story, without the Internet. Bennett explains this change in the media's attitude towards Nike in the following terms, "The distributed property of the Web makes it difficult for news organisations to close the gates on tempting stories that competitors will be tempted to report if they don't." (Bennett, 2003:34). Steinhardt (2015), has argued that even in China, along with other factors, the Internet has helped activists to get their news into the traditional media; an achievement which would not have been previously possible.

2.4.1.2. *Deepening and improving levels of activist engagement*

Some researchers, such as Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010) and Gladwell (2010), have argued that Slacktivism[1] has little real effect on demands or change. Gladwell (2010), for example, claims that activism via social media is not the same as real-life activism, observing that Slacktivists tend to participate only in low commitment 'easy activism', such as signing e-petitions, rather than engaging fully in high intensity, collective activities, thus weakening group ties. In the worst case scenario, their activity may actually be damaging to a cause, and may promote a more superficial understanding of what are often extremely complex issues. Glenn agrees, maintaining that cyberactivism is largely about making people feel good without them actually having to do anything; the term ‘Slacktivism’ refers to the, “Disconnect between awareness and action through the use of social media.” (Glenn, 2015:81).

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[1] Slacktivism can be defined as, "Low-risk, low-cost activity via social media, whose purpose is to raise awareness, produce change, or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity." (Rotman *et al.*, 2011:821).

However, Lee and Hsieh's (2013:07) findings suggest a more subtle distinction:

> When the subsequent action is closely related to Slacktivism, people are motivated to remain consistent. But when the subsequent action is ambiguous or less related to Slacktivism, people will increase or decrease their likelihood and intensity based on their previous choice about Slacktivism, (Lee &Hsieh, 2013: 07).

Both advocates and opponents have ignored an important point that should be taken into account when discussing online participation and the role of the Internet in political activities. For, essentially, both sides tend to judge the Internet’s efficiency on the basis of the offline activities which it creates.

In the case of Slacktivism, they directly compare online and offline activities, with Gladwell (2010), for example, noting that:

> Facebook is a tool for efficiently managing your acquaintances, for keeping up with the people you would not otherwise be able to stay in touch with. That’s why you can have a thousand ‘friends’ on Facebook, as you never could in real life, (Gladwell, 2010:03).

It is clear that Gladwell considers Facebook to be a ‘tool’ only and ignoring it can also be a virtual public sphere for political participation. He directly compares Facebook acquaintances with real life acquaintances. Online acquaintance requirements are far easier than offline acquaintances. The easiness of action does not necessarily mean ineffectiveness. An online sit-in is far easier than an offline sit-in[1], but it does not mean it is not effective. Advocates of cyberactivism try to validate the Internet’s potential in terms of its influence in offline political spheres, such as participation in demonstrations or voting and so forth.

It is important to see the Internet as a virtual public sphere for activism and campaigning in its own right, not by judging its effectiveness in terms of political participation on the basis of offline results. Online activism on the Internet should be considered as an activity in its own right without linking it with offline activities. It could equally be argued that one demonstration, as a single act, will not serve to bring about political change; rather it will serve to make people feel good, precisely what Glenn (2015), argued is the problem with Slacktivism.

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[1] Technically, ‘online sit-ins’ mean participants accessing a website at the same time, multiple times, which results in creating disruption of the target website.

What has been described, somewhat disparagingly, as Slacktivism, can actually be a means of deepening political participation and mobilisation. According to Theocharis (2011), evidence of this can be found in the fact that the interactivity feature of the Internet has influenced mobilisation and enhanced political communication in general. Similarly, Land (2009:232), has emphasised that, "Interactivity is critical in allowing people to become more deeply involved in the advocacy effort." Interactivity means that targeted audiences are not passive audiences, as was the case with pre-Internet audiences. The Internet allows them to become active since it offers them the ability to respond to any content they receive in a number of ways. 'Like', 'Friend', 'Retweet' and other Slacktivism actions on social media, show that the targeted audience not only received the message sent by campaigners, but also responded to the message in a digital form of political participation.

With regards to deepening activism, the Internet also makes issues more visible, even for those who are not interested in politics. Kaufhold *et al*. (2010), have argued that in the digital age, political communication has become part of users' daily lives. Permanent exposure to political content can encourage people to engage with discussions in an informal way. The visibility and repetition of online political discussion gives users confidence to express themselves, and encourages them to seek further information which is more easily available online than elsewhere (Ostman, 2012). This searching for news may lead to users, "Exploit[ing] digital tools to engage in communicative activities when they use online news." as stated by Lee (2015:86).

Furthermore, it has been noted that the 'personalised politics' of the digital age mean that citizens are seeking, "More flexible associations with causes, ideas and political organisations." which, as Bennett and Segerberg (2013:05) explain, also deepens campaign mobilisation. Two specific points can be highlighted. First, citizens express themselves in a very personal way via online communication tools, such as social media, when engaged with any collective action. Once citizens start taking part in discussions, it means they are already taking extra steps towards political participation and becoming more than just a targeted audience. This is clearly visible in the second aspect of 'personalised politics' because when a personalised action is circulated on the Internet, it mobilises other people as it travels rapidly across social networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Thus, the mobilisation task is handed to the targeted audience itself on the Internet, making mobilisation a personal, not an organisational, task which further deepens participation.

Low-cost forms of participation facilitated by the Internet mean that new campaigners and small organisations, as well as individuals, can enter the field of online activism to protest or campaign for their rights (Ward *et al.*, 2003; Schussman & Earl, 2004). The high cost of traditional activism, which typically includes financial outlay and manpower costs, may prevent citizens from protesting or campaigning, as they may not have sufficient resources to mobilise and take action. The Internet theoretically allows activists to protest and campaign, regardless of their resources.

Similarly, the Internet also reduces the cost of organisation, as the online environment reduces the need for face-to-face meetings for two reasons (Choi & Park, 2013; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014). Firstly, by meeting online, distributing tasks and roles can be conducted virtually, and activists have no need to travel, or find places for meeting. Secondly, and more radically, the Internet has reduced the need for the entire notion of ‘organisation’ since cyberactivism does not require hierarchical organisations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In self-organised or decentralised campaigns for example, there are no organisational costs as activists simply share the same goals (see section 2.5 below).

Many scholars have also addressed the notion of using the Internet to empower individuals and small organisations in different ways (see, for example, Bennett, 1998; Redden, 2001; Bennett, 2003; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012;2013; Dalton, 2008; Kligler-Vilenchik & Thorson, 2015). Using the Internet, individuals can communicate and interact on a one-to-one basis (using email, for example), on a one-to-many basis (using social networking, for example), or use many-to-many web-based communication (Redden 2001; Lysenko 2011). As Wellman (2011:27) notes, “The Internet is helping each person to become a communication and information switchboard, between persons, networks, and institutions.”

Clearly, the Internet has replaced many of the pre-Internet tools used for campaigning and political participation in general but, more importantly, it also helps to improve these aspects of activism in terms of both quantity and quality, by widening and deepening mobilisation. The following section will explore how the Internet impacts on the organisational aspects of collective action.

2.4.2. Collective Action in the Internet Era: New Organisational Patterns

As previously discussed, use of the Internet has influenced collective action in a number of ways through changing patterns of communication. More specifically, as a number of scholars have acknowledged, this new communication tool has influenced the organisational structure of collective action (see, for example, Diani, 2000; Castells, 2009; Castells, 2012; Van Dijk, 2012; Benkler, 2006; Van De Donk *et al.*, 2004; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bennett, 2003; Chadwick, 2007; Norris, 2002; Shirky, 2008; Bimber, 2003).

Castells (2012), asserts that the central change in online collective action represents a power shift from hierarchical organisations to more flexible networks. Other scholars have attempted to distinguish the exact nature of the difference between traditional, collective action groups and those of Cyberactivism, the latter being motivated by shared goals and interests rather than organisational incentives (Earl & Kimport, 2011). The consensus amongst researchers is that groups and collective action are not necessarily the bedrock of Internet activism. Rather, the actions of individuals have become as important as those taken collectively and Internet era activists now have no great need to work in groups to achieve their goals (Tarrow, 2005; Land, 2009; Chadwick, 2007; Norris, 2002; Bennet,t 2003; Herrera, 2003; Milan & Hintz, 2013; Castells, 2012).

According to Gonzales-Bailon (2014), digital technologies have made political engagement more decentralised, changing the nature of grass-roots, political operations. Collective action has begun to acquire more flexible characteristics. This is clearly reflected in the categorisations of pre- and post-Internet era activism proposed by various researchers: individualistic versus collectivistic action (Potts *et al.,* 2014); normative versus non-normative (Postmes & Brunsting, 2002); connective versus collective (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012); collective versus collective individualism (Hirzalla & Zoonen, 2010); ‘networked individualism’ (Wellman, 2002); finally, ‘liquid organising’ (Gerbaudo, 2012). Writing at the start of the new millennium, Wellman presciently predicted that:

> Easily usable communication networks will support a shift from place-based to person-based and role-based communities. This will be a shift from living as groups in ‘little boxes’ to living as individuals in networked societies, (Wellman, 2000:n.p).

This description alludes to how the power of collective action has shifted in the Internet era from organisations to individuals. Critical action now concerns individuals more than organisations or hierarchical structures.

Hunter (n.p.), stressed the globalising aspect of Internet activism when he referred to a ‘Networked Army’ consisting of, “A collection of communities and individuals who are united on the basis of ideology, not geography. They are held together by public communications.” (cited in Bennett, 2003). Others, such as Shirky (2008), have focused on the fact that online collective action groups consist of individuals drawn to associate and bond with those who share similar ideas or ideologies. This ‘homophily’ can be clearly demonstrated in the case of otherwise, diverse individuals converging to campaign on a single issue about which they all have strong convictions.

Overall, there is widespread agreement that the Internet has increased the importance of the role of individuals in activism, whilst at the same time, eroding that of groups or organisations. However, this does not preclude the importance of organisations in collective action. When activists use the Internet, the link between individuals in collective action is not necessarily membership of a hierarchical organisation. Participants might not know each other personally, or have a leader, but they share the same goals.

Consequently, Bennett and Segerberg (2013:28), argue that the introduction of new communications technology forced a rethinking of the shape and concept of collective action. They claim that, in the age of the Internet, the logic of collective action has changed since, “Strong organisational control or the symbolic construction of a united ‘we’ is no longer required.” They argue that new communication technologies have helped to alter the dynamics of connective action, meaning that the focus has been shifted, “From networks as conditions or pathways to participation to networks as organisational units.” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013: 44). The authors suggest that, in the new communication technologies era, organisation has become more of an umbrella title for campaigns. People can work with a campaign without any sort of membership or a recognised leader.

Benkler (2006), has made a similar point, referring to the shift from the importance of the collective mind-set, or external factors, to interpersonal motivation, when individuals are the bedrock for activism, not the organisation. Earl (2011:147), went so far as to pose the question of whether innovative uses of Internet-enabled technologies would do away with the need for collective organising altogether.

In terms of the impact of the Internet on organisational or institutional structures, Chadwick (2007), noted that, when established groups use the Internet, this creates a form of ‘organisational hybridity’. He argues that the Internet is blurring the boundaries between groups which have traditionally been distinct entities, such as political parties, social movements and interest groups. Nowadays, this sort of organisation would not be able to form without the Internet:

> …because the technologies set up complex interactions between the online and offline environment and the organisational flexibility required for fast 'repertoire switching' within a single campaign or from one campaign to the next, (Chadwick 2007:284).

There is broad agreement that, whilst the Internet may have reduced the need for some of the traditional forms of collective action, activists do still continue working together in groups in cyberspace, even if they operate from geographically different places. A number of studies of online campaigns have demonstrated that organisations, in the traditional sense, can still play important roles. For example, Micó and Casero-Ripollés (2014), concluded that, during the immensely popular 15-M campaign in Spain,[1] some features of a traditional organisation were in evidence, even though the campaign relied on the Internet for structure and mobilisation in both the online and offline spheres. Bennett and Segerberg (2013), also identified a number of campaigns that use the Internet as an organisational milieu without the direct engagement of individuals. Though there is no contradiction between these two concepts, some campaigns could be described as loosely structured, whereby a pre-existing organisation facilitates individuals to campaign individually as the following section will discuss.

2.4.2.1. Lifecycle of social movements

Before shedding light on collective action on the Internet and characteristic changes in activism, it is important to gain an overview of the lifecycle of social movements on the Internet, in order to understand the general context of such activism. Scholars such as Blumer (1969), Mauss (1975) Macionis (2008), and Tilly (1978) have all suggested that social movements usually go through four life stages (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Macionis, 2008)

(1) Emergence 'social ferment'
(2) Coalescence 'popular excitement'
(3) Bureaucratisation 'formalisation'
(4) Decline 'institutionalisation'

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[1] The 15-M movement or 'Indignants Movement', is a Spanish movement aimed at promoting, "More participatory democracy, the regeneration of the political system and counteracting the dominance of the banks and the large financial institutions." (Castells, 2012, cited in Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2013).

Scholars state in the issue that during the first stage there is little or no organisation within a social movement. Participants act individually, showing their negative attitudes towards issues that will later become the goal of the movement. Some also act in small groups to raise awareness about the issue which they are concerned about (Macionis 2008). During the second stage, movements have their goals defined and start acting more collectively, participating in demonstrations with a leadership, and may engage with other similar collectives to gain more resources (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Macionis, 2008). During the formalisation stage movements create a formal organisation, becoming more bureaucratic and relying on capable staff more than charismatic leaders (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Macionis, 2008). The fourth stage is the institutionalisation wherein a movement becomes an organic part of society and "crystallises into a professional structure" (Della Porta & Diani, 2006:150).

Other scholars such as Miller (1983) argue that becoming a part of society is one of the five evolutionary end points for a movement. He shows that social movements may also end if participants have met their goals, or due to organisational failures. Social movements can also decline when a leader is co-opted by money or power within existing systems. Lastly social movements can also go into decline as a result of repression by officials or the state (Miller, 1983, cited in Macionis, 2008).

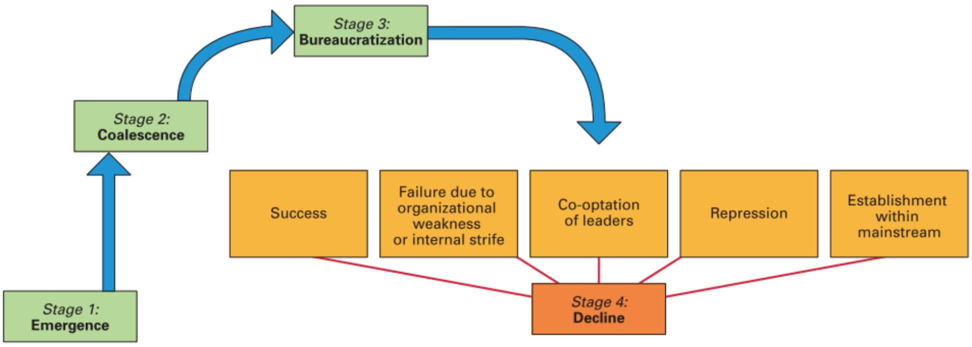
Stage 3:
Bureaucratization
Stage 2:
Coalescence
Success
Failure due to organizational weakness or internal strife
Co-optation of leaders
Repression
Establishment within mainstream
Stage 1:
Emergence
Stage 4:
Decline

Figure 1: Stages in the Life of Social Movements (Source Macionis 2008:555)

2.4.2.2. From Collective to Connective Action

Much of the research concerning online activism does not develop explicit theories or models which could be used to help us to gain a clearer understanding of online activism or activism in the age of the Internet as a whole. Furthermore, long-standing theories related to social movements such as Resource Mobilisation or New Social Movements, will not necessarily help to explain activism phenomena, due to the nature of the assumptions upon which they are based. For example, empowering individuals and reducing group power, or eradicating the vertical structure of groups, were not considered in pre-Internet theories. This crucial feature of the Internet has had a significant influence on online collective action, as discussed above.

However, one recent large-scale comparative study does offer a potential comprehensive framework for the research here. The 'Logic of Connective Action' (LoCA), proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2012;2013), provides a useful, comprehensive, theoretical platform for a number of reasons. Firstly, the LoCA framework was developed on the basis of empirical studies which analysed large-scale campaigns, focusing on various topics in several different countries and contexts. This helped to create a framework based on a wide, cultural and economic spectrum and a broad age range. Secondly, the framework also reflects ideas from the 'traditional movements' literature, adopting some of its theoretical assumptions and elements and embedding these either in the logic of the framework or in the typology, as will be explained below.

Another key point about the LoCA framework is that it does not distinguish between online and offline activism, on the grounds that both connective and collective action, involve using the Internet but in a different dynamic. The framework also covers various aspects of activism including organisational and mobilisation elements, together with the context in which the activism takes place. A further important factor in its favour is that the framework was devised comparatively recently and is based on experience from the recent social media era. Moreover, the framework takes into consideration the power of individuals but does not ignore the presence of traditional or vertical organisations on the Internet.

With specific reference to the case of Saudi Arabia, there is no tradition of activism. In addition, there are still relatively few political and social campaigns and activism, as a practice, remains very restricted (see Chapter Five for further discussion). This means it might not be possible to identify a traditional form of activism for which the Internet has been used as a tool. Thus LoCA is deemed to be more appropriate to the Saudi context than other theories as it has identified some types of activism that do not require organisation.

The main concept of connective action is based on understanding how the Internet can be used to help individuals to participate in activism without organisation. People who act share common goals without the need for vertical organisational structure. The act of communication becomes the act of organisation. According to LoCA, people create organisations by personal actions. So, for example, when individuals share their personal stories or Internet postings about an issue, this act becomes the act of organisation; thus, they are organised as a result of taking action rather than being organised before taking action (see also Earl & Kimport, 2011). Hence, Bennett and Segerberg claim that:

> Communication is often much more than a means of exchanging information and forming impression, or an instrument for sending updates and instructions to followers. Communication routines can, under some conditions, create patterned relationship among people that lend organisation and structure to many aspects of social life, (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012: 08).

In this regard, Bennett and Segerberg show in their LoCA model that this logic also relates to countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, not simply Western democracies. It can be noted that these Arab Spring countries and other involved in the Arab Spring have been mentioned side-by-side with movements in democratic countries. This is seen in the opening chapter of *The Logic of Connective Action* in which the authors state:

> Whether we look at PPF, the Arab Spring, the *indignados*, or Occupy, we note surprising success in the communication of simple political messages directly to outside publics using common digital technologies such as Facebook or Twitter, along with a rich array of custom media platforms" (Bennett & Segerberg 2013:25).

Moreover, one could argue that there are some parallels between Saudi society and post-industrial societies or late-Modern societies, where there are so-called lifestyle politics or issues of contemporary lifestyle participation (see Bennett *et al.* 2011; Bennett 2003; Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Kavada 2014).

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that changes relating to globalization have altered many of the structures of modern society that used to bind individuals together. Institutions such as the church, political parties or trade unions, as well as broader concepts such as class identification, family traditions and career paths have all been affected. Although these institutions have been decoupled from the individual's desire to experience common interests and share political concerns, the impetus to participate remains. This has led to the adoption of more personalised forms of politics related to lifestyle and social networks. Such participation allows space for "difference and individuality", as Kavada points out (2014:357).

To some degree, this is also applicable in the Saudi context. Al-Rasheed suggests that globalization and new communication technologies have similarly influenced Saudi society (Al-Rasheed, 2010). Although young Saudis are not normally politicized, they constitute the majority of the population, with 67% of Saudis being less than 30 years old (National Information Centre 2014). Mai Yamani argues that "incoherent criticisms of government, corruption and double standards are slowly forming into a call not for revolt, but for more autonomy to pursue the goals that their education and experiences have led them to expect" (Yamani 2000:48). It can be seen that the issues discussed on the Internet are challenging traditional norms such as religious institutions, and fuelling discussion and campaigning in daily life. Issues such as housing, salaries, and women's right to drive all have a strong presence on the Internet.

The authors further argue that collective and connective logics are distinct logics of action and involve differences in: (a) What draws people to feel they should be part of a particular movement; (b) What issues matter to people who are part of the debate; (c) How people decide what issues matter most and then convince others; (d) Roles for communication mechanisms (i.e. Facebook being used to organise events on a given day, Twitter being better for broadcasting). Social media certainly allows for more rapid dissemination of views than conventional tools, (Bennett &Segerberg, 2013: 45).

Bennett and Segerberg (2012), emphasise that their framework complements Olson's classic study, '*The Logic of Collective Action'*, in which the author claims:

> Unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests, (Olson, 1965:02).

According to Bennett and Segerberg (2012: 42), their framework helps to identify, "Which actor uses what organisational logic, and how the positions of these differently organised blocks in the larger protest ecology affect the coherence, stability and impact of the action." In short, it is an attempt to set up a comprehensive explanation of protest and campaigning activity in the Internet era, rather than being driven by the technology itself.

Four major topics provide key building blocks to the LoCA, namely: multiple logics of action; personalisation of action; communication as organisation; power in different forms of networked organisations.

Multiple logics of action

There are multiple logics for action on the Internet. Traditional collective action is based on the organisation; connective action organises while it communicates, meaning the communication *is* the organisation. Bennett and Segerberg argue that the collective action typology (what they call *'Organisationally Brokered Networks'*) perceived as 'modern' collective action, (which was based on the idea of organising groups of people beneath one banner), is being replaced by connective action. The traditional type of organisation required a leadership, material resources and commitment, whereas the new social media enables solely the latter (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

The collective action logic emerged in modern societies before the Internet. According to the authors, it uses the Internet as a tool, or a means of supporting its action and the movement. The authors argue that '*Organisationally Brokered Networks'* use the Internet mainly as a tool for mobilising and managing participation, "Rather than inviting personalised interpretations of problems and actions." (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012: 46).

Connective action, on the other hand, emerged on the Internet itself. As noted above, the main characteristic of this logic is that it uses communication as organisation, employing, "Broadly inclusive, easily personalised action frames as a basis for technology-assisted networking." (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:02). This connective action depends on technology as an organisation, is enabled by social media and can result in political activity without the pre-requisites common to collective action, such as prior membership of the group.

Connective action, (i.e. joining together under the banner of a hashtag such as #BlackLivesMatter), does not require a hierarchical structure or leadership (i.e. people with a particular manifesto or tasks to get others to follow), material resources (i.e. signs, meeting halls or such like) or commitment (i.e. rallies on a given day). This new type of protest uses social media to draw people in, to become a part of the protest without the same kind of commitment that 'traditional' collective action required. In this way, connective action can create a larger and more dispersed, political movement which is very difficult to pin down or fight against, and which can grow to be much larger due to the lower entry costs.

The personalisation of action

Bennett and Segerberg (2012;2013) suggest that, in the digital age, collective actions are more personal than collective. Individuals can participate politically on the Internet in a very personal way by, for example, sharing their own stories and photographs, and demonstrating their solidarity as individuals, not linked to any group or movement. The Internet functions as a tool, allowing individuals to interact and act individually to achieve shared, common goals. This personalisation of action is conducted in both of the logics of action: connective and collective.

The authors claim that personalised action frames make it easier for individuals to connect to a cause, as they can offer a level of support appropriate to their own time and resources. Collective action required participants to adhere to a group agenda, which modern activists appear reluctant to do (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012:197). Personalised actions bring an added value to collective logic as they strengthen the network. Moreover, they spread faster than collective actions on the Internet, as they pass social obstacles easily, from one-to-one in many cases, or from friend-to-friend on social media. Collective action, in contrast, needs more 'cultural production' as it needs to understand society to produce a message which can reach everyone. However, participating in a personal way does not mean that participation is any less serious (despite this being framed by some as Slacktivism); it is, in contrast, a deeper form of participation when people express themselves politically as part of their lifestyle (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

Power in different forms of networked organisation

Bennett and Segerberg are keen to stress that collective and connective action, in both typologies, have different strengths. They also argue that no form of networked organisation has more power than any other type of networked organisation. The key question is: how does power operate within different kinds of connective action networks? (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:149.)

Communication as organisation

As alluded to previously, the advent of digital media has altered organisations since the Internet has created new patterns of communication (see section 2.3). Bennett and Segerberg (2013), suggest that communication via the Internet has evolved, from discussion forums to Twitter and Facebook, and political action networks have evolved with it. Ease of access and the variability of involvement have changed the way we connect, socially and politically, and this technology has become the, 'Agent of connection action', (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:196). They argue that the ubiquity of social media and the ease of connection in modern society, allow people to find common ground with a remarkably large number of others.

In another work Bennett *et al.,* (2014b: 234) developed an analytical framework illustrating how organisation is produced in digital media through what they call production packages.

These are where “crowds create organisation through packaging these elemental peer-production mechanisms [production, curation, and dynamic integration] to achieve various kinds of work” (Bennett *et al.,* 2014b:232). These peer-production mechanisms will be discussed in the following section.

The scholars argue that “the centrality of media platforms as organisational hubs, along with the roles of individuals in activating their own social networks, results in dynamic organisations in which crowds (with various degrees of cohesion) allocate resources, respond to external events, and display transitional changes over time” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:13). In this context the authors minimise the collective identity in these crowd-enabled networks. They claim that “connective action networks are typically far more individualised and technologically organised sets of processes that result in action without the requirement of collective identity framing or the levels of organisational resources necessary to respond effectively to opportunities” (Bennett & Segerberg 2013:32). Yet, this claim has been challenged by a number of scholars who argue that collective identity is still playing a key role in online activism, which will also be discussed further in this chapter.

Peer production in large-scale networked protests:

Theorists argue that in the large-scale networked protests there is what they call a package of peer-production processes. Such processes are essential for a “coherent organisation ”. Importantly “focusing on the production package highlights the action going into the organising structure rather than the structural properties of the network per se” (Bennett *et al.* 2014b:240). As in the case of the wave of protests in the Arab Spring, and the US Occupy movement, there are enormous numbers of networks in the crowds. Production mechanisms, according to the theorists, “serve as stitching mechanisms that connect different networks into a coherent organisation ” (Bennett *et al.* 2014b: 234). For example, the Occupy movement included a number of different actors such as *Anonymous*, as well as participants in local camps, and protestors.

The elemental peer-production mechanisms include Production, Curation, and Dynamic Integration and according to theorists, these stitch the different actors into a “coherent organisation”. Scholars suggest that understanding the new forms of media and how they are being used is essential in order to comprehend the emergence of crowd-enabled networks. The technology itself, smart phones, websites and apps, are what enables the organising. Production, creation and dynamic integration explain how the crowds involved in large-scale protests create, organise and sustain their networks without identifiable leaders, and, hence, an organisation emerges.

Before shedding the light on the production packages suggested by theorists, it is important to distinguish between ‘organisation’ or what they call ‘coherent organisation’ and ‘organising’ in this context. Bennett *et al.* 2014b argue that non-bureaucratic organisation can come in a variety of forms, ranging from networks to virtual organisations. Networks consist of interdependent actors working together towards a common goal, while the virtual kind is born from modern technology, in which distributed actors can collaborate via private or public electronic means.

These organisations share certain common facets with their bureaucratic cousins, namely resource mobilisation, responsiveness to external conditions and long-term adaptation, change or decline. Resource mobilisation relates to their ability to create, position and utilise the materials (either physical or symbolic) needed in collective action. Responsiveness is their capacity to react to threats and opportunities, and in doing so learn best how to deal with them and future situations. Hence over the long term, these non-bureaucratic organizations can re-arrange their internal assets to respond to growth or decline in both resources and public support (Bennett *et al.,* 2014b).

These components of organisation can be found in several types of organisation and different kinds of logics (collective and connective).

Organising, or the organising process, can also be found in any sort of campaign, regardless the logic as well. However, the flowing production packages suggested by Bennett *et al.* (2014b) are an organisational process leading to what they call a coherent organisation.

Production: This mechanism includes creating and sharing, or “publicising”, different content within the crowd networks on different Internet platforms such as Twitter, Livestream, blogs, and news websites. The creation of content does not require high degrees of originality or tailoring for a wider audience. In this marketplace of ideas a natural evolutionary process takes place, where good ideas are taken up and bad ones are passed over. From this process resources are formed which can include symbolic themes, shared identities and directions for future activity.

Curation: This category is related to Production in that it continues the evolutionary process by sorting and maintaining the assets generated by the crowd. A negotiation process occurs as content is selected and preserved by archiving on sites such as Reddit, or in cloud storage facilities, such as Sound Cloud or YouTube. This creates a shared pool of assets and this collection naturally creates and evolves according to the norms and boundaries of those user communities.

Theorists (Bennett *et al.* 2014b) have asserted that when faced with the vast signal-to-noise ratio of unfettered content creation, the crowd is forced to sort and distribute this information so that particularly important and timely information can be shared while it is most relevant. In this way, the information does not spread “virally”, but rather the work of those creating and sharing determines what is timely and what is unhelpful, or counterproductive, which can include spam and trolls.

Dynamic integration covers the role of links, metadata, hashtags and cross-platforming. These enable content to be transferred between individuals, across platforms, networks and technologies. This way multi-centred movements can connect and share content, allowing ideas to flow across the layers.

As a digital platform Twitter plays a role in these stitching mechanisms and is a good example of how the complexity arises. A tweet can be considered to be a unit of production, and can contain several sub-elements, such as the content itself, links, hashtags, mentions, as well as other components that could be used for any of the three mechanisms. Moreover, and in common with other peer-produced materials, an individual’s contribution may not fit easily into one of the mechanisms, nor may it appear significant at the time, but may emerge as timely and relevant later on. Bennett *et al* argue that:

> Without production, there is little substance in the network, and what there is will not be significantly co-produced among the crowd; without curation the network will be saturated with noise; without the micro-level connections of dynamic integration, groups and networks will scatter or become significantly dependent on key bridging actors. The indicators will differ across contexts, but the presence of the basic processes, along with routinized patterns of use, helps shape the degree to which large-scale crowd-enabled networks attain organisation (Bennett et al. 2014b:253).

Three typologies of collective action on the Internet

Based on the four main topics, the authors identified three typologies of collective action on the Internet, each of which possesses different characteristics. The authors stress that this tripartite typology is a useful means of understanding the different dynamics of networked activism in the Internet era. They emphasise that the way political activity is organised has changed and the tripartite typology they suggest attempts to visualise the new action networks which have arisen as a result of the Internet. Social media is intertwined within all three models but it is utilised with differing degrees of central organisation.

The three typologies are: *Crowd-enabled Networks* or *Self-organising Networks; Organisationally Enabled Networks; Organisationally Brokered Networks.*

CONNECTIVE ACTION *Crowd-Enabled Networks*	**CONNECTIVE ACTION** *Organisationally Enabled Networks*	**COLLECTIVE ACTION** *Organisationally Brokered Networks*
• Little or no formal organisational coordination of action. •Large-scale personal access to multi layered social technologies. • Communication content centres on emergent inclusive personal action frames. • Personal expression shared over social networks. •Crowd networks may shun involvement of existing formal organisations.	• Loose organisational coordination of action. • Organisations provide social technology outlays-both custom and commercial •Communication content centres on organisationally generated inclusive personal action frames • Some organisational moderation of personal expression through social networks. • Organisations in the background in loosely linked networks.	•Strong organisational coordination of action. • Social technologies used by organisations to mange participation and coordinate goals. •Communication content centres on collective action frames. •Organisational management of social networks- more emphasis on Interpersonal networks to build relationships for collective action. •Organisations in the foreground as coalitions with differences bridged through high-resource organisation brokerage.

Figure 2: The Elements of Connective and Collective Action Models (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013: 47)

Crowd-enabled networks[1]

This type of connective action can be defined as, "Dense, fine-grained networks of individuals in which digital media platforms are the most visible and integrative organisational mechanisms." (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:13). A self-organised network is organised by a crowd, not an organisation, and is a highly decentralised action, meaning there is no leadership or formalised organisation. According to Bennett and Segerberg, crowd-enabled networks are densely layered through complex networks of networks. However, although these clearly layered networks involve several platforms and message types, they are not structured and are less deliberately constructed, having no distinct characteristics. Generally, there is little or no co-ordination of action and this type of network is primarily technology-enabled; its activities respond to external factors, such as police raids or positive recognition from politicians or celebrities.

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[1] Crowd-enabled networks and self-organised networks refer to the same typology by authors but in different publications (2012;2013).

Crowd-enabled networks rely on personalised action. This means, actions are taken through individuals separately, but sharing a meme, for example. Generally, people in connective action do not usually act by taking part in collective action, such as demonstrations; instead each individual can take action and share this online. For example, someone might film him or herself wearing a T-shirt with the campaign meme in a shopping mall. Moreover, this type of connective action tends to avoid engaging with formal organisations or firms. Crowds mobilise and organise resources including communications and technology development, event co-ordination, and information sharing, as well as fund raising.

Organisationally enabled networks

If '*Crowd-enabled Networks'* and '*Organisationally Brokered Networks'* could be described as extreme forms of networks, '*Organisationally Enabled Networks'* are moderate in their characteristics compared to the other two forms of action. '*Organisationally Enabled Networks'* are 'hybrid' networks, combining conventional collective action and digital networked connective action, which are loosely organised either by links or by actions. Personalised action is distinguishable in this type of connective action but at the same time, participants are less wary of involvement with other groups or organisations. The main characteristic of this type of network is that, "Conventional organisations operate in the background of protest and issue advocacy networks to enable large-scale personalised engagement." (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:45). In other words, organisations still hold sway in this form of action and have a degree of control over individuals but those same individuals have some control of the content; it is they who produce the final message and action by the organisation.

The hybrid '*Organisationally Enabled Network*' combines centrally organised ideas and goals with an array of personalised access points (action frames) for those who wish to participate (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). It is important to note that, in this type of connective action, the uses of digital media and interactivity offer people a great deal of choice in terms of the level of commitment with which they want to engage in the action. Individuals in this type of network are enabled to find ways to engage with issues either online or offline with which they feel personally comfortable. Moreover, this type of connective action usually receives official recognition as well as positive media coverage. Organisations remain invisible even though they are responsible for organising collective action. This 'invisibility' gives an impression that people are witnessing organised crowd action only.

One of the best examples of this type of connective action is the British campaign '*Put People First*' (PPF). The campaign, which launched in 2009, defines itself as a, "Coalition of development charities, trade unions, faith groups, environmentalists and other organisations, formed in response to calls for a fair, sustainable route out of recession." (Put People First, n.d.). According to Bennett and Segerberg (2013), this campaign provided a rich interactive environment for people to learn about issues, giving them information about actions in which they could participate and encouraging them to participate at different levels. For example, all their websites featured a box asking people to write a message to G20. Although the campaign identified itself as a coalition of organisations, campaign activities were clearly personalised, including personal stories on social media, website photos and so forth.

Organisationally brokered networks

The final type of collective network covers the traditional type of activism using the Internet as a means to an end. In this type, the Internet technology does not change the dynamics of activism or the links between supporters; it serves simply as another tool, such as leaflets. According to Bennett and Segerberg's typology, an '*Organisationally Brokered Network'* is a large-scale, centralised network, originally formed without the Internet. Members and support come from different movements/organisations to support a single goal, while the communication content is centred on collective action frames. Often therefore, '*Organisationally Brokered Networks'* tend to be movements and groups which originated in the pre-Internet era and which have simply grafted technology onto their activities and organisational structures, such as trade unions, political parties and standard pressure groups.

Problematising LOCA: Some Critical Considerations

As we noted at the outset of the chapter, LoCA offers a series of advantages when examining Internet age protest activity. Not least its attempt to develop a coherent theoretical approach married to a diversity of empirical studies, Nevertheless, Bennett and Segerberg's framework has been increasingly critiqued in from variety of quarters. The central criticisms tends to focus on three broad areas: the general approach; the concepts deployed especially notions of the collective and personal (in particular, how new and distinctive they are) and the restricted methodology of the study (its over-reliance on public social media data sources).

Approach: Technological determinism again?

Arguably, the broadest central criticism is that LoCA, in its overall approach, risks falling into the old trap of technological determinism in a new guise. In this context, Gerbaudo for instance, has criticised the tendency of scholars such as Bennett *et al* (2014b), and also Castells earlier work (n.d), for pursuing an analysis of social movements, which considers technology to be the only cause or means of uniting individuals, while still viewing it as an independent variable, when other variables (for example, organisational practices, objectives and tactics) rely on it (Gerbaudo, 2014). Gerbaudo asserts that there is a need to go beyond what he called 'methodological individualism' without digging into 'micro- operations' in technical networks which can be seen in the LoCA.

Concepts: The importance of identity in constructing the "We"

Thorny conceptual and definitional problems also abound mostly notably around the concept of collective identity and the mechanisms for generating this. In essence, LoCA has been criticised for downplaying shared collective identity underestimating the role of organisation and collective structures in generating collective glue for movements and campaigns. Such criticisms have their roots earlier theoretical social movement debates around the importance of material capabilities/limitations and organisational structures within movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977) versus cultural processes and collective identity (Melucci, 1996).

Contrary to LoCA, a range of studies have recently argued that digital media platforms play a crucial role in the process of identity construction, but this has been marginalised and neglected in favour networks.. They argue that collective identity, a phenomenon originating from and fostered by social media, needs to be involved in any research concerning digital activists. Consequently, networks are not a substitute for collective identity but rather are complementary to it (See Bakardjieva, 2015; McDonald, 2015; Milan, 2015; Treré, 2015; Kavada, 2015; Coretti & Pica, 2015; Gerbaudo & Treré, 2015; Monterde *et al.*, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2015). Some, such as Monterde *et al.* (2015), warn that "abandoning the concept of collective identity would be a mistake, as it has generated rich insights into the 'cultural and emotional dynamics of mobilisation'" (Flesher Fominaya, 2010:401 cited in Monterde *et al.*, 2015:932).

Whilst most of this recent empirical research on campaigning, protest and movements acknowledges the loose, decentralised structures of digital protest, it still sees the strength in collective platforms. Hence, Kavada for instance, argues that "despite the emphasis on the role of social media in loosening and individualising collective action, such platforms are important in the process of creating the collective" (2015:884). She goes on to emphasise the necessity of collective identity in digital protest, noting that even if we accept that recent movements are more loosely structured than those of the past, these movements still need to develop their self-understanding as distinct collectives with their own agency (Kavada 2015:883). Her research found that using social media platforms benefited the movement as it "blurs the boundaries" between inside and outside the movement, which complies with the movement's value as a call for direct participation.

Similarly, Gerbaudo and Trere (2015: 866), argue that

> disregard of collective identity and connected communicative processes constitutes a major obstacle in the understanding of contemporary protest movements, since it obscures the symbolic and cultural aspects inherent in social media activism and in protest communications more generally.

Gerbaudo's (2015), further empirical work on social media avatar photos in the 2011 protest waves in Egypt, Spain and the US, argues that avatar photos which may appear to be "trivial acts" are actually a new form of collective identity in social media. Gerbaudo shows that such practices "are a demonstration of the fact that collective identity continues to exist in the contemporary web, despite the high levels of individualisation and fragmentation of online interactions" (Gerbaudo 2015: 920). The scholar stresses that "the use of protest avatars testifies to the fact that protest movements in a digital era are still compelled by the need to construct a 'we' that people can adhere to" (Gerbaudo 2015: 926).

Replying to Gerbaudo's concerns about 'the collective' Bennett et al (2015) stress that the solidarity and 'We' in connective action logic differs from conventional collective action. Memes such as 'We Are the 99%' have a shared expression but are also highly personalised, allowing such memes to be shared widely despite the cultural and social barriers that may prevent sharing within a conventional movement. Connective action in their work does not "preclude common identifications or inhibit acting collectively. Rather, it signals the presence of alternate perceptions, motives, and forms of action" (Bennett *et al.* 2014a:273).

In this context, they stress that studying post-bureaucratic mobilisations should highlight the sharp distinction between the individual and the collective. This suggests that ‘We’ can be formed in many different ways, and just as there are different ways for political participation, so there are many mechanisms and roots for collective action.

Methodology: Extending the focus?

A third set of criticisms has centred on the, often limited, methods of studying social movement and protest activity in the era of social media. LoCA has sometimes been viewed as concentrating too closely on social media platforms especially Twitter to the detriment of other key platforms or centres of activity. Della Porta (2014), in her critique, suggests that there is still a need to study traditional media such as leaflets and posters. Furthermore, she emphasises that further studies need to concentrate more on understanding in which circumstances actors adopt particular repertoires of communications and what shapes the decision making behind this. Della Porta also points out the importance of triangulating this type of research with other qualitative methods such as ethnographic work since such methods would help researchers to explore and understand the relationship between the means of communication and the different steps in the mobilisation process.

Similarly, David Karpf echoes some of the ideas of Della Porta (2014), commenting that public data collected from Twitter may not reflect the communication among the crowd since “many important elements that may be crucial to understanding the development of the networks are never digitally recorded or archived for public consumption” (2014: 237). His own research demonstrates that many online or offline activities taking place are hidden in what he referred to as “network backchannels”. These backchannels such as mailing lists, Google groups or face-to-face meetings cannot be traced online as they leave no public record. They allow members to create their own private spaces, leading inevitably to in-groups and out-groups. Karpf argues that such backchannels form an essential part of behind-the-scenes curation and dynamic integration, but they make no appearance in the vast dataset used by Bennett et al. According to Karpf, therefore in monitoring protest and movement activity in the Internet era it is not to concentrate on particular platforms or publically available big data. Tracing and understanding backchannels requires adopting qualitative methods such as ethnography and interviews. This approach is underlined in Kavada’s (2015) research on the Occupy Movement uses a qualitative approach which involves interviewing activists and analysing digital media content, along with documents belonging to the movement. She argues that this approach revelead how Occupy campaigners in different locations created a sense of collective action organising, instead of the connective action logic as proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2013).

In response, Bennett et al. acknowledge the importance of different qualitative methodological approaches such as ethnography and interviewing. They also agree that assessing network backchannels is of clear significance. Indeed, they argue that the LoCA study does not ignore events and platforms outside Twitter but social and traditional media, organisational sites, resource bunkers, together with face-to-face and mediated action are all considered and that his had helped reveals the importance variables such as the physical location, the contribution of individuals, and network actors not simply social media technology. That said, they stress that with the different approaches that can be used, the most important question to be addressed is “how does it all play into the internal workings of the crowd-enabled network?” (Bennett *et al*. 2014a: 274) since focusing on details of these parts of organisations may reduce the mobilisation to segregated foci instead of viewing it as one large organisation. Bennett *et al*. 2014a argue that their work on Twitter shows the bigger picture of the organisation, i.e. they encircled the public protest they were trying to study. The patterns demonstrated by the links are revealing in terms of how and when various elements come into play during the protests. The model they used shows how the information is connected through the networks, stitching together sites, resources and actors, and it is this which allows researchers to gain a broader understanding of the protest ecology.

Part of the purpose of the study here is of course to contextualise and test some of the criticisms raised above. In relation to the approach adopted, it explicitly seeks to understand the importance of the Saudi social and political context for campaign activity not simply the technological environment. Moreover, both the case studies that follow in Chapters Seven and Eight reveal the importance of considering a range technological platforms as well the backchannels referred to here. Thus methodologically, the study follows Della Porta’s advice in triangulated both social media data, the role of traditional media and interviews with activists to understand patterns of collective/connective action.

2.5. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a detailed discussion on the mobilisation and organisation which form the theoretical base of this research. Firstly, it discussed the key philosophical approaches to the role which technology plays in relation to social phenomena. Secondly, it identified the principal debates about the features of the Internet which have transformed aspects of activism, with specific reference to mobilisation and organisation. Thirdly, it has presented a detailed description of Bennett and Segerberg's typology which serves as the basis of the theoretical framework for this study.

The first part of this chapter examined the role played by technology in creating social phenomena, noting the arguments for the two main philosophical approaches, namely, technological determinism and social constructivism. It was suggested that technological determinism, in its extreme form, is not a useful means of understanding cyberactivism as a social phenomenon in various political contexts. It also argued that changes to collective action behaviour, prompted by the use of the Internet, demonstrate that it is not possible to ignore the influence of technology on social phenomena.

It was noted that Internet use by activists has led to practical changes being made to activism as a social phenomenon, in terms of mobilisation and organisation. This technology has reduced the cost of communication and empowered individuals at the expense of vertical organisations. It has widened and deepened levels of political participation, making this a part of citizens' daily lives, allowing them to engage where, when and how they wish. The Internet has also minimised the need for organisations to launch, lead or co-ordinate campaigns, with individuals taking responsibility for social actions to a degree which was previously impossible.

Bennett and Segerberg's LoCA, a comprehensive theoretical framework which reflects the new forms of cyberactivism, was presented and explained. It was argued that this framework will be a useful means of understanding the impact of Internet technologies on social campaigning in the ND context because it make it possible to understand collective action without there being a clear organisational structure.

These three topics form the foundation for the discussion of the specific role of the Internet in activism in ND states like Saudi Arabia. As noted in the discussion of social constructivism, the role of the Internet cannot be considered without first addressing the systemic environment wherein activism takes place and the following chapter will focus on the role which the Internet plays in ND countries, where it provides not only the tools for activism, but also a new space for activism.

3. CHAPTER THREE: THE INTERNET, DEMOCRATISATION and NON-DEMOCRATIC REGIMES

> The free flow of information is inherently compatible with our political system and values. The Communist states, in contrast, fear this information revolution, perhaps, even more than they fear Western military strength. We all remember the power of the Ayatollah's message disseminated on tape cassettes in Iran; what could have a more profound impact in the Soviet bloc than similar cassettes, outside radio broadcasting, direct broadcast satellites or photocopying machines? Totalitarian societies face a dilemma: either they try to stifle these technologies and thereby fall further behind in the new industrial revolution, or else they permit these technologies and see their totalitarian control inevitably eroded. In fact, they do not have a choice because they will never entirely be able to block the tide of technological advance.
>
> George Shultz, US Secretary of State, (1985:716)

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the literature concerning the first and second research questions on mobilisation and organisation in particular. This chapter focuses on the questions relating to the third area of the thesis; the contextual and systemic environment. The aim is to understand the role of broader social, cultural and political factors in shaping cyberactivism. As noted in the introduction, much of the focus of existing research on Internet activism is premised on the western, liberal, democratic experience. Given that the case studies here relate to the Saudi Arabian experience, the chapter focuses more specifically on the role of the Internet in non-democratic (ND) contexts. It is argued that the Internet helps to promote certain features of democracy, including freedom of speech, in opening up an alternative public sphere, as well as creating a space for new types of media. All of these online features are used to support activism in ND systems which strictly control this within the non-virtual space. Given the overarching role of the Internet in ND contexts, this chapter will also discuss the challenges it presents to ND regimes and their attempts to control Internet usage. Exploring citizens' use of various Internet features and the responses which this elicits from authoritarian regimes will serve to highlight both the advantages of the Internet for activism in ND countries, as well as the threats which cyberactivists can face there.

3.2. Democratisation and the Internet

It has been argued that the growth of the Internet has created the potential for (virtual) public spheres, similar to the original Habermasian concept, (Poster, 1997; Bennett, 2004; Dahlgren, 2005; Benkler, 2006; Papacharissi, 2009; Castells, 2009; Ruiz *et al.*, 2011). Habermas (1991:176), looked at the public sphere (pre-Internet) as it is, "Made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state."

Scholars have noted that people's use of the Internet for creating alternative political spaces can be compared to seventeenth-century coffee houses or the nineteenth- and twentieth-century press, which were used by the public to share their ideas and discuss social issues. Thus, Benkler (2006:213), observes:

> The easy possibility of communicating effectively into the public sphere allows individuals to reorient themselves from passive readers and listeners to potential speakers and participants in a conversation.

In doing so, he recognises interactivity as the feature of the Internet which makes it a public sphere, arguing, "The network allows all citizens to change their relationship to the public sphere." Fung *et al.* (2013), stress that such a development may have even more impact outside established democracies:

> In ND [non-democratic] societies, then, the digitized public sphere will be dramatically more democratic in terms of who speaks and what they say than the public sphere without the Internet as long as it is difficult for authoritarians to control content on the Internet.

Users no longer need to be simply consumers or passive spectators (as with traditional media) but can become creators and primary subjects. Some have even suggested that authoritarian regimes have lost much of their control over the public sphere following the emergence of the Internet (Tufekci, 2015), since simply controlling traditional media and civil society institutions is no longer sufficient in order to control the public sphere in the Internet era. To put it simply, authoritarian regimes cannot rule with an iron fist if they do not have absolute control over the public sphere. To do so, they now need to control the Internet in order to hold sway over the virtual public sphere.

At this broad level, then, it can be claimed that, "The Internet democratises." (Benkler, 2006:272). Like the public sphere, the Internet facilitates the process of democratisation, giving people the ability to create a democratic, online atmosphere in ND countries.

Democracy, as a concept, does not only mean the right to elect the political leadership or the right to vote, "But it is also about reconfiguring relations of power in order to open spaces for pluralism, diversity and inclusiveness." (Pratt, 2005:86).

However, democracy and democratisation as a political process have different definitions. Tilly (2000) argues that the working definitions of democracy can be divided into three categories, all of which share some overlap. These are *substantive criteria*, which deals with human experiences and social relations; *constitutional criteria*, which refers to the legal mechanisms underlying elections and referenda; and *political process*, which covers the actual cut-and-thrust of party politics (Tilly 2000).

He also defined democratisation as a "movement toward broad and equal citizenship, bound to the consultation of its citizens, which protects those citizens from arbitrary state action" (Tilly 2000:01). Both terms' definitions and meanings are related to elements other than those covered by "substantive criteria". In this context Balkin (2004) emphsises that "the forces of democratisation operate not only through regular elections, but through changes in institutions, practices, customs, mannerisms, speech, and dress" (Balkin 2004:33).

Historically, there has been a close correlation between economic growth, including technological development and democratisation. Huntington (1991), pointed to the global economic growth of the 1960s as one of five major factors which contributed to what he called, the 'third-wave transitions to democracy'. Weaver's study of traditional media in 137 countries over 16 years, including ND states such as China, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco, found that the, "Growth of mass communications is important to the growth of participant forms of government and to greater freedom of expression" (1977:169). As a media and communication tool, the Internet can also play a similar, or even greater role in this kind of democratisation. The Internet's interactivity could increase this role, not only in ND countries, but also in reinforcing political engagement and participation in democratic countries, (see Chapter Two).

Many scholars (Rheingold, 1993; Chase & Mulvenon, 2002; Best & Wade, 2009; Diamond, 2010; Howard, 2011; Khazaeli and Stockemer, 2013; Shirky, 2008 and 2011) have acknowledged the role of the Internet in promoting some basic principles of democracy. Specifically, Khazaeli and Stockemer (2013), found a positive relationship between high rates of Internet penetration[1] and the quality of political institutions, on the grounds that the Internet can create a space for political expression and provide citizens with information. Philip Howard also clearly states that:

> Democracy—and democratisation—can no longer be effectively studied without some attention paid to the role of digital information technologies. Not only does the character of this infrastructure have an impact on the opportunity structures for political change and the range of possible outcomes, but the technologies themselves support new forums for political discussion and are themselves politicized media, (2011:132).

Similarly, McNair (2006:162) claims that, "There is clearly a correlation between the evolution of NICTs [New Information and Communication Technologies] and the decline of authoritarianism across the world." whilst Miazhevich (2015:434) notes, "In semi-authoritarian states, the Internet can potentially offer an alternative space outside the restricted political public sphere."

Papacharissi (2009:244), emphasises the contribution that the Internet has made more generally to political engagement, asserting that:

> Online protest, expressing political opinion on blogs, viewing or posting content on YouTube, or posting a comment in an online discussion group represents an expression of dissent with a public agenda, determined by mainstream media and political actors.

She then further claims that actions of this type made by the public mean that:

> [The] citizen engages and is enabled politically through a private media environment located within the individual's personal and private space. Whereas in the truest iterations of democracy, the citizen was enabled through the public sphere, in contemporary democracy, the citizen acts politically from a private sphere of reflection, expression, and behaviour, (Papacharissi, 2009:244).

Tang and Huhe (2013), argue that such optimistic views about the Internet's role in ND countries are essentially built on three tenets. The first of these is the belief that the Internet facilitates access to information and challenges control of information, imposed by authoritarian regimes. The Internet makes it easier for citizens to express their views about corruption and social injustice because it allows them to do so anonymously and in a fast, low-cost environment, (see Chapter Two). The second core tenet involves the ease with which digital technologies allow political movements to challenge an existing regime through cyberactivism, by organising actions, mobilising people and obtaining information. The third and final tenet is that by facilitating the free flow of information, creating an alternative environment for social interaction and deliberation, and acting as a means of communication between activists, the Internet can foster civil societies that have often previously been absent or nascent.

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[1] Internet penetration rates refer to, "The relationship between the number of Internet users in each country and its demographic data." (Dictionary Search).

In the following sections, therefore, we discuss in more detail, the impact of the Internet on ND societies with respect to these three aspects: freedom of expression; online media; and cyberactivism.

3.2.1. Freedom of expression

Reports from international organisations like ‘Reporters without Borders’, continually highlight the lack of freedom of expression in ND countries. Balkin (2004), however, claims that two of the key characteristics of the Internet, its interactivity and appropriative nature, might possibly offer a means of providing this freedom of speech. As we saw in Chapter Two, by using the Internet, individuals from different backgrounds are able to interact with each other, sharing ideas and thoughts. In this way, citizens build a cultural resource which leads to appropriate behaviour, where dissenters share or criticise what they dislike in order to encourage cultural innovation within a society (Balkin, 2004). Clearly, the Internet offers this interactive and appropriative environment in various ways via blogs, online comments on news and social media, for example.

By providing an alternative means of expression and interaction with others, the Internet allows citizens to express themselves without the need for traditional mass media. Theoretically, this means of expression can be free from the control of the authorities. Internet users can share their views and ideas directly with large numbers of individuals at little cost, with no need for traditional media, using only the Internet (Balkin, 2004). This process of deliberation amongst citizens can be considered as a phase in the process of democratisation.

In the ND state setting, the freedom of speech provided by the Internet has influenced societies and consequently, national politics to a certain degree, as exemplified by the case of China (Herol and Marolt, 2011; Shirk, 2011; Yang, 2013; Sautede, 2013). Yang (2013), for example, argues that online expression there reaffirmed people’s values by means of what could be called a ‘recursive process’ in which those communities which value openness, solidarity and justice find their way to the Internet via other users. Therefore, the more people see these values, the more they are reaffirmed.

This relatively free environment encourages greater numbers of citizens to use it for the purpose of political participation, as is the case in democratic countries (Bolsover *et al.,* 2013; Bimber, 2003; Al Nashmi *et al*., 2010). Citizens in democratic countries have other means of expressing themselves, including public demonstrations and the traditional media. In contrast, in those ND countries where the citizenry has limited or no means of expressing opinions publically, the Internet has become a lifeline and the principle means of expression.

In addition, online freedom of speech can influence authoritarian governments when people have this outlet to express themselves. In reference to China, Qiang (2011), stated:

> We are starting to see new compromise, negotiation, and rule-changing behaviours in the regime's response to this challenge, indicating the possibility of more open and accountable governance with greater citizen participation, (Qiang, 2011:60).

As Qiang argues, the Internet is not simply about freedom of expression. More importantly, this freedom of expression has the power to influence political systems to some degree and make them enact changes in their behaviour in response to citizens' claims and criticism.

The fact that the Internet offers a relatively open environment for freedom of expression has led to it being used in numerous ways, all of which potentially contribute to the democratisation process in ND countries. In order to consider the literature on the role of the Internet in ND countries, the following sections will examine the 'blogosphere', social media, citizen journalism and online journalism. It is argued that these outlets form the axis of cyberactivism, since they are used for mobilisation and organisation as elucidated in Chapter Two.

3.2.2. New Media Outlets

The alternative public sphere and freedom of expression, as well as the technology itself, can be said to have created a new type of media outlet including blogs, social networks, Indymedia, citizen journalism and new media organisations. This section examines how these outlets relate to the practice of cyberactivism.

3.2.3. Blogs and social networks

Blogs and social networks give citizens free access to upload and share their views with the public, with little or no interference from the authorities. They provide people in ND countries with what might be their only means of expressing themselves freely. In its annual report, *The Internet Enemies 2010,* Reporters without Borders shows that bloggers are more active in countries with ND regimes, (*The Internet Enemies, 2010*).

In this context, Iran makes an interesting case study in relation to the power and spread of blogging. The authoritarian situation in the government and the media led to an explosion in the number of Iranian blogs on the Internet. In 2005, Golkar found that half of the Persian language on the Internet was found in Iranian blogs. Moreover, other studies have ranked Iran as second, fourth or seventh in the number of blogs worldwide, (Kelly & Etling, 2008), depending on the criteria and ranking systems used. In 2008, the number of blogs in Iran was estimated at 700,000, and at least 100,000 were still active,(Chiesa, 2008). Different points of view and various ideologies not represented in the traditional media in Iran can be found in this blogging community. Kelly’s study (2008) suggested that there are at least four distinct sectors of the Iranian blogosphere, namely: secular/reformist; conservative/religious; Persian poetry and literature; mixed networks. Whilst it is understandable that the Iranian regime and its traditional media would prefer to represent all Iranians as conservative supporters of theocracy, the state’s bloggers have shown that this is clearly not the case, (Golkar, 2005).

In another example from the former Soviet bloc countries, Kulikova and Perlmutter (2007), found that during the revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, bloggers played a crucial role in supporting citizens with information, comments, analysis and alternative interpretations of media stories.

Interestingly, while these examples exemplify the importance of blogging in ND societies, it is worth noting that blogging activities and corresponding academic studies of blogging have been declining since 2010. This can perhaps be explained by the rise in popularity of social media such as YouTube, where vloggers can express themselves visually rather than in writing. In addition, Twitter can also be viewed as a form of micro-blogging, with individuals sharing their ideas in just 140 characters, as can Facebook, (Rainie, cited in Kopytoff, 2011)

Internet discussion forums also played a similar role to that of blogging, serving as a place for free expression and political debate. It has been suggested that one of the most distinctive features of online forums was their ability to, "Generate focused and meaningful interaction." (Hamilton & Feenberg, 2012:55). One of the earliest examples of an online forum being used as an open space for public discussion in an authoritarian regime occurred in Indonesia; it is almost certain that online discussion forums existed there in the 1990's when the country was under President Suharto's rule,(Marcus, 1998; Sen and Hill, 2007; Lim, 2009). In addition to a number of other factors, the Internet can be said to have contributed to the fall of Suharto's dictatorship in 1998, mainly by helping citizens to communicate and share their thoughts about political issues in a free space, avoiding the media controlled by Suharto's regime.

In some Arab countries, online forums are largely used for political discussion. According to Al Nashmi *et al.* (2010), Arabs regard the Internet mainly as a political discussion platform. They observed that:

> Almost every news event in 2006 – from the many conflicts and wars in the Middle East to the Republican loss of a majority in the US Congress – was discussed. Arab Internet users were not shy or reluctant to engage in any sort of political debate, (Al Nashmi *et al*., 2010:731).

This research highlights the role of the Internet in opening up a space for political discussions, which relates not only to issues within the region but also to political news from all over the world.

3.2.4. New types of journalism

Mass communication can play a vital role as a democratising agent and a watchdog over public authorities (Lichtenberg, 1990; McNair, 2006), but the role of the media differs from one political system to another. Perhaps the best description of the role of media within different political systems can still be found in Siebert *et al.*'s '*Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do'*, (1956). They noted that in authoritarian regimes, the media are generally privately owned, but 'guided' by the state which effectively decides on the degree of freedom that they are given within its system. So the state itself sets the limits of media freedom. This theory can still be applied to countries in the Arab world in particular, (Al-Ghazzi 2014).

The Internet has clearly created a space for media through citizen journalism and by allowing new news organisations to be formed online. The following two sections will address both these types of outlets.

3.2.5. Citizen journalism and indymedia

Individual citizens, or groups of citizens, now have the opportunity to practise journalism to professional journalistic standards, and some studies suggest that this kind of 'amateur' journalism is now able to compete with mainstream, traditional journalism, (Goode 2009). The literature refers to journalistic practice by non-professionally trained individuals by a number of different terms, but mainly it is dubbed 'Citizen Journalism', (Kern and Nam, 2009; Kaufhold *et al*., 2010; Ali and Fahmy, 2013; Al-Ghazzi, 2014; Gillespie, 2013), although others refer to this trend as 'Participatory Journalism', (Moyo, 2011; Karlsson *et al*., 2015).

Both these terms are used to refer to the, "Range of web-based practices, whereby, 'ordinary' users engage in journalistic practices." (Goode, 2009:1293). Goode argues that, "Certain characteristics of citizen journalism appear to present interesting possibilities for a reinvigorated public culture." (2009:1292).

Regardless of the differences in terminology, it is clear that authors focus on two specific characteristics: 'journalistic practices' and 'made by ordinary people', emphasising how the Internet allows citizens to essentially form their own media outlet. In citizen journalism, people do not simply express themselves but use similar practices to those found in traditional newsrooms, (Weiss 2015): reporting news, investigating issues and filming events. Citizens, using the power of journalism, can help independent media converge with the contemporary, monopolised media environment within different political systems.

The most explicit example of this practice is the Salam Pax blog,[1] the diary-like accounts of daily life in Baghdad during the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, published by an Iraqi architect. The blog became a source for international journalists who wanted to know what was going on in Iraq under Saddam Hussein's regime. The blogger later became a columnist for *The Guardian* and went on to publish a book containing the blog entries, (McNair, 2009). Similarly, the Egyptian blogger, Wael Abbas, started collecting and publishing videos showing police brutality in Egypt, (Saleh, 2012). Such blogs can be said to be practising journalism more than simply expressing personal views.

Some researchers have argued that the practice of citizen journalism has influenced the agenda of the traditional media, (Goode, 2009; Ahy, 2014;Castells, 2007), which is now incorporating some citizen journalism practices into its own news coverage. 'Guardian Witness' for example, is a platform belonging to *The Guardian* newspaper which allows people to write news stories or send in photographs relating to events in the news. This allows citizen journalists in areas of political unrest, a space to post their thoughts in traditional media. At the same time, it means that *The Guardian* can provide reports from conflict zones without sending its own reporters, rather, using coverage from citizen journalists instead. Without the Internet, citizens in Syria would find it hard to show the scale of destruction caused by the war between the authoritarian regime and the rebels, (Al-Ghazzi, 2014).

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[1] Salam Pax is available at: http://salampax.wordpress.com and http://dear_raed.blogspot.co.uk.

A number of studies have addressed the role played by citizen journalists in reporting the conflict in those countries involved in the Arab Spring and the Iranian uprising in 2009, including those by Wojcieszak and Smith (2014), Ali and Fahmy (2013), Ahy (2014) and Al-Ghazzi (2014). The use of the Internet by citizen journalists has made borders more permeable. This may make it harder for regimes to control the flow of information internationally. Internet and citizen journalism in particular, provide a window on countries where journalists from the conventional media cannot get access to conflict and closed areas.

Additionally, the Internet not only allows citizens to practise journalism as individuals but also allows ordinary people to group together as news-gathering organisations by means of the so-called 'Indymedia'. This online practice has been more clearly defined by Pickard (2006) as, "An interactive news website, a global network and a radically democratic organization." (Pickard, 2006:317). Indymedia.org, which was the first of its kind, was established on 27th October, 1999 by, "Various independent and alternative media organizations and activists in 1999, for the purpose of providing grassroots coverage of the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle." (Indymedia n.d.). They define their websites as:

> [A] network of collectively run media outlets for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of the truth. We work out of a love and inspiration for people who continue to work for a better world, despite corporate media's distortions and unwillingness to cover the efforts to free humanity, (Indymedia n.d.).

Chapter One touched on the limitations of the news flow, noting that the Internet allows campaigners to use the Internet as media. Indymedia websites across the world became the voice of activism. Chapter Two also highlighted the problematic relationship between conventional media and activists. Activists can now avoid this problematic relationship by using Indymedia and other online outlets.

Independent news websites currently enjoy high rates of credibility among citizens and, in some cases, higher credibility than their traditional counterparts, (Bosch, 2010; Chung and Nah, 2013). Furthermore, independent news websites are free from the commercial interests of advertisers, (Platon and Deuze, 2003) and from the political pressures exerted over traditional media.

Bowman and Willis's (2003) description of participatory journalism summarises the role which this can play in democratisation in the following terms:

> The act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide the independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires […] Participatory journalism is a bottom-up, emergent phenomenon in which there is little or no editorial oversight or formal journalistic work-flow dictating the decisions of a staff. Instead, it is the result of many simultaneous, distributed conversations that either blossom or quickly atrophy in the Web's social network, (Bowman and Willis, 2003).

In the broadest sense, the importance of citizen journalism is to allow ordinary people to tell their stories and present their views to the world without the limitations imposed by traditional media and authoritarian regimes.

3.2.6. New media organisations

The digital revolution also made it easier for people to establish their own media organisations online, without a great need for licensing and state permission. In many ND countries, media organisations are subject to complicated terms and conditions when publishing information. It also means adhering to the power of the authorities which may withdraw a license for any reason at any time, as in the Saudi case documented by AlEnizi, (2003).

Today, there are a number of independent news organisations online. Some Pan-Arab and Chinese news websites such as Altagreer[1], Arabi21[2] and the China Digital Times[3], are all based online only and provide a good illustration of free, online news websites. No information is provided about website ownership nor editorial staff and they have no physical address. Furthermore, with some exceptions, sources and data collection are mainly online and sources are usually unnamed. Both the Arab and Chinese examples use English language news websites for newsgathering. The voices of Chinese citizens are translated into English to be accessible to a wider audience. The China Digital Times declares that one of its aims is to attempt to reveal, “The hidden mechanisms of state censorship by collecting and translating filtered keywords, propaganda directives and official rhetoric.”(China Digital Times n.d.).

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[1] Altagreer is available at: http://altagreer.com.

[2] Arabia21 is available at: http://arabi21.com

[3] China Digital Times is available at: http://chinadigitaltimes.net

3.3. Cyberactivism

Thus far, we have shown the Internet creates a potential public sphere and provides relatively higher levels of freedom of expression in ND countries compared to the level of freedom of expression afforded by the conventional media.

The Internet has provided activists with a considerable number of tools which they can use to promote their mobilisational and organisational demands. It can make a real difference in the ND context, by speeding up the distribution of information to allow mobilisation to take place and by cutting the costs of mass communication for activists. In addition, it can offer freedom of expression, as mentioned in the previous sections. It is argued here that, if the Internet can act as a useful facilitator of activism in democratic countries, it can be used to create a space, or totally new environment, for activism in ND countries.

Aouragh and Alexander (2011), have emphasised that it is important to distinguish between the use of the Internet as a tool and the role of the Internet as a space for activism, (Aouragh & Alexander 2011). The notion of activism contradicts the principles of many ND regimes. Subsequently, any type of offline activism, such as demonstrations or strikes, are often against the law in ND countries, or are suppressed by the authorities on the grounds they represent a threat to civil order. One of the most striking examples of the Internet’s role in activism in ND states is the Egyptian case during the Arab Spring. A large and growing body of literature has investigated Internet activism during the Arab Spring in general, and the Egyptian case in particular, (Aouragh & Alexander 2011); Lynch, 2011; Rane &Salem, 2012). Although not all scholars agree upon the exact causes of the uprising, or what role, if any, the Internet actually played, all these studies regarded the Internet as having played a role in the mobilisation and organisation of popular protest.

The Day of Rage, January 25th, 2011, was generally considered to be the catalyst for the Egyptian revolution. Importantly, the precursors to the revolution started as early as 2004, with Egyptians feeling, "Fed up with the degree of corruption, dictatorship, economic distress and humiliation they had been suffering for a long time." (Khamis and Vaughn, 2011: n.p). A number of both online and offline activities contributed to the Day of Rage. There was a growth in digital political activities (Howard *et al.*, 2011), with the appearance of Facebook pages for the April 6th Youth Movement in 2008, (Tufekci and Wilson, 2012; Röder & Rinke, 2011) and the launch of *Kullena Khaled Said,* (We are all Khaled Said) in 2010, (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011; Etling *et al.,* 2010; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Hirst, 2012). The Egyptian Movement for Change, *Kefaya* (Enough), was also involved in offline and online activities between 2004 and 2008, (Salah Fahmi, 2009; Mellor, 2007; Howard *et al.,* 2011). There was also evidence of blogging and citizen journalist activities.

Some scholars argue that the roots of the Arab Spring, including the Egyptian revolution, date back to pre-2004 and that it was the result of corruption, a dictatorial regime and related domestic issues, but certainly there had been a:

> Decades-long history of social and political protest in Egypt, starting with the mobilizations in solidarity with the Second Intifada, and the U.S. (and British) invasion of Iraq, which led to huge protests expressing anger at leaders seen as the local lackeys of the U.S. and Israel, (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011:1346).

The causes of the Egyptian revolution highlight the need to examine the influence of systemic environment on Internet uses for activism.

Generally, the literature shows that the Internet played a number of significant roles in the Egyptian revolution. It shaped political debates by providing people with information that could not be obtained elsewhere, as well as opening up a free space for discussion. Both of these elements, provided by different Internet platforms, allowed citizens from different demographic groups to participate in political debates in light of information provided by activists online, (Salah Fahmi, 2009; Howard *et al.*, 2011; Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; Aouragh & Alexander, 2011).

Secondly, the Internet fostered solidarity among the Egyptian protesters. For instance, the Internet was used to obtain legal assistance for those who were arrested by the police, (Ishani, 2011). When it was shut down by the Egyptian government for five days, activists collected information about the uprising and then contacted other Egyptians abroad to tweet and post on behalf of activists in the country who could not participate online, (Aouragh and Alexander, 2011). In addition, the Internet gave activists a chance to address the entire world and engage with like-minded activists. For example, activists had training with the Kenyan NGO, *Ushahidi,* to learn how to capture footage and report videos online, (Ishani, 2011). Moreover, even those Egyptian citizens who did not use the Internet themselves were influenced by those who did, and so participated in the demonstrations, (Iskander, 2011, cited in Khamis and Vaughn, 2011); the classic, indirect effect or two-step flow of communication. Furthermore, existing Internet features gave activists an alternative media outlet. Using Facebook pages, protesters used to update followers with the latest news as well as the locations of demonstrations. Photographs and videos of tortured citizens were also uploaded to address the international media, (Salah Fahmi, 2009; Röder and Rinke, 2011; Hofheinz, 2011).

The Egyptian case provides a particularly good example of the role played by the Internet in a ND country. It shows that Internet users were able to create a space where they could circulate information and air opinions which could not have been circulated or aired by any other means, giving them an alternative, relatively free media. Information and discussion in the alternative media led to mobilisation and organisation for action against the political system. This demonstrates that the Internet can help activists and ordinary people to participate in politics in both online and offline activities. Through these activities, the Internet fostered solidarity among the participants which ultimately led to a political change, with Mubarak stepping down and a new president being elected.[1]

3.4. Cultural Shaping of Communication

While the previous sections addressed the role of the Internet in democratisation and how it facilitates activism in a ND context, it is important to state that the Internet is still limited by governments and other social factors, which in turn shape the activists' communications. That means the participant's beliefs and social attitudes still play a crucial role in shaping the communication culture and the use of the Internet. This can be seen in both democratic and

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[1] After the so-called January 25th Revolution, the then President, Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, stepped down and handed power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces on February 11th 2011. On June 24th 2012 Mohammad Morsi was declared the winner of the presidential election. However, on July 3rd 2013 the Minister of Defence, General Abdel Fattah El-Sis, overthrew Morsi and became Egypt's new president.

ND contexts, and, hence, scholars have addressed the issue using various approaches and in different terms. These include communication culture (Kavada, 2013), cultures of participation (Porta & Mattoni, 2012), framing (Karagiannis, 2009), and media perception (Mattoni, 2013). Kavada stresses that

> The Internet is only one component of a movement's communication ecology, so the cultures underlying a movement's Internet use are linked to those driving its communication practices in other media and forms of communication, including face-to-face contact (Kavada 2013:77).

According to Kavada the concept of communication cultures refers to the influences that shape activists' engagement within the protest ecology. These include the boundaries and taboos regarding what should be discussed, and how that discussion can progress. The culture also relates to the infrastructure, both in terms of hardware and apps, as well as meeting places and offline discussion. For example, Karagiannis (2009) who considered Hizballah (Party of God) to be a social movement with an armed wing, indicates that the members of this movement prefer mosques for face-to-face interaction when meeting potential participants. Mosques in this case are a part of Hizballah's cultural space, and the members' ideology and culture is strongly linked with this space, which may not be used for face-to-face meetings by other movements with a different culture.

Put simply, 'communication cultures' refers to the framework governing communication with others. It involves who talks to whom, what can be discussed, and how, in addition to what content can be produced. It also relates to activists' attitudes to the consumption of other media.

Organisations are formed socially from a web of ongoing discussions that sets the "reality" for those involved. It is then through these conversations that definitions, meanings and direction can be established? The production and consumption of media, group communications, along with the topics, frames and discourses, all merge to represent the communication culture of a movement (Mann 2015).

Porta and Mattoni (2012) identify three dimensions in activists' media practices, namely, collectiveness, openness and possession, demonstrating how these are used to help categorise cultures and participation therein.

The first of these dimensions, *degree of collectiveness*, focuses on the creation of alternative media outlets and technological infrastructures, and activists are either involved in "the collective production of alternative media outlets" or "individual participation in the creation of alternative media outlets and texts" (Porta & Mattoni, 2012).

The second dimension, *degree of openness,* relates to in content creation, and (Della Porta & Mattoni, 2012) argue that in activists' media practices "there are those alternative media outlets that are easily accessible and, as such, can be considered open to a variety of contributions. At the other of the axis, there are those alternative media outlets that tend to revolve around a small, closely knit group of activists" (Della Porta & Mattoni, 2012).

The third axis, the *degree of possession,* covers the media or technological infrastructure, and they suggest that at one end of this dimension "there are individual activists or activist groups that use media outlets not situated in the social movement milieu" whilst at the other "there are individual activists and activist groups that decide to employ alternative media outlets and technological infrastructures that could be positioned within social movement milieu".

With regards to the strategic, organising and decision-making culture of participants in movements, Kavada argues that this is "underlined by specific ideations, values and beliefs". Strategic culture "concerns the understandings that pervade the efforts of social movements to transform society" (Kavada 2013:79) and involves their view of social transformation, their type of politics, and their forms of mobilisation. Organising cultures refers to the "beliefs that drive social movements' preferences for specific organising methods and structures" (Kavada 2013:79). This involves the degree of formality, degree of centralisation, degree of hierarchy, degree of professionalisation, and leadership and lines of control, which is similar to the dimensions outlined above.

In this context, Hara and Shachaf's (2008) study of peace movement websites in two different countries found that culture is a major influencer on organisational strategy, specifically in regards to leadership. In one country the peace movements "used leaders with political or military credentials, which provided credibility for the organisation's existence and its activities" (Hara & Shachaf 2008:60). In the other country, websites were used to forge leaderless resistance, which refers to a "technique for fighting an incumbent government using self-organising clandestine cells" (Garfinkel, 2003 cited in Hara & Shachaf 2008:60).

3.5. State Responses to the Internet

Despite all the research concerning the important role of the Internet in modern social life and in the ND context in particular, a number of researchers, including Morozov (2012; 2013), Bueno de Mesquita (2005) and Gladwell (2010), believe that the Internet's potential and its role in political and social change has been over-exaggerated. Morozov argues in his book, *The Net Delusion,* that:

> Much of the present excitement about the Internet, particularly the high hopes that are pinned on it in terms of opening up closed societies, stems from such selective and, at times, incorrect readings of history, rewritten to glorify the genius of Ronald Reagan and minimize the role of structural conditions and the inherent contradictions of the Soviet system, (2012: xii).

Morozov categorises scholars as cyber-utopianists, Internet-centrists and cyber-realists and believes that the first two of these groups hold mistaken views about the potential of the Internet. He explains that:

> While cyber-utopianism stipulates what has to be done, Internet-centrism stipulates how it should be done. Internet-centrists like to answer every question about democratic change by first reframing it in terms of the Internet rather than the context in which that change is to occur, (2012: 214),

According to Morozov, the reason for this lies in the fact that they are:

> Oblivious to the highly political nature of technology and like to come up with strategies that assume that the logic of the Internet which in most cases, they are the only ones to perceive, will shape every environment that it penetrates rather than vice-versa, (2012: xvi).

Hence, Morozov suggests the ideal way to approach the Internet is as a 'cyber-realist', which means not searching for technological solutions to problems that are political in nature and not pretending that such solutions are even possible, (Morozov, 2012: 529-49).

In essence, Morozov is criticising the philosophy of technological determinism (see Chapter Two), as well as underlining the importance of the systemic environment in shaping the use of technology. However, he states clearly that, "The Internet does matter, but we simply don't know how it matters." (2012:711), indicating that he has no clear answers concerning the exact nature of the Internet's role in social and political change. Morozov is far from being alone in his scepticism. Rod and Weidmann (2015), for example, also have their concerns about the role of the Internet. Far from being uncontrollable, they argue that governments and companies still attempt to minimise any Internet democratising influences through a variety of means from technological to social controls. Similarly, Kalathil and Boas (2003:05), describe optimistic studies about the Internet's role in democratisation as, "Impressionistic and anecdotal, falling prey to the pitfalls of the conventional wisdom." They argue that the Internet often empowered regimes against citizens and armed such governments with a new tool to suppress citizens, who have little or no power to use this technology in their favour.

Generally, Gunitsky (2015:02), presents four mechanisms: counter-mobilisation; discourse framing; preference divulgence; elite co-ordination. These support the notion that the Internet is, in fact, a tool of regime entrenchment rather than democratisation.

With respect to the first mechanism, Gunitsky (2015), argues that, despite the fact that social media in particular, is used to campaign against autocratic regimes, the regime's own supporters use counter-campaigns to bolster their legitimacy, (2.5.6). The second mechanism, 'discourse framing', involves using the Internet to frame nationalist discourse as would be the case with traditional media but doing this by using ordinary people who may benefit from the regime such as military, business elites and people motivated by patriotism. It is thus similar to propaganda in conventional media but takes on a more personalised form. The third mechanism is the 'preference divulgence' of public grievances. In autocratic regimes, the complaints and reports of local corruption made by people online via the Internet can act as a feedback tool for rulers, helping them in two ways. On the one hand, rulers can respond to some of these complaints to show that they are receptive to people's concerns. At the same time, this helps rulers to gain more information about the effectiveness of local elites (the fourth mechanism). In a similar way, the Internet expert who was based in Beijing clearly stated, "Since China never had mechanisms to accurately detect and reflect public opinion, blogs and BBS have become an effective route to form and communicate such public opinions of the society." (Yong, 2005, cited in Qiang, 2011).

In this context, (King *et al*., 2013), analysed nearly 1400 different social media services in China and found that the Chinese Government allowed some kind of freedom of expression. For example, criticism of leaders, or of the state, is more likely not to be censored or removed. The research indicates that the censorship programme's aim is to reduce the content that calls for collective action. Researchers stated, "Chinese people are individually free but collectively in chains." (King *et al.,* 2013).

What should be noted here is that while the optimists' view acknowledges the power of regimes over the Internet, the pessimists' view seems to deny citizens the power to oppose regimes using the Internet. This way of assessing the role of the Internet in democratisation leads to an identical debate about the role of technology in social phenomena and about who has control, as discussed in Chapter Two. Moreover, it seems that this way of understanding the role of the Internet in democratisation is illogical for two reasons. First, it considers democracy as a homogenous bloc, meaning that it is viewed merely as having the right to elect one’s government whilst, in reality, as later discussion will demonstrate, democracy is much more than this. Secondly, it equates democracy, which is a political process, with the Internet, which is technology. In other words, democracy is a complex, political process; it cannot be measured by specific outcomes such as the presence of a democratic ‘electoral system’ and it cannot happen overnight.

The Internet serves as a battlefield between governments and citizens, regardless of their respective goals for using the Internet. There is no absolute victory. Clearly, the use of the Internet by citizens has turned this into an alternative public space and it can be to be more conducive to their needs than that of governments which are better served by the ‘offline’ public sphere.

Eid (2008), emphasises that the meaning of ‘democratisation’ in the Arab world does not have the same meaning as in the West, since leadership exchanges between political parties, “Have not yet taken root anywhere in the Arab world.” (Eid 2008:47). He stressed that even though there is no fully democratic system amongst the Arab nations, a number of them have experienced a degree of political liberalism.

Likewise, Howard (2011), agrees that authoritarian regimes may have some elements of democracy but may not be a ‘full democracy’. He states:

> Democratic outcomes can take several forms. If a country is somewhat authoritarian, it can experience a democratic transition where there are marked improvements in regime transparency over a relatively short period of time, (Howard, 2011:189).

Importantly, citizens’ use of the Internet does not provide them with the absolute power to change the whole political system; however, by using it, they can improve some of its aspects which may lead to democratisation, such as providing an open space for discussion and encouraging online political participation.

Both Howard and Eid agree that, even in those cases where there is no ‘full’ democracy, there is at least evidence of some steps being taken towards liberalisation and democratisation. This indicates that the Internet may not help people to enact a full democratic transition, but it may, at least, establish some elements within these authoritarian regimes. In short, the Internet’s role in democracy is not a zero-sum game but is a new battleground for democratic rights.

3.5.1. The dictator's dilemma

As we have seen, whilst the Internet can threaten authoritarian regimes politically, in the international business world, technology is becoming indispensable for economic development. Consequently, some commentators have referred to the so-called Dictator's Dilemma, (Kedzie 1997). This can be summarised as follows:

> The dictator may be stuck with a stark choice between securing the rewards of either the invisible hand or the iron fist, market success or social control. The mutual exclusivity of the options pivots on information and communication media. These guide the hand yet weaken the fist, (Kedzie, 1997:n.p).

According to Kedzie, dictatorial regimes find themselves between a rock and a hard place: either they lose the opportunity for economic growth or they lose control over the public sphere. This mutual exclusivity leads to weakening the dictator's control and operates in favour of citizens. However, Saleh (2012:482), argues that Kedzie has merely simplified the stance of authoritarian regimes, as regimes can both benefit from the Internet and be negatively affected by it simultaneously. Shirky (2011), prefers to use Briggs' description of the 'conservative dilemma', since the Internet presents a problem, "Not only to autocrats but also to democratic governments and to religious and business leaders." (Shirky, 2011:36).

Similarly, Diamond emphasises that:

> Democrats and autocrats now compete to master these technologies [the Internet]. Ultimately, however, not just technology but political organization and strategy and deep-rooted normative, social, and economic forces will determine who 'wins' the race, (2010:70).

Nevertheless, the weakening of authoritarian regimes by the Internet is by no means inevitable. In Cuba, for example, Boas (2000), concluded that, despite the development of information and communication technologies, the Internet has not challenged the political system. The same was true in Singapore because the government had, "Staunched much of the Internet's potential as a medium for political expression." (Kalathil and Shanthi and Boas, 2003:97). Boas goes on to explain:

> The introduction of the Internet in any authoritarian country may present a new set of challenges to the regime, but its actual impact will be mediated by intervening social factors among them, the way that the government chooses to regulate the technology. Authoritarian regimes will base their approach to the Internet, and specific regulation strategy, on the combination of threats and benefits that they perceive from the medium, (Boas 2000:65).

Boas' argument, as mentioned above, seems to be still valid since these authoritarian regimes have strategies to deal with the threat posed by the Internet through using tools such as counter-campaigns and online propaganda to minimise its impact.

Yet, neither Morozov's negative view, which underestimates the role of the Internet, nor those of others, which exaggerate the Internet's positive impact on democratisation and challenging political systems, are fully accurate. As Boas observed, the Internet presents challenges for both ND and democratic regimes alike. Indeed, research indicates that almost all governments have introduced policies to confront various Internet threats in the form of terrorism, pornography, theft of intellectual property and the like.

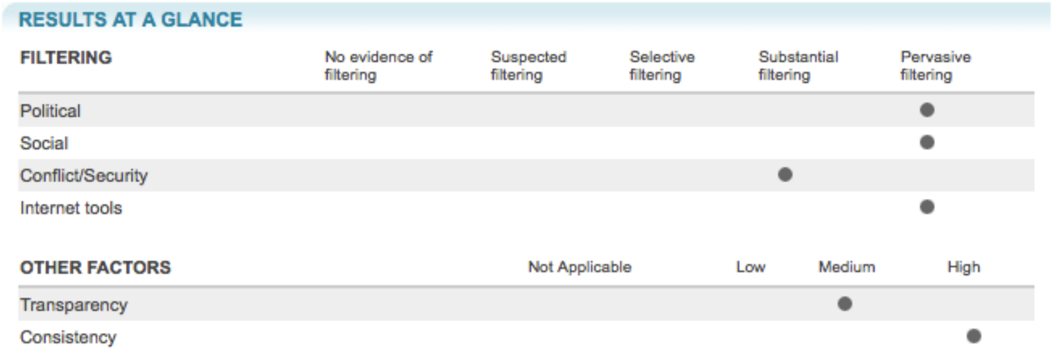
3.5.1.1. Surveillance and censorship

Globally, the dilemma posed by the Internet has produced a range of different strategies and policies. Some countries monitor and take online action, whilst others only censor the Internet, taking offline action when judged necessary. The following section will examine different types of practices and policies which have emerged to lessen the impact of the Dictator's Dilemma.

There are a growing number of organisations and research institutions which have developed more accurate methodologies for analysing Internet freedom and government practices to limit this. One of these is the 'OpenNet Initiative', whose aim is to, "Investigate, expose and analyse Internet filtering and surveillance practices in a credible and non-partisan fashion." (OpenNet, n.d). Two other organisations: 'Freedom House' (Freedom on the Net) and 'Reporters without Borders' (Enemies of the Internet), also publish reports using their own methodologies to measure and study freedom of expression on the Internet and government responses to citizen practices. Such reports and methodologies provide more nuanced ways of looking at Internet analysis than the traditional *soft* and *hard* approach.

The OpenNet Initiative appears to have the most clearly explained methodology for measuring and identifying government methods to tackle Internet threats. It identifies four forms of Internet censorship: technical blocking, search result removals, take-down and induced self-censorship. The methodology which it uses is helpful in gaining a nuanced understanding of the differences between censorship and surveillance practices in democratic countries. Tables 3.1 and 3.2, produced by OpenNet, show the filtering profiles for one ND country (Iran) and one democratic country (Italy), allowing for a meaningful comparison to be made.

Table 1: Internet Censorship by the Iranian Authorities



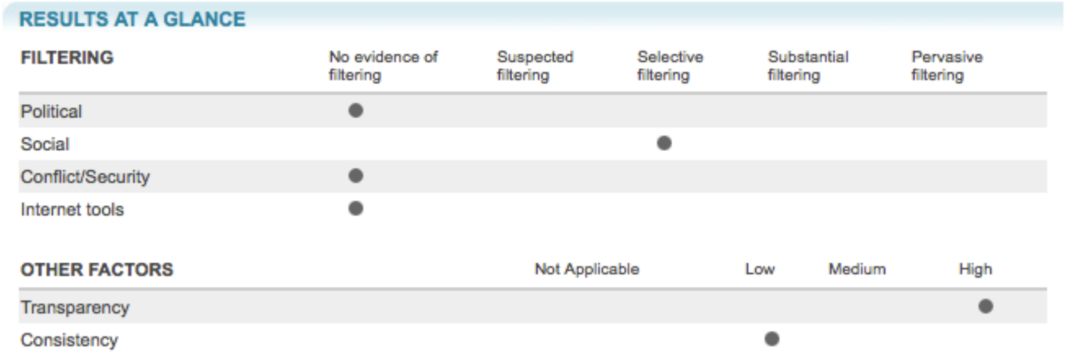
RESULTS AT A GLANCE

FILTERING	No evidence of filtering	Suspected filtering	Selective filtering	Substantial filtering	Pervasive filtering
Political					●
Social					●
Conflict/Security				●	
Internet tools					●

OTHER FACTORS	Not Applicable	Low	Medium	High
Transparency			●	
Consistency				●

Note. Retrieved from: OpenNet, 2009

Table 2: Internet Censorship by the Italian Authorities



RESULTS AT A GLANCE

FILTERING	No evidence of filtering	Suspected filtering	Selective filtering	Substantial filtering	Pervasive filtering
Political	●				
Social			●		
Conflict/Security	●				
Internet tools	●				

OTHER FACTORS	Not Applicable	Low	Medium	High
Transparency				●
Consistency		●		

Table 3: Internet Censorship Measurement according to OpenNet

Filtering type	Definition
Selective filtering:	Narrowly targeted filtering that blocks a small number of specific sites across a few categories or filtering that targets a single category or issue
Pervasive filtering	Filtering that is characterized by both its depth — a blocking regime that blocks a large portion of the targeted content in a given category — and its breadth — a blocking regime that includes filtering in several categories in a given theme
Substantial filtering	Narrowly targeted filtering that blocks a small number of specific sites across a few categories or filtering that targets a single category or issue
Suspected filtering	Connectivity abnormalities are present that suggest the presence of filtering, although diagnostic work was unable to confirm conclusively that inaccessible Web sites are the result of deliberate tampering.

Note. Retrieved from: OpenNet, 2010

Examples from two different countries, Jordan and China, will serve to clarify the difference between selective and pervasive filtering. The former country employs selective filtering of political content on the Internet, meaning that the only political website that Jordan blocks is arabtimes.com because this is judged unacceptable on the grounds that it criticizes Arab leaders (opennet). Thus, Jordan does not block all political websites or all political websites targetting audiences in the Arab world. China, on the other hand, employs pervasive filtering which entails targets as many political websites as possible across a wide range of categories including "foreign and international" news websites (opennet). Moreover, according to Opennet, China censors content considered to include "sensitive keywords", enabling it to conduct filtering in both depth and breadth (Opennet). In other words, it tries to censor all political content regardless of the source if the content is not judged to match the Chinese government's ideology. These examples from Jordan and China illustrate how selective and pervasive filtering differs in practice.

Iran practises pervasive filtering on all issues, apart from conflict and security issues; in these cases, substantial filtering was noted. In the case of Italy, there is no evidence that the government filters any areas other than selective filtering of socially related issues such as gambling sites. 'No evidence of filtering' means that the government may filter but there is no firm evidence of this so far.

3.5.1.2. Technical blocking

This form of blocking is the most common type of censorship, involving IP blocking, DNS tampering and URL blocking, using a proxy, and blocking specific keywords. This type of censorship has, over time, become less effective, due to the high cost of the blocking services, (Oh and Aukerman, 2013). It could be argued that cost might not be an issue when it comes to blocking but that technical blocking has become less effective. This may be because there are alternatives which can be used by activists and users to bypass the blocking, such as Virtual Private Networks (VPN), (Odagiri *et al*., 2014). China is one of the main countries which regularly blocks keywords. For example, every year on June 4th, the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, the Chinese authorities block words related to this event such as 'June 4th', 'Wang Weilin', and 'martial law', (Ng, 2014). However, Internet users can also avoid words being blocked when searching or discussing issues by crafting alternative words to replace those which are likely to be blocked and censored, (Boelinger, 2010).

Search Result Removals and Take-down. In some countries, Internet companies such as Google co-operate with state authorities to remove certain search engine results. Google explains its position thus:

> We regularly receive requests from courts and government agencies around the world to remove information from Google products. Sometimes we receive court orders that don't compel Google to take any action. Instead, they are submitted by an individual as support for a removal request. We closely review these requests to determine if content should be removed because it violates a law or our product policies, (Google n.d.).

Between 2009 and 2013, Google received 3015 requests from different countries to remove information but claimed that not all these were accepted or compatible with its guidelines. In its Transparency Report, Google gave some examples of requests which were accepted and those which were not, (Google n.d.). It could be argued that Google has its own opinion of what constitutes freedom of expression which is not related to the nature of the political system operating in a particular country. For example, when a government contacts Google requesting the removal of content for whatever reason, it might choose not to comply with this request as it has its own definitions regarding what it considers to be legally acceptable.

The following table of companies is transparent (Table 4) concerning government requests for data removal disclosing those which have been received on a regular basis, (Google n.d.). These reports indicate that governments have varied motives for requesting data removal.

Table 4: Companies that offer transparent reports about governments' requests

Pinterest	Cheezburger	Comcast
Korea the Internet Transparency Report	Cloudflare	Aol
Wickr	Cyberghost	Telstra
Wikimedia Foundation	Daum Kakao	Tumblr
Wordpress	Kickstarter	Dropbox
Leaseweb	Rogers	At&T
Linkedin	Snapchat	Apple
Lookout	Sonic.Net	Twitter
Microsoft	Spideroak	Sasktel
Credo Mobile	Teksavvy	Verizon
Vodafone	Teliasonera	Telus
Time Warner Cable	Yahoo!	Facebook
University Of California, Berkeley	Deutsche Telekom	

Note. Retrieved from: Google n.d

This list includes the most popular content websites which regularly receive requests from various governments asking for the removal of content which they deem to be harmful or a threat to national security.

In addition, governments do ask hosts[1] to disable websites that they believe should be removed. This could be the result of a court order or for national security purposes, for example, if a website publishes content that the government considers to pose a threat of some kind. This means that both large corporations and small hosting companies, like those on the list above, can be asked to remove content.

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[1] A host is a computer with a Web server that serves the pages for one or more Web sites. A host can also be the company that provides that service, which is known as hosting, (Search Networking).

3.5.1.3. Self-censorship

Self-censorship[1] is a fundamental aspect of the forms of Internet censorship in ND countries, although it is worth remembering that it is not a new practice. It has long been employed, especially by journalists and media organizations. Journalists in ND countries understand what can be published and what cannot and are aware of the consequences of misjudging this. Self-censorship can be the result of social pressure or pressure from political or religious authorities, (Hayes *et al*., 2006; Aceto and Pescapé, 2015). Governments can employ various means of encouraging self-censorship on the Internet. They can create legal grey areas, meaning that individuals must attempt to negotiate a fine line between what is acceptable/permitted and what is not. They can also arrest citizens for online participation if they wish to send a clear message to cyber-dissidents that government surveillance exists online, even if in reality, it is unlikely that everyone is under surveillance.
Consequently, this means individuals often impose a form of self-censorship when they go online, (George, 1998; Rod and Weidmann, 2015; Ghobadi and Clegg, 2015). One likely outcome of this is to limit the freedom of expression provided by the Internet environment, thus making it more similar to the controlled, traditional media in ND countries. This practice therefore, can be viewed as the principal threat to the Internet's democratising role, and specifically to the creation of the virtual public sphere, (Rahimi, 2003).

It has been argued that online anonymity could be used to protect freedom of expression and prevent citizens from self-censorship, (Postmes and Brunsting, 2002; Clark and Themudo, 2006) but, as Morozov (2012) argued, governments can still track and arrest people. Furthermore, some countries, notably China and South Korea, have introduced a so-called 'real name policy', which requires people to register on social media with their real names (Kern and Nam, 2009). Fu *et al.,* (2013), examined the influence of this policy on posts by Chinese users, comparing the nature of their posts before and after the policy. They found that this policy reduced users' online activities, as well as causing them to refrain from writing about politically sensitive issues. Similarly, in South Korea, Cho *et al*. (2012), found that the policy reduced online posts in the short term, as well as making users more cautious in their behaviour.

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[1] Self-censorship is best described as a form of censorship practised in person, "In order to avoid trouble or sanctions from state officials, striking controversy, offending an audience, initiating lawsuits or other problematic consequences." (*Oran's Dictionary of Law*).

3.5.1.4. Beyond Censorship and Surveillance

Censorship and surveillance by regimes aim to prevent Internet use which challenges or poses a threat to government agendas, be they political or social. However, censorship and surveillance may not be sufficient to achieve this. For example, Internet users may not need to employ self-censorship if they can simply use alternative identities. As noted above, various tools can be used to prevent website blocking. Research suggests that recently, governments have started to use different methods to patrol Internet usage by citizens and activists groups, (Ng, 2013; Elliott, 2014).

Regimes are now using Internet applications to track government opposition or activists by using the same applications as they themselves use and collecting data about them. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, consistently release news about governments asking Twitter for users' private information, (BBC, 2015), whilst the US government is one of several which monitors those who appear to be using applications which guarantee anonymity, (Thomson 2014).

In addition, governments are now launching what could be called counter-campaigns using social media in order to engage individuals in the same way that cyber-activists do. These counter-campaigns take many forms, use different tactics and have been undertaken by governments in countries including China (Ng, 2013), Russia (Elliott, 2014) and the United Kingdom (Greenwald, 2014). Verkamp and Gupta (2013), describe how state counter-campaigns can spam a popular Twitter hashtag, or other social media, which is being used by citizens against the regime, thus drowning voices of protest. For example, different user names can be employed to bombard the hashtag with other content intensively so people can barely read the original content posted by citizens. Verkamp and Gupta's study shows this practice is commonly used by Syrian, Russian and Mexican regimes. Other researchers have referred to the Wu Mao Dang, or '50 Cent Party' in China, the name given to Internet users who are supposedly paid by the Chinese regime for each Internet post which is presented online as being from an ordinary individual supporting the regime's views, (Deibert and

Rohozinski, 2010; Feng and Guo, 2013).

Other countries, most frequently Russia, Syria and North Korea, use hackers to gain access to opposition websites and user accounts on social media. For example, a group known as the '*Iranian Cyber Army'* hacked the Twitter accounts of the political opposition in 2009 as well as taking down some websites and posting messages on these hacked websites, (Deibert and Rohozinski, 2010; Giles and Marks, 2012; Hesseldahl, 2015).

In some countries, the authorities try to decrease network performance in order to make it harder for people to log in, thus lowering the possibility of reading unwanted material or participating in activism. For instance, in preparation for the presidential election in Iran in 2013, the government started gradually reducing the Internet speed to stop the flow of information on the Internet, (Iran Daily Brief, 2013).

Overall, censorship and monitoring are not the only tools that governments can use to reduce Internet threats to their political systems. Internet control by regimes can involve physical action such as arresting individuals, blocking websites or making online access more difficult or it can take more proactive forms such as counter-campaigning and propaganda. These methods will no doubt change over time as individuals develop new forms of online activity and the Internet itself evolves.

3.6. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to assess the uses of the Internet for political purposes in the democratisation process, examining how it can be used to create an alternative public sphere for citizens in ND countries. It considered, in particular, the extent to which the Internet acts as a force for democratisation, by helping citizens in general, and activists in particular, to express their views relatively openly in this virtual public sphere. This chapter has highlighted the importance of the Internet as one of the best tools for facilitating political and social change, despite the best attempts by regimes to impose censorship on citizens and place restrictions on its accessibility.

However, like any other space or medium used for activism, the Internet has its own disadvantages. Governments may exercise a degree of control over it, but it is certainly not completely under their control. Larry Diamond concludes that:

> In the end, technology is merely a tool, open to both noble and nefarious purposes. Just as radio and TV could be vehicles of information pluralism and rational debate, so they could also be commandeered by totalitarian regimes for fanatical mobilization and total state control [...] Yet to the extent that innovative citizens can improve and better use these tools, they can bring authoritarianism down — as in several cases they have, (2010:71).

It is clear that, despite the obstacles that regimes put in place to limit the possibilities offered by the Internet, it still presents great opportunities for activists in ND settings to campaign and gain their rights.

Previous research has underlined that studying the context is vital in terms of addressing the role of technology. It also shows that technology is part of social phenomena and is not an exogenous agent as technological determinists have claimed. This means that it is important to focus on the socio-political context of the country where the cyberactivism is based, even if this takes place virtually, as this may present different threats and opportunities. Activists themselves remain part of this socio-political context and they must still operate within this system, even if their ultimate aim is to destroy it. Thus, the following chapter will focus on the socio-political system of Saudi Arabia, since any action which activists take there will be subject to the specific limitations imposed by this socio-political context.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

Previous chapters of this thesis addressed the research questions, objectives, and the theoretical framework for this study, as well as reviewing the existing literature on the role of the Internet in activism in general and in ND countries in particular. The aim of this chapter, however, is to shed light on three key issues. Firstly, it presents the research philosophy, research strategy and research rationale which form the basis for the case study research to follow. Secondly, it details the research methodology which was used for this study, including the data collection instruments, the sampling methods, interview procedure, social network analysis and the measures taken to ensure credibility of this study. Thirdly, it considers the research limitations imposed, and problems created, by working in a ND context. Addressing these three issues will establish the methodological framework which underpins this study.

4.2. Research Philosophy

In broad terms, it is possible to speak of two major Western philosophies which have informed approaches to the research. Traditionally, there has been a split between the Natural and the Social Sciences in terms of research paradigms. Researchers may choose to adopt a positivist or interpretivist perspective when conducting research but this decision is based on their philosophy regarding the acquisition of knowledge itself. Thus, these 'basic beliefs' need to be considered before conducting research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Positivism can be defined as, "A philosophy of science that rejects metaphysical speculation in favour of systematic observation using the human senses." (Blaikie, 2004:837). It could also be defined as, "A doctrine that maintains that the study of the human or social world should be organised according to the same principles as the study of the physical or natural world." (Ritzer, 2004:571).

Positivists believe that knowledge is based on observation and that a distinction must be made between values and facts. They argue that values should be excluded when studying and inquiring objectively and that hypotheses derived from scientific theories must be tested empirically (Stace, 1944). Positivists also distinguish between theory and observation, in that theory is based on the researcher's imagination, while hypotheses are

derived from theory and tested by means of observation (Ivory, 2006). Moreover, positivists argue that knowledge develops, “Inductively through generalising from the accumulation of verified facts.” (Ivory, 2006:781), and that the research methods of the Natural Sciences can be utilised to study the Social Sciences because both of them share the same goal. Positivism believes that, “The higher the level to which a theory can be abstracted, the better it is.” (Ivory, 2006:781).
In contrast, interpretivists believe that the, “Subject matter of the Social Sciences—people and their institutions—is fundamentally different from that of the Natural Sciences.” and that consequently, “The study of the social world […] requires a different logic of research procedure.” (Bryman & Bell, 2007:17). Interpretivists, “Assume that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them.” and thus researchers who take an interpretivist approach, “Attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them.” (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991:05). Interpretivism can be defined as a way of studying society that is different from the way of studying natural phenomena and which seeks to understand social phenomena. It can also be used to study immeasurable disciplines, such as metaphysics, since it considers that personal experience is also a way of knowing which can be described as subjective. It rejects the idea that there is more than one single external reality, positing instead that reality is relative and multiple. For this reason, it has been argued that the findings from interpretivist studies cannot be generalised because human experiences are different (Carson *et al*., 2001).

Generally, interpretivism focuses on contextualised meaning and believes that, “Reality is socially constructed, filled with multiple meanings and interpretations, and that emotions are involved.” (Mathison, 2004:210). Therefore, interpretivists view the goal of theorising as, “Providing an understanding of direct lived experience instead of abstract generalisations.” (Mathison, 2004:210).

This study seeks to understand cyberactivism phenomena, primarily from the personal perspective of the activists who are involved in this, aiming to identify how the Internet is used in activism, tracing the uses and implications of cyberactivism, as well as exploring the particular obstacles which cyberactivists face. Thus, a positivist approach has not been adopted for this research since it is judged that this would limit the researcher’s ability to fully understand the range of social phenomena and related issues which this involves.

An interpretivist philosophy is the most suitable approach to adopt in cyberactivism research since, in its broadest sense, cyberactivism is concerned with how people interact with other human beings and with technology. Interpretivism, “Suggests a way of knowing that springs from personal experience and maintains a relatively narrow, locally situated focus.” (Bursztyn, 2006:382). Studying cyberactivism in Saudi Arabia involves analysing various kinds of personal experiences of social activists interacting with technology and people. This Saudi-based experience may differ from the experience of cyberactivism elsewhere, since it is influenced by different contextual factors and variables, such as the political system, legislation, cultural traditions, as well as the technological environment.

The methodology adopted is ultimately related to the ontological approach of the chosen research paradigm. Ontology has been defined as a, “Branch of metaphysics that considers the nature of being, the philosophical investigation of being.” (Littlejohn & Foess, 2009:695). In other words, it is the, “Science of what is, of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes and relations in every area of reality.” (Smith, 2003:155). Different ontologies produce various views on human nature, such as realism, nominalism and social constructionism which posit that reality is constructed and created by individuals and groups. Social Constructivist believe that humans develop their own ways of perceiving reality and that this does not emerge from nature; consequently, they believe that it is not possible to speak of one single global reality. This also means that reality can differ from one society to another and, hence, that what may hold true in one society may not be the case elsewhere. Thus, Constructivist argue that any social research should study how people create their own reality by interacting with their environment and with other individuals. This reality may change as a result of shifts in belief or understanding due to interaction amongst individuals or between individuals and their environment (Recker, 2005). Interpretivism is usually associated with constructionism since both approaches believe that there are multiple realities and that reality is socially constructed.

It is argued in this thesis that studying activists as objects to which is it possible to apply a universal law, will not help understand their motives for using the Internet to deliver their messages and achieve their goals. When studying social activists, therefore, it is important to understand the obstacles that they face as well as the effect of other communities on their activities, strategies and goals. Thus, the interaction between the researcher and the research subject offers a deeper understanding of cyberactivists and their activities on the Internet.

4.3. Research Strategy: A Case Study Approach

It is important to emphasise that the case study is not the method; it is just the object of study (Stake, 1995). A case study can be defined in various ways, however. It can be defined as, “An empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and with its real-life context.” (Yin, 2013:18). Bromley (1990), defined the case study as, “A systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest.” (Bromley, 1990:302). A case study is thus a unit of investigation. This could be a group, country, community, etc., and the aim is to understand a real life phenomenon. Scholars note that there is no minimum or maximum limit for a case study (Henn *et al*., 2010). When using a case study for research, there are a number of methods which can be used to collect data including observation, interviews, and/or document review (David & Sutton, 2004; Yin, 2013).

The case study has been chosen for this research because it, “Comprises an all-encompassing method—covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis.” (Yin, 2013:16). It can help to provide in-depth understanding of complex social phenomenon by using the rich data gathered from the case (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

4.4. Case Study Selection

As explained in Chapter Six, there are many online campaigns in Saudi Arabia, and it would clearly be impossible to study all of these, so the decision was made to focus on social campaigns. Scholars, such as Darke *et al*. (1998) and Seawright and Gerring (2008), have acknowledged the difficulty of choosing a case study as a sample; Yin (2013) argues it is important that selected cases reflect characteristics and problems identified in the underlying theoretical propositions or conceptual framework. Two campaigns were therefore chosen as case studies for this thesis. One is the Women Driving Campaign (*October 26th*), which focuses on getting the current ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia lifted. This campaign has its roots in 1990 and is dominated by female activists. The other is the teachers’ rights campaign, which have four main demands (detailed in Chapter Eight). This campaign was started on the Internet in 2007 and run by predominately male activists.

There were three main reasons for choosing these specific campaigns. Firstly, it was possible to gain access to the activists involved in both these campaigns. Not all online campaigns could be accessed by the researcher, as there are no links leading to them, and campaigners do not respond to formal correspondence. Even if campaigns are based online and are visible there, it is often not possible to contact them via the Internet, as will be discussed in section 4.11.

Secondly, there was a level of personal risk involved in contacting campaigns. For example, there are some online campaigns that deal with security issues, such as those dealing with prisoners who have been accused of terrorism but have not been tried (see Chapter Six). It was judged unsafe for the researcher to try to contact these. It is also impossible to reach them without personal contacts as they use the Internet anonymously such as the e3teqal (Arresting) campaign (Matthiesen, 2013; Alahmed, 2014; Lacroix, 2014). Contact with campaigns of this kind would be unsafe since the researcher would face questions from Saudi authorities if any of the interviewees had been arrested or questioned.

Thirdly, the choice was also determined by the characteristics of the campaign. The women driving campaign, has its origins in 'offline' activism and it also has international dimensions, engaging with a number of international media and human rights' organisations. The teachers' campaign is recognised as being one of the first online campaigns in the Kingdom, and a number of other online campaigns had been inspired by their activities. The campaign also engages with large numbers of Saudi teachers, with forum statistics revealing that more than half of those in the teaching profession were registered in one of the teachers' forums. The teachers' campaign has also been involved in taking legal action against the Ministry of Education in the Saudi Administrative Court.

Both the women driving campaigns and the teachers' campaigns fit within the theoretical framework adopted for this research. Both can be considered to be large-scale campaigns in terms of the number of people who are actively involved in them and follow them. Moreover, the Internet has been used by both these campaigns which have also organised actions. Finally, organisationally these exist on different levels, and their messages are distributed online.

4.5. Research Reasoning

The research reasoning can be defined as, "[A] method of coming to conclusions by the use of logical argument."(Walliman, 2005:09). Broadly, there are two logics that can be used to reach a conclusion when conducting research: deductive and inductive. Each has different aims when dealing with research data. Deductive research aims to test an existing theory or model by using new data. Conversely, inductive research aims to generate a theoretical concept and model by observing the newly collected data (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The data in the inductive approach generates a concept, while it is testing a concept in the deductive approach.

The inductive perspective is the most appropriate logic when taking an interpretivist approach to studying a social phenomenon. As Thomas (2006:238), notes:

> [The] primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies.

It is clear that the inductive approach gives the researcher flexibility when dealing with data and develops better understanding of the phenomenon studied as there are no predominant assumptions, and the observation leads to theory building.

4.6. Research Methodology

It is, of course, imperative for researchers to select the most suitable research approach in order to fully understand the phenomena being investigated and choose an appropriate means of gathering the data required. Two factors influence the choice of the research approach; firstly, the philosophical and ontological approach adopted by the research and, secondly, existing studies in the same field.

Concerning the first factor, a constructivist interpretivist approach to studying social phenomena implies the use of a qualitative methodology as the most appropriate means of accomplishing the research goals. It has been argued that bias or subjectivity may occur due to the nature of qualitative research and there is no such thing as a fixed research procedure and analysis that can be followed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Wimmer &Dominick, 2006).

Concerning the second factor, previous studies in the same field can offer the researcher new insights into research methodologies which can be used to better understand the phenomenon under investigation. However, researchers need to evaluate the usefulness and appropriateness of a methodology which has been previously used by evaluating the findings of the study and assessing whether these succeeded in fully addressing the research questions. Consequently, researchers can avoid using methodologies that failed to achieve the research goals in similar studies.

Previous studies on cyberactivism have nearly all tended to utilise qualitative approaches including Atkinson and Dougherty (2006); Reber and Kim (2006); Gillan and Pickerill

(2008); Tufekci and Wilson (2012); and Micó and Casero-Ripollés (2013). Others, such as Ošljak (2014) and Karlsson *et al.* (2015), used a mixed method approach. The nature of the qualitative approach, which seeks, “Answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings.” (Berg, 2004:08), may make this the most suitable approach for studying cyberactivism in general and for examining the ways in which activists use technology to achieve their goals and connect with others via the Internet in particular.

4.6.1. Qualitative approach

It is difficult to find a comprehensive or commonly accepted definition of this approach both because it is a broad concept and because attempting to impose a narrow definition on this approach may limit it as a technique (Berg, 2004). This being the case, researchers have tried to define this approach from different perspectives. Denzin and Lincoln (2005), suggested that qualitative research is, “Multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:2).

Qualitative methodology is well suited to studying cyberactivism phenomena since it allows researchers to study these in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Johnson also notes that qualitative research, “Probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features.” (1995:4). Moreover, as stated previously, multiple realities, “Are socially constructed by human beings in their expressive and interpretive practices.” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010:11). Thus, it is appropriate to use a qualitative approach in order to explore realities among cyberactivists regarding social phenomena in Saudi society and to learn more about the ‘social realities’ of those engaged in cyberactivism.

Beside the qualitative approach, this research also adopting Social Network Analysis (SNA) method which is often perceived as a quantitative method due to its formalized approach and extensive use of statistical analysis. Nevertheless, SNA incorporates a qualitative aspect as well (Borgatti et al. 2013; Crossley et al. 2015). First of all, a very common framework employed in SNA is the case study with researchers selecting a community, an organisation, or a social group to study and analyse the patterns of the connectivity there. Second, the data for the SNA are quite often collected from observations, in-depth interviews, diaries, and other qualitative data collection methods. Third, the very nature of the analysis allows researchers to see the qualitative nature of the interactions between actors (strong or weak ties, multiple links, friends or foes).

This thesis employs SNA to inform the qualitative case studies looking at Twitter and online forum communication. A quantitative analysis of the frequency of interactions between online users allows conclusions to be drawn about the nature of such communication.

The quantitative SNA in this research inform the other data that been collected qualitatively. Chapters 7 and 8 will show that SNA is a useful means of gaining the bigger picture of both campaigns. SNA will be used to help identify the actors in the campaigns and these can then be analysed as texts, images, or videos to understand the content and the context of the data circulated online and its sequences, and will be combined with interview data that been collected by the researcher.

4.7. Research Methods

The aim, when selecting research methods, is to choose those which are the most suitable means of collecting data to help answer the research questions and achieve research goals (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). However, a number of factors affect the choice of data collection methods, such as the research philosophy, research resources (including time, money and technology needed) and the needs of the research itself (Bell, 2005). Looking at these factors, two main data collection methods have been adopted to carry out this research: semi-structured interviews and social network analysis (SNA). The following two sections will address both the tools and the sampling methods in detail.

4.7.1. Interviews

An interview can be simply defined as a, “Conversation with a purpose.” (Berg, 2004:101). It is one of the commonest and most powerful tools used to understand social phenomena, particularly in the cyberactivism field. Many scholars have used interviews to conduct research on cyberactivism including Dimond and Dye (2013); Micó and Casero-Ripollés (2013); Aouragh & Alexander (2011) and Garcia and Trere (2014). Interviews can help to, “Elicit depth of information from relatively few people.” (Guion *et al.*, 2011). In cyberactivism research, where most action takes place online, the main actors are the activists themselves, who are using the Internet as a technology to achieve their goals. So interviewing those activists can prove helpful in understanding the viewpoint of the participants, and getting them to explain how they perceive the Internet uses of activism in Saudi Arabia, where freedom of speech is limited. Focusing on the online activities, rather than the creators of these activities may not help us to understand activism in the Saudi context, due to a number of factors as discussed in Chapters Five and Six, including self-censorship, monitoring and blocking. The online space by itself may not reflect the actual use of the Internet by Saudi activists. Thus, interviews with activists could be seen as the most suitable tool in this field.

Three fundamental types of qualitative interviews are generally pursued in research: (1) formal/structured; (2) Unstructured/informal/non-directive; (3) semi-standardised/ semi-structured (Gilbert 2001; Berg 2004). The first of these, structured interviews, are usually considered to be a quick and easy means of clarifying information, or obtaining very specific information. This sort of interview is not always helpful for gaining an in-depth understanding, as it gives limited participant responses (Gill *et al.*, 2008). Conversely, an unstructured interview is an open interview without any predetermined questions or answers (Minichiello, 1991). This type of interview is arguably not the most efficient way of researching specific questions, since interviews may produce a large quantity of data without answering the research questions.

The third basic type of research interview is the semi-structured interview that has features of both structured and unstructured interviews. It has, "Some degree of predetermined order but still ensures flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant." (Dunn, 2010:80). This thesis uses semi-structured, in-depth interviews to collect data in order to allow the researcher to cover the important areas by controlling the interview while providing interviewees with opportunities to express themselves and suggest some ideas and thoughts from their own perspectives (Desai & Potter, 2006; Willis, 2004). Moreover, the in-depth interview allows the researcher, "To grasp and articulate the multiple views of, perspectives on, and meanings of some activity, event, place, or cultural object." (Johnson, 2012:106).

After carefully considering the research questions and aims, as well as the literature, a written interview guide (see Appendices B) was prepared to ensure that the maximum information was gained from the interviewees (Given, 2008; Wengraf, 2001). Moreover, a pilot interview was conducted to ensure that the interview guide would be helpful in future interviews.

Some 16 cyberactivists were interviewed independently in recorded face-to-face interviews, and a further three were interviewed over the phone without being recorded as they requested. Interviews were conducted in five different cities in Saudi Arabia namely, Riyadh, Jeddah, Makkah, Buridyah and Alahssa. The sampling procedures and related ethical issues are discussed in the following sections. The duration of the interviews ranged from 35 minutes to three and half hours. A total of 19 hours and 9 minutes of semi-structured interviews were recorded with activists.

In addition to these case study interviews, two interviews, one by e-mail and the other by phone, were conducted with journalists from traditional international media to clarify some points relating to the *October 26th* campaign. Also, one interview was conducted with an activist from the *Man Divan* campaign as a pilot study. This activist's answers were linked with the teachers' campaign (Chapter Eight). The *Man Divan* campaign 'copycatted' the teachers' campaign, and one of the teachers worked closely with it. A further two interviews were held with businessmen involved in audiocassette distribution and production in Saudi Arabia to find out further information about the tools used by Saudi activists prior to the arrival of the Internet. In total, therefore, some 24 interviews were conducted for the purposes of this study.

Even so, scholars have raised a number of issues about the use of interviews in qualitative methodology. (Gomm 2008; Patton 2001) argue that in some types of interviews, particularly in the 'interview guide approach' some important issues might be accidentally forgotten, and rewording questions might cause interviewees to provide different responses, thus reducing the comparability of responses. To solve the problem (Gomm 2008:161) suggests that the interviewer should "frame questions in terms which are likely to be understood by respondents".

Interviewers can also affect the results of interviews as well. Gomm, 2008 and Denscombe, 2007 claim that interviewer characteristics such as gender, age, and accent can influence interviewee responses. To address this aspect, Denscombe, 2007 suggests that interviewers should not become a hostile or upset interviewees, and stay neutral and non-committal on any claims they make. It could be argued that interviews could also be affected by the so-called 'Hawthorne effect' meaning that people may behave differently if they know that they are participating in an experiment or are being observed (Gomm 2008; Denscombe 2007). This effect can occur when interviewees are enthusiastic or want a specific outcome (Gomm 2008). However, this effect is not limited to interviews alone, but it can occur in focus groups, observations and similar methods (Gomm 2008; Denscombe 2007).

4.7.1.1. *Interview sample*

Sampling refers to the, “Selection of a sub-set of a population for inclusion in a study.” (Daniel, 2011:01). Clearly, studying the entire research population of Saudi cyberactivists is impossible for several reasons. For example, not all activists wish to be interviewed, mainly due to issues of trust (see section 4.11). Thus, the researcher needs to choose a sample which is representative of the larger research population. However, the type of sampling used in qualitative research differs from that used in quantitative research since, “In qualitative methods, sample units are deliberately selected to reflect particular features of groups within the sample population.” (Ritchie *et al*., 2003:81). Moreover, the sample does not need to be statistically representative. Given that this research is using qualitative methods as part of the interpretative constructionist approach, the aim of this research is not to produce generalisable results but to understand the social phenomenon of Saudi cyberactivism in depth. Marshall (1996), has emphasised that the aim of the qualitative approach is to improve the understanding of complex human issues rather than to generalise the results.

The research population was limited to Saudi cyberactivists who are involved in social campaigns. The term ‘social campaign’ was defined in Chapter One as, “A campaign that aims to demand rights that are considered necessary for full participation in the life of society.”

Snowball sampling was used to gain access to the interviewees, due to the sensitivity of the subject of activism in Saudi Arabia. This sampling method, “Consists of identifying respondents who are then used to refer other respondents to researchers.” (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Snowball sampling was also a useful means of countering researcher subjectivity when choosing participants, since suggestions for interviewees come from participants themselves. However, the first link in both campaigns was established through friends in common, after several months of searching. The researcher had to find links with activists through friends and colleagues, a time-consuming process.

Whilst the interview numbers in this study are not necessarily large, they encompass virtually all the core activists in both campaigns. In the women’s driving campaigns the core activists are those who are members of the campaign’s WhatsAapp main group which included some 45 activists, both male and female. In the teachers’ campaign, the core activists are those who have a designated role, for example, member of the Supervisory Committee as indicated in chapter Eight. The two journalists interviewed include one from an international news agency covering Gulf news and the second from an international news organisation based in the UK. Both have covered the women driving campaign on more than one occasion. Similarly, the two businessmen in the audiotape industry are well known entrepreneurs, one of them being amongst the first to establish such a business in Saudi Arabia.

4.7.1.2. Interviews transcribing and translation

As noted earlier in section 4.7.1, most of the interviews were recorded. After recording the interviews, all audio files were coded to replace interviewees' names and ensure anonymity. In this context date of interviews did not reported because of the confidentiality agreement with all of the interviewee. Moreover, for the British journalist and others, there was an implicit agreement, where the researcher guaranteed the interviewees' confidentiality. Further more, when the research started looking for journalists to be interviewed, some rejected because as they said their institution will not allow them, this put an obligation on the researcher to not reveal the name of the journalist as this might harm him/her.

Businessmen in the audiotape industry were coded as C plus a number. Women driving campaign activists were allotted codes starting with W whilst teacher campaigners' codes started with T. Journalists and *Man Divan* campaign interviewees are simply described by their titles.

The second step was to transcribe the audio files. Apart from the longest interview, all interviews were fully transcribed, amounting to some 138 pages of transcript. As the interviews were conducted in an Arabic-speaking country, 23 of the 24 interviews were carried out in Arabic, although many of the activists can also speak English. However, there were two main reasons for conducting interviews in Arabic. First, Arabic is the first language for 23 of the interviewees and conducting the interviews in Arabic allowed them to express themselves more fluently. Second, conducting interviews in two different languages can make the coding and analysis process more complex. However translating 138 pages would be a costly process (in terms of both time and money). Thus, transcribed interviews were coded in the original language and only quotes that were chosen for inclusion in the main text were translated into English by the researcher himself. The coding process is explained below in section 4.8.

4.7.1.3. Social network analysis

The second tool that been used in this thesis for data collection is quantitative social network analysis (SNA). This can be defined as, "The study of social relations between a set of actors (people, organisations, ideas and events)." (Desikan *et al.*, 2013:483). SNA is not limited to Internet-based social networks. A number of studies used SNA before the emergence of the

Internet (McCulloch *et al.*, 2013) but it has gained popularity with the advent of the Internet because of the ease of data gathering and analysis this presents.

Quantitative SNA is used in this research to inform the other data that has been collected qualitatively. Chapters 7 and 8 will show that SNA provides a more complete image of both campaigns, helping to identify the actors in the campaigns which then will be analysed in terms of their text, image, and video output in order to understand the content and the context of the data circulated online and its sequences. This data will be combined with the interview data that was collected.

Data was collected from different platforms, as activists in each campaign specified their preferred campaign platform. Cyberactivists leading the women driving campaign considered Twitter to be the main application they used on the Internet whilst those involved in the teachers' campaign considered online forums as their main application for engaging with people. For the teachers' campaign, the data was extracted from the sub-forum in the teachers' forum which focuses only on the campaign. The teachers' campaign has one big discussion forum covering a number of issues, not necessarily relating to their campaign, but also about other cultural and social issues. This sub-forum can be found at www.ksa-teachers.com/forums/f5. For the women driving campaign, data was gathered from both of the hashtags used by the campaign, namely #oct26driving in English and an Arabic hashtag #قيادة٢٦اكتوبر.

Two sets of Twitter data in the form of Internet segments were collected for the hashtags #oct26driving for English (N=246) and Arabic (N=250). The language of the hashtag was used to differentiate these segments.

The time frame for the data collection was October 2013 to February 2014 as it proved difficult to collect more data for campaign activities on Twitter. This was an important time frame as it covers the period of the campaign launch. This data was used to help the researcher to understand the online network when the campaign was originally launched online. Whilst Karpf (2014) thought that the data set used by L. Bennett *et al.* 2014 was impressive, he also criticized them for not including data from the period July to October 2011, when the Occupy movement was formulated and launched. L. Bennett *et al.* 2014 began collecting data in mid-October 2011, about three months after the movement has been launched. The data collected for the women driving campaign could reflect the campaign launch activities on Twitter for the two hashtags which are considered to be campaign hashtags as seen in the campaign's account bio on Twitter.

More specifically, the Twitter analysis contains the 78 unique accounts with 76 ties, 132 Retweets in Arabic, 118 original Tweets in Arabic, 109 original English account with 120 ties, 65 Retweets in English, and 183 original Tweets in English.

The rich data from the teachers' campaign added extra value to the SNA results because it helped to make it possible to trace the development of the structure of the teachers' campaign over time. Data from the women driving campaign revealed differences in the connections between participants in that campaign, according to the language which they used which generated two different spaces or communities (see Chapter Seven).

Three pieces of computer software were used to carry out the SNA. The first was Microsoft Excel, which was used to enter and code data. The second was NodeXL which helped to retrieve and analyse the Twitter data. The third software was R Package, which was used to visualise the data. The algorithm to plot it is called "layout Kamada Kawai". This algorithm plots central nodes closer the centre of the picture. NodeXL and R package were used for two main reasons. Firstly, both are open-source software, which means they are free to use on any computer without any need for purchase. Secondly, both programmes are fully supported by the academic community and are widely used among researchers. Scholars such as Choi and Park (2013); Howard *et al*. (2011); Park *et al*. (2015); Ackland and O'Neil (2011), have used either one, or similar of these software packages for similar purposes. The SNA in Chapters Seven and Eight will provide the in-depth data analysis for each campaign.

There are, however, some limitations on the SNA in both case studies. For the women driving campaign, extracting all the tweets for both hashtags was not affordable as the cost starts from £1250 per hashtag paid to specialised companies. Originally, the necessary data from the hashtags was obtainable for free or at a low cost. However, this is no longer possible since as of mid-2014, data must now be purchased from either Twitter or companies who work with them. This is because Twitter placed restrictions on use of their API[1] by the public during the course of the research. Some of the software used for SNA can extract data, but it is hard to provide the network data which is needed to link between Twitter users as Twitter keeps cutting the connection between the software and Twitter servers, sometimes every 15 minutes. Thus, the researcher extracted about 500 tweets manually from both hashtags, as well as retweets and replies. However, this small sample allows for more in-depth investigation which involves identifying the individual and organisational accounts and the type of relation between them in addition to analysing the nature of the content of those accounts that have more connections.

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[1] API is an Application Program Interface, although it is sometimes referred to as an Application Programming Interface. This is a set of commands, functions, and protocols which programmers can use when building software for a specific operating system. The API allows programmers to use pre-defined functions to interact with the operating system, instead of writing them from scratch. (Source: www.techterms.com/definition/api)

For the teachers' campaign, it was necessary to download the whole forum first, and then access the campaign's sub-forum which consisted of about 10 GB of available data. According to some online experts[1] the data needed for SNA is less than 2GB. The analysis software used cannot extract the data directly from the forum, meaning that specific data needed to be extracted in order to analyse the social network of the campaign. This process, called data formatting or data cleaning, proved to be the most difficult step in the SNA. All of the professional commercial companies which were contacted said this process was long and laborious and not worth doing. However, Dr. Andrew Young from the School of Computing, Science and Engineering at University of Salford, succeeded in extracting the necessary data from 2009 onwards; unfortunately data for the first 16 months (prior to 2009) of the forum could not be extracted from the raw data.

The main strength of the data use in this thesis is that it is what is called behavioural data. In other words the real activities of individuals are observed, instead of asking them about their behaviour. Often, retrospective surveys are biased due to the limitations of human memory and accuracy (Borgatti *et al.* 2013). However, this becomes more an issue for interviews that rely on the subjective opinions of surveyed individuals who may have forgotten some information or chose to hide this.

One of the main limitations of SNA Twitter and online forum data is that they do not provide information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals which have produced these. It is also argued by some scholars such as (Karpf 2014) that SNA might not reflect what he called backchannels of communication, where there is no *public* trace of participants' activities. The interviews in this research indicate some backchannels in both campaigns which might not be traceable using SNA. In the teachers' campaign, for example, campaigners use a private sub-forum for internal communication which cannot be traced using the SNA. Similarly, in the women driving campaign interviews indicate that core campaigners use WhatsApp for their internal communication. Needless to say that communication that not happen in public cannot be traced by SNA use.

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[1] The researcher consulted some experts online as well as some companies such as http://www.tmt.co.uk.

4.8. Data Analysis Method

Choosing the data analysis method is subject to the adopted research philosophy, research reasoning logic, and the research aims and needs. Section 4.5 showed that this research adopted the induction reasoning logic, “Which allows research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies.”(Thomas, 2006: 238). However, there are a number of methods which can then be chosen when analysing data. Broadly, it may be noted that researchers assessing data analysis agree about the similarities between various inductive data analysis approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Generally, researchers either address data analysis using specific methods, such as Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006), Conversation Analysis (Psathas, 1995), Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Harper & Thompson, 2011) or Grounded Theory (Eaves, 2001). Alternatively, they discuss the data analysis as a process such as Marshall and Rossman (2015), who suggest a seven-step approach to a qualitative data analysis.

This thesis adopts Thematic Analysis as a method for the data analysis, for two main reasons. First, this is consistent with the research philosophy and reasoning logic set out above. Second, it suits the data collection methods and can help provide the answers to the research questions from the collected data. Using inductive data analysis methods means that the themes are driven by the collected data. In the research conducted here, the method used cannot be purely inductive. Describing the method used as inductive means that it extracts the themes only from the collected data. This pattern of inductive methods is rarely found in research (Kuckartz, 2014) because the aim of research is to answer the research questions, so there are usually some themes already in the researcher’s mind when data analysis starts.

Thematic Analysis can be defined as a, “Method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes [the] data set in (rich) detail.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79). Braun and Clarke argue that there are a number of advantages to thematic analysis (2006:97). Firstly, it is flexible and easy to learn and practise. Moreover, it can easily be used to demonstrate results to an educated public. It is also a useful method for participatory research paradigms and can help to summarise large quantities of data by demonstrating their key features. Furthermore, it can serve to highlight the similarities and differences in the data set, and finally, it can help the researcher to generate unanticipated insights from the collected data.

In this study the six phases of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006:97) were used (see Table 5)

Table 5: Phases of Thematic Analysis

No.	Phase	Description of the phase
1	Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting initial ideas down with your data.
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all the data relevant to each potential theme.
4	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Note. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

4.8.1. Phase 1: Familiarisation with data

In this phase, the researcher has to transcribe verbal data in order to make it more accessible. After transcribing verbal data, this phase requires more reading and note taking. The aim of this phase is to find latent or semantic themes. The researcher's personal experience showed that this phase is important for getting to know interviewee thoughts and main claims in more detail to build a bigger image. Importantly, as Braun and Clarke (2006) note:

> At this phase, one of the reasons why qualitative research tends to use far smaller samples than, for example, questionnaire research will become apparent as the reading and re-reading of data is time-consuming. It is, therefore, tempting to skip over this phase, or be selective. We would strongly advise against this, as this phase provides the bedrock for the rest of the analysis, (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87).

It is also important to note that data analysis in this research started by using NVivo software which is used for qualitative analysis, coding and categorising. The software was useful for highlighting and taking notes, but unfortunately when it came to grouping the quotes and building the initial themes, there were a number of issues with Arabic text. More specifically, when copying quotes within the software, these appeared disjointed and could not be read, so the researcher had to switch and work manually.

4.8.2. Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Once the researcher became more familiar with the data, and notes had been taken, coding began, which means identifying, "The most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon." (Boyatzis, 1998: 63, cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding process is important for building themes. In other words, codes are the elements or components of themes. The aim here is to code regardless of whether codes or ideas seem contradictory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this phase, a number of codes were generated for both campaigns. After reading the transcribed interviews many times, there was some basic information which referred to a specific aspect, for example, the demographic information, relating to age, sex, and educational level of each of these participants which was given a code. However, it was noted during the coding process that some codes were applicable to both campaigns whilst others were not, which highlights the variation in the chosen case studies.

4.8.3. Phase 3: Searching for themes

By this stage, the researcher has coded all the data and starts grouping or combining some codes together to build themes and sub-themes. Using the previous example regarding demographic information, all the information concerning age, sex, education and related information created a sub-theme in the mobilisation aspect. In this thesis, the researcher first combined all codes relating to mobilisation in one group, organisation in a second group, and the systemic environment in a third group. Each of these represents a main research question area. After this, the researcher built different themes under each question area.

4.8.4. Phase 4: Reviewing themes

This is the phase of nominating themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain:

> During this phase, it will become evident that some candidate themes are not really themes (e.g., if there are not enough data to support them, or the data are too diverse), while others might collapse into each other (e.g., two apparently separate themes might form one theme). Other themes might need to be broken down into separate themes, (2006:91).

In this study, a number of themes were moved from one area to others during this phase and some were merged, producing sub-themes. This phase ended with the emergence of bigger and more definitive themes compared to the previous phase. For example, the relationship between traditional media and the *October 26th* campaign was all in the mobilisation aspect, as the activists used the Internet to target the media. However, after a number of drafts, the researcher found that activists have targeted media, but there were issues related to media which were more than just mobilising issues. Consequently, findings about media needed to be split into two different sections.

4.8.5. Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

This phase could also be called 'define and refine' (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and entails, "Identifying the 'essence' of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures." (Braun & Clarke, 2006:92). This last phase before reporting considers three aspects: thematic content and how coherent is it; the collected data and how it was used; the relation between whole themes in general. Doing this helps to pull the themes into shape and produce the larger picture.

4.8.6. Phase 6: Producing the report

Once themes have been identified and linked to each other, the reporting phase demonstrates the results of the collected data through thematic analysis which means going beyond mere description of the data, to make links with the literature and research questions.

4.9. Credibility of the Research Findings

According to Saunders *et al*. (2007), research gains credibility when attention is paid to reliability and validity. Bloor and Wood (2006:147), define reliability as, "The extent to which research produces the same results when replicated." whilst validity is, "The extent to which the research produces an accurate version of the world." (Bloor & Wood, 2006:147). There is no doubt that reliability and validity are important concepts when considering the quality of a piece of research. Quantitative methods based on a positivist epistemology use statistical tools to measure reliability and validity, including measurements like root, mean, square, error, Spearman's Rank and Pearson's correlation (Ahlqvist, 2009), and these tools can be applied to wider subjects and situations in science (Winter, 2000).

However, considering Bloor and Wood's (2006) definitions, three procedures have been taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the research and the credibility of the research undertaken here.

Firstly, multiple methods of data collection were used and more than one data collection instrument was employed, including in-depth semi-structured interviews and SNA. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:134), argue that using multiple methods for data collection is one means of enhancing research credibility as it, "Increases the likelihood that the phenomenon of interest is being understood from various points of view and ways of knowing." Secondly, every step in the research methodology is explained in detail and a clear rationale provided in each case (see section 4.8 of this chapter). Thirdly, interviewees' thoughts and ideas are quoted directly, "To enable the reader to see and judge how interpretations are made from the data." (Bloor & Wood, 2006:149).

4.10. Research Ethics

The following processes were undertaken to ensure that the research project followed ethical principles, paying close attention to the guidelines contained in the Statement of Ethical Practice produced by the British Sociological Association (BSA 2002):

Institutional Review Boards: The study has been approved by the University of Salford Research Governance and Ethics Committee which considered the following issues in relation to this study: research focus; objectives and strategy; rationale for the research; data protection; recruitment of subjects and their involvement in the research; consent form.

Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality: All information collected was stored on password-protected university computers with access limited only to the researcher, along with all collected data for this research. All participants' real names were replaced by codes immediately after transcribing the interviews. Furthermore, participants themselves chose the place for the interviews. The women driving campaign interviewees were coded as W followed by a different number for each interviewee, whilst teachers interviewed were coded as T, again with a different number for each interviewee. This procedure was used to ensure the safety of interviewees and to fulfil their requests.

Informed consent: Participants were asked to read and sign a consent form and data sheet to indicate their willingness to be interviewed and recorded. It was made clear that the content of interviews would be used for academic purposes only. Moreover, interviewees were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the research by request to the researcher during the interviews or after the interviews, without any negative consequences associated with their withdrawal (see appendices A).

4.11. Research Limitations

As Chapter Five explains, activism in Saudi Arabia is viewed as being risky due to the political and social restrictions imposed by the government and society. Moreover, apart from work about the religious dissent in Saudi Arabia (Lacroix, 2011), researchers have not used interviews to understand collective action in Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that most western studies about collective action normally use interviews as the best method to understand the phenomenon. For example, *(*Yuce *et al.*, 2014) used only SNA to conduct a study about the women driving campaign in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Al-Saggaf and Simmons (2014), used online data to conduct their research about social media and political participation in the country. Other research did not even use a clear method to research activism in Saudi Arabia (Chaudhry, 2014). Thus it can be argued that this study currently provides one of the most in-depth pieces of research on cyberactivism in Saudi Arabia.

Nevertheless it is worth noting that studying activism in Saudi Arabia is almost as problematic a task as conducting the activism itself. Those who are practising cyberactivism publicly do not want to be labelled as having links to specific activist groups. To put it simply, cyberactivists do not want to show that they are part of any organisation or collective action. For this reason, it proved difficult to interview Saudi cyberactivists. Firstly, it took several months of searching for connections with cyberactivists to convince them to take part in the interviews for the sake of the research. Many did not respond to correspondence by e-mail, SMS and phone calls. Some of them refused to take part in this study giving several excuses. This was expected due to the sensitivity of the subject; one campaign activist had just been released from prison. Cyberactivists from one campaign replied to the researcher thinking he was a journalist, not an academic researcher. This was the result of the fact that some years previously, the researcher contacted this campaigner when he was working as a freelance journalist.

However, after several attempts, communication was established with some activists through personal connections and eventually, two successful contacts were made. In the women driving campaign, the first participant agreed to be interviewed a few days after the initial communication. The researcher learnt that the participant had conducted her own research concerning his credentials, and fortunately, a mutual close friend was able to convince her about the researcher's intentions and background. Once the initial interview had been conducted, the interviewee then contacted a number of fellow cyberactivists, some of whom agreed to be interviewed.

Not all of the interviews were used for this research as two interviewees tried to talk about other issues relating to women's rights in general which they believed were just as important as the women driving campaign. Moreover, in many of the interviews, activists denied that there was any kind of organisation. Therefore, the researcher tried to use information given by their fellow activists to encourage them to talk about related issues.

One of the interviewees from the women driving campaign women spent most of the interview focusing on issues more generally related to women's rights rather than talking about this campaign specifically. Another used the opportunity to ask the researcher for technical advice using the Internet for campaign organisation and mobilisation. Thus, neither of these interviews provided content which was of direct relevance to the areas being examined in the case study.

Interestingly, the fact that the researcher's home university was recognised as an 'Islamic University'[1], coupled with his personal appearance[2], made some interviewees 'reticent' when talking about certain issues in the women's campaign. As an example, one cyberactivist who agreed to be interviewed emphasised during the pre-interview phone call that she knew I was from an Islamic University and warned me that she did not wear hijab. She advised me that I was only welcome to interview her if I agreed to do this without her wearing hijab. There were a number of instances when the researcher thought that the mention of his home university in Saudi Arabia and his personal appearance might have influenced what was said by some participants, especially concerning religion. Issues relating to religious restrictions were particularly sensitive to some interviewees.

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[1] The researcher is an international student being sponsored by Imam Mohammad bin Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia where he works as a lecturer.

[2] The researcher has a beard, which in a Saudi context is generally interpreted as meaning that a man is more likely to follow a more traditional Islamic ideology and would not be expected to be supportive of women's right to drive.

In this respect, choosing the location for the interviews proved somewhat problematic. In Saudi Arabia, a man is not allowed to sit in public with a woman unless she is his mother, wife, sister or mother-in-law. This prohibition is rigorously enforced by the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (usually referred to in Western media as the 'religious police'). Consequently, when choosing an interview location, the researcher had to ensure that it would be safe for both participants. Thus, two interviews were conducted in participants' homes. One was conducted at the interviewee's place of work. The rest took place in public locations such as coffee shops, restaurants and hotel lounges, places that 'Committee' members are less likely to visit. Interestingly, this was not the case in Jeddah, a city on the western coast of Saudi Arabia, where interviews were conducted in three different public spaces without this being thought problematic.

Additionally, in some cases, cyberactivists to be interviewed, then changed their minds and later apologised. Thus, although the researcher travelled to Buridyah and Dammam having secured appointments with cyberactivists from both campaigns, when he arrived, interviewees failed to respond to phone calls.

Interviewing cyberactivists for the women driving campaign proved easier than for the teachers' campaign. In the latter case, most of the cyberactivists who were contacted either politely declined to take part or failed to respond, even when they had previously been contacted by fellow activists. Some agreed to be interviewed but only on condition they were not recorded. Others eventually agreed to participate several months after they originally rejected the request. This may be because they heard about the research from more than one friend. It was particularly difficult to get cyberactivists for the teachers' campaign to talk about security threats. One interview was conducted in two parts and the participant tried to change some of the original answers when questioned for the second time. It was important at that interview to remind the interviewee about the previous part of the interview as well as reminding him about the examples he gave, which were inconsistent with his later answers.

It proved most difficult to interview non-Saudi international journalists. Some 39 journalists were initially identified by the researcher as having an interest in the women driving campaign, because they had written about the issue; 13 of these replied to the researcher's correspondence, but only two agreed to be interviewed. Some stated they did not wish to participate, as they were no longer interested in this subject; others said they were not permitted to speak about this subject, and the remainder said they just copied other sources, which means they got the news from other media outlets.

Whilst interviewing cyberactivists in a ND context provides extremely valuable information, a number of considerations need to be taken into account: First, researchers must be aware of the specific societal context in which the cyberactivism takes place since this is as important as the activism itself. In the Saudi case, some of the actions taken by cyberactivists are in response to, or conditioned by, the societal context. Some actions taken by cyberactivists in this ND context may not exist in democratic countries, or even in other ND contexts. For example, people who are not familiar with Saudi Arabia may not understand the issue of a Saudi woman requiring a male guardian and why some people are in favour of this and others not. So, in order to prepare for interviews, understanding the context is vital, so such social phenomena can be discussed. Secondly, conducting interviews in this context entails risks both for the researcher and the interviewees. This explains the importance of the ethical approval by the university. Without trust, interviews would be impossible, and accurate answers to the researcher's questions would not be given. Thirdly, interviewees may try to hide some facts if they find out that the researcher has no background concerning the case study. It can be argued that a researcher who is from the same society as the interviewees may conduct better interviews rather than an outsider to that society.

4.12. Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the research methodology used in this thesis. Primarily, it is argued that the interpretivist paradigm was the most suitable approach for conducting research on social phenomena in a ND context because cyberactivism in the Saudi context needs to be understood in the light of Saudi social and political restrictions.

In addition, the chapter explains in detail the research methodology used in this thesis, including the data collection methods, the instruments employed and the rationale for their use. The methodology section also discussed the steps which the researcher took to ensure the credibility of the study.

As with all research, there are limitations, in particular, the practical difficulties of conducting research interviews on sensitive issues in an ND country. Being aware of these limitations helped the researcher to overcome these restrictions in order to maximise the benefit of the interviews. This research is one of few studies about activism in Saudi Arabia which used interviews to enrich the research with original data.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: SAUDI ARABIA: THE SYSTEMIC ENVIRONMENT FOR ACTIVISM

5.1. Introduction

In order to define the research area and understand cyberactivism in the context of Saudi Arabia, this chapter will examine the three main areas that can be said to construct the systemic environment of cyberactivism. This chapter argues that the political system, the media and its regulation, as well as the legal restrictions on civil society institutions have all helped activism to flourish online rather than offline.

Specifically, this chapter will focus first on politics and religion as key contours of Saudi Arabia activism. It will also examine the media environment, and its laws and regulations which limit the freedom of expression. The final part will discuss the traditional notion of activism and the restrictions to activism in the Saudi context prior to the Internet. It examines the roots and traditions of activism in a country which is often regarded as having had no history of collective action since it was founded.

5.2. Politics and Religion in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy, currently ruled by King Salman, son of King Abdulaziz, the founder of the modern state. The ruling monarch is also the political Head of State in his role as Prime Minister. However, the Basic Law of Saudi Arabia states in Article 47, that the state authorities are composed of a judicial, an executive and a legislative entity, suggesting that a separation of powers is recognised. All laws are issued by royal decree, and the reigning monarch also appoints ministers and high-ranking officials. Traditionally, the order of succession to the throne of Saudi Arabia is determined by, and within, the House of Saud according to agnatic seniority i.e. succession usually passes to the monarch’s younger brother rather than his own sons. The King then chooses the Crown Prince and the Deputy Crown Prince (second in line to the throne).

5.2.1. Majlis shura (Saudi consultative council)

It is important to understand the role of the *Majlis Shura* because it can be claimed that it allows some citizens a degree of engagement in political deliberation, but not in true political participation. Unlike parliaments in other countries, the *Shura* Council, as it is often referred to in English, has no power and is a mainly advisory body, with currently all of its members being appointed, not elected.

The origins of the *Majlis Ash-Shura* date back to 1924 when King Abdulaziz established a short-lived Consultative National Council consisting of twelve appointed members. A council of this type was regularly formed, under various names and with differing remits, even including some elected members, until 1953. Then, for almost four decades, no consultative body of this type existed. According to the official *Majlis Ash-Shura* website, "Many of the jurisdictions of the Council were distributed between the Council of Ministers and other apparatuses of government."(Law of The Sura Council, 1992). It was not until 1992, that the late King Fahad announced the establishment of the new *Shura* and determined its powers, its role and duties being summarised in Articles 15, 18 and 23 of *Shura* Council Law. In general terms, it has the power to discuss and debate laws and treaties, provide views and opinions, propose new laws or amend them but, according to Article 18 of the same law, all of these, "Shall be issued and amended by Royal Decree after being reviewed by the Shura Council."

Only the King is empowered to choose and appoint Shura Council members, as stated in the third article of Shura Council Law (Law of The Sura Council, 1992). The 150 Shura Council members are usually from different backgrounds, tribes, religious sects and regions, since it has different functions, which may be honorific, symbolic, representational and corporative. However, it is clear from the articles of Shura Council Law that its function is mainly advisory, and that members are to be appointed rather than elected. Due to its purely advisory function and non-elected membership, the Shura Council has been the subject of intense debate amongst the Saudi Internet community and is often considered one of the key areas requiring reform in the Kingdom. For instance, following a Royal Decree issued in 2013 which appointed new Shura Council members and changed some articles of Shura Council law to make 20% of the Shura Council seats for women, an online campaign entitled '*Shura Majlis* does not represent me, and I do not care who is there' was launched. The campaign that ran on the Twitter hashtag #مجلس_ الشورى_ لايمثلني (*#Shura Majlis* does not represent me) used the fact that women had been appointed to debate the idea of appointment, rather than election. Similarly, in 2015, when the Shura Council rejected a proposal for a national unity protection bill, Saudis responded with another debate, using the same hashtag. The debate was also reflected in the Press (for example AlHerbish, 2015).

5.2.2. Islam in Saudi political culture

Islam is one of the main pillars of Saudi society, since from its foundation, modern Saudi Arabia has been an Islamic state, and the Kingdom's population is loyal to the Royal Family as part of their adherence to the practices of Islam and the institutions of Islamic law. Article 1 in Part One, General Principles of the Basic Law of Governance, states, "Its [Saudi Arabia's] religion is Islam. Its constitution is Almighty God's Book, The Holy Qur'an, and the *Sunnah*[1] of the Prophet (PBUH)." Political thought in Islam has grown alongside the spread of the religion and Muslim scholars have written extensively on political thought in Islam.

Many protests and campaigns in general in Saudi Arabia have been either mainly motivated by Islamic precepts or shaped by Islamic issues but two main concepts underpin the subject of this activism: the relationship between ruler and ruled and religious motives for activism.

5.2.3. The Relationship between ruler and ruled in Islam

Islamic law essentially controls all aspects of life for Muslims, with Islamic jurists having produced rulings and guidance designed to cover everything from governing a country to how a Muslim should sleep. One of the most hotly debated issues in Islam is the relationship between ruler and ruled. For example, in the Holy Qur'an, Muslims read:

> you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination,(An-Nisa, 04:59).

However, according to the Prophet Muhammad this obedience does have limitations:

> It is obligatory upon a Muslim to listen (to the ruler) and obey whether he likes it or not, except when he is ordered to do a sinful thing; in such case, there is no obligation to listen or to obey, (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Moreover, the relationship between ruler and ruled should be one of mutual duties: citizens must obey the ruler, but he, in turn, must do his best to serve citizens and provide for their needs. Given the emphasis which is placed in Islamic scriptures on obedience towards those in authority, some Muslim clerics, like (AlFawzan 2011), regard public demonstrations or open criticism of the ruler as unacceptable for Muslims.

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[1] *Sunnah* is, "The traditional portion of Muslim law based on Muhammad's words or acts." (Oxford English Dictionary).

5.3. Islam as a Motivation for Activism

Alternatively, many Qur'anic verses and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad can be interpreted as encouraging individuals to do many things which would now be recognised as a type of activism, for example, Muslims are encouraged to protect life on earth, to not waste water or food, nor to kill animals for fun.[1] Muslims are also encouraged to rally together and stand up against oppression.

Ultimately, given that Saudi Arabia is officially an Islamic state, this religion plays a major role in the sphere of activism, regardless of whether this is considered to be political or social activism. From an Islamic perspective, Muslims are expected to live their life in keeping with Islamic teachings and practices, believing that even if there are no rewards in this life, God will reward them in the hereafter.

5.4. Women, Islam and tradition in Saudi Arabia

Women's issues are one of the most frequently debated topics at all levels of society in Saudi Arabia. It is no exaggeration to say that women's issues are at the heart of most of the intellectual, religious, and political debates in the public sphere (Alkhedr 2010).

It could be argued that the main cause of debates about women in Saudi society is the perceived lack of differences between Islamic teachings and Arab traditions, or the overlap between the two in people's thoughts. A study conducted with a sample of over 200 Saudis from both genders, indicated what the researcher referred to as a lack of consistency in male attitudes towards some specific issues related to women when they refer inconsistency to religion and customs and traditions (AboKhalid 2004). She states that:

> It is not enough to say that Islam guaranteed women rights 14 century ago, while the women today are struggling with these rights. There is a need to take the lead and review what Islam gave women, which is a lot, and disseminate awareness of these rights and put them into practice. There is a need to remove what the illiteracy in Islamic knowledge about women's rights (AboKhalid 2004:n.p).

The people of Saudi Arabia, which occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula, have inherited the long-rooted traditions of the pre-Islam period. Like many other ancient civilizations, Arab traditions humiliated women and treated them harshly (Jawad 1998). Scholars such as (Jawad 1998) have shown that Arab women in pre-Islamic era "were in subjugation either to their kinsmen or their husbands. They were considered a chattel to be possessed, to be bought, to be sold or to be inherited. Men had absolute domination over them. They were not individuals themselves, they either belonged to their father or to their husband" (Jawad 1998:01).

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[1] A number of *Sunnah* quotes have been quoted as supporting this, for example, the Prophet Muhammad is said to have sanctioned punishment for a woman on the grounds that she had failed to provide food and water for a cat and did set the animal free to fend for itself, (Sahih Muslim, Book 39, Hadith, 206).

The birth of Islam according to (Jawad 1998) radically changed women's situation in the Arabian Peninsula in particular. Generally speaking, Islam has granted them political, social, and educational rights, as well as the right to work. Jawad identifies eight basic rights that women enjoy under Islam and summarises these as: the right to independent ownership, the right to marry whom she likes, and the right to divorce in the case of an unsuccessful marriage, the right to education, the right to keep her own identity, the right to sexual pleasure, the right to elect and be nominated for political offices and participation in public affairs (Jawad 1998: 7-11).

However, women in Saudi Arabia do not have some of the rights mentioned above despite the fact that the laws of the Kingdom are derived from the Qur'an and Sunna. Some scholars such as (Doumato 2010) argue that the lack of women rights in Saudi Arabia is caused by the Saudi *Ulama*'s (Muslim Scholars) interpretation of Islam, which is based on a *literal* reading of the Qur'an and Sunna.

Doumato and AboKhalid demonstrate that women in Saudi Arabia are still struggling to gain a number of rights, for example, freedom of movement, power to act without a male guardian, and women's rights in family law generally, such as the right to custody of their children upon divorce.

With regards to social and cultural participation (Doumato 2010) noted that

"The extent to which women are free to participate in and influence community life, policies, and social development depends on their family's support for such activities, their family connections, their education, and their personal abilities [...] Saudi women influence policies and social development in their roles as teachers, doctors, social workers, journalists, university professors, investors, and religious scholars engaging in public debates on the role of women. If they have the connections they can also communicate their objectives directly to members of the royal elite." (Doumato 2010:448).

5.5. Media Environment in Saudi Arabia

It is also important to discuss the role of media in the Kingdom, in order to better understand the systemic environment which shapes activism there. Aspects of politics, religion and media all interact with each other to influence cyberactivism which should be viewed primarily as a social phenomenon.

It is generally accepted that media plays a vital role in providing political knowledge (Michael X & Keeter 1997), and in particular, in promoting civic participation. As the literature review in Chapter Two established, when the media provide information about social issues, this can act as a catalyst for political participation (Kenski, 2006). However, it can be argued that the media in the Arab world generally, and in Saudi Arabia in particular, are restricted from performing this role by the country's media laws and the type of ownership system, which means the media demonstrate a high degree of loyalty to the political system. As Nossek and Rinnawi (2003:186) note, "Media structure and policy in most Arab states are determined by the political elite, where the mass media are directly centralised in the hands of the state regime leadership." With regards to the Saudi context, (Sakr, 2006:136), points out that, "In theory, privately owned broadcast media outlets are not banned under Saudi law. In practice, however, the government retains a broadcasting monopoly." and in all of the Gulf Co-operation Council countries, "Non-governmental broadcasting […] is extremely limited." (Sakr, 2006:143).

Thus, access to conventional media for Saudi activists wishing to engage citizens is extremely limited or non-existent. The following section will explore the current media landscape in the Kingdom along with its media laws, which to a greater or lesser extent, shape all media output.

5.5.1. Press

The first newspaper in modern Saudi Arabia was *Um AlQura*, founded by the Saudi government on December 12th 1942. This is still in circulation and is the only official state newspaper. The newspaper typically publishes official state news such as royal decrees, treaties and declarations, as well as addressing political and social issues. It is also used to report local and international news; especially coverage concerning the Arab and Islamic world. Like other Saudi press historians, AlShubili (2000) has divided the history of the press in Saudi Arabia into two major phases outlined below.

5.5.1.1. *Independent press phase*

This phase began in 1928, when press licenses were given to individuals who did not need to be a registered as a media organisation to get a license. According to Rugh (2004), at that time, the press industry consisted of family-run enterprises and was, “A symbol of family pride.” (Rugh, 2004:67). Studies suggest that a great many newspapers and magazines were in circulation in various regions across the newly established country. AlShubili (2000), notes that between 1924 and 1964, some 22 newspapers and magazines were established; a large number for an era when there was a small population with a high illiteracy rate and many distribution difficulties.

During that era, the press shifted from political interests to cultural and literary interests, following the establishment of the Kingdom and political stability, and as elsewhere in the Arab world, the Egyptian press were influential on Saudi publishers. AlShubili (2000), observes that during that era, the press enjoyed relative freedom of expression, probably as a result of the low circulation rates of newspapers due to financial difficulties and illiteracy in Saudi society at that time, as well as the shift in the focus of press coverage from politics to socio-cultural matters.

5.5.1.2. *Organised press phase*

At a press conference held by the then Crown Prince, Faisal bin Abdulaziz, on October 24th 1958, he expressed his deep dissatisfaction with the state of journalistic practice in the country. He suggested that in each city all the owners of the newspapers and magazines published there should come together under a single name to strengthen journalism. As a result, the Saudi press entered the second stage of its development.

Five years after this press conference, a decree was issued by the Council of Ministers on November 11th 1963, abolishing all press licences for privately-owned publications, although exemptions were granted to some specialist newspapers and magazines. Since then, only two press licences have been issued to privately-run newspaper publishers.

Currently, some nine news organisations print several dailies and weekly magazines in Saudi Arabia, and a number of news agencies based abroad also print Saudi editions. The Minister of Information has responsibility for approving the appointment of editors-in-chief in all Saudi-based newspapers (Rugh, 2004), and also has the power to dismiss them (Awad, 2010). Rugh (2004), notes that the Saudi press, “Tend to be loyal to the regime in presenting news and commentary on important issues.” but emphasises that this loyalty does not necessarily imply a total lack of criticism of the government. Awad (2010), confirms that there is a strong relationship between the government and the press, and gives examples of some of the coverage which has irritated the government, particularly issues relating to municipal services.

Awad (2010), explains how the Ministry of Culture and Information (MoCI) influences journalistic practices in two ways. Firstly, it sends guidelines to newspapers prohibiting them from publishing certain stories. Secondly, it asks newspapers to follow specific news stories, and give them special consideration. Clearly, such requests by the Ministry could prevent newspapers from covering important stories, leading them to cover less important news. Editors-in-chief have no other choice but to adhere to these requests or risk dismissal.

5.5.1.3. The Saudi press abroad

Any full account of the media scene in Saudi Arabia must include foreign media organisations since some of the foreign-licensed media are considered to be its main players. Although the two newspapers discussed here, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* and *Al Hayat,* are based in London and are not aimed specifically at Saudi audiences, they are very much a part of the media environment there for three reasons: (1) They are both owned by Saudis; (2) One of them produces a Saudi edition; (3) One of them is listed on the Saudi stock market.

The first of these, the Saudi Research and Marketing Group (SRMG), was founded in 1972 in Saudi Arabia (SRMG n.d.). The UK capital was chosen as the headquarters for the daily so they would be free from any editorial interference. Today, SRMG prints more than 20 publications in many languages and on diverse subjects. In 2000, SRMG became a joint Saudi stock company with capital of 100 million Saudi Riyals (SRMG n.d.).

The second non-Saudi newspaper was originally founded as *Dar Al Hayat* in Beirut by Kamal Mrowe in 1964, who was assassinated in 1966. Although *Al Hayat* continued throughout the Lebanese civil war, facing constant threats, it was finally forced to cease publication in 1976 (Rugh, 2004). In 1990, Prince Khalid bin Sultan, the eldest son of the former Crown Prince and Saudi Defence Minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, took over partial, and later full, ownership of the newspaper (Zayani, 2012).

Al Hayat published its first Saudi edition in 2005, with three different versions, one for each region of Saudi Arabia. The editorial content in the Saudi edition of *Al Hayat* is the same as that of the international edition, but is accompanied by extra pages for local news, and different advertisements (Alhayat, n.d.)

Both *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* and *Al Hayat* are owned by Saudis and royal family members; both have more freedom of expression than the locally published press, but they remain under Saudi authority. Thus, they must also be concerned about the threat of being banned from publication in Saudi Arabia and of losing advertising revenue. The Saudi government appears to allow them to function as, “A kind of loyal opposition […], permitting a diversity of views within understood boundaries.” (Eickelman & Anderson, 2003:06). This type of loyal opposition may, in fact, be beneficial to both parties. It suggests that the state authorities do not totally control the media, and that some media organisations oppose the government on certain issues. It is also shows the independence of the press, consequentially giving it more credibility.

5.5.2. Radio

Radio emerged many years after the Press in Saudi Arabia, purely for financial reasons. On July 18th 1949, King Abdulaziz issued a royal decree authorising the Deputy Governor of Hijaz, his son Prince Faisal, to supervise the setting up of a new Saudi radio station, demonstrating his keen interest in this medium. A policy on radio was also set out in the decree which stated, “There is to be no editing of any foreign news; leave this as it is, without insulting or praising anyone with no justification.” He also asked for local domestic news to be broadcast in accordance with his state policy, commenting that this should, “Broadcast what we have always talked about, and keep silent about what we have always ignored.” (Ibrahim, 1992, in Alsaud, 2007). The King also asked his son to broadcast the Qur’an, religious talks, and programmes about Islamic and Arab history, (Ibrahim, 1992, cited in Alsaud, 2007).

However, there were no private FM radio stations in Saudi Arabia until 1994 when MBC FM radio, part of the MBC Group (Middle East Broadcasting Centre), began transmitting. It is unclear how MBC obtained its licence, since there was no public bidding process or legislation allowing it to launch FM radio in the Kingdom. At the end of 2009, the MoCI said it would start licensing new FM radio stations in Saudi Arabia and a few months later, bidding started, with six media groups obtaining licences after paying 60-80 million Saudi Riyal (some 10-13million pounds).

5.5.3. Terrestrial state TV and satellite

Terrestrial television in Saudi Arabia is a state-owned monopoly and, from a historical perspective, television was the last of the conventional media to enter the Kingdom (AlShubili, 2000). Official terrestrial television broadcasting began in 1965 after Crown Prince Faisal had declared the Kingdom’s determination to bring television to Saudi Arabia in 1962.

Today, the Saudi Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) broadcasts nine TV channels, eight of which are in Arabic and one in English. However, scholars such as Marghalani *et al.* (1998) and Barayan (2002*)*, were already suggesting over a decade ago, that due to the restrictions on TV programmes, Saudis were increasingly moving to satellite TV which provided them with a greater range of programmes. Barayan (2002), notes that Saudis complain that state TV does not seem to be interested in broadcasting events taking place in the country; a result, according to Barayan, of the lack of news correspondents. Interviewees in Barayan's study also particularly complained about the lack of analysis in news bulletins and the length of the official news. The research indicated that that nearly two-thirds of the news coverage on Saudi TV concerned the King and government officials.

Marghalani *et al.'s* (1998) study focusing on the reasons why Saudis prefer foreign TV channels over national ones, found that the heavy political and religious restrictions, as well as censorship of local media, are the major reasons for moving to foreign TV stations. However, moving to foreign TV stations does not mean the audience is free from Saudi restrictions, especially in political affairs, since Saudi Arabia probably exerts the greatest degree of power and control over satellite TV within the Middle East. Cochrane (2007), for instance has claimed that the:

> Saudi establishment has used its deep pockets to influence the region's media and minds, morphing from an approach that paid off and intimidated media that ran negative reports on the Kingdom to become one of the Middle East's most influential media owners, (2007:1).

For example, Saudi Arabia is the largest shareholder in Arabsat (Arab Satellite Communication Organisation) holding 36% of the stock (Alsharq, 2013); this makes it the main player in this company, as well as hosting the firm's headquarters. Despite the fact that Arabsat was founded by the 21 member states of the Arab League, and it runs as a business or satellite service provider, Saudi Arabia has the power to stop carrying any channel that could threaten its policy, while other members cannot do this. As an example, Arabsat has banned many satellite TV programmes dealing with magic, witchcraft, the Occult or paganism (*shirk*) in Saudi Arabia, on the grounds that these are incompatible with Islam. In contrast, Bahrain has struggled to stop Al Alam, the Iranian Arabic language channel programme on Arabsat, having been told by the organisation that there is no monitoring of channel content. Following long debate, Arabsat was finally convinced to stop broadcasting Al Alam (Elgomaa, n.p.).

With regards to ownership, Saudi Arabia controls all the main Arabic language TV networks (MBC Group, ART, OSN, and Rotana) with the exception of the Al Jazeera Network, which is the only rival to the Saudi media empire in Arab environs. It appears that members of the Saudi royal family, their relatives and close friends own all the Saudi TV networks, without exception. As result, this ownership means that their, “Editorial policy is Saudi-friendly.” (Kraidy, 2002:07) Moreover, private TV channels are also Saudi-backed financially and have a pro-Saudi editorial policy. Hence, when Saudi citizens try to express themselves and seek their rights via the media, they will find a space, but not what might be expected from a supposedly ‘independent’ media industry. The Saudi regime, like all Arab countries, usually allows, “A level of freedom to satellite television but still exercises substantial control.” (Kraidy, 2002:9). Importantly, all the previously mentioned satellite TV stations are allowed freedom to broadcast entertainment, social, and Islamic programmes, but not politics. As recently as July 2015, the Saudi authorities banned a TV presenter on the *Rotana Khalijiyah* satellite channel and the political activist Mohsin AlAwaji from media activities, and referred both of them to the Investigation Commission and to the General Prosecutor's Office for alleged abuse of the late Saudi king (Middle East Monitor, 2015).

5.5.4. Media and regulation and freedom of expression

Media laws and restrictions are crucial to an understanding of the media landscape in Saudi Arabia and also in shaping activists’ tendency to use alternatives in order to mobilise and achieve campaign goals (Fandy, 1999). As previously noted, legislation relating to the media was originally established with radio broadcasting but issues relating to media are covered in the Basic Law of Governance. Article 39 states:

> Mass media and all other vehicles of expression shall employ civil and polite language, contribute towards the education of the nation and strengthen unity. It is prohibited to commit acts leading to disorder and division, affecting the security of the state and its public relations, or undermining human dignity and rights, (Basic Law of Governance 1992).

In addition, Article 40 continues:

> The privacy of telegraphic and postal communications, and telephone and other means of communication shall be inviolate. There shall be no confiscation, delay, surveillance or eavesdropping, except in cases provided by the Law, (Basic Law of Governance 1992)

Both these articles address important points. The first article emphasises the role of media in national unity and human dignity and the second article prohibits censorship. The so-called ‘Higher Media Council’, headed by the Minister of the Interior, was dissolved in 2000 Part of its remit was to devise a Saudi media policy, meaning there is no longer any specific authority responsible for the policy. In addition, there is also a

Committee of Cultural and Media Affairs in the *Shura* Council, which considers issues relating to culture and the media, and legislation regarding these areas.

There is a variety of regulations and legislation governing the operation of media in Saudi Arabia and freedom of expression, the key ones being the 'Law of Printed Materials and Publication' and the 'Digital Publishing Implementation', as well as one article in the 'Anti-Cyber Crime Law'. The following section will address these laws and implementations.

5.5.4.1. Law of printed materials and publication, digital publishing implementation and the anti-cybercrime law

The printed press in Saudi is subject to several specific laws and regulations, including articles in the Basic Law of Governance. The vast majority of media is governed by three pieces of legislations: the Law of Printed Materials and Publication (2000), the Digital Publishing Implementation (2011) and the Anti-Cyber Crimes Law (2007). The Press and Publishing Law (last amended in 2000) consists of 49 articles, dealing with domestic and international publications, as well as other topics, including the need to obtain a license from MoCI to practise activities connected with printing and publication, and all relevant conditions, procedures and fees.

Presumably, having to obtain a license means that the MoCI can control not only who owns the media, but also the output as well. This could be seen clearly in the case of online media and foreign publications that come into the country. For example, in May 2015, the Saudi authorities blocked the licensed online Saudi news website, Anha,[1] due to what was described as a 'violation' of the law (Alhyat, 2015).

The law, however, covers provisions related to domestic publications and the local press. The law also stipulates penalties for violation of its legal provisions, the authority responsible, and the process for dealing with complaints. This amended law clearly shows some improvement 'theoretically' in the case of printed materials and publication regulations, but practically it has not had much influence on the media landscape, as the newspapers in particular are not free from MoCI influence. AlEnizi (2003), believes that the amended law (the 2000 Law) includes a number of important points which promote freedom of expression. For example, Article 24 states, "Local papers shall not be subject to censorship except under extraordinary circumstances determined by the President of the Council of Ministers." Also, Article 25 makes the point that:

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[1] Available at: http://www.an7a.com

> Outside the domain of private press establishments, private bodies or individuals may publish papers by license from the Ministry and upon approval of the President of the Council of Ministers.

Furthermore, Article 31 notes, “Publication of a paper shall not be banned except under extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the President of the Council of Ministers.” whilst Article 38 of the amended law abolished imprisonment as a penalty, replacing this with fines and closure of the institution which has violated the law. So far, none of these laws have been tested.

In January 2011, a new set of regulations forming part of the Press and Publishing Law from the MoCI entitled, ‘Digital Publishing Regulations, Digital Publishing Implementation’, came into effect in Saudi Arabia. These are intended to regulate a wide range of activities that use ‘modern technology’ to transmit information (MoCI, 2011). The legislation has a list of 14 defined mediums such as websites, online news, and social media activities. The regulation also gives the Ministry the freedom to add any other medium it sees fit. Saudi-based digital publications have been warned that they will not be able to operate in Saudi unless they obtain a license from the MoCI. Currently, this legislation only seems to have been applied to online news websites and there have not been any cases concerning blogs or social media related to this regulation whilst YouTube channels are still working freely without licence.

Previously, in 2007, Saudi Arabia introduced the Anti-Cyber Crime Law. This law aims to combat cyber crime by identifying crimes and determining their punishments. It should be noted that while the Law of Press and Publishing abolished imprisonment as a penalty, the Anti-Cyber Crime Law reinstates imprisonment as a punishment for legal violations, (the penalties in the Digital Publication Implementing Regulation are based on this).[1] This can be seen in Articles Three-Seven of the Anti-Cyber Crime Law, which makes provisions for ‘violators’ to be jailed for up to 10 years.[2] It could be argued that the digital publishing regulation is illegal according to the provisions of the Press and Publishing Law, since Article Two of this Law lists 19 ‘media’ activities which are covered by this piece of legislation. However, ‘activity [article] number 20’ states, “Any other activities suggested by the ministry to be added to the activities” and subject to the approval of the Prime Minster. In the case of digital publishing regulation, the Prime Minster has not approved this regulation yet. In addition to this, Article Six in the Anti-Cyber Crime Law, which was released by the Royal Decree No. M/17 on March 26th 2007, states that:

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[1] Generally, there are Law of Printed Materials and Publication, and Anti-Cyber Crime Law, as well as Digital Publishing Implementing Regulation. Penalties stated in the Implementing Regulation refer to Anti-Cyber Crime Law not to the Law of Printed Materials and Publication.

[2] The Anti-Cyber Crimes Law has been widely utilised by the Specialised Criminal Court set up to deal with terrorism cases.

> People who engage in any online activity that impinges on public order, religious values, public morals, and privacy, shall be subject to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years and a fine not exceeding three million riyals or to either of these punishments, (Anti-Cyber Crime Law 2007).

The phrase, “impinges on public order, religious values, [and] public morals”, is a broad one, and this could be used to limit online freedom of expression, as some might view online activities as ‘impinging on’ these areas. Sakr, (2006:138) noted, “The norm in GCC [Gulf Co-operation Council] constitutions is for media regulation to be referred to only in vague, general terms and for detailed provisions to be left to specific laws.” In addition, loosely worded legislation of this type creates grey areas in Saudi media law that tend to force people to practise self-censorship and ensure adherence to the regime. As Rugh argues:

> [T]he most common mechanism ensuring newspapers’ loyalty to the basic policies of the regime and to its top leadership is anticipatory, self-censorship based on sensitivity to the political environment, (2004:82).

Consequently, it is important to examine the links between politics and media in Saudi Arabia before discussing either online or offline activism in this country since it plays an important role in shaping the context in which activism takes place. Whilst the media may be a useful tool for activists in democratic countries, this is certainly not the case in the context of ND states such as Saudi Arabia.

5.6. Pre-Internet Activism: Concepts and Practices

Studying cyberactivism in the Saudi context requires an understanding of what constitutes activism in the Kingdom, since this differs somewhat from what is typically meant by the term in the Western world. Furthermore, it is important to understand the history of activism in Saudi society before the introduction of the Internet in order to appreciate the dramatic changes that this medium has made possible.

5.6.1. Defining activism in the Saudi context

It is argued here that activism in Saudi Arabia differs from what is commonly understood by this term in other countries, due to the unique complexities of the legal, religious, media and social restrictions posed by the Saudi context. Chapter One has demonstrated the complexity of activism terminologies in the general context. In the Saudi context, it is more difficult to use such terms or definitions when referring to activism or collective action. Pascal (2013), states that activism in Saudi Arabia is semi-formal it is, “Neither formal mobilisation (visible institutions or organisation with definite memberships and a published program), nor informal groups, the fortuitous union of previously unconnected people.” (Pascal 2013:70).

The semi-formal nature of activism makes it difficult to identify and measure activities and activism. Bayat (2010), also acknowledges that activism differs in the Middle East in general and uses the phrase, “Collective action without collective actors”, coined by Alberto Melucci (1996, cited in Bayat, 2010:110). Bayat’s use of Melucci’s phrase highlights the fact that activists in the Middle East act on the ground, but without organisation, and this observation is particularly apt in the Saudi case. This also makes an interesting link with what Bennett and Segerberg (2013), referred to as ‘*connective action*’ online, as discussed in Chapter One. This may suggest that connective action may also be applied to pre-Internet collective action in the case of the Middle East.

As terms, ‘activism’ and ‘social movements’ are not commonly used among activists in Saudi Arabia for two main reasons. Firstly, the government criminalises any collective action launched without state permission and it only allows collective action on a small scale for charitable purposes. This can be legalised only if it receives direct supervision from the authorities; for example, no trade unions exist in the Kingdom (Hertog, 2006). There are what could be called ‘semi-unions’, such as the Saudi Journalists Association, which was established by the MoIC, to block any attempts by independent journalists to form similar associations. The government sought to avoid the actual word ‘union’ when naming this organisation. There are very few, truly independent organisations and the civil society institutions are still weak because of the restrictive legal framework. The majority of Saudi non-governmental organisations are, in fact, managed or controlled to some extent by the government, (ICNL, 2013).

Secondly, the official religious establishment in Saudi, which has been created and formed by the Saudi government, considers most types of social action to be anti-Islamic. The following passage from the Qur’an is often cited as evidence of this, “And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah [i.e. the Qur’an], and be not divided among yourselves.” (Aal-Imran, 3:103). It is believed, then, that such organisations may be divisive to society. Moreover, the official religious establishment prohibits open criticism of the ruler, as well as prohibiting many actions usually used by activists to deliver their message or achieve their goals, (AlFawzan, 2011).

5.6.2. Restrictions on activism in Saudi Arabia

Collective action in Saudi Arabia has traditionally been viewed suspiciously by the authorities, regardless of the type of action in question. For example, even teaching the Qur'an to children in mosques is considered to be a kind of activity requiring to be licensed and monitored. Predominantly, there are three legal barriers which can be said to shape and restrict the nature of activism in Saudi Arabia. The first of these is the Law on Associations and Foundations which regulates collective action. This law is often regarded as out-dated by some activists like Alfalih (2008), and has become an obstacle to achieving the goals of collective action in general. For example, it mainly focuses on charitable organisations as well as limiting the activities of civil society organisations (Shalaby, 2008).

The current law has specified more complex requirements for establishing any organisation, for example, at least 20 people must write to the Ministry of Social Affairs in order to create an organisation. Moreover, all requests must be approved by the Ministry, which tightly controls the organisation to the extent that even the place for regular meetings must be approved by the Ministry. Given these problems with the current law, the government has agreed to adopt a new law but it does not appear to have the appetite for opening up participation in civil activities to the public and so is hindering the proposed new legislation. The law that was passed to the government by the Shura Council on December 31st 2007, is still to be officially issued at the time of writing.

Moreover, according to AlFaleh (2008, n.p.), the proposed law, which was drafted by the Shura Council, is still out-dated and does not fulfil citizens' expectations. He argued that if the proposed law is approved, citizens will still, "Face a continuing confiscation and kidnapping of society as a result of restrictions and trapping curbs on the effectiveness of its NGOs which are supposed to work in accordance to this law." The proposed law, "Does not enshrine the right and freedom of individuals to establish and form NGOs directly and freely." (AlFaleh, 2008, n.p.). The proposed law again requires the establishment of any civil society institution to be registered and given official approval. AlFaleh argues that this will not help civil society institutions, comparing the Saudi situation with that of countries such as Lebanon, which only require an announcement concerning the founding of the organisation without approval by official bodies. In the Saudi case, if the Ministry of Social Affairs refuses approval, there are no grounds for appeal against the decision.

However, both the current and the proposed Saudi legislation on civil society organisations, formally prohibit any free collective action within the state. Nonetheless, despite all these obstacles and limitations, the government is still trying to postpone the approval which, as a result, has opened the door for them to quash any collective action that could be viewed as being against the state.

It is not simply that collective action is not allowed but also specific types of activity are often highlighted as prohibited, even though there is no specific law regulating demonstrations or assembly. Calling for a demonstration or any small public assembly to be held in the Kingdom, is still regarded as forbidden, whatever the reason. The Ministry of the Interior constantly reminds the public of this restriction via the mass media. For example, one of the Ministry's press releases on March 5th 2011, makes clear that:

> In light of noticing the attempts of some people to circumvent the laws and relevant instructions and due processes in order to achieve illegitimate objectives […], the Security Spokesman of the Ministry of Interior explained that the laws enforced in the Kingdom strictly prohibit all forms of demonstrations, marches and sit-ins as well as any call for such actions because these contradict the principles of Islamic Law (Sharia) and the values and norms of the Saudi society; they further lead to public disorder, harm to public and private interests, breach of the rights of others, and to wreaking havoc that result in bloodshed, violation of people's sanctity and loss of their possessions, and encroachment on public and private properties, (SPA 2011).

The spokesman went on to stress that the State provides other means for expression:

> While the laws and values prevailing in our society, under the laws of Allah and the teachings of His Messenger, have sanctioned legitimate venues for expression and open doors for communication at all levels to serve the public good, the security forces are lawfully authorised to take all necessary actions against whoever tries to violate the law in any way, and he will be subject to the full force of the relevant regulations, (SPA, 2011).

Furthermore, the discourse of the official religious establishment is always consistent with the government's point of view, or vice-versa, as Saudi Arabia always emphasises religion as the core component of the state, which makes the Ministry of the Interior's prohibition of demonstrations appear to be religiously, rather than politically, motivated. In their statements about demonstrations, the Council of Senior Islamic Scholars use similar discourse to that used by the Ministry of Interior:

> Since the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, the pledge of allegiance, and the necessity of unity and loyalty, then reform should not be by demonstrations and other means and methods that give rise to unrest and divide the community. This is what is affirmed by scholars of this country in the past and present to prohibit these methods and warn against them. The Council affirms prohibition of demonstrations in this country and the legal method which realizes the welfare without causing destruction rests on the mutual advice. This is what was practised by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and followed by his companions and their followers, (Islamopedia, 2011).

5.6.3. The origins of activism in Saudi Arabia

Despite current legal restrictions against activism in Saudi Arabia, as well as the stereotypical view of the country as a repressive state, which has the power to suppress any uprising or activism, a closer look at the history of Saudi Arabia clearly demonstrates that activism has always been present there in some shape or form. However, despite the various types of activism which have existed in the Saudi state, most published studies have focused on Islamic or jihadi movements while other types of movements have received very little attention. Thus, a number of studies exist on the *Ikhwan*, but it was difficult to find studies relating to other social movements in the country, such as the Labour Movement (1953-1956). The reason for this is because most of the locally, religiously inspired movements have had an international impact, or have been linked with other such movements worldwide.

However, tracing the history of collective action in Saudi Arabia shows that most pre-Internet activism was primarily aimed at political reform, with militant activism in some cases. For example, the Free Princes Movement, founded in 1958 by Prince Talal, son of the founder of Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz, called for political reform and operated from Cairo in Egypt (Dekmejian, 2003). Similarly, in 1958 the National Liberation Organisation, also known as the Saudi Communist party, sought adoption of a constitution that would guarantee parliamentary elections, ensure press freedom and freedom of association, allow political parties and trade unions to be formed, give citizens the right to protest and strike, develop national industry and outlaw slavery (Kjorlien, 1994). A further example was the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights, later, the Movement for Islamic Reform, which was founded during the First Gulf War in 1991. This movement sought to achieve comprehensive reforms in the spheres of politics, economics and social security, as well as in the military, the judiciary foreign relations, the media and religious institutions (Kapiszewski, 2006; Fandy, 1999). The petition signed by the members of this committee showed that almost all members are university academics in different disciplines, and Islamic scholars.

We can also see regular occurrences of more extremist activism including violence. For example, *Al-Jamma'a Al-Salafiyya Al-Muhtasiba* is a group of Salafist Muslims who condemn Saudi rulers for not governing in accordance with Islamic rules. The founder of the movement, Juhayman al-Utaybi, accuses the Saudi royal family in particular of corruption as well as having close ties with 'infidel' governments and persecuting all members of the domestic opposition (Munson, 1989). On November 20th 1979, a group led by al-Utaybi seized the Holy Mosque in Makkah, and then declared that his brother-in-law was the, "Messianic Mehdi who had come to rid the world of injustice and corruption." (Munson

1989:71). This siege lasted for two weeks and 127 army personnel were killed and 462 injured during the operation, in addition to civilians. The leader of the attack and 102 of his followers were later executed (Lacroix, 2011; AbuKhalil, 1994).

5.6.3.1. Islamic movements

As noted above, historically, many of the key movements have been religiously inspired in Saudi Arabia. Islamic Movements have been studied globally within the Saudi context because of their influence on other movements elsewhere in the world, (see, for example, Kjorlien, 1994; Munson, 1989; Hegghammer, 2008; Lacroix, 2011; AbuKhalil, 1994; Armajani, 2011). The most famous of these is *Assahwa Al-Islamia* (Islamic Awakening). It can be argued that the most important question in this context is why Islamic movements of this kind would be found in a country that is often thought of as the world's most Islamic nation. One possible answer could be that these movements, including *Assahwa Al-Islamia,* are not interested in opposing the secular regime, but in challenging the regime's right to monopolise religion, even though its legitimacy is derived from Islam. However, researchers such as Lacroix (2012), argue that *Assahwa* is a combination of the Egyptian Islamic movement *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimeen* (Muslim Brotherhood) and Wahabbi Islamic thought. In this context, Alomaim argues that the uniqueness of *Assahwa* lies in the fact it is more practical than theoretical. In other words, it puts its ideology into practice, (AlOmaim, n.d.).

Lacroix appears to be the only scholar to have focused on *Assahwa* in particular and he has treated it as though it were a European-style political party, or a movement with organisation. However, like other movements in Saudi Arabia, *Assahwa* cannot be studied in the same way as one might study a movement in the European context or anywhere else, where people can freely disclose their political or ideological affiliations. There is no doubt that *Assahwa* is a movement, but it might be agreed that it is not an organised movement, in the sense of having leaders and plans. Assahwa could be seen as a philosophy rather than an organised movement. As such, then, it can also be thought of as, "Collective action without collective actors." (Melucci, 1996).

What is important is the movement's pivotal activist role in education, politics and volunteerism, as well as in many other fields in Saudi Arabia. As it is an Islamic movement, it does not confine its activities to one field, because Muslims believe that their religion should embrace all areas of life.

5.6.3.2. *The labourers' movement 1953-1956*

One of the earliest examples of pre-Internet activism in Saudi Arabia is the 'Labourers' Movement', which relied on the traditional model of activism in a ND country. In 1945, workers in the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Aramco) began their first strike, demanding higher wages and reduced working hours. The company responded to some of their demands. Later, in 1953, a group of company employees held a meeting to launch a body called the 'Workers' Committee', composed of seven employees and then notified the government and the company. The Committee, which was intended to act as the link between staff on the one hand, and the Saudi government and the oil company on the other hand, received no objections from either. Later, it presented a list of demands to the company and the government, in addition to distributing leaflets to tell the workers about the Committee.

According to Matthiesen (2014), the oil company management claimed that although the committee was ostensibly set up to achieve worker demands, it had a different agenda, and would evolve to include issues of public policy or politics. At this stage, labour activists also accused the oil company of deliberately provoking workers to commit acts of vandalism, which supports the company's claim. The government summoned the members of the Committee to negotiate with the Workers' Committee on October 15th 1953, and then arrested all the Committee members, who were imprisoned in Al-Ahsa in what is known as the 'slaves' prison'.

News about the imprisonment of Committee members spread swiftly among workers who were asked by their colleagues not to return work, in preparation for a major strike. The strike lasted for two weeks, until the Committee members were released from prison, but eventually all lost their jobs and two were expelled from Saudi Arabia. In 1955, the newly crowned monarch, King Saud, asked the oil company to re-hire the workers who had been fired and the company agreed to do this but excluded three of the Committee members.

The examples noted above were used to represent the scale of social movements and campaigns before the Internet era. All these examples could be classified as political in nature. These examples demonstrate that, despite regulations and a political environment which criminalises all type activism, with the exception of charities, activists in Saudi Arabia have still succeeded in challenging the regulations and the political environment on occasions. Yet, it is important to state that regulation and the political environment may only be effective for limiting small campaigns**.** When reviewing the history of pre-Internet activism, it is clear that big collective actions could stand against the political and social system in the country. This includes the militant movements and political movements such as the '*Committee for the*

Defence of Legitimate Rights'. In an iron-fisted regime, activism is a very risky activity, and ordinary people are generally unwilling to take the risk to campaign for social issues.

5.6.4. Pre-internet activism tools

As we saw earlier in the chapter, legal regulations and social pressure have limited the freedom of expression. Yet, activists in Saudi Arabia have always used alternative media to circumvent these controls such as fax, leaflets, posters, videotapes, and particularly, audiotapes. For example, (Zayani, 2012) pointed out:

> The use of small media to circumvent state control and disseminate anti-establishment political messages constituted a security challenge in subsequent years. Prominent Saudi opposition figures made feverish use of fax machines [...] to diffuse antagonistic messages, voice criticism and call for reform. Because the fax was essential to the conduct of business, it was difficult to disrupt its use without disrupting the economy, (2012:312).

This section will focus only on audiotapes, as they were recognised as the main alternative medium used in Saudi Arabia. During the 1980s and 1990s, cassettes were considered as an alternative medium in many Muslim countries (Hirschkind, 2006) and have been credited with playing a major role in Iran's Islamic Revolution (Annabelle, 1990). Internationally, they were also used in the Soviet Union as a form of so-called 'acoustic *Samizdat'*, to deliver messages that could not be delivered via the mainstream media (Mianowicz, 1994). In the Saudi context, even though cassettes were meant to be licensed before circulation, interviews with business leaders in the Islamic audiotape industry show that cassette distribution began in the early 1980s and grew rapidly (Fandy, 1999). According to Aldoah (1991), by 1991, there were as many as 70 Islamic cassette stores in Riyadh, some of which carried about 9,500 titles, with sales averaging 60,000 cassettes per month. Islamic tapes were viewed as a highly profitable business, as well as being used for mobilisation purposes.

It is clear that the spread of Islamic audiotapes could be attributed to Islamist organisations feeling that they had no alternative. Alkhedr (2010:670), indicates that, "Journalism remained immune from Islamist journalists who maintained only a marginal presence." due, in part, to opposition from the press and from politicians who did not allow Islamists to form part of the mainstream media.

Many audiotapes were recitals of the Qur'an and Islamic lectures which came from Kuwait on a weekly basis, and were then re-copied and sold on the Saudi market (interviewee C1). However, cassettes were also used to address subjects such as women's issues from an

Islamic point of view, religious matters and political analysis which might be classed as anti-Saudi policy, and all topics which could not be covered in the press in the Saudi context. This does not necessarily indicate that the issues addressed on cassettes were opposed by government, since most cassettes were issued with licenses for circulation. This suggests that these issues were not of interest to the Saudi press.

Moreover, the subsequent development of the cassette industry also shows that it became an alternative medium produced in parallel with mainstream media. Cassette stores started producing songs for adults and children consistent with Islamic teachings, as well as video cartoons with the same concept. Also, other titles about medicine and physiology could be found in cassette stores. Furthermore, some Islamic scholars used cassettes to reply to press columnists, since in most cases they did not have the chance to reply in the same newspapers. Some journalists also used their newspaper columns to reply to issues previously circulated by cassette as the titles of cassette content shows (Almanie & Alsheikh, 2013).

Friday sermons on secular, rather than religious, matters also played a crucial role in supplying the cassette industry with material and succeeded in engaging larger audiences than they would normally get in the mosques during sermons (Hirschkind, 2006). Newspaper columnists called for Friday sermons to focus on religious teachings only, whilst Islamists interpreted these calls as a kind of secularism and argued they must be about everything related to Muslim life. Islamists who represented the so-called *Assahwa* also used cassettes to address the public, but claimed that circulation remained relatively low among audiences, despite government support by buying some titles for free distribution at certain events.

Islamists claimed that audiotapes had many advantages for them. Firstly, it was easy to use them, as people could easily listen to audiotapes nearly everywhere, at home or driving cars. Moreover, they could be quickly circulated. For example, more than 30,000 copies of one title of these audiotapes was sold in one store in a very short time in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the cassette could be used to address all levels of society. As a tool, it could reach a wide array of people, even those who were totally illiterate or who found it difficult to read. A further advantage was that compared to a book, audiotapes have the power to be more influential. When people listen to an audiotape they feel that someone is addressing them directly and skilled speakers can use their voice very effectively. Finally, a very broad range of titles was available, with producers trying to provide something for everyone, including sermons by preachers, Islamic songs, Arabic language teaching and poetry (Alodah, 1990).

All of the advantages of audiotape mentioned by Alodah could also apply to the Internet, as a mobilisation medium, as discussed in Chapter Two. Moreover, it can be noted that many of those Islamic scholars who are now popular online, originally gained their popularity on audiotape.

Alodah, a well-known Islamist scholar in Saudi Arabia, has argued that two groups were opposed to the use of cassettes. Local newspapers and secularists used newspaper articles to attack the audiocassette, whilst the international press and some foreign political circles tried to discourage people from using cassettes by linking them with the Islamic revolution in Iran, arguing that the recording industry could lead to a revolution in Saudi Arabia. Alodah claimed that this conflict between the two sides was understandable given that each had its own ideological agenda which clearly contradicted that of the other (Alodah, 1990).

Interviews by the researcher with businessmen in the cassette industry indicate that it was influenced negatively by the emergence of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. They claimed that many cassette stores closed and the larger ones began to shrink their activities. They argued that their works were copied and uploaded to the Internet without taking into account any intellectual property rights, meaning that people downloaded these from the Internet instead of going to the stores. Moreover, preachers who had previously used cassettes to address the public quickly moved to the Internet seeing it as being more efficient (interviewees C1 and C2).

Activists in Saudi Arabia have often developed their tools to overcome the restrictions of using traditional media, in the same way that it was noted in Chapter One that activists always develop their own tools to reach audiences (Raboy, 1981). The fact that audiotapes were used widely in Saudi Arabia to engage both national and international audiences and as a means of bypassing traditional media, emphasises the fact that cassettes have some parallels with the Internet, as activists always find a way around existing restrictions.

As noted by (Almanie & Alsheikh, 2013), those who use audiocassettes do not have access to or representation in the printed press in particular. (Almanie & Alsheikh, 2013) suggest that each party uses their own media to reply to the other party. Moreover, reinforcing traditional religious values does not guarantee that people can participate in traditional media. Some religious group claim that traditional media does not represent Islamic values in the Saudi society.

5.7. Conclusions

This chapter outlined the political system of Saudi Arabia, and underlined the close relationship which exists between the Islamic religion and the political system. It also reviewed the media landscape and the laws and regulations which shape the systemic environment, especially the limitation of freedom of expression. The main goal of the chapter was to examine the overarching systemic environment of Saudi Arabia as a means of contextualising the case study campaigns reviewed later in this thesis.

In general, the Saudi systemic environment makes activism on the ground a complex and risky process for those involved. It is clear that the Saudi political system does not provide a public space for citizens to participate politically, when even the Shura council members are appointed, not elected. This chapter also showed that both the political system and religious belief discourage any sort of activism, with some Muslim scholars claiming that this runs counter to the teachings of Islam.

The traditional media in Saudi Arabia are in a similar situation to those in other ND countries. They are loyal to the state and even the privately owned press is still effectively under state control, with the Minister of Information having the power to appoint and dismiss Editors-in-chief. Foreign media, whether press or satellite TV stations, are also subject to state control, with media laws placing restrictions on journalistic practices and freedom of expression. Legislation is often deliberately vague, meaning that citizens and journalists impose, "Anticipatory self-censorship" to avoid punishment (Rugh, 2004).

The approach to the theory and practice of activism which has developed in Saudi Arabia is a particularly interesting, if not unique one, due to the peculiarities of the environment in which it exists. Addressing the socio-political environment and the media landscape, and tracing the history of activism, paves the way to understanding current cyberactivism in Saudi Arabia as a social phenomenon, as we shall in the next chapter.

6. CHAPTER SIX: THE INTERNET AND CYBERACTIVISM IN SAUDI ARABIA

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explored the systemic environment for activism in Saudi Arabia; the focus now shifts to establishing the broader context of Internet usage in Saudi Arabia. This chapter begins by examining the emergence and growth of the Internet in the Kingdom and exploring how and why Saudis use this medium. High penetration rates for Internet and, particularly social media, in comparison to other countries, globally indicate the potential for activism in cyberspace there and this chapter will demonstrate how various online campaigns have engaged both Saudi citizens and decision makers, and brought real change to the lives of ordinary people. Following this, the limitations of the Internet will be considered, addressing the impact of restrictions imposed by the government on freedom of expression and Internet usage campaigns initiated by citizens.

6.2. Internet Use in Saudi Arabia

The Internet became publically available in Saudi Arabia in January 1999, through commercial providers (ISPs), relatively late in comparison to many countries. It began with about 134,000 users and since then, has grown rapidly, despite high prices and infrastructure problems. By 2015, the number of Internet users had reached 21 million, around 66% of the Saudi public (CITC, 2015). In addition, around 72% of the Saudi population have smart phones and 80% of these have an Internet subscription for their mobiles.

According to the most authoritative recent survey conducted by the Communications and Information Technology Commission, which is the information and communications technology sector regulator, from a sample of 3000 Saudis, aged between 12 and 65, some 91% claim to use the Internet (CITC, 2014). Similarly, comparative studies of Internet penetration in Gulf countries indicate that Saudi Arabia has relatively high penetration rates in the region. Table 6 shows that Saudi Arabia is ranked in fourth place amongst Internet users, and indicates that Saudi users make up nearly 60% of the Gulf total.

Table 6: Internet usage in Gulf Countries as in 2012

Country	Population	Internet Users	Penetration	% of Sub-Total
Bahrain	1,217,701	799,521	65.66%	3.03%
Qatar	1,836,676	1,008,850	54.93%	3.82%
UAE	9,036,488	5,169,280	57.20%	19.58%
KSA	29,595,084	15,800,000	53.39%	59.85%
Kuwait	3,823,728	2,268,470	59.33%	8.59%
Oman	3,770,473	1,353,318	35.89%	5.13%

Note. (Madar Research and Development and Orient Planet, 2014)

6.2.1. Internet users: Demographics and online behaviour

The CITC 2014 survey (mentioned above), provides a clear insight into Internet users demographics and user habits. In terms of educational levels, the survey indicated people with limited education, as well as those who are illiterate, use the Internet in Saudi Arabia, where 16% of those who described themselves as illiterate are using the Internet. It also shows that 82% of the people surveyed who have studied at primary school are using the Internet, while 99.21% of those surveyed are master degree holders and are using the Internet (CITC, 2014). The survey also showed gender differences in usage: 85% of Saudi women surveyed reported accessing the Internet via mobiles, as opposed to 79% of men.

Generally, with regards to time spent on the Internet, the results indicated that some 28% of those surveyed stated that they used the Internet for between two and four hours every day, whilst just over a quarter (25.75%) use the Internet for more than eight hours a day; the youngest age cohorts (12-19 year olds) spending most time online. There was also a gender split on time spent on the Internet with nearly a quarter of females (24%) using the Internet for more than eight hours a day, while only 11% of their male counterparts spent the same amount of time online.

The percentage for Internet penetration in Saudi Arabia is 59.85% and came from a survey conducted by Madar Research and Development and Orient Planet in 2012 as stated in the table title. However, the CITC survey in 2014 was conducted with people aged between 12 and 65 whilst no lower or upper age limits were imposed in the CITC figures for 2015.

In relation to social media usage, the survey revealed that almost all Internet users make use of social media (91%), with 94% of these spending at least two hours daily. In this case, there was little marked difference between men and women, although the latter are more likely to use Twitter and Instagram than their male counterparts.

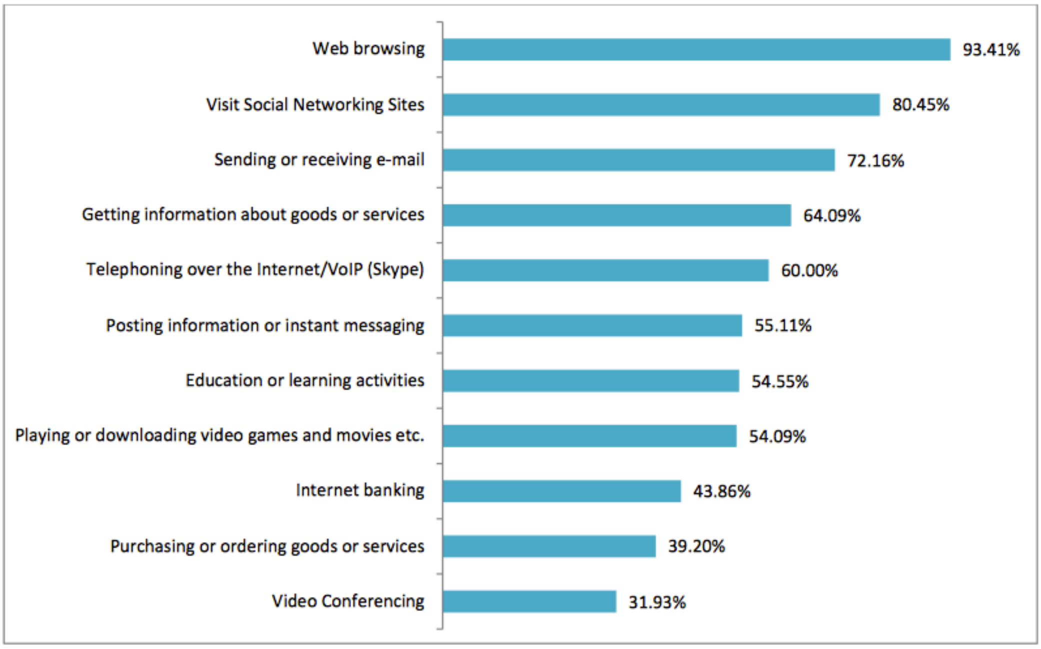

Figure 3: Internet Usage by Saudis at Home (not including 3G/4G Internet Services), (Source: CITC Report 2014)

Statistics also indicate very high Internet usage in terms of producing content, time spent online and sharing online content compared to other countries globally. For instance, one survey classified Saudi Arabia as the lead country in the world in terms of sharing online content, with over 60% of Saudis sharing most things online, including feelings, videos, photos, links and so forth. Figure 3 shows that the international average for sharing online content is just 24% (Ipsos OTX, cited in Meeker & Wu, 2013).

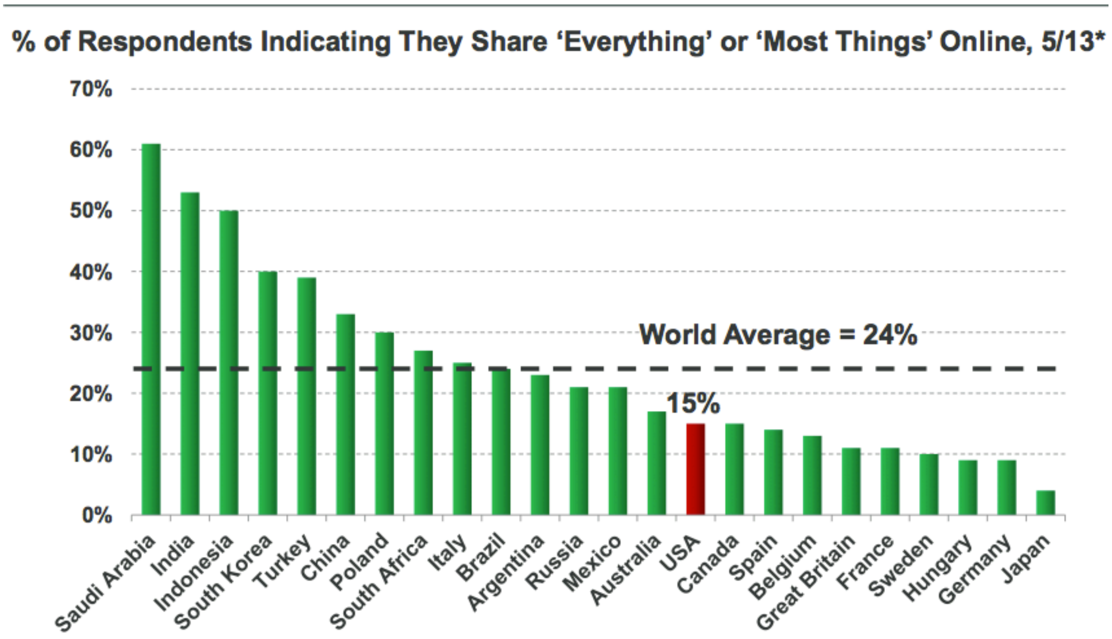

Figure 4: Cross-country comparison of percentages of content-sharing online (Source: Ipsos OTX, cited in Meeker & Wu, 2013)

With regard to Twitter, for example, Saudi Arabia is the country with the highest percentage of active users among its online population. Studies show that the annual growth of Twitter in Saudi Arabia during the period 2013-2014 reached 3000%, making it the number one country in the world in terms of penetration, with 32% of Saudis posting at least once per month on Twitter (Mari 2013; Peerreach n.d.; AlQahtani, 2014). Moreover, although Saudi Arabia is not the largest Arabic-speaking country, Saudis produce 47% of the tweets in Arabic on Twitter (Estimo, Jr 2015).

A Twitter hashtag created in 2014 asked why people thought this had been so successful in Saudi Arabia (#لماذا_نجح_التويتر_في_السعودية). Some of those who responded suggested the following reasons for its popularity:

- Users can communicate without interference.
- There is no Editor-in-chief to interfere.
- People express themselves freely without restrictions or limitations.
- It is the alternative to the Saudi *Shura* [Council].
- Your voice can reach more people and it can make a difference.
- You can discuss issues with different people without any social barriers.
- You can express yourself without revealing your identity.
- Because the press is controlled.

- It is the only available channel for Saudi citizens to express their views.
- It is a means of entertainment.

The posts reveal that the popularity of Twitter seems largely due to the fact that it opens up a space for discussion without a gatekeeper ("no Editor-in-chief to interfere"). This is contrasted with the traditional media and the offline public space, where many restrictions prevent Saudis from expressing themselves politically. In addition, some also believe that posting on Twitter can bring about change, suggesting its potential for activism.

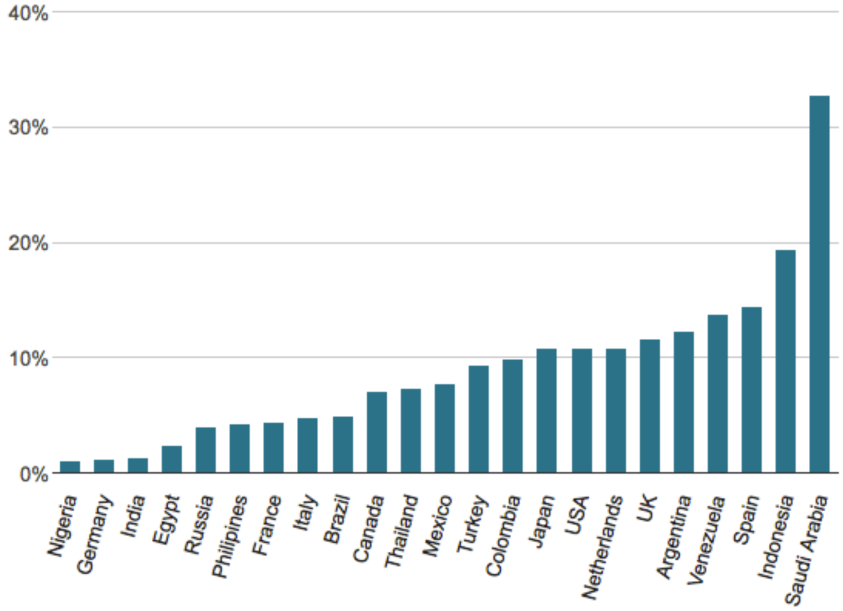

Figure 5: Twitter Penetration Rates per Country (Source: Mari 2013)

In addition to the exceptionally popular Twitter, Saudi Arabia is also the biggest per capita user of YouTube in the world, with its citizens contributing more than 90 million YouTube views every day (Hootsuite, 2013). Other reports also indicate that Saudi Arabia is one of the top 10 countries in using instant messaging applications on mobiles, namely Whatsapp, Snapchat, and weChat (Global WebIndex, 2015). This report (Global WebIndex) demonstrates that 50% of Internet users in Saudi Arabia use Whatapp, 20% use Snapchat, and a further 5% use weChat (Global WebIndex, 2015) .

Access to Internet services can be considered the key to a Saudi public space that is not be available in 'real' life. Delivering a public lecture online requires no authorisation, whilst offline authorisation is required. Talking freely to a member of the opposite sex is nowhere near as problematic online as it is offline because the Internet helps to dissolve boundaries which are normally strictly enforced due to established social and religious traditions. Saudis can watch the latest films and TV series with an ease that was previously unthinkable given that CDs and DVDs still need official approval before they can enter the country. Thus, the Internet has become a crucial part of Saudi life and a means of bypassing traditional controls.

6.2.2. Internet and Traditional Media: The challenge of the new Virtual Public Space

The comparatively high take-up rates of Internet-based technologies and platforms are, in part, due to the absence of the socially constructed public space offline. In terms of newspapers, for example, only eight news dailies have been licensed in Saudi Arabia but currently there are 600 licensed news websites, in addition to another 1400 unlicensed ones. Some 90% of Saudis claimed that the Internet is an important source of news, giving it a higher rating than TV (Dennis *et al.*, 2015). Low circulation numbers and financial deficit are evidence of the position of Saudi traditional media in the Internet era. Awad (2010), notes that the traditional press is struggling, with three national newspapers failing to cope financially because Saudis use online news websites. Traditionally, Saudi newspapers do not reveal their circulation figures, but it is believed that currently, the daily circulation of one of these newspapers barely reaches 1500 copies. Further evidence of low circulation figures can be found in the newspaper's official statement, which declared that it had not paid staff salaries (Alarabiya 2013).

The Internet is clearly impacting on journalistic practice in Saudi Arabia. Awad (2010), argued that this is reflected in various ways. In practical terms, censorship has been reduced following the advent of the Internet, since online news websites have published news stories that would not make it into the traditional press. This has broken the taboo on certain subjects, such as corruption, making it easier for newspapers to follow these stories without pressure from the Ministry, and to compete with online news websites. Nearly 72% of Saudi officials interviewed in the Ministry of Information agreed that, "Online coverage of some local issues has put them under strong pressure to allow the national press to follow these issues." (Awad, 2010:247).

Officials gave three reasons for this. Firstly, once a story had been published online it became less sensitive, allowing traditional newspapers to cover such news. Secondly, it was feared that newspapers might lose their readership to online news websites. Thirdly, now that Saudis can access online news easily, there is no point in banning newspapers from covering stories. One official clearly stated, “Censorship was originally exercised to isolate Saudi society from the outside world for fear of contact with other religious and ideological currents.” (Awad, 2010:267). Consequently, when news stories became available to Saudis online, it made no sense to prevent traditional newspapers from covering these. This can be compared to the case of the traditional media in China. Tang and Sampson (2012:468), state that, “Strong public opinion online may provide a way in which storylines can be more legitimately taken up in state-controlled mass media.” The authors also argue that even in such controlled media, citizens’ online participation shapes the news agenda of the more controlled traditional media. Moreover, competing news websites and the Internet’s ability to rapidly disseminate stories has forced newspapers to speed up their own news coverage in order to stay in the market. Online news websites do not need to wait until the following day to publish news as traditional newspapers did. For a news website, publishing online is much less complex than it is for traditional printing. This forces newspapers to attempt to speed up their news cycle, meaning that they do not have time to wait for approval for some important stories.

It is clear that the Internet has become the public space from which journalists draw information. It has become a recognised stylistic feature for journalists to entitle a report, ‘Twitter users demand...’ and Twitter hashtags are frequently visible in the Saudi dailies. Furthermore, popular online bloggers and Twitter users have been invited to write columns in the dailies, hoping to attract Internet users to follow their favourite writers in the newspaper e.g. Abullah Alqarni on Twitter @agrni writes daily for a Makkah newspaper.

Similarly, popular bloggers, Twitter users, vloggers and presenters of online TV shows have become Saudi celebrities with a similar following to actors, actresses and football players. They have gained their fame through their online presence and some have turned this into a business opportunity. Advertisements using online Saudi celebrities became popular among companies and dozens of examples of their ads can be seen online every day, for example Afnan Albatel, who is famous for showing premium products on Instagram, Afnan Albatel, @Afnan_Albatel, reportedly charges 4000 SR (750 pounds) per advertisement (Almghloth 2014).

YouTube has also become an alternative medium for watching Saudi content that is not limited to offerings from state or satellite TV. Rather than just watching YouTube content, the younger generation of Saudis has established their own TV network on YouTube and turned this into a business. Thus, UTURN, a Saudi Network on YouTube, presents various recorded daily shows and videos about national and regional news, social issues, video games and technology on 21 YouTube channels. At the time of writing, UTURN had received 21,413,940 views and had some 422,489 subscribers since establishing its network in November 2010. As with the press, some YouTubers have been invited onto satellite TV to present their show there. Mohammad baZaid, for example, moved to Rotana satellite TV to present a daily talk show similar to the one he presents on YouTube.[1]

Some Saudi Islamic scholars who became popular during the audiocassette boom in the 1990s have gained similar popularity online. For example, the controversial Islamic scholar, Muhammad AlArefe (see Chapter Five), has more than 11 million followers on Twitter. His YouTube channel has also gained 555,098 subscribers and generated 40,267,613 views since being established in December, 2010.

Everyday issues, such as political and international issues, are discussed online. A survey by Dennis *et al.* (2015), focusing on six Arab countries, found that 53% of Saudis over 18 agree that they can exert more political influence by using the Internet. This percentage underlines the fact that Saudis believe the Internet plays a key role in political empowerment more than those surveyed elsewhere.

Not only do Saudi citizens register on Twitter to discuss various issues, even the current King launched his own Twitter account whilst he was still Crown Prince in 2013. In addition, most Saudi ministers and ministries have their own Twitter account, as well as a number of civil service departments. Furthermore, it can be noted that discussions take place online between officials and citizens and this Internet debate has influenced the decision-making process in the Kingdom. For example, in 2015, Saudi users on Twitter captured a short video from State TV showing the Chief of Royal Protocol, Mohammed AlTobayshi, slapping a photographer who came close to the King when he was welcoming the Moroccan monarch, Mohammed VI, to Riyadh. Within a few minutes of this becoming available, the hashtag became a global trend on Twitter. By midnight, the Saudi Press Agency announced that by Royal Order No. 197A AlTobayshi had been replaced (SPA 2015).

This demonstrates that there is great potential for cyberactivism to emerge in Saudi Arabia, as a result of the restricted political system and limitations placed on civil society institutions. Both factors draw activists to alternative spaces and tools to demand their rights within this

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[1] BaZaid's YouTube show *Quarter to Nine* can be watched on: https://www.youtube.com/user/s7ch

ND system. The emergence of Cyberactivism in such an environment is more than coincidence. Rahimi (2003), emphasises that Internet activism thus:

> Continues to play an integral part in new Arab citizen activism, and the diversity and complexity of online tactics and strategies cannot be seen as detached from a broader spectrum of intertwining and competing cultural, political, and social forces that are changing global life in unpredictable ways, (Rahimi 2003:163).

The following section will explore Internet activism in this ND system and how it has become a fertile environment for campaigns due to its interactivity, participation levels, high volume of content, high percentage of penetration.

6.3. Cyber activism in Saudi Arabia

The previous chapter outlined the development of activism in the pre-Internet era in Saudi Arabia, and the earlier part of this chapter demonstrated the popularity of the Internet in the country. Both of these factors demonstrate that the Internet has great potential to be used for activism. This is due to two main reasons. Firstly, activists found it is too difficult and risky to conduct activism on the ground because, as the previous chapter indicated, there are numerous political, social and legal restrictions to doing this. Secondly, Saudis online present a unique case in terms of the activities they carry out, in comparison to what goes on elsewhere in the world. Both reasons suggest strongly that activism could be flourishing online because it is ‘suppressed’ offline, meaning that people are not only passively reading online or just simply ‘logging on’. As noted earlier, Saudis tend to share almost everything online which brings to mind Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) argument in Chapter Two, that in Internet activism, people organise by means of online communication and personal action. This is exactly the case in Saudi Arabia, bearing in mind that Saudis prefer to act collectively without organisation, as Bayat (2010) argued. Thus, Internet activism suits Saudis perfectly, due to the political restrictions to which they are subject and due to their social ‘sharing’ habits online.

The Internet has also generated a new type of activism. As previously noted, early pre-Internet activism in Saudi Arabia was mainly of a political and militant character, with a few exceptions. The absence of a socially constructed public sphere and independent media, together with the restrictions on activism imposed by the authorities, make it difficult for ordinary people to demand their rights by taking collective action. This political and militant activism tended to be carried out by ‘intellectuals’ rather than ordinary citizens, who appeared to be unwilling to risk participating in such action due to tough restrictions and the fear of being labelled an ‘activist’. Lacroix (2014), has argued that the Internet makes Saudis, especially young people, more politicised and transforms them into activists because of, “Their exposure to a wide range of influences through the Internet and the new media.” (Lacroix, 2014:07). He also claimed that the Internet and the increasing number of Saudi users, offered ‘constitutional reformists’[1] a chance to mobilise new social groups, more specifically, those who were socialised with *Assahwa Al Islamia* (see Chapter Five), and those who studied abroad on scholarships.

Despite the apparent popularity of the technology, research on online activism in Saudi Arabia is still very limited. However, a number of studies have addressed elements of this social phenomenon (Fandy, 1999; Al Nashmi *et al*., 2010; Alahmed, 2014) whilst others mention Saudi online political activism in passing (Matthiesen, 2013). Alahmed claimed that political activism is new in Saudi Arabia and that, “It appeared mostly after the emergence of new media social networks.” (Alahmed, 2014:38). His research listed many political organisations and campaigns such as the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), established in 2009 (Alahmed, 2014). There is no evidence that this organisation was originally formed online but it has certainly gained momentum there. Scholars such as Teitelbaum (2002), showed that the Internet was used by the Saudi opposition in 1994, even before this was officially introduced to the Kingdom. Teitelbaum points out that the Internet was also used by the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (see Chapter Five) to send emails and run the committee website.

Unlike pre-Internet activism, social activism in Saudi Arabia has witnessed a boom which parallels that of the growth of the Internet, even though the country has not changed its policy regarding collective action and activism. This suggests that the Internet allows Saudis to practise a form of activism without taking part in formal collective action, which is still criminalised by law, thus lowering the risks associated with activism in this non-democratic context. According to Flanagin *et al.*:

> Instances of collective action that might be labelled ‘classic’ in a theoretical sense, such as joining interest groups or voting, are accompanied now by a variety of new kinds of actions. These include self-organised protests and political actions in the absence of an interest group or other central co-ordinators, affiliation with a wide array of online organisations outside of formal ‘membership’ procedures and incentives, and a vast scale of personal, voluntarily contributed informational goods for public use through the creation of Web content, (2006:30).

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[1] Constitutional reformists are those Saudi activists who are calling for the introduction of constitutional monarchy.

This argument is similar to Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) model of connective action discussed in Chapter Two. Connective or self-organised action, which is the central theme of online activism, might be the key to studying this flourishing online social activism, which can be considered to be a democratic practice in a ND setting.

As a result, numbers of online social campaigns in the Saudi context have appeared since the Internet was introduced in 1999. The following section illustrates some of the different types of online social campaigns which have emerged in recent years, thus providing an indication of the broad range of cyberactivism in Saudi Arabia.

6.3.1. The Jeddah floods

Jeddah, in western Saudi Arabia, is the largest seaport on the Red Sea, the largest city in Makkah Province, and the second largest in Saudi Arabia after the capital, Riyadh. With a population currently standing at 3.2 million, Jeddah is an important commercial hub in Saudi Arabia. However, despite its importance, its current infrastructure is not robust enough to protect it against natural disasters. In November 2009, the western regions of Saudi Arabia were hit by heavy rain and floods when, “The impact of the severe convective weather process caused more than 90 millimetres (3½ inches) of rain to fall in Jeddah in just four hours.” (Al-Khalaf, 2013:150). Some 122 people were reported to have been killed, more than 350 went missing, and at least 3,000 vehicles were swept away or damaged in the worst natural disaster in Saudi history (Al-Khalaf, 2013). This catastrophe led to social activists seeking help and communicating openly via the Internet. This natural disaster can be said to have opened the doors to online campaigns against some of the government’s actions.

Activists broadcast and published hundreds of videos and news stories on YouTube and other online websites to educate people about the events and to expose the lack of accuracy of the official media coverage. As a result, for the first time ever, the Saudi Government was forced to admit that there was corruption in Jeddah City Council and some of its ministries. The King formed a ministerial committee, headed by the Second Deputy Prime Minister and the then Minister of the Interior, Prince Naif bin Abdullaziz, to address the issue of the Jeddah floods. The Prince promised to name and shame the authorities and individuals found responsible. Alahmed (2014:46), considers the fact that the Saudi government took responsibility for this catastrophe as, “A new phenomenon, a new movement and a courageous development in Saudi Arabia which has never existed before in this society.” He attributes this to use of the Internet by Saudi citizens.

More importantly, this catastrophe and its aftermath paved the way for a number of other developments. Firstly, it inaugurated online activism as a tool for civic engagement. The videos posted on YouTube, and posts in different online forums, demonstrated co-operation between citizens online and highlighted to Saudis that the Internet could be a helpful development for their society (Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2014). Secondly, Saudis became more open about expressing their concerns over corruption in their country. The King's directives and his statements about corruption by high-level officials emboldened people to talk freely about all kinds of corruption within the government. More importantly, they did this with some real hope that exposing these problems might lead to more transparency in dealing with local issues.[1] According to Alahmed, the Jeddah floods were a milestone in Saudi political participation and he goes on to claim (that):

> It was the first time in Saudi Arabian history that people took advantage of publicity in order to hold the government accountable for the disaster. All these processes came from social networking activities, (2014:47).

Similarly, Al-Saggaf and Simmons (2014), who used the Jeddah floods as one of their case studies exploring social media and Internet usage in Saudi Arabia, suggested that the Internet empowered political communication in several ways. They claimed that it facilitated the voice of citizens more than traditional media could, providing a new online space for those who had previously had no opportunity to express themselves. Their study also concluded that people were able to discuss domestic issues through social media and online forums in a way that they could not do in traditional media. The authors found social media represented a useful means of understanding citizens' attitude toward various issues in Saudi Arabia because online posts reflected in-depth discussions by Saudis about the everyday matters which affected them most:

> Social media were more useful for reading the emotional state of the people than they were as a vehicle for the more idealised deliberative and rational aspirations of the public sphere, (Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2014:11).

Al-Saggaf and Simmons (2014), also highlighted the effectiveness of the Internet in Saudi Arabia in bringing about social change. This could be clearly seen in various actions such as voluntary work done by citizens during the Jeddah floods, compensation for the flood victims provided by the government, the establishment of the ministerial committee and the national anti-corruption commission, and infrastructure work undertaken by the government to avoid any similar disasters in the future.

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[1] Videos can be watched on: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqQLtBISD14
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAcSBNnrPhg
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSCTvklCih4&feature=related

Overall, Al-Saggaf and Simmons argue that social interaction via social media demonstrates evidence of unity among users, even if this, “Was more likely to come from emotional and religious empathy than a rational process of argument and counter-argument.” (2014:11). Their study argues that the Internet also allows people to express themselves emotionally, sharing their sadness and anger at the catastrophe. These expressions of emotion were shared via comments on YouTube and other social media. For example:

> O Allah [...] and Lord of [the] Kaaba, something makes tears fall from the eye... for how long are we going to suffer this terrible psychological pain and every time a raindrop falls on Jeddah we become tormented, worried and frightened. May Allah punish those behind this, (Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2014:10).

However, this YouTube comment seems to be more than emotion. It also recognises that this is not divine retribution but rather, human error.

6.3.2. The boycott of municipal elections

The story of the boycott of the municipal elections began in 2005 when the Saudi government decided to introduce some elements of democracy. The Saudi Minister for Municipal and Rural Affairs announced that municipal elections were to be held across the country. More than 148,000 of the 400,000 Saudis who were eligible, voted for some 1,800 candidates who were vying for 592 seats in 178 councils. Some citizens were eager for political debate, but they voted for councils that, in reality, had no clear powers. Even so, people were willing to accept this due to their enthusiasm for their first democratic experience in the country.

However, vast numbers of citizens were very disappointed since these councils did not implement any changes in people’s lives; they did not have any ‘real power’ and, in many cases, were considered to have simply neglected issues as seen in tweets on the Twitter hashtag #مجلس_ الشورى_ لايمثلني (*Shura Majlis* does not represent me). Additionally, without giving any reasons, the Ministry then decided to postpone the second set of municipal elections until 2011, instead of 2009. Subsequently, groups of online activists began calling for a ‘Campaign to Boycott the Municipal Elections’, asking citizens not to vote again, or to participate at all, in what was described as a ‘Black Comedy’ or a farce. Online campaigners called for the boycott for three main reasons: firstly, the elections would bring no benefits for Saudi society; secondly, only half of the municipal councils are elected and they did not have any power; thirdly, women were neither allowed to vote nor stand for election (Lacroix, 2011; Alahmed, 2014). Thus, online activists encouraged people to boycott the elections in order to have them cancelled. Preliminary indications suggest that their calls for boycotts have borne fruit. Commenting on the low turnout at registration for the second elections, Riyadh's Mayor, Prince Abdul-Aziz bin Ayyaf, was quoted as saying that he, "Completely understands citizens' disappointment, but we still have the chance to make this work better." Numbers of participants show that only 14% of people who registered their names have voted (AlHabeeb, 2011).

The traditional media, however, did not engage with the calls to boycott the elections, simply reporting that these had been issued. In contrast, on the Internet, bloggers such as Eman AlGuwefly, Ashraf Fagih[1], and Ahmed Alomran[2], as well as a Facebook group[3] and a number of users on Twitter accounts were clearly advocating an election boycott by citizens. The Internet appeared to allow individuals to show their solidarity in challenging the government plans, and they succeeded in doing this online, without any other presence offline.

6.3.3. Imprisonment without charge or trial

The Saudi Intelligence services do not have full executive powers but, even so, they are able to arrest someone and hold him/her for an unknown charge for more than six months, the maximum period for imprisonment without a trial. Discussing individuals who had been imprisoned without charge was also taboo. However, the Internet has helped to change this scenario. In 2007, the Secret Police arrested Saudi reformists who were calling for a Constitutional Monarchy and others who had written or talked about corruption in the Kingdom. Then, in April 2011, a group of online activists broadcast a short video called 'Saudi Missing' which showed how political reformists suffer in prison, along with their families outside.[4] Those who appeared in the film were family and friends of prisoners and showed their faces on the video. This film paved the way for people to talk freely online about this taboo subject, as well as the topic of the 4,396 people jailed on charges of terrorism and other charges (National Society for Human Rights, 2012). Previously, such issues could not be addressed openly, but these different online campaigns about the prisoners have broken the taboo and made a number of Islamists, and other well-known individuals, speak out about these issues (Lacroix, 2014).

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[1] Both blogs are available at: http://www.alfagih.net/site/.

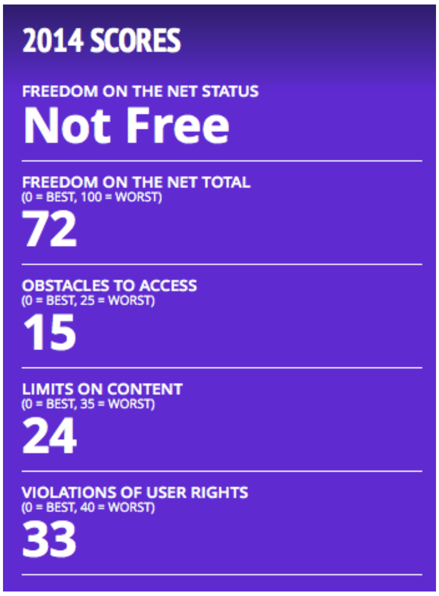
[2] The blog is available at: http://saudijeans.org

[3] The group can be seen at: http://on.fb.me/1CdR0Oi

[4] A sample video can be watched at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R99d7SVgyQU

6.4. Controlling the Internet/Official Responses to the Potential of Online Activism

Since the Internet and social media show great potential for developing civil society and cyberactivism, Saudi state authorities have begun to follow online activities. Internet reports issued by organisations such as Freedom House, Internet Enemies and the Opennet Initiative show how heavily the Saudi government controls the Internet.



2014 SCORES

FREEDOM ON THE NET STATUS
Not Free

FREEDOM ON THE NET TOTAL
(0 = BEST, 100 = WORST)
72

OBSTACLES TO ACCESS
(0 = BEST, 25 = WORST)
15

LIMITS ON CONTENT
(0 = BEST, 35 = WORST)
24

VIOLATIONS OF USER RIGHTS
(0 = BEST, 40 = WORST)
33

Figure 6: Summary of Freedom of the Net Report for Saudi Arabia in 2014 (Source: Freedom House)

Saudi officials and Islamic clerics, such as the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and the imams of the Two Holy Mosques, are permanently cautious about the Internet in general, and social media, in particular. The Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdulaziz AlSheikh, has twice denounced Twitter as, “A place of evil and a scourge, and the source of lies and falsehoods.” He attacked Twitter on the grounds it was used to, “Promote lies, backbiting, gossip, thinking badly of Muslims and insulting Islam.” AlSheikh also commented that the, “Enemies of Islam are taking advantage of these tweets to sow discord and create chaos in the country.” (AlThomiri, 2014).

Speaking to Reuters, Abdulrahman AlHadlaq, the head of the Saudi Ideological Security Directorate (ISD), suggested that the unit, “Known for keeping tabs on liberal activists and women drivers as well as Islamist extremists, is turning its focus increasingly towards those using the Internet to recruit fighters for jihad abroad.” (McDowall, 2014). He noted that the broad mandate of the ISD includes, “Peaceful political or human rights activists.” and added that several had been jailed in 2013, “On charges that included comments made online.” AlHadlaq justified the Ministry of the Interior’s policy by saying that:

> Most governments, including those in the West, monitor citizens online. The Saudi monitors are careful to distinguish between people who simply voice opinions and those who incite others to action, (McDowall, 2014).

However, two days later, AlHadlaq said that there were mistakes in the translation in the Reuters’ report and that it also contained misunderstandings and exaggeration. In a further statement, he also gave the name of his organisation as the ‘Intellectual’, as opposed to the ‘Ideological’ Security Directorate. AlHadlaq commented, “Following what is going on in social networks cannot be considered censorship, as this content is available to the public openly and it is not done secretly.” He emphasised that, “It is the task of such authorities to follow up all matters relating to their responsibilities and citizen concerns, in co-ordination with other relevant government authorities in this regard.” (Albarqawi, 2014).

AlHadlaq’s statement is of key importance regarding the censorship of online activism, since he has claimed that ISD is not against ‘voicing opinions’ as such but rather against ‘inciting others to action’. The ISD’s online operation is intended to tackle those individuals who mobilise for action, even in the name of human rights or the issue of women driving.

AlHadlaq notes that ISD, which is under the aegis of the Ministry of the Interior, is not the only authority in Saudi Arabia responsible for the Internet. He might be referring to the MoCI, as this is responsible for online publication. The following sections will address the ways in which Internet freedom has been limited in Saudi Arabia, namely by technical blocking, search result removals and take-down, self-censorship, and further actions.

6.4.1. Technical blocking

Saudi Arabia is clear about the technical blocking, or so-called ‘filtering systems’ implemented by its Communications and Information Technology Committee (CITC) which came into operation when the Internet was introduced into the country. Use of a filtering system is included in the Council of Ministers Resolution No. 163 04/03/1997, which assigned provision of the Internet services in King Abdulaziz City for Science and

Technology, represented by the Internet Services Unit, and then by CITC after the other resolution in 2004 gave the responsibilities of developing Internet Filtering measures and requirements to CITC. According to CITC:

> Blocking is applied to those websites and materials that are incompatible with the Islamic religion and national regulations, and in compliance with the permanent Security Committee guidelines. The Committee was assigned the task of directly blocking websites that promote pornography and provides a means of circumvention without having to refer to the Committee, (CITC, 2011 n.p.).

This filtering process is mainly conducted through two lists: commercial and local. CITC has a contract with an Internet company specialising in site classification. This company provides CITC with a daily list of websites under 90 different categories, which then blocks websites which fall under the categories of pornography, gambling, and drugs. In addition, the local list, which is updated by the Saudi public, provides CITC with website addresses that people think should be blocked because of their illegal content. The CITC says the local list comprises:

- Pornographic sites = 93%
- Sites that can be used to bypass filtering systems = 4%
- Other sites (including gambling, drugs etc.) = 3%.

However, CITC does not mention blocking any Saudi-based political and news websites and they do not provide any information about blocking political content in general, but clearly there are a number of news websites that have been blocked and some which continue to be blocked e.g. Elaph.com which has been blocked since 2010 (IFEX 2010).

6.4.2. Search result removals and take-down

Some sources from Internet companies show that companies have been asked by CITC to remove some content. For example, in the first half of 2014, Facebook restricted access to seven pages stating, “We restricted access in Saudi Arabia to a number of pieces of content reported by the Communications and Information Technology Committee (CITC) under local laws prohibiting criticism of the royal family.” (Facebook, 2014). Google says it has received 11 removal requests from Saudi Arabia in the period between 2009 and 2013 (Google, n.d.). Since the report started in 2012, Twitter data shows that Saudi Arabia has not officially asked for any data removal between 2012 and 2013. However, Saudi Arabia sent 220 information requests to Twitter in 2014 (Twitter, 2014). The report has not specified the required action requested by Saudi Arabia, but according to Twitter indexing, this may include tweet removal, user removal and account information.

6.4.3. Self-censorship

Self-censorship has a long history in Saudi Arabia in general and several scholars have addressed self-censorship in the context of Saudi media (Mellor, 2009; Yushi, 2012; Zayani, 2012). The use of this practice in Saudi Arabia was described by Jihad Khazen who has worked with the Saudi-owned press for many years and has been Editor-in-chief for three Saudi-owned dailies. He has stated:

> The most prevalent form of censorship is self-censorship. Sitting at my desk, I feel at times that I'm not so much covering the news as covering it up. Editors know the dos and the don'ts of their trade, so when I am shown a story, it is often to shift responsibility from the editor concerned to me, should the paper get banned the next day […] if we are banned in Saudi Arabia, we stand to lose tens of thousands of dollars in advertising revenue. Consequently, we are more careful with Saudi news; it is a matter of economics, even of survival, (1999).

Self-censorship on the Internet seems to be a continuation of this effective policy in Saudi Arabia. Apart from terrorist groups who are arrested due to their online activities, only a small number of citizens have actually been jailed because of their online activities. One could argue that these numbers are small not because Saudi is tolerant of online expression, but because people are practising self-censorship, aware of the consequences of not doing so. This is similar to Khazen's statement about self-censorship in the Saudi press: '*Editors know the dos and the don'ts of their trade*' since in the case of the press, the punishment will be confiscation of the newspaper next day, or arrest of a journalist, or in some cases, both. In the case of the Internet, people know that they will be arrested or banned from using social media.

6.4.4. Beyond Censorship and Surveillance

In Chapter Two, it was argued that censorship and surveillance alone might not be sufficient to control the Internet so the government has found new methods to control the Internet. In Saudi Arabia, Almohea's study indicates that there has been some use of Twitter spamming, similar to that mentioned by Verkamp and Gupta (2013), in China, Russia and Mexico (see Chapter Two). The difference in the Saudi context is that Almohea (2013), did not find evidence of direct state spamming of Twitter hashtags, although most spamming activity seemed to be pro-government, which may raise the possibility of co-ordinated indirect spamming.

Similarly, the anti-radicalisation campaign, Assakina, which is described by campaigners as an ‘online volunteer campaign’, is working online under supervision of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, *Da’wah*, and Guidance in Saudi Arabia. This online campaign, “Seeks to publish unique translations, research and news about issues related to jihad, political violence and radicalisation.” (Assakina, n.d.). However, the campaign, which was launched in 2003 and has won international recognition, is trying to challenge some elements of freedom of expression, especially the relationship between the ruler and citizens. This campaign uses social media to campaign against some issues which are only discussed explicitly and relatively freely online such as the relationship between the ruler and citizens.

A Twitter campaign, led by an individual with the user name ‘@mobta3athon’, is doing a similar job for the Ministry of Education. It is clear this campaign, which says it supports Saudi students abroad, avoids talking about any negative practices by the Ministry, even in relation to sponsored students. For example, in 2015 the Ministry told students that if they paid their travel expenses and registered for approved universities in the US, they would be sponsored. Later, the Ministry declined to provide funding. However, even though this issue was clearly related to Saudi students abroad, it was never mentioned by the campaign.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to identify the uses that are made of the Internet by Saudi citizens and the state response to this growing usage. It demonstrated the central importance of the Internet in the lives of Saudis, with some figures putting Internet usage at over 90%, whilst citizens of Saudi Arabia rank amongst the top nationalities in terms of sharing content on the Internet.

The chapter clearly shows that the Internet has become a public space for Saudis to discuss different issues in a relatively free environment, at least, compared to traditional media. The Internet space in Saudi Arabia is shared by everyone from ordinary citizens right up to the current King himself, and most of his ministers; his participation on Twitter reflecting the importance of the Internet for the government as a means to recognise citizen demands. This was highlighted by the AlTobayshi story and the government’s response to online debate about what was considered to be unacceptable behaviour towards a journalist.

The degree of freedom permitted by the Internet has also increased freedom of expression in the traditional press, with Saudi officials in the Ministry of Information acknowledging this change has occurred in order to allow newspapers to compete with online news websites. They also noted that, since the Internet allows Saudis to read news from all over the world, there is no longer any point in trying to ban newspapers from covering sensitive news. Clearly this does not mean there is no censorship, but the point here is that the level of freedom has been increased and there is more discussion and news coverage of some sensitive issues than before. Scholars such as (Teitelbaum 2002) have argued that Internet control in Saudi Arabia is not absolute.

The discussion of the three campaigns: Jeddah floods; boycotting municipal elections; prisoners held without trial, illustrates that the Internet allows people to discuss domestic issues in a way that was not possible previously. The examples also indicate that the Internet has influenced decision makers on different occasions. The government responded to citizen comments regarding the Jeddah floods. The online campaign against the municipal elections caused many voters to boycott these whilst the third campaign showed that the ability to act anonymously on the Internet helped people to campaign about sensitive issues, such as prisoners being held without trial.

Nevertheless, the state still uses a range of methods to restrict Internet influence in Saudi Arabia, and, in particular, relies on self-censorship to control citizen activity online, just as is the case with the press. This demonstrates that the government is not against online activities per se, but is clearly concerned about these being transformed into offline activities, as the Ideological Security Directorate, Al-Hadlaq, suggested.

Chapters Two to Six have explored the uses of the Internet for activism, both in democratic and ND settings. They have also established the philosophical approaches which have influenced the study of the Internet, and the framework that will be used in this thesis. The literature review also shed light on the peculiarities of Saudi society, the context for this research. The methodology chapter explained the philosophical underpinnings of the research and described in detail the methodological issues and the research procedures for this study. We will return to all these points later when attempting to understand cyberactivism as social phenomenon in the Saudi context, as illustrated by the two case studies chosen for analysis in this thesis.

7. CHAPTER SEVEN: THE WOMEN DRIVING CAMPAIGN *(October 26th)*

7.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the role and impact of new communication technologies in the so-called '*October 26th*' Campaign, supporting Saudi women's right to drive. It assesses how such technologies are used to mobilise and organise activists and supporters, and the extent to which the Internet, in particular, has enabled activists to challenge the Saudi authorities. To do this, it draws on findings obtained from activist and journalist interviews, and online network analysis of two Twitter hashtags in Arabic and English.

Although both case studies in this thesis are described as social campaigns in the Saudi context, there are a number of differences between them. Firstly, this campaign has its historical roots in the pre-Internet era. Secondly, it does not relate to any specific age group like the teachers' campaign, but for obvious reasons, tends to be deliberately targeted towards female members. Finally, it has wider links with the international media and international campaigning organisations rather than the teachers' campaign which follow in Chapter Eight.

This analysis of the '*October 26th Campaign'* focuses on four main areas. It begins by tracing the origins of the campaign and its background in the pre-Internet era. It then outlines the mobilising aspects of the campaign, before moving onto its organisational structure. Finally, it concludes by examining some of the factors which have affected the online campaign, both in terms of mobilisation and organisation.

7.2. The Women Driving Campaign: Origins and Background

7.2.1. Historical background

Generally, the right to drive a car is recognised as a basic freedom and an uncontroversial act in most countries. In Saudi Arabia, however, women are not allowed to drive cars under any circumstances. Despite the absence of any 'gender ban' on driving under Saudi regulations, women cannot drive because there is a *fatwa*[1] that prohibits females from driving, supported by two statements from the Ministry of the Interior.

The campaign has a history dating back to November 7th 1990, when 47 Saudi women drove in 11 cars through the Saudi capital, Riyadh. However, there is a lack of information concerning the original 1990 action, partly because there was limited media coverage due to official restrictions. Hessa Alsheikh and Eayish Almanea, who were among those Saudi female activists who originally drove their cars through the city, subsequently published a book detailing the ‘demonstration’, telling the story of events from the campaigners’ viewpoint. Importantly, the activists emphasised that the Women Driving Campaign in 1990 was intended to draw attention to women’s rights in Saudi Arabia in general. The right to drive was seen as symbolic of their wider objectives. In Saudi Arabia, by law, women are generally not allowed to travel, marry, or invest, without a male guardian, who should be their father, an adult son, a brother or a husband. According to Almanie and Alsheikh (2013:30), the right to drive was used to highlight wider rights because it was felt there was public backing for it, thus providing the momentum for a larger campaign.

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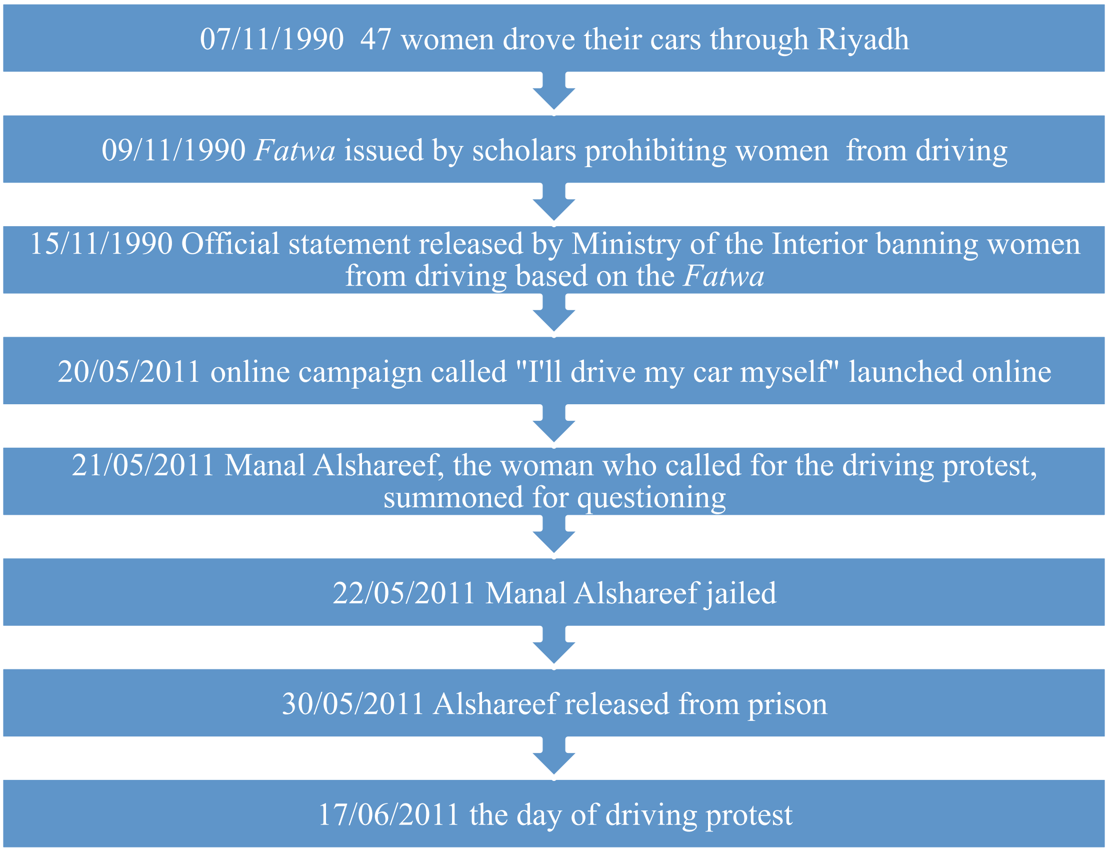
[1] A *Fatwa* is an Islamic legal pronouncement, issued by an expert in religious law (*mufti*), pertaining to a specific issue, usually at the request of an individual or judge, to resolve an issue where Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is unclear, (The Islamic Supreme Council of America).



07/11/1990 47 women drove their cars through Riyadh

09/11/1990 *Fatwa* issued by scholars prohibiting women from driving

15/11/1990 Official statement released by Ministry of the Interior banning women from driving based on the *Fatwa*

20/05/2011 online campaign called "I'll drive my car myself" launched online

21/05/2011 Manal Alshareef, the woman who called for the driving protest, summoned for questioning

22/05/2011 Manal Alshareef jailed

30/05/2011 Alshareef released from prison

17/06/2011 the day of driving protest

Figure 7: The Timeline of the Main Events for the 1990 and 2011 Campaigns

However, the women who participated in the driving demonstration were subsequently sacked from their jobs, until a royal pardon from King Fahd, nearly three years later. The campaigners also faced a so-called counter-insurgency campaign, where activists, mainly from conservative and religious groups, circulated leaflets and audiotapes and used Friday sermons at mosques to condemn the action. For example, a cassette entitled, ‘*For Women*

Only', (a lecture by the academic and Islamic scholar, Salman Alodah), claimed that the 'Women Driving Campaign' not only sought the right for women to drive, but that it aimed for women's liberation more generally. Alodah argued that the issue of women driving would lead to a split within the Saudi community (Alodah, 1991).

Conflict between the two groups, pro-women driving and anti-women driving, has continued ever since. For instance, in 2005, more than 100 people signed a petition which was sent to the Saudi National Society for Human Rights in support of women's right to drive (Alarabiya, 2005). Yet, 500 Saudi females have also signed a petition, which was sent to the Crown Prince, asking him not to allow women to drive because it may lead to 'harassment of females' in public spaces, market places, and in front of girls' schools (Alaqili, 2005).

In 2011, a number of women tried to launch the campaign again. With support from other activists from a campaign called *'My Right, My Dignity'*, a female activist called Manal Alshirif filmed herself driving her car on May 20th 2011, with support from other activists. The clip showing her driving was uploaded to YouTube and she was subsequently placed under arrest for nine days. From May 21st onwards, a number of women followed Manal's example and filmed themselves driving in Saudi Arabia and uploaded their clips to YouTube. Manal's action gave the women's right to drive campaign new momentum within Saudi society.

7.2.2. Media coverage of the 1990 campaign

Media coverage of the 1990 campaign was limited. Local Saudi media, including radio stations, TV channels, newspapers and magazines, published the official statements about the action. The Ministries of the Interior, Islamic Affairs and Information warned Imams about giving any statements, speeches or even talking about the demonstration during Friday sermons (Almanie & Alsheikh 2013). The authors explain that the first news coverage of the 1990 action appeared about one week later and took the form of a brief official statement, released by the Ministry of the Interior:

> The Ministry of the Interior would like to announce to all citizens and residents that based on the *fatwa* issued on 20/4/1411 AH [09/11/1990] from His Eminence Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz, the General President of the of Scholarly Research, and Ifta presidency, his Vice President, and a member of the presidency, women are prohibited from driving, and those who do so should be punished. Moreover, car driving by women is incompatible with Islamic behaviour enjoyed by Saudi citizens, (Aljazeerah, 1990, cited in Alwehibi, 2013).

There was a similarly limited amount of international news coverage in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, which started to emerge the day after the demonstration. Most news stories were credited to one source, Associated Press, although not all newspapers published exactly the same information. Some, such as *The Toronto Star,* focused on the profile of demonstrators and noted the diversity of participants, "They included businesswomen, housewives and a woman eight months' pregnant." (*The Toronto Star,* 7th November, 1990). However, others, such as *The Boston Globe,* suggested that support for the campaign was limited to a particular class of women:

> One hopes, though, that if a women's-rights movement sweeps like a desert wind through the Moslem world that it will benefit all women, not just the Mercedes elite, (*The Boston Globe*, 7th November, 1990).

Overall, the tone of the international media's coverage was supportive and viewed the action as being aimed at challenging tradition more than simply focusing on the issue of women driving. It is worth noting that when the international media published coverage of the driving demonstration it mentioned other women's issues, such as the requirement for women to have a male guardian when they need to travel.

Thus, the activism in the 1990s can be seen as a short-term campaign, which focused mostly on the specific day of the driving protest, the *fatwa* and the statement issued by the Ministry of the Interior. This was due to the lack of media coverage that supported the women drivers, as well as the counter-campaign that used other forms of media to spread its message. The short-lived nature of the campaign can also be attributed to the unified religious response with no other *fatwa* having been issued, which then allowed women to drive.

7.3. The Formation and Growth of the October 26th Campaign

Arguably, the main component of the more recent campaign is groups not individuals. Most of the core activists in this campaign came from similar groups and a campaign called, *'My Right, My Dignity'.* This campaign was launched in 2011 to pursue several rights for women, one of which was driving. Because of Manal Alshareef's prison sentence and the Arab Spring, the activists said they preferred to pause the campaign, as they did not want to be accused of exploiting the events of the Arab Spring. During the first half of 2011, particularly on March 11th, there were calls by unknown groups on the Internet for a revolution in Saudi Arabia, referred to as the 'Hanin Uprising'. For this reason, activists only re-launched their activities some two and a half years later. Two activists who participated in both the 2011 and the 2013 '*October 26th'* campaigns said the imprisonment of Manal and what followed, in addition to the Arab Spring, risked framing the campaign in a negative context, by linking it with the climate of freedom created by the Arab Spring, "We did not want to be shown riding the waves of freedom." (W1). Surprisingly, this appears to show that the Arab Spring actually had a negative influence on the campaign, but as we shall see later, it did have other influences, especially in terms of campaign organisation.

Personal contacts and direct invitation were also used to recruit activists for the '*October 26th Campaign'* but some of the activists interviewed here also said they joined after seeing activities on the Internet. In this context, the Internet played a role in re-engaging people with this campaign. An interviewee who participated in the 1990's campaign said she was happy to see a new generation of activists claiming their rights. She contacted some participants in the campaign and started working with them, without knowing any of them personally beforehand, only becoming aware of them via the Internet.

The '*October 26th Campaign'*, now based online, particularly on Twitter, did not originally start there and was not launched by ordinary individuals like the first campaign. The group of activists who arranged this campaign claim that it really started when a famous KEEK[1] application user, Loujain Al Hathlool, announced it. However, it is clear that the campaign did not start spontaneously online; activists arranged a specific date to start the campaign. They also stated in interviews that they were looking for someone with a large number of followers on any social network to launch the campaign but well-known people, even those who shared apparently similar views, did not respond to them.[2] Loujain Al Hathlool was the only one who responded and announced the campaign slogan and the date for driving, *October 26th 2013* (W1). Al Hathlool was, at that time, well-known in the Keek app for her controversial thoughts and significantly, her video transferred instantly to Twitter and other apps such as YouTube. Thus, although the actual date set for the launch of the campaign was October 26th 2013, it started to gain prominence about a month earlier. Al Hathlool's initial post was on September 19th, and the website domain for the campaign was registered on September 21st, whilst the Twitter account was created on October 2nd.

This video in Figure 7, which had had some 3,077,046 views by the end of 2014, sparked off the campaign. Activists have asserted their determination to continue the campaign until the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia is lifted.

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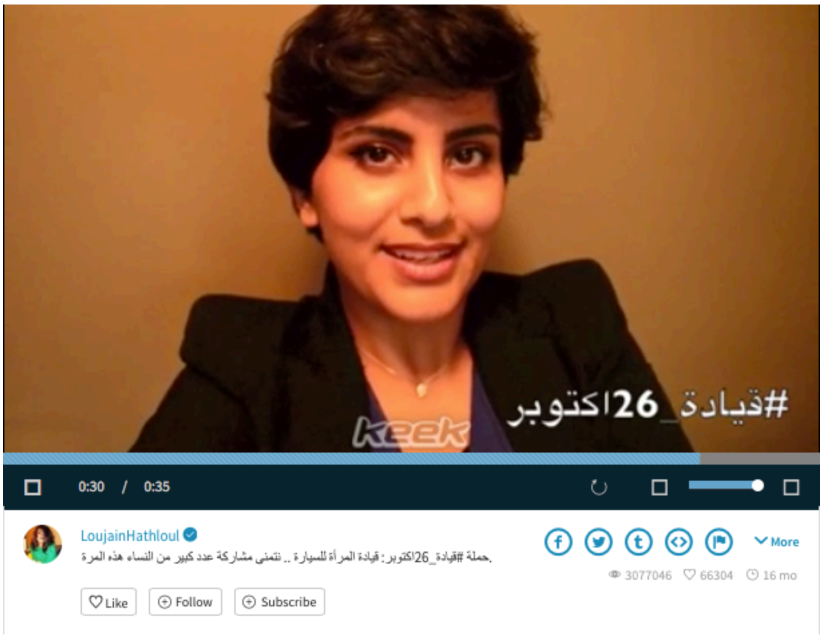
[1] A 'Keek' is a short video update that can be up to 36 seconds in length. People can post Keeks via webcams, iPhones, Android or Windows 8 devices and share them (keek.com).

[2] Some of the interviewees mentioned specific names of mainly social media 'celebrities' but they did not want these to be published.


#قيادة_26اكتوبر
Keek
0:30 / 0:35
LoujainHathloul
More
3077046
66304
16 mo
Like
Follow
Subscribe

حملة #قيادة_26اكتوبر: قيادة المرأة للسيارة .. نتمنى مشاركة عدد كبير من النساء هذه المرة.

Figure 8: The Keek video which announced the Campaign

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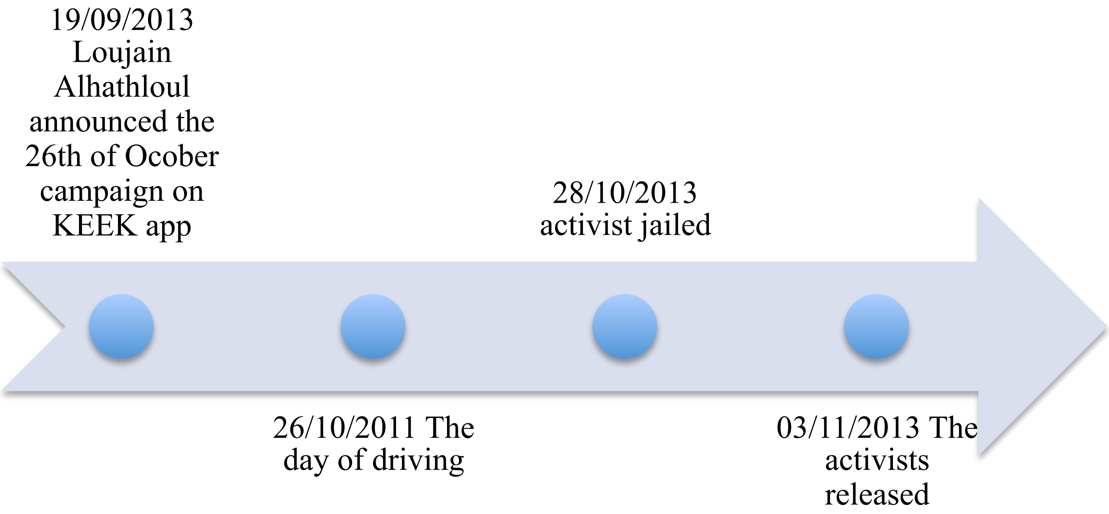
19/09/2013 Loujain Alhathloul announced the 26th of Ocober campaign on KEEK app
26/10/2011 The day of driving
28/10/2013 activist jailed
03/11/2013 The activists released

Figure 9: Timeline of key events pre- and post-October 26th

7.3.1. Campaign Aims

The main goal of the ‘*October 26th*’ Campaign was to call for the rights of women to drive their cars in Saudi Arabia. However, as with the 1990 campaign, it is seen as part of a wider agenda such as challenging the need for male guardianship and fighting for child custody rights and other issues. In this context, the campaign website stresses that:

> The issue of women driving has moved on beyond the superficiality of a social debate. The issue is not simply that of a vehicle being driven by a woman, but the acknowledgement and recognition of the humanity of one half of society and the God-given rights of women, (Oct26driving.com n.d.).

There are, however, also interim goals or milestones and achieving these could be seen as a stepping stone to the main goal. These include convincing people about women's right to drive, showing the government the level of public support as well as demonstrating that there are other Islamic points of view which allow women to drive.

Official statements often claim that the ban reflects Saudi public opinion. Prince Niyf bin Abdulaziz, the former Minister of the Interior, noted that, "Women driving is a social issue, society is to decide." (Alghonim, 2005). From a religious perspective, the Grand Mufti has claimed that the ban on women driving is to, "Protect the community from evils." (Alharbi, 2013). Campaigners, of course, do not accept this as an excuse for banning women from driving. They believe that public opinion and religious beliefs have shifted in recent years. Consequently, they have been keen to promote short video clips on YouTube, showing Muslim scholars supporting women's right to drive in order to demonstrate that it is only politics which is limiting women's right to drive (W1, W2, W3, W4 and W9). The campaign is, therefore, seeking to force a response from the Saudi government. As one activist stressed, "The government has no plan. It is a government that reacts. They will not do anything unless you do something, then they reply to it." (W3).

Activists are also trying to shatter the myths about women driving and to educate people about the importance of women's right to drive, "When women find themselves driving in Saudi Arabia's streets with no harassment, people will see how normal this is." (W4).

Campaigners have thus summarised their overall objectives as follows:

> The campaign aims to gain women's rights in a civilised way by addressing both the government and citizens, and this must follow two courses of action: first, be brave and drive your car; second, do this in terms of human rights discourse and not special pleading, (W8).

However, this official mission statement highlights a potential contradiction in the campaign's strategy. On the one hand, it emphasises that demanding rights should be conducted by using well-mannered discourse, which may mean peacefully and in a relatively understated manner. The key point here is the reference to human rights discourse. This means stressing that women are not asking for special treatment but that they have a right to drive. On the other hand, it also shows that women should be brave when demanding their rights and take direct action by driving. This reflects that campaigners share the same goals but they campaign in diverse ways.

7.3.2. Campaign achievements to date

It is obvious that the campaign has not yet achieved its main goal: obtaining the right to drive. Even so, the activists are satisfied that they have reached some of the milestones. They claim, for instance, that they have succeeded in convincing the audience that the government's main excuse for banning women from driving, public opposition, is not true. The only obstacle is the government. The activists claim to have demonstrated this through the number of women who have filmed themselves driving with their families and people's reactions, via social media, being largely positive. Similarly, the activists claim that these videos have also succeeded in explaining to international organisations and countries, that the Saudi community welcomes women driving, contradictory to what Saudi officials are trying to say to the outside world, namely, that women cannot drive because of public opinion.

7.4. Mobilisation and the Role of the Internet

Clearly, one of the main uses of the Internet for campaigners is mobilisation. This section will examine the mobilisation elements in the campaign by adopting Tilly's definition of mobilisation. According to Tilly, mobilisation is the, "Process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action [including] labour, power, goods, weapons, votes, and any number of other things, just so long as they are usable in acting on shared interests." (Tilly, 1978:07).

The '*October 26th Campaign'* pursued mobilisation primarily through online means, both in terms of mobilising women generally but also by engaging different audiences, including the wider Saudi public, the Saudi government, journalists in the traditional media, international media and human rights organisations. This section examines both how Internet tools are used for mobilisation and communication purposes and also the extent to which the Internet enables activists to reach wider audiences by examining the profile of the activists and supporters.

7.4.1. Activist Profiles

Some 10 activists in total were interviewed about this campaign, only one of whom was a male activist. As discussed later, he was identified as the activist who influenced the campaign structure. Another male activist had agreed to be interviewed but later declined.

The interviews indicated that half of the core campaigners had never taken part in any form of activism before the '*October 26th Campaign'*. Furthermore, there was a very broad age range in the group of core activists, with interviewees suggesting that the youngest activist was just 17 and the oldest 70. Age is significant in the sense that women were urged to drive their cars only if they had a valid driving license, which in this case, had to be from abroad. Older women were more likely to have been overseas and it seems most of the women who took part in the driving events action were over 30 years old, according to the interviews. Nevertheless, there are some videos on YouTube uploaded by the campaign which show younger women driving their cars. Indeed, Figure 9 suggests that 74% of the campaign's followers on Twitter are between 18 and 34 years old.[1] Hence, although the activists might be older, social media has brought their campaign to a younger audience, many of whom could not take part in the action itself.

7.4.2. Campaign target audience.

Interview data primarily shows that the Internet is used by activists to engage with four main groups:

7.4.2.1. *The Saudi government*

There is a debate amongst activists about their primary target audience. Some believe the government is the most important, whilst others argue that citizens should be the priority. This debate touches on the fundamental question of 'who is following who' when it comes to the issue of women driving. Is the government following public mood as it claims, or do the public follow the government's lead? The campaign is targeting decision makers in government in general and the Minister of the Interior in particular.

7.4.2.2. *The Saudi public*

Campaigners are also divided on which Saudi citizens to target. Some activists look at women as the most important target audience because they are the ones most likely to benefit from any change. Others argue that men should constitute the key audience to target in the Saudi context because they act as the guardians of women and their support will be necessary to make any changes. One activist said:

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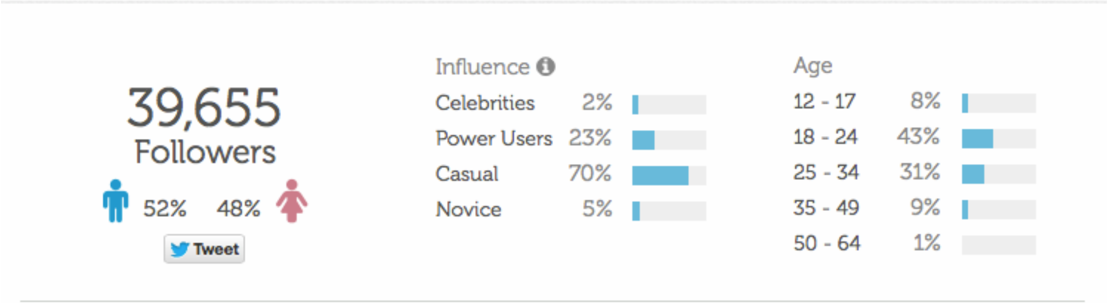
[1] The method used to indicate the followers' age by the data provider is unknown. Presumably they have to provide a date of birth to register.

> We are trying to address men more than women. Men are the decision-makers. We are trying to address the ladies as well because the driving issue is their issue, and we want them to influence their spouses, their parents, and their children and educate them. But at the same time, it is men who made the decision about the driving issue in our society, (W8).



39,655 Followers

52% 48%

Influence	
Celebrities	2%
Power Users	23%
Casual	70%
Novice	5%

Age	
12 - 17	8%
18 - 24	43%
25 - 34	31%
35 - 49	9%
50 - 64	1%

Figure 10: Demographics for the Campaign's Twitter Account (Source: Twitonomy)

Moreover, interview data shows that the campaign not only targets Saudis, but also, people from around the world. One activist stressed, “Our discourse is international not local.” (W2). This is reflected in the use of different languages. The Twitter account shows that the campaign mainly uses Arabic and English. However, Spanish was also used in several tweets. Similarly, the campaign’s YouTube and Instagram accounts show a number of videos and photographs of non-Saudis in different countries supporting campaign issues in Arabic and English. Results from two Twitter hashtags about the campaign found that participants in both hashtags are based in 116 different countries, (Yuce *et al*., 2014).

7.4.2.3. *Traditional media and journalists*

Activist interviews imply that the Internet is used to attract traditional media in order to engage a wider audience. It makes the campaign visible to the media and provides them with all the information they need about the campaign. However, most of the interviewees were already engaged with media in some shape or form before the campaign started. Some of them are newspapers columnists, some have a TV presence, while others are bloggers.

However, activists acknowledge there has been a welcome shift in press freedom in Saudi Arabia, when compared to the national media coverage of the 1990’s campaign. One activist claimed that, “In 1990, the media denigrated women who drove their cars so that they would not look like heroines.” (W7). The local media coverage has certainly changed since the 1990 campaign, both in terms of scale but also, in terms of tone. There are now clearly various news stories in the Saudi media discussing the issue of driving from different viewpoints, as will be shown below.

7.4.2.4. *International organisations and media*

Campaigners acknowledged the important role of international organisations and media outside Saudi Arabia in supporting the campaign and extending audience reach. One activist said:

> If I'm interviewed by *AlRiyadh* newspaper, no one will read it. On the other hand, if I'm interviewed for the CNN website, everyone will read it, even those who cannot read English, (W6).

The fact that they are targeting international media partially explains the use of English language in the campaign. The journalists who were interviewed agreed that the Internet had made the campaign visible to them. Whilst they had not initially heard about the campaign from the Internet, they agreed it was a crucial source which had helped them make contact with campaigners. One journalist said, "If I need to know anything about the campaign, I have to go online first." Another acknowledged that the campaigners used the Internet very effectively:

> It's very difficult to get news out of Saudi that isn't state controlled – at least in English and I thought they were creative in their use of social media, reaching out to people and backing it up with campaigns that people could join.

Interestingly, social network analysis for the campaign's English hashtag shows that two of four of its most active users are international journalists. International media exposure undoubtedly gave the campaign an international dimension by continual coverage in several languages across the world. What is more, the activists argue that international media not only provided coverage, but 'protected them' when journalists attended, or covered, any campaign action, and that the Saudi authorities took this into consideration. For example, one activist explained:

> I went driving with an AFP correspondent who was filming me at all times during the drive. When the police arrested me, I told them: 'This is the AFP correspondent, and she is filming everything,' (W7).

Some activists assert that international media is able to put pressure on the Saudi government, claiming that it, "Respects international media more than its own national media." (W4). This was supported by an international news agency reporter who noted, "It is obvious that international media has an influence on the policy makers, especially in the Middle East." However, a British journalist disagreed, arguing:

> I don't think Saudi leaders really care about their international reputation and while the Women Driving Campaign probably led to some awkward questions for the Royals from some distinguished guests, it's probably a bit like talking to the Chinese – or indeed the Saudis for that matter – about human rights. Has to be done, but doesn't change anything.

Activists were mostly satisfied with the international media coverage, with one commenting, "It is a human rights' issue, so no wonder the '*October 26th*' Campaign attracted international media attention." (W10). Interviews with international journalists revealed that they cover the issue because they think it is an interesting and unusual one. One journalist said that people love to read about this issue and it gets a high volume of readers. Another journalist commented that Western audiences find the idea that, "Women aren't allowed to drive simply because they're women, very unusual". One of the activists argued that the reason for the popularity of this news coverage with Westerners may relate to the 'Orientalist' slant that the international media give to stories covering Saudi-related issues. He claims that the international media, "Look at them as inferiors."[1] (W8).

In addition to international media, activists used the Internet to engage international organisations such as Amnesty International (Amnesty, 2013), and Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2013). According to the activists, organisations of this type put more pressure on the Saudi government. They, "Protect the demands [lift the ban on women driving] and the activists." (W2). This kind of protection can be understood in terms of the attempts made by these organisations to free people jailed on the issue of driving, as well as speaking about the issue at various global events. For example, Human Rights Watch sent a press release asking the Saudi government to free a journalist who had supported women driving.

While some Saudi Twitter users have accused the activists of treason because they deal with international organisations,[2] the activists obviously deny this. They argue that Saudi Arabia has signed agreements with organisations such as the United Nations, promising to respect human rights and that dealing with organisations of this kind will, "Help the Saudi government to meet its obligations." However, activists have not provided any example of these kinds of signed agreements, but this may refer to the fact that Saudi Arabia is a signatory to the convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

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[1] This could be understood in the context of Edward Said's work *'Orientalism'* (1978), which was the first to highlight the West's negative perceptions of the Arab world.

[2] These accusations are widely circulated on the Internet and on Twitter in particular. See for example the Arabic hashtag #فئران_القيادة (Driving Mice).

(1981) which they ratified in 2000. Secondly, one of the activists explained, “We only deal with organisations which have offices in Saudi Arabia, such as the United Nations, which means they are working legally in Saudi Arabia.” (W1).

Some activists however, raise concerns about the role of international organisations in their campaign. According to one activist, “They say one thing to us, and they say something else to the government.” (W1). The female activist said:

> They seem convinced by anything told to them by Saudi officials. For example, when they met X, he told them “we are a progressive government in an underdeveloped country”. The delegate seemed to be convinced by his statement. When I met her I asked her: “Do you follow the campaign online?” and she said she did. Then I said to her: “With all due respect, you should have challenged him. You have seen women broadcasting videos of themselves driving their cars for more than one month and a half. How can they be considered underdeveloped? (W1)

7.4.3. Internet mobilisation tools

Several Internet applications are used by the campaign to mobilise their target audiences. The campaign mainly uses its website, e-petition websites, Twitter, YouTube, Google Hangout, Instagram, e-mail, and WhatsApp. Generally, the main driver for the campaign to use any application is its popularity. However, interviews point out that not all applications have the same level of influence. Every application has its particular uses and its own audience, as well as its sphere of influence. The following sections will provide an insight into the uses of these application revealing the peer-production processes as suggested by (Bennett *et al.* 2014b).

7.4.3.1. *Campaign website*

The campaign’s bilingual website[1] was launched on September 21st 2013, just before the campaign started to use any other platforms. It is the campaign’s main focal point on the Internet and as one activist noted, “It has everything in one place.” Campaigners aim to make this website the starting point and main hub for online mobilisation. When the activists launched the website, they expected 150,000 signatures on the petition they started. This expectation was based on the high response that the petition received in the first week of the launch in September, 2013, when it received about 8,700 signatories. However, the petition garnered only around 17,000 signatures in total due to the fact that the website was blocked by the Communications and Information Technology Commission, and also hacked by opponents of women's right to drive (W1). Unsurprisingly, activists reported that this badly affected the number of signatories, the blocking more so than the hacking. After their website was blocked and hacked, campaigners decided to move to an e-petition website (https://www.change.org). Despite this, the number of signatories did not increase significantly.

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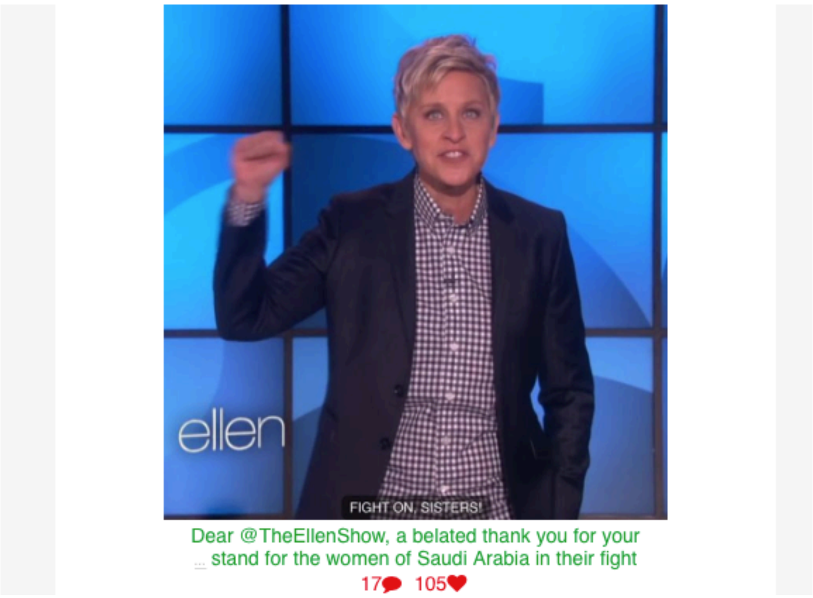
[1] The campaign website can be found at: https://www.oct26driving.com.

Analysis of the use of the websites by activists shows that they play a role in the stitching mechanism and, consequently, the processes of curation and dynamic integration can be seen in the website. Looking at the tabs on the campaign websites shows that campaigners archive the web content supporting the campaign, as well as making use of some content produced by supporters to highlight issues, what (Bennett *et al.* 2014b) refer to as dynamic integration.

For example the music tab shows a YouTube song produced by a Saudi celebrity Hisham Fageeh entitled *No Women No Drive.*[1] This song had been viewed 13,567,219 times by March 2016. Although this song is still available on YouTube, campaigners embedded it in the website to highlight Fageeh's contribution among those of other supporters.

Similarly, the campaigners highlight other messages and content produced by supporters online, keeping this away from the noise and ensuring it does not get lost in the crowd. This can be seen in tabs such as Photos, Famous Saudis on Video, and Women Driving where content from various social media platforms are posted on the website.



Dear @TheEllenShow, a belated thank you for your stand for the women of Saudi Arabia in their fight

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[1] It can be viewed on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZMbTFNp4wI.

Figure 11: A capture from the campaign's websites showing a video produced by the American TV presenter Ellen DeGeneres to demonstrate her solidarity with the campaign.

7.4.3.2. *E-mail*

Instead of using e-mail for sending information to the public, the activists used it to mobilise and interact with people by asking them to send videos and images showing their support. These are then shared on different platforms not via mailing lists. However, the activists said they have not received a large number of e-mails. According to one activist, people do not like to use e-mail for this purpose due to fear of censorship and the difficulty of sending content via e-mail in comparison to other applications. Thus, activists found the application WhatsApp was another useful way to receive people's content. Email is a good example of the type of backchannels that cannot be traced in this campaign.

7.4.3.3. *Whatsapp*[1]

Activists do not use WhatsApp for broadcasting messages, but to receive content from supporters. According to W5, the activists were not receiving many e-mails from supporters, but as soon as they gave a WhatsApp number, the amount received from supporters doubled and, "People felt encouraged to send photos and videos." Campaigners emphasised that they do not save any number from which they have received content and they do not contact people via WhatsApp or broadcast messages on behalf of the campaign. She continued:

> Apart from long videos, most of the messages we receive are sent to the Whatsapp number. People are not afraid to send content by using Whatsapp, compared to sending content by email. We receive dozens of videos by Whatsapp; we do not choose, we publish any video we receive by Whatsapp unless the sender ask us to remove the video later. We also receive supporting messages, and messages containing insults and bad language, but not that many. We sometimes print screen the messages we receive and put them on Instagram or Twitter. (W5)

The Instagram account for the campaign @oct26driving shows some messages received via Whatsapp showing women experiencing problems due to their drivers or how hard life is for women who cannot drive.

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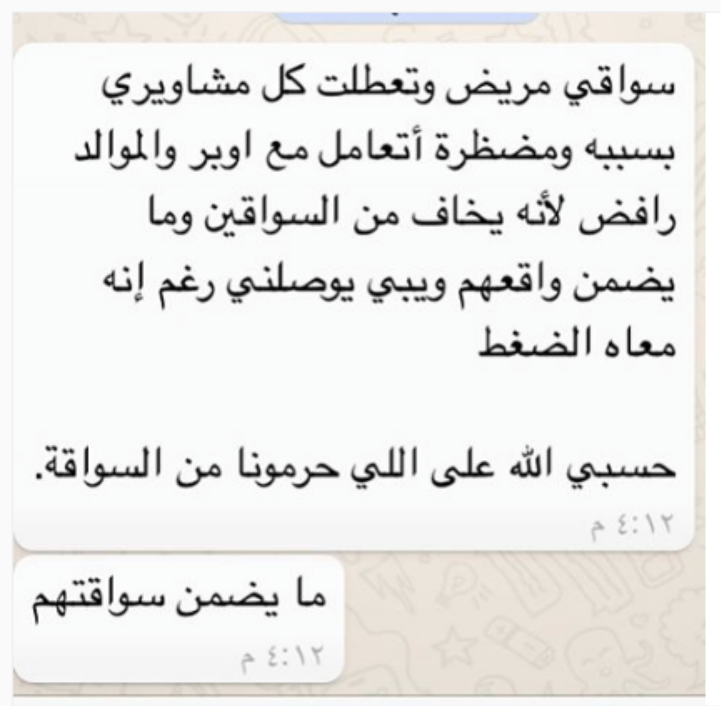
[1] WhatsApp is an instant messaging application for smartphones. Users can chat to each other directly or in groups.



سواقي مريض وتعطلت كل مشاويري
بسببه ومضطرة أتعامل مع اوبر والوالد
رافض لأنه يخاف من السواقين وما
يضمن واقعهم ويبي يوصلني رغم إنه
معاه الضغط

حسبي الله على اللي حرمونا من السواقة.
٤:١٢ م

ما يضمن سواقتهم
٤:١٢ م

Figure 12: A WhatsApp message sent to the campaign from a woman complaining that due to her driver's illness she cannot go out. (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/BBAiuvAkI1Y/)

7.4.3.4. *Instagram*[1]

A few months after the campaign was launched, activists started using Instagram to support the campaign because it was seen as popular among Saudi women in particular. However, initially, they found it was useless for supporting their campaign since, "People were not interested." (W5). Interviewees could not detect any particular reason for this. The number of followers on the campaign account in Instagram had reached just 219 users by the end of 2013. Interestingly, the number of posts jumped to 741 and the number of followers to 12,500 by the end of 2014 (see Figure 10 and appendices D). This growth in activity and followers was accompanied by a shift towards interactive activities. By the end of 2014, the number of 'likes' had reached 29,570 and the number of comments was 13,541, with videos receiving more comments and likes. This indicates that the activists' mobile strategy was to engage people through popular Internet applications regardless of what these are. The shift in Instagram activities and popularity is also indicated by the published figures on use of Instagram by females in Saudi (see Chapter Six).

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[1] Instagram is an application for sharing photographs and short videos.

As is the case with the campaign website and other applications used by campaigners, curation and dynamic integration processes are used to produce a coherent organisation of the campaign as suggested by (Bennett *et al.* 2014b).

Activity Details

Instagram Likes	**29,570**
per photo	243.9
per video	260.5
Instagram Comments	**13,541**
per photo	99.8
per video	150.2

Figure 13: User activity and engagement on Instagram for the October 26th Campaign in November 2014 (Source: Simply Measured)

It can be noted that almost all of the campaign's account posts are personalised messages produced by supporters. There are different types of personalised messages including videos and photos supporting the campaign, messages of complaint about women being banning from driving cars, and photos showing the dangers posed by taxis and foreign drivers. These campaigns posts on Instagram receive larger numbers of comments than on Twitter.

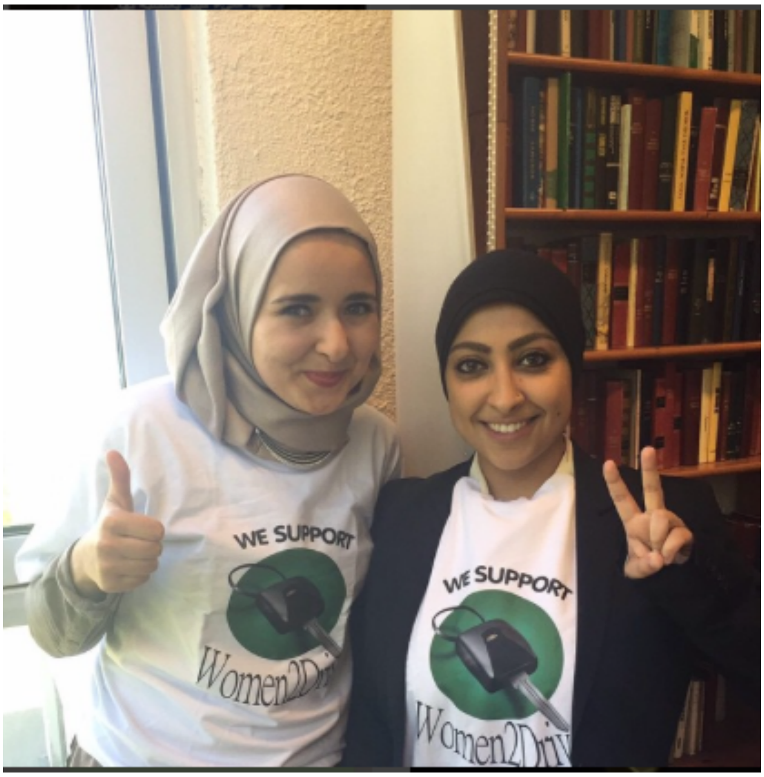

Figure 14:A photograph showing women from Norway and Bahrain supporting the Women2Drive campaign (Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/3mX3JkkI3L)

In the context of Instagram, some interviewees asserted that the campaign succeeded in persuading more people to support women's demands. It is not the aim of this thesis to assess the extent to which the campaigns studied were successful in achieving their demands or not; instead, it is important to focus on user comments on social media about the campaign's content to find out what people think about the campaign's aims. Analysis of 30 posts made on the campaign's Instagram account shows that the majority of these comments support the campaign's aims. Moreover, most appear to have been made by females while the majority of commentators who do not support the campaign are males.

7.4.3.5. *Google hangout*[1]

When Google Hangout was launched in May 2013, the activists immediately adopted this feature as it gave them the ability to broadcast live to the world. A hangout user can have more than one speaker per screen. The main user, who is the broadcaster in this case, can use those features to host more than one speaker talking. Activists used this feature to broadcast a monthly TV talk show called '*Driving Cabin*', which lasted for four months, where activists hosted two or three people talking about a specific subject related to the women driving issue. It was not possible to discover the numbers of those watching the programme being streamed live. However, the number of views uploaded later on the campaign channel on YouTube was between 1600 - 2100 by the end of 2014, with one exception where the views exceeded 10,000, possibly as a result of a celebrity appearing on the show. Overall, Google Hangout acts as an alternative to traditional TV broadcasting, since conventional media was not available to activists in most cases. Unlike the other uses of applications, Driving Cabin content is produced solely by core activists in the campaign.

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[1] Google Hangout is an instant messaging and video chat platform allowing video chats between groups of people.

7.4.3.6. *Twitter*

Twitter is considered to be the most important and most popular application for the '*October 26th Campaign'*. Appendices C shows the number of followers and the average number of re-tweets, as well as other detailed information about campaign's Twitter account. Campaign users try to re-tweet supporter tweets rather than posting new tweets, in order to encourage people to express themselves about the issue and to show that campaigns need individuals to participate actively. Moreover, the campaigners are trying to launch a hashtag periodically to keep the debate around the campaign issue alive. For example, they have launched several hashtags, to encourage women to drive on particular dates, including 28th December, 2013 and 22nd February, 2014. However, opponents of the campaign tried, on some occasions, to make links between the chosen dates and the campaign's 'hidden agenda'.[1] To prove that there is no hidden agenda behind any particular date, a hashtag has been created to call for driving on the fictitious November 31st.

Figure 18 illustrates activity on the campaign's Twitter account, showing that 52% of tweets are by the campaign itself. Analysis of the favourite tab (likes) shows the campaign's favourite tweets as well as the number of other users' tweets. Both can be seen as examples of the dynamic integration and curation processes.

Regarding the most retweeted tweets created by campaign users, it is immeditately clear that personalised content is most frequently retweeted. For example, the item which was retweeted most shows a Saudi man teaching his elderly mother how to drive in a rural area. This tweet showing a short conversation between the pair, in which she expresses her support for the campaign's aims has been retweeted 756 times and received 228 likes. It is likely that several factors have made this video popular on both Twitter and YouTube, namely, (a) the action took place in a rural area which would usually imply more conservative viewpoints. (b) The man's elderly mother has her face and body fully covered which might reflect her conservative beliefs (c) the son is supporting his mother's decision and (d) the video demonstrates his support in both words and actions.

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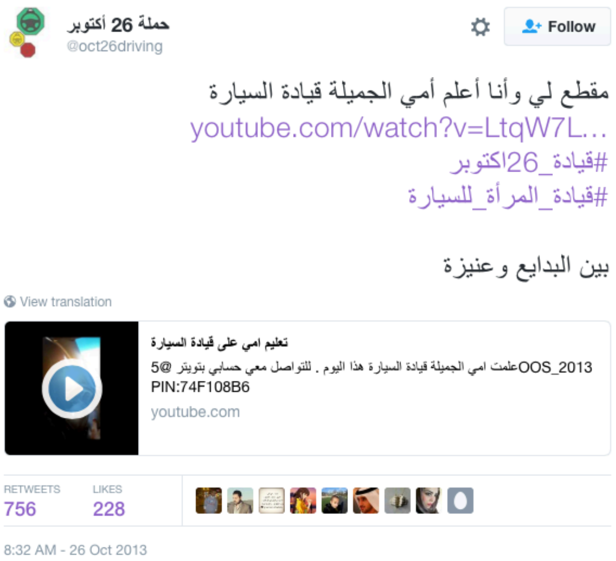
[1] Campaigners have been accused of being westernised, and their opponents have tried to link the dates chosen to important dates in the West.



حملة 26 أكتوبر
@oct26driving

مقطع لي وأنا أعلم أمي الجميلة قيادة السيارة
youtube.com/watch?v=LtqW7L...
#قيادة_26اكتوبر
#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة

بين البدايع و عنيزة

تعليم امي على قيادة السيارة
علمت امي الجميلة قيادة السيارة هذا اليوم . للتواصل معي حسابي بتويتر @5OOS_2013
PIN:74F108B6
youtube.com

RETWEETS 756
LIKES 228

8:32 AM - 26 Oct 2013

Figure 15: The most retweeted tweet from the campaign account showing a video featuring a Saudi woman being taught how to drive by her son.

Among the list of the most retweeted tweets, there are other personalised actions. These include a short video of a fully veiled woman riding a hover scooter in the street with a comment saying she used this new technology to visit her neighbours without having to rely on her sons or a paid driver. It received 331 retweets and 116 likes.

In this context, analysis reveals that those tweets with videos, photos, and links are usually gain most retweets. The only exception is a tweet created by campaigners asking people to follow the campaign, as a big event was about to occur in the next few hours.

Examining the comments on the campaign tweets shows that some support the campaigns whilst others do not. Among the 30 tweets that received comments, none have received exclusively positive or negative comments, suggesting a divide between followers. Unlike the Instagram comments, this split is not gender specific.

7.4.3.7. *YouTube*

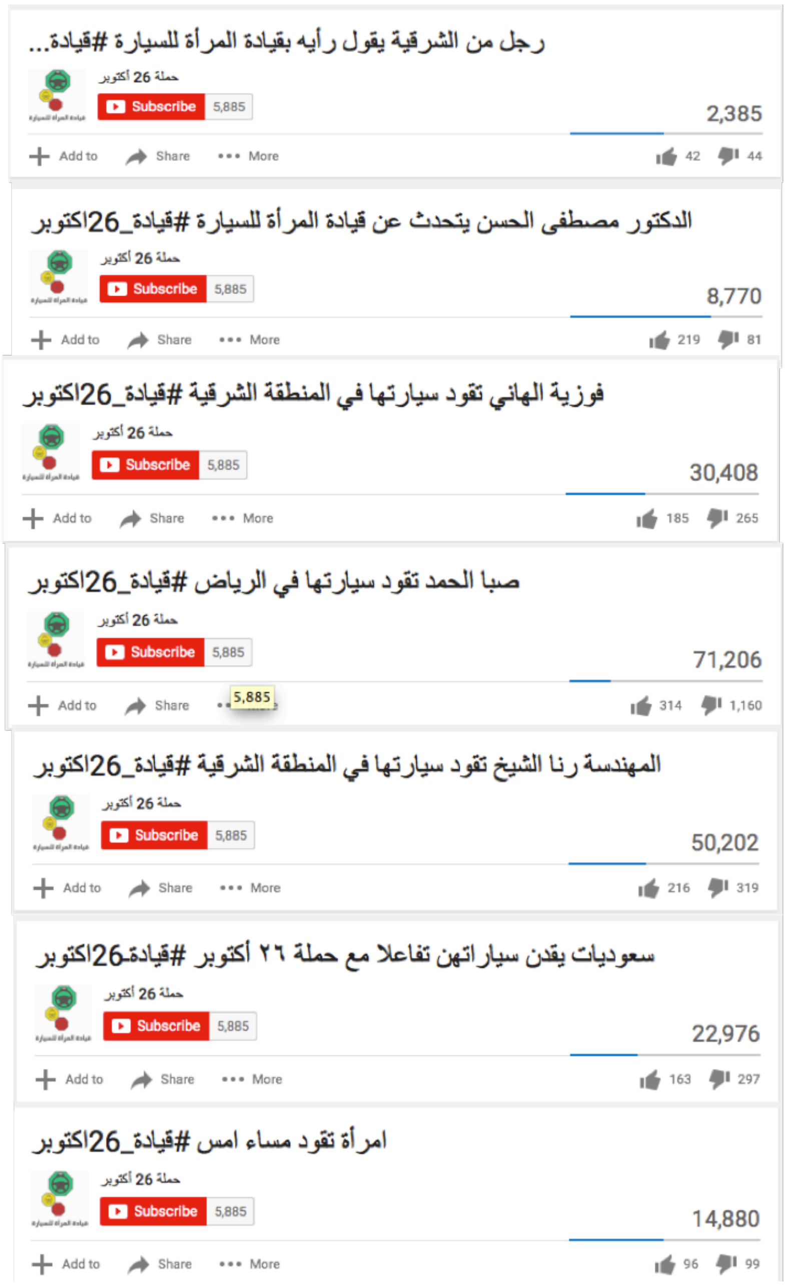
YouTube is also an important application for the campaign because as one activist put it, "Saudis love YouTube" (W9), which is also confirmed by statistics in Chapter Six. Activists use YouTube to document any TV content related to the campaign issue. "YouTube is our archive." one activist said. She continued, "When someone misses a TV show about the issue, he or she can find it on our YouTube channel; this maximises the number of viewers for a TV show or radio discussion." (W7).

In the main, activists do not publish any video or photographs received from supporters without first editing them to make it more viewable. Moreover, in some videos, activists have pixelated people's faces for security reasons. This kind of editing might be said to indicate a type of hierarchical organisation but the fact is, activists tend to edit because they want to protect themselves as well. Publishing harmful or unsuitable content is the activists' responsibility. Activist uses of YouTube suggest that this application is used mainly for curation purposes for archiving the video content related to the campaign. The campaign channels on YouTube contain 192 different videos, including material sent to the campaign by supporters from countries outside Saudi Arabia, including Georgia, USA, UK, Guatemala, and Turkey, and from Arab countries such as Kuwait, Bahrain, Lebanon, and Palestine. These videos also show Saudi women's daily struggles as they cope with being banning them from driving, in addition to women taking action and driving their cars in Saudi Arabia. In some videos women are seen trying to drive their cars with help from a male guardian. The YouTube channel also carries some interviews and news about the campaign's aims.

However, when campaign videos were ranked by the number of views they received videos of women driving their cars in Saudi Arabia were most popular. It is also noticeable that videos of non-Saudi women showing their solidarity gained fewer views. Moreover, seven of the videos on the campaign channel show women driving their cars, or talking about their aims without them identifying themselves as campaign members. Two of them have more than five videos on the channel. A CNN journalist with two videos supporting the campaign gained the lowest number of views: 502 for the English language video and 954 for the Arabic version.

Overall, the activists are open to using any application that can help them if it is popular with the targeted audience. For example, they do not use Facebook, because as they claimed, this was popular in 2011 but not anymore (W5, W9). Another argued that freedom of speech on Facebook is limited in comparison to Twitter (W2). One activist said Facebook is popular among a segment of youth only but not all people (W6). Campaigners therefore did not think that using Facebook would help them to reach the Saudi citizens they sought.

It is easier to visualise people’s opinions toward the campaign on YouTube because of the like and dislike buttons. Of the 30 videos uploaded to the campaign’s channel on YouTube, only two have received more likes than dislikes; for the rest, the opposite is true. This division is reflected in the seven examples shown in Figure 16.



رجل من الشرقية يقول رأيه بقيادة المرأة للسيارة #قيادة...
حملة 26 أكتوبر
5,885
2,385
42 44

الدكتور مصطفى الحسن يتحدث عن قيادة المرأة للسيارة #قيادة_26اكتوبر
حملة 26 أكتوبر
5,885
8,770
219 81

فوزية الهاني تقود سيارتها في المنطقة الشرقية #قيادة_26اكتوبر
حملة 26 أكتوبر
5,885
30,408
185 265

صبا الحمد تقود سيارتها في الرياض #قيادة_26اكتوبر
حملة 26 أكتوبر
5,885
71,206
5,885
314 1,160

المهندسة رنا الشيخ تقود سيارتها في المنطقة الشرقية #قيادة_26اكتوبر
حملة 26 أكتوبر
5,885
50,202
216 319

سعوديات يقدن سياراتهن تفاعلا مع حملة ٢٦ أكتوبر #قيادةـ26اكتوبر
حملة 26 أكتوبر
5,885
22,976
163 297

امرأة تقود مساء امس #قيادة_26اكتوبر
حملة 26 أكتوبر
5,885
14,880
96 99

Figure 16: Seven captures from YouTube showing the number of campaigns’ videos likes and dislikes.

7.4.4. Offline mobilisation

Most of the interviewed activists tend to mobilise people by any means possible and do not to stick to online mobilisation only. Activists strongly believe that online mobilisation needs to be supported by offline action, which means asking women to drive their cars in streets and get a reaction from the police and the public, which will add extra value to the campaign. One interviewee claimed (in relation to the earlier 1990 campaign):

> Correspondence with officials seemed to be useless. As soon as we drove our cars, and met them, they quickly recognised us because we are the women who drove their cars, (W7).

She believes this still holds true today for the *'October 26th Campaign'*. In other words, driving her car gave her legitimacy and power to talk to the government, whereas they did not care about her previous correspondence because they did not recognise her. Other activists emphasised the importance of mobilising on the ground because writing letters was only a 'soft way' to demand rights (W4, W10). In short, activists argue that campaigning of this kind is 'the soft option'.

Offline mobilisation, in the form of driving, puts female activists in danger as it is considered illegal, and police may stop and arrest female drivers and seize their vehicle. However, some of those interviewed showed their willingness to take this risk. One activist explained, "I have prepared for this before starting up my car. I have a small bag filled with clothes, enough for three days." (W4). Moreover, the activists encourage women who are going to drive to film themselves. They argue that filming drivers adds extra value because it will be published online and will encourage people to take similar action.

To maximise the benefit to the campaign of having females drive cars, the activists, set guidelines for those women who want to drive. Firstly, any women planning to drive must carry a driving license (W1). Secondly, they are told not to travel in groups (W4) to avoid the negative stereotype of demonstrations in the Saudi social context. Thirdly, if a woman has driven a car, has been arrested and then signed a pledge at the police station promising not to drive again, then she should not drive in order to avoid longer spells in prison. The activists also encourage women to drive while accompanied by a male, such as their father, brother or son. This is to emphasise to those Saudis who are against the campaign that men support their female relatives in claiming this right.[1] One of the most viewed video clips on the campaign account on YouTube was an older woman driving her car in a rural area accompanied by her son.[1]

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[1] See, for example, the clip at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIiFm3caGuc

However, not all activists share the same belief about offline mobilisation. One activist refuses to take part in this action due to her dislike of confrontation and expressed her disagreement, asserting that the campaign should be based on asking for their rights only. She said, “I have not taken part in any driving action and I will not.” (W2). The activist express that by saying:

> I have a foreign driving license but I will not drive my car in Saudi now. I do not want make trouble for my father. He is very supportive, but I care about him. He is ill he got trauma I do not want him to be called to pick me up from the police station, and have to sign a pledge. [...] I use human rights discourse to campaign for this. I am trying to defend our claims, showing that the government’s excuses for banning women from the public sphere are not valid”.

This indicates that the campaign encompasses a diversity of opinions around tactics and strategies, despite sharing the same overall goal.

7.5. Campaign Organisation and the Role of the Internet

The literature in Chapter Two indicates the impact of the Internet on collective action, revealing different types of activism and activists, as well as influencing the structure and formation of the collective action. Using Tilly’s (1978) definition of organisation, namely, “[The] aspect of a group’s structure which most directly affects its capacity to act on its interests.” (Tilly, 1978:7), the section below concentrates on organisational campaign structures, including campaign membership, structure and applications used for internal communication.

7.5.1. Campaign membership

The interviews with activists did not reveal any formal membership criteria but reflect some apprehensions about monitoring, especially after one of the activists was imprisoned. However, there may be a type of informal membership. For example, one activist said, “We will accept anyone wishing to join the campaign, but acceptance needs approval from the other members.” Similarly, another stated, “We had a bad experience once. A female activist joined us, but she was behaving suspiciously, so as activists we excluded her from future meetings.” (W10). These statements could refer to what might be called the ‘core activists’ (Ennis & Schreuer, 1987). (See Figure 11)

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[1] This video is no longer available on the YouTube campaign channel because according to one interviewee, the woman asked a campaigner to remove it as she had faced negative comments or pressure in her community.

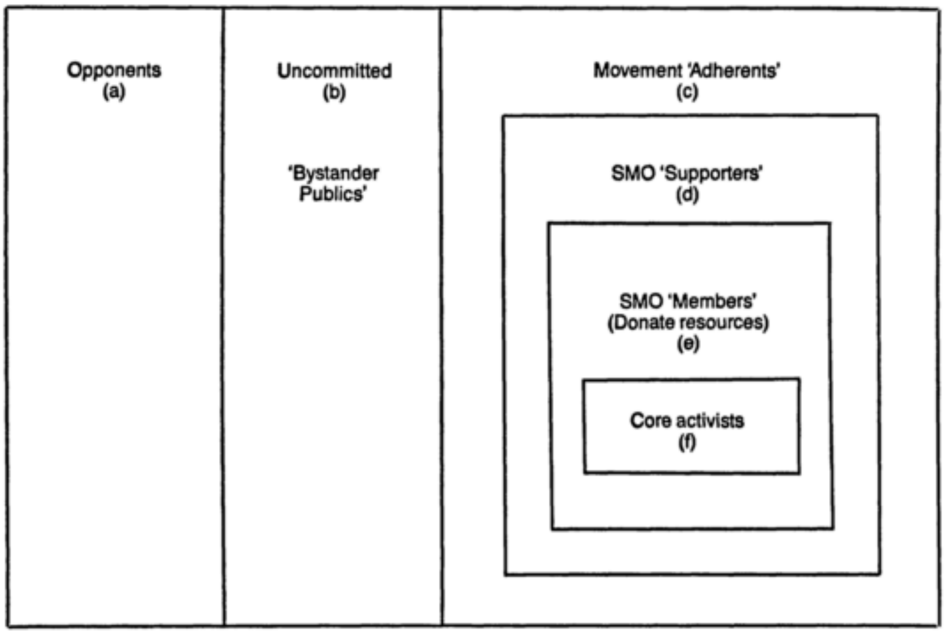


Figure 1. LEVELS OF MOVEMENT SUPPORT

Figure 17: Levels of Movement Support(Ennis & Schreuer, 1987)

Thus, certain individual activists come to form the core of the campaign, through personal invitation or contact, by joining the group and by Internet engagement. Clearly, censorship and the monitoring of activists influenced the way individuals were admitted to the core group. Interviews indicate that the Internet played a key role in identifying people who share the same point of view and could possibly work within the campaign. However, just because someone showed interest online does not mean activists would add that person to the campaign. As the activists explained, they need to check someone’s profile first by asking other members of the campaign. Presumably, this works differently for non-Saudis. Hence, the Internet can recruit activist members but activists need personal contact and offline activity to become a core activist. In this case, the social and political environment (climate of censorship/surveillance) in Saudi Arabia still plays a vital role when recruiting new activists.

7.5.2. Campaign structure

A number of activists refused to describe their activities as a ‘movement’ and insisted on calling it a ‘social campaign’. This is, in part, related to the sensitivity regarding activism in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter Three). Similarly, the campaign’s official website, both the English and Arabic versions, calls it ‘a grassroots campaign’. Other activists either denied it had a structure or refused to discuss the structure of the campaign because it led to unwanted assumptions (see Chapter Five). Thus, campaigners recognised their campaign as a ‘self-organising network’, similar to the model described by Bennett and Segerberg (2013), (see Chapter Two), meaning there is little, or no, formal organisational effort.

One interviewee (W6) attempted to explain the loose structure of this campaign using the following illustration:

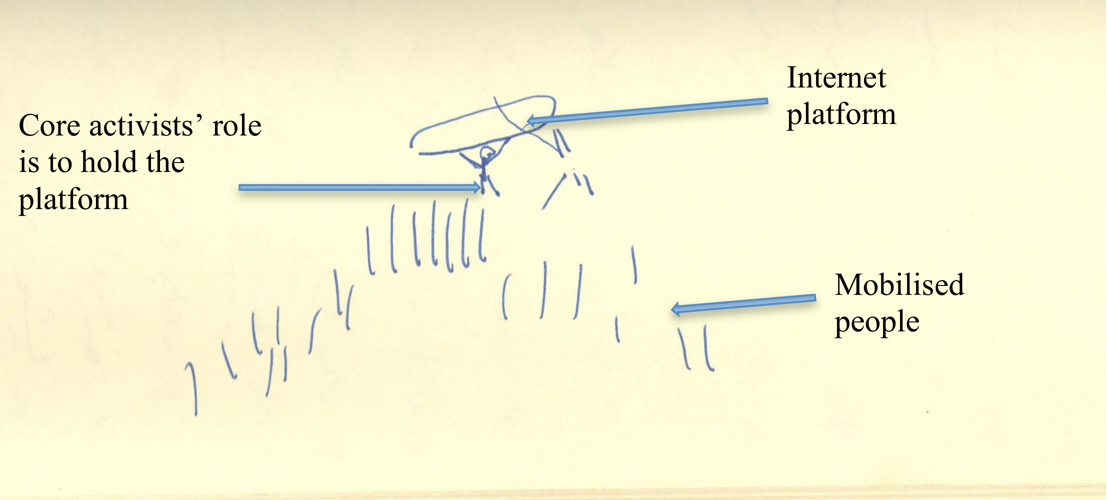
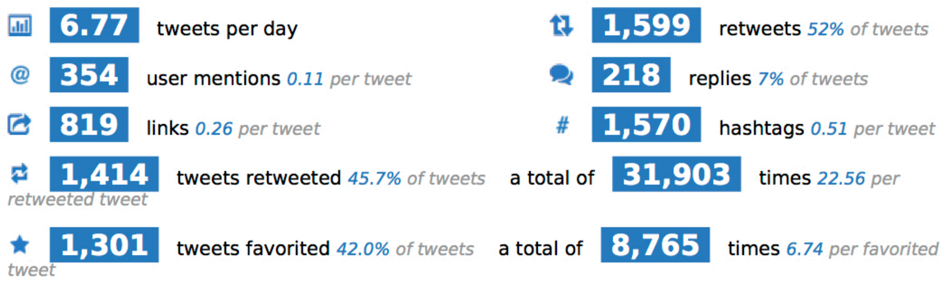


Figure 18: An activist’s Impression of how the Campaign Operates

According to her, the role of the activists is to maintain the platform, which refers to the Internet applications such as the Twitter or Instagram accounts, while the public shape and control the campaign without any planning or central leadership figures. In short, core activists do not make the content or control the campaign; they are Gatekeepers.

Therefore, the task of the core activists is to encourage and energise people to participate in the campaign. Analysis of the Twitter account seems to support this claim (see Figure 13). Some 52% of tweets in the campaign account are re-tweets of others, whilst the rest are either replies to people or original tweets composed by the campaign account. Therefore, the activists who manage the campaign account on Twitter are mainly distributing other participants’ content, rather than producing their own.



6.77 tweets per day

354 user mentions 0.11 per tweet

819 links 0.26 per tweet

1,414 tweets retweeted 45.7% of tweets a total of 31,903 times 22.56 per retweeted tweet

1,301 tweets favorited 42.0% of tweets a total of 8,765 times 6.74 per favorited tweet

1,599 retweets 52% of tweets

218 replies 7% of tweets

1,570 hashtags 0.51 per tweet

Figure 19: Statistics for Campaign Users on Twitter (Source: Twitonomy)[1]

However, it is clear that there are differences between what some activists suggested and the actual shape of the campaign. Some activists, mainly men participating in the campaign, have changed the way it operates. The interviews revealed that one male activist had divided other activists into groups, according to their jobs within the campaign as Figure 14 illustrates. The male activist's decision to employ this mode of organisation may have been influenced by the hierarchical structures that carry authority in Saudi Arabia. He may have learnt this structure from Saudi culture, possibly indicating the cultural influence on the organisational aspect of social movements as argued by (Mattoni, 2013,Kavada 2013) in chapter Three.

When asked why this male activist in particular had influenced the campaign structure some activists (W1 and W6) asserted that he had experience in such work. Interviews suggest that there are number of male activists, especially on the legal aid committee. Some are older than that activist. This suggests that the male activist who influenced the structure has done so on the basis of his personal experience of campaigning rather than as a result of cultural influence.

Nevertheless, the imprisonment of an activist clearly impacted on the shape of the campaign and on its structure in particular. Some people left the campaign altogether whilst others preferred to work without any structure. One activist remembered, "They suddenly disappeared without notifying us... They just switched their mobiles off and disappeared." (W6). Closer analysis of all the interviews indicates that the campaign structure is similar to Figure 14 below:

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[1] The figure shows an analysis for the campaign account for the period from 20/03/2013-19/01/2015 for a total of 3,049 tweets which are all tweets sent during that period (see Appendix A). These statistics are based on Twitter data that is made available publicly through the Internet as well as Twitter API which is available from the analysis company (Twitonomy n.d.). Company servers retrieve all available tweets in real-time from Twitter for a particular user and then analyse each tweet to calculate the totals and the ratios displayed on the page (Source: email from the company).

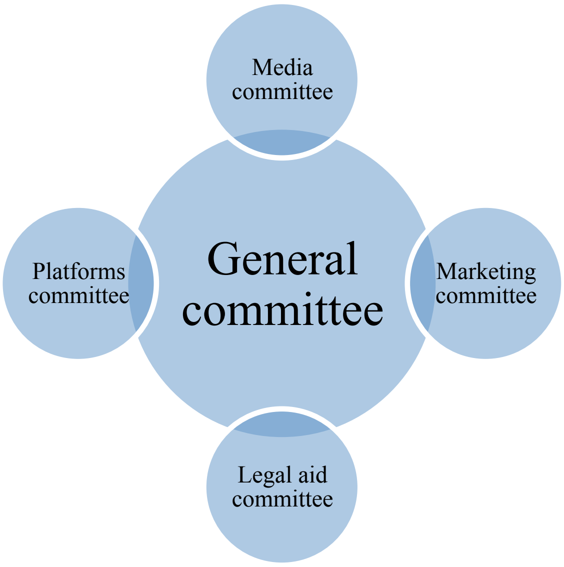


Figure 20: Campaign Committees and their Inter-relationship

Figure 14 reveals the structure of the campaign and shows a number of committees for media, marketing, platforms and legal aid. The committees work in parallel, not in a hierarchical order, with all core activists forming part of the General Committee. This shows the campaign is in reality more of a semi-structured campaign. In other words, the campaign works horizontally, not vertically. This means that formally, it has no official leader although interviews referred informally to a campaign leader (a woman who was part of the original 1990 campaign and also works on other political and social campaigns). The face-to-face meetings of activists are usually held in her house although she alone cannot make any sole decisions without there being a vote; this also applies to decisions about who joins the General Committee.

The Media Committee handles media inquiries. They are usually the ‘campaign faces’, hosted by TV stations, newspapers, radio and online media. The task of these activists is to film short video clips of Saudi celebrities and religious clerics, showing their support for the campaign and giving their opinions about the driving issue. The Legal Aid Committee is responsible for providing legal advice to activists if they are jailed or detained by the police. Members of the Platforms Committee disseminate the campaign message via the Internet. Members of this committee manage the Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram accounts and also receive videos and texts from the public, then edit and publish the content. They are also responsible for documenting the TV interviews with activists about the campaign and making these available on YouTube.

The presence of some sort of informal membership and committee structure confirms that the campaign is at least semi-structured. The only people who can be described as core activists in the campaign are part of the WhatsApp group. One activist referred to another supposed activist by saying, “She’s not part of the campaign. She’s not even on our WhatsApp group.” (W6).

Overall, activists emphasise that the campaign is largely a self-organising network, and for the most part, deny any sort of formal structure, apart from the one noted in Figure 6.3. However, Figure 6.4, which has been gleaned from information provided by interviewees, clearly shows the campaign is formed as an ‘*Organisationally Brokered Network’*.

Before moving to the SNA, it is important to discuss whether the mapping and analysing of the social network data reflect organizational structure or the structure of the circulation of information. I argue that the SNA can be said to reflect both the organisational structure and the structure of the circulation of information to differing degrees. In a digital network, both of these structures are interrelated because social media should not be considered as a single thing; rather, as argued by (Segerberg & Bennett 2011; Langlois et al. 2009; Poell 2013), it is an assemblage that provides a protest’s ecology as a whole

Generally, the SNA alone might not reflect the organisational structure of a campaign because it might be a single factor or one space of many that is used for campaigning. For example, in the women driving campaign, other social media, such as YouTube and Instagram, are used for the same purpose. Furthermore, as (Langlois et al. 2009) observe, backchannels or private online spaces in social media cannot be mapped as they are hidden, as is the case for face-to-face meetings. Importantly, this does not mean that social media do not reflect organizational structure, but that it can help to identify this. The interviews in this campaign reveal that campaigners can invite individuals to participate in the campaign according to their online activities as well as other criteria as discussed previously. In this context, the concept of ‘communication as organisation’ suggested by (Bennett & Segerberg 2013) could be useful in this argument, as circulation of information is an organising principle in personalised digitally networked action.

Thus the circulation of information cannot be segregated from the organizational structure of the campaign on Twitter, as it is interrelated with it. Segerberg and Bennett 2011 note that “extracting single elements from more complex communication processes involving many actors and technologies may misrepresent the political action and dynamics of the case at hand” (Segerberg & Bennett 2011:200).

Applying Social Network Analysis (SNA) to the campaign activities on Twitter reveals two logics of networks, as described by Bennett and Segerberg (2013), an ‘O*rganisationally Enabled Connective Network’* and an ‘*Organisationally Brokered Collective Network'.*

Two Twitter hashtags (#oct26driving and the Arabic hashtag #قيادة٢٦اكتوبر) were analysed in order to understand the model of the campaign structure and whether online communication reflects connective action, according to the Bennett and Segerberg (2013) model. Twitter data were used to understand the campaign communication and information circulation because activists identified this as the main tool used by the campaign on the Internet for mobilisation. There were a total of 496 tweets analysed from both hashtags: English (N=246) and Arabic (N=250). In the analysed data, there are 78 unique accounts with 76 ties,132 Retweets in Arabic,118 original Tweets in Arabic, 109 original English account with 120 ties, 65 Retweets in English and 183 original Tweets in English

The first striking point to note is the separation of Arabic and English hashtags from each other (see Figure 16) with only four accounts connecting them:

@oct26driving (official campaign account) using Arabic and English

The campaign account plays different role in each hashtag. This can be seen in the SNA of

@Othmanbay (a non-Saudi journalist)

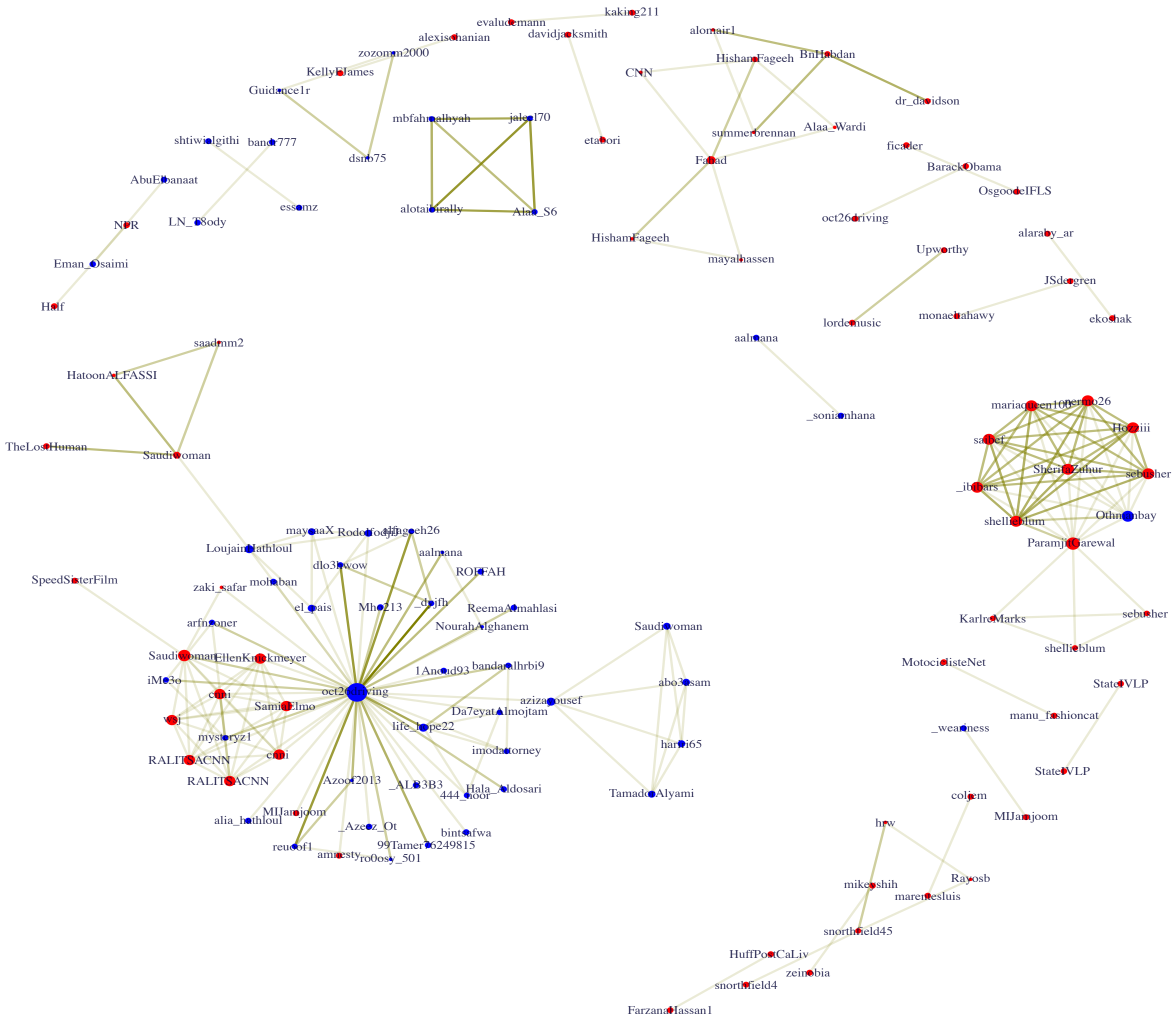
In his LinkedIn profile which is associated with the Twitter account @Othmanbay, Othman identified himself as a bilingual journalist working for Al-Ghad Al-Arabi TV. According to his profile, he had also worked for different news organisation such as Radio Netherlands Worldwide Arabic Service, and Associated Press' Arabic News Service (Othman n.d.) Analysis of Othman’s tweet in Arabic and English shows that he is posting news related to the campaign which is published by different news organisations in both languages (Arabic and English). However, none of Othman’s tweets included any news story by the journalist himself. Moreover, Othman also translated some Arabic YouTube videos that were uploaded by campaigners and posted these links in the English hashtag. Twitter data show that both @Othmanbay and the campaign account @oct26driving followed each other.

@MIJamjoon (CNN journalist)

Mohammed Jamjoom is also a bilingual Saudi journalist as his tweets and YouTube video on the campaign’s YouTube channel reveals. Jamjoom has two accounts @MIJamjoom and @JamjoomCNN, the second being linked with CNN where he used to work. However, Jamjoom produced a number of news stories about the campaign published on CNN such as (Jamjoom 2013). He also has a video uploaded by campaigners on YouTube, showing his support and solidarity with the campaign, and encouraging Saudi women to support it. The content of Jamjoom's tweets also shows some replies to several discussions about campaign issues. He also tweets other news sources which cover news from the campaign.

@Da7eyatAlmojtam (campaign core member)

Key to Figures 21, 22 and 25	
Green edges (links)	The link between users, lighter green reflect amount of ties that means less mentions, retweet, and replies. Darker means more in degree.
Blue Node	Arabic hashtag participant.
Red Node	English hashtag participant.
Node Size	Reflect the node centrality that means larger nodes have more connection.



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essomz
alotaibirally
Alaa_S6
NPR
LN_T8ody
Eman_Osaimi
Half
alomair1
HishamFageeh
BnHabdan
CNN
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Alaa_Wardi
Fahad
ficader
BarackObama
OsgoodeIFLS
oct26driving
HishamFageeh
mayalhassen
alaraby_ar
Upworthy
JSdergren
lordemusic
monaeltahawy
ekoshak
aalmana
_soniamhana
saadmm2
HatoonALFASSI
TheLostHuman
Saudiwoman
mariaqueen100
nermo26
Hozziii
saibef
SherifaZuhur
sebusher
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ParamjitGarewal
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Rodolfodjb
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LoujainHathloul
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SpeedSisterFilm
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el_pais
Mhe213
_dujfh
ReemaAlmahlasi
NourahAlghanem
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Saudiwoman
Saudiwoman
EllenKnickmeyer
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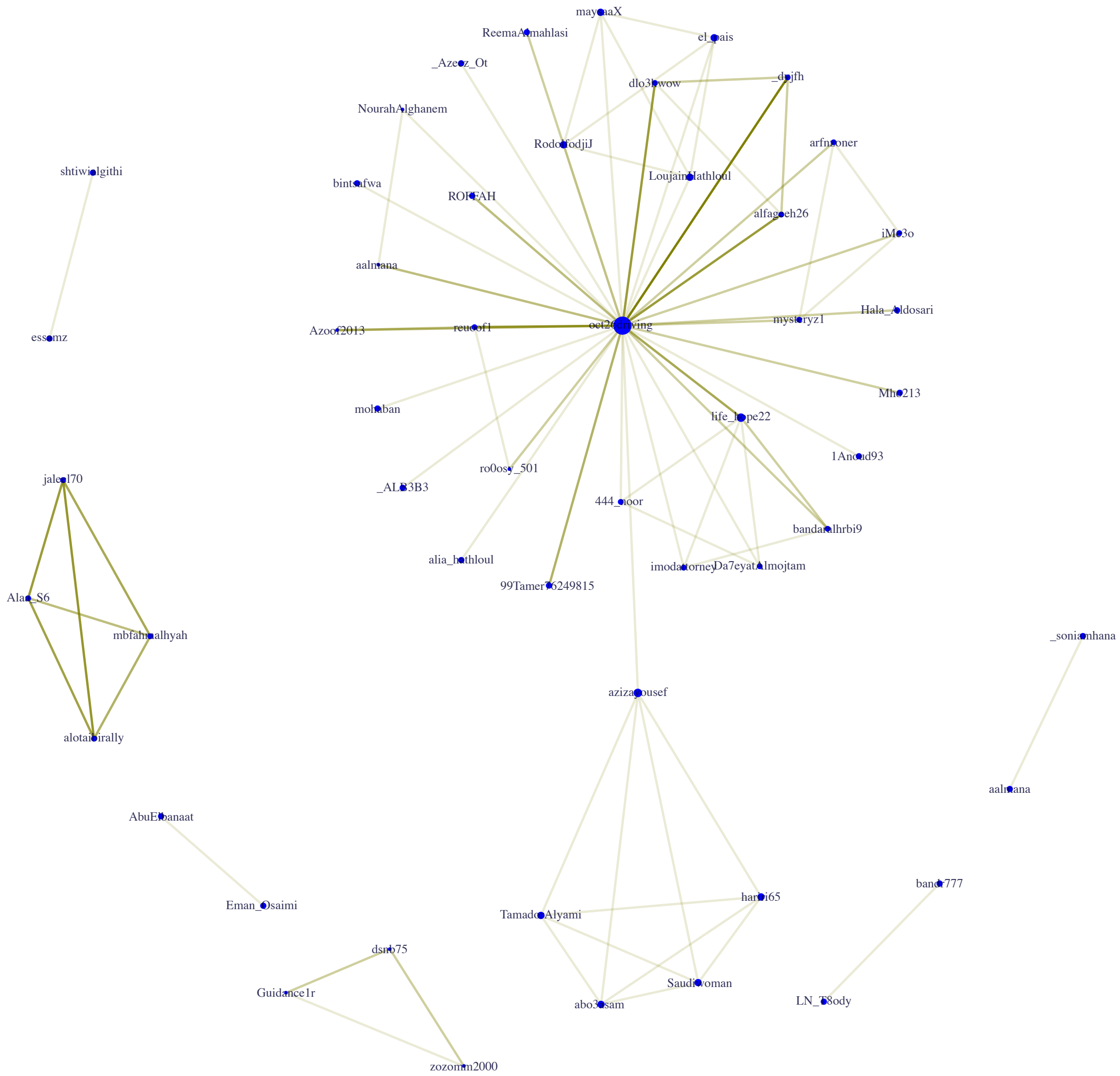
MIJamjoom
hrw
Rayosb
mikeyshih
marentesluis
snorthfield45
HuffPostCaLiv
zeinobia
snorthfield4
FarzanaHassan1

Figure 21: Separate Arabic and English Sectors for the two Hashtags (refer to CD appendices for larger view)

Secondly, analysis shows that there is no overlap between the two hashtags, meaning they are driven by different organisational structures.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AbuElbanaat
bandr777
harbi65
Eman_Osaimi
TamadorAlyami
dsmb75
Saudiwoman
Guidance1r
LN_T8ody
abo3ssam
zozomm2000

Figure 22: Arabic hashtag analysis shows the centrality of the campaign user in communications (refer to CD appendices for larger view)

The analysis illustrates that the Arabic hashtag was dominant and was built around a single Twitter account belonging to the campaign (@oct26driving), meaning that this hashtag is mainly dominated by the campaign account. Tweets, replies, and re-tweets were all about and around the official campaign account, not other individuals' accounts, nor organisations' accounts. The campaign account is the main player in the hashtag. Furthermore, almost all interviewees have their presence in the Arabic hashtag. They also have their ‘own network’ in the Arabic hashtag. In another word, they are almost isolated within the Arabic hashtag and they communicate directly to each other, communicating less frequently with other participants within the Arabic hashtag.

When mapped, the communication on the Arabic hashtag illustrates that the campaign is an ‘*Organisationally Brokered Network’*, which supports the interview findings as the core campaigners, not individual supporters, lead and direct the campaign.

Figure 16 indicates that in contrast to the Arabic hashtag and interview findings, the English hashtag #oct26driving for the campaign is part-organisational and part-based on interpersonal influences. Individuals play a key role within the hashtag. This would characterise the English hashtag as an *‘Organisationally Enabled Network’*, if the only hashtag activities are considered. The role of two accounts (@saudiwomen and @oct26driving) was significant but not decisive. However, the interviews do not reflect that, and the backchannels, which in this campaign are the WhatsApp groups, do not reflect that (Karpf 2014).

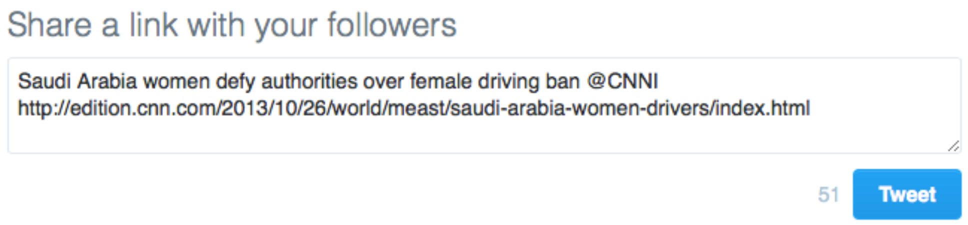
Detailed analysis of the participants in the Arabic hashtag shows that not all of them necessarily support the campaign. One user @LN_T8ody, which could be translated from Arabic as “You will not drive”, is dedicated to attacking the campaign; this user posts inappropriate language and photos to attack advocates of women driving as well as calling them liberals.

Whilst it is hard to detect the gender of participants, examining participants’ account in the hashtag manually suggests that most participants are female and also tweet about other women’s issues in Saudi Arabia, such as the male guardian issue. Furthermore, this analysis shows that most accounts in the Arabic hashtag are Saudis, as demonstrated by the content of tweets in accounts such as @life_hope22 and @dyjfh.

Despite the communication mapping for the English hashtag, which shows different segmented communities within the hashtag not related to the campaign users, the campaign in general can still be classified as an ‘*Organisationally Brokered Network’* for this hashtag. However, this is on a lower scale than the Arabic hashtag. In short, the communication within the Arabic hashtag relies heavily on the campaign account. In contrast, communication within the English hashtag reveals several other, small communities, meaning that those communities are interactive and mobilised separately from the campaign Twitter account. This reflects the diversity of the English hashtag community compared to its Arabic equivalent, which has a fairly small community. However, the English language community within the English hashtag is much bigger since English can be used by, and is understood by, a wider number of Twitter users.

Interestingly, the English hashtag shows that a number of followers are organisational accounts, and that these can be divided into two types: (a) news organisations and (b) human rights organisations. This reflects the role which international media and human rights organisations play in supporting the campaign’s aims, as was discussed by interviewees.

In-depth analysis of these organisations shows that their presence in the hashtag happens unintentionally as it is automated. In other words, when news website readers want to share an article on Twitter, they click on the appropriate icon on the website. The article link will then be pasted in their tweet along with the news website’s Twitter account as Figure 3 illustrates. However, this does not mean that news websites do not participate in the hashtag to promote their content about the campaign. Overall, then, it can be argued that the presence of news organisations in the English hashtag reflects news content about campaign issues rather than the communication structure of the campaign, as it can be the result of automated processes which happen unintentionally.



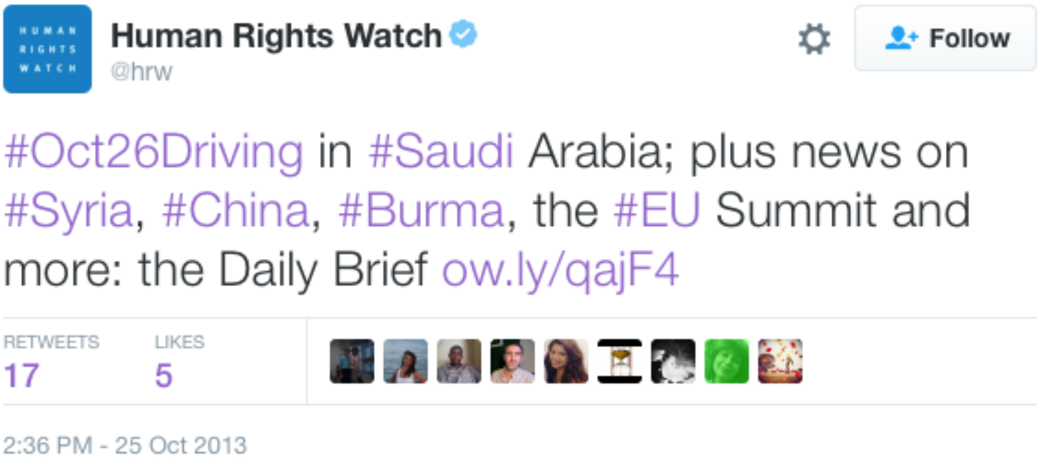
Saudi Arabia women defy authorities over female driving ban @CNNI
http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/26/world/meast/saudi-arabia-women-drivers/index.html

Figure 23: Example of how news websites attach their Twitter account when a reader shares one of their articles on Twitter.

This can be seen in accounts such as @guardian, @AP and @CNN. However, the personal accounts of journalists who are linked to news organizations such as @amjoomCNN might participate differently. AmjoomCNN has interacted with other participants, as well as promoting his news organization content. All but one of the news organizations represented in the sample are English-speaking.

In the context of news organization accounts, it was noticed that some TV shows and films about cars also participated in the English hashtag @speedsisterfilm, as did @MotociclisteNet which is community for female motorcyclists in Italy.

International human rights organisations also have a presence in the English hashtag, including Amnesty International @amnesty, amnesty UK @amnestyUK, Human Rights Watch @hrw, and United Nations Women @UN_Women. It can be seen that their presence serves two functions, firstly, to show solidarity with activists and encourage people to participate, and secondly to promote their own website content.



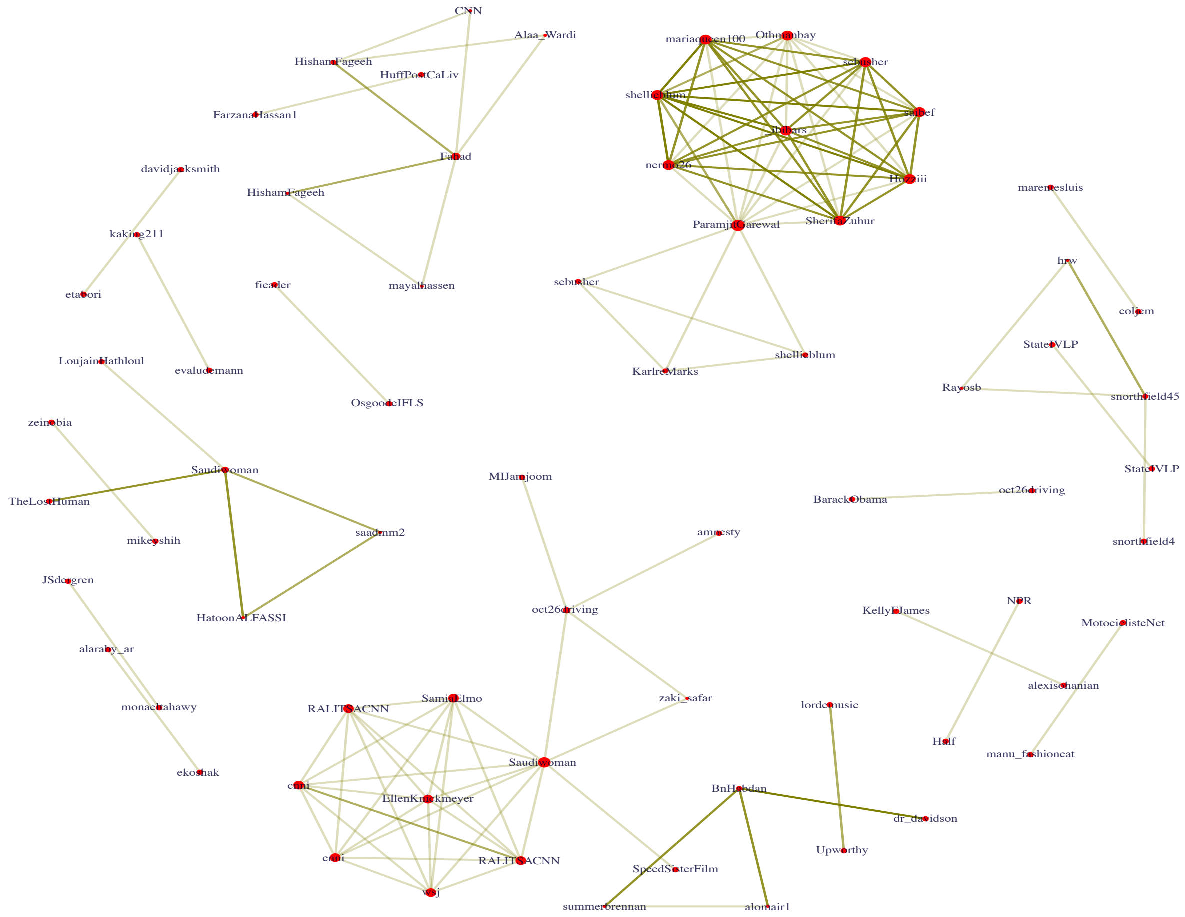
Human Rights Watch
@hrw

#Oct26Driving in #Saudi Arabia; plus news on #Syria, #China, #Burma, the #EU Summit and more: the Daily Brief ow.ly/qajF4

RETWEETS 17 LIKES 5

2:36 PM - 25 Oct 2013

Figure 24: An example of a human rights organisation promoting its own content on the English Twitter Hashtags (Source: http://twitter.com/hrw/status/393732699397316608).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Saudiwoman
TheLostHuman
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mariaqueen100
Othmanbay
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SherifaZuhur
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SamiaElmo
zaki_safar
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manu_fashioncat
Saudiwoman
cnni
EllenKnickmeyer
BnHabdan
dr_davidson
Upworthy
cnni
RALITSACNN
SpeedSisterFilm
wsj
summerbrennan
alomair1

Figure 25: Analysis of the English hashtag (#oct26driving) shows small unconnected communities (refer to CD appendices for larger view)

Comparing the types of participants and the content of the English hashtag with that of its Arabic counterpart demonstrates that there is a big difference in the presence of news organisations in the hashtag, which could reflect the amount of news in English as opposed to Arabic. Participants in the English hashtag are more diverse than those in the Arabic hashtag. Whilst Arabic is widely used outside Saudi Arabia, few users from elsewhere in the Arab world participate in the Arabic hashtag whereas the English hashtag shows participants from different countries such as USA, Mexico, and Australia, as well as Saudi Arabia.

Clearly, both hashtags do not reflect only the organisational structure of the campaign, but also the structure of the circulation of information and it could be argued that both these structures are interrelate.

7.5.3. Internal communication applications

It was confirmed by all interviewees that Internet platforms were the incubator for most of the *October 26th* activities. However, the activists stated that this wasn't necessarily by design. For example, one interviewee stated:

> When we launched our campaign we had no specific plan. We did not even have an account on Twitter. Our aim was to decentralise the campaign on Twitter. Thus, we only had to launch hashtags. But after a short period of time, a supporter set up a Twitter account with a campaign name (W6).

Bearing in mind the geographical distribution of campaigners, using the Internet as a platform was vital for activists to communicate in a fairly safe, cheap and reliable way. However, the government's obsession with monitoring was a clear consideration, especially when choosing an application for internal communication, although activists still use some applications (e.g. WhatsApp and Skype) despite them not being secure. Activists have mentioned Skype as one of the best applications for making voice and video calls, particularly for contacting other activists who are abroad for a short periods of time. E-mail is used chiefly for long messages (W3, W9). Activists also use the direct messages feature in Twitter, as it is fast and easy to use.

7.6. Systemic Shaping Factors

So far in this chapter, we have mainly dealt with the influence of technology on the campaign. Whilst the Internet seems to offer more freedom than the traditional offline environment in Saudi Arabia, it has already been noted there are a number of factors such as government policy or religion, which also shape activism online and offline, meaning that the Internet plays a different role in different contexts. Here, we examine in more detail, these broader factors that have shaped the campaign's use of the Internet.

7.6.1. Saudi policy, legal restrictions and campaigners

Activists have their own policy for coping with 'invisible' regulations. Organisations, such as 'Human Rights Watch' are usually criticised in the Saudi media for their reports. For example, the Deputy Editor of *AlRiyadh* newspaper said, "Their reports are discredited, […] and politicised." and he also warned that they were aiming to destroy the Saudi image (Alshye, 2013). Similarly, activists always try to take into account religious and cultural traditions when campaigning for women driving and have a commitment to wear the hijab when filming, for example.

During the course of this research, a new threat emerged for the campaign. The ‘Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing Law’ was introduced on December 16th 2013 and came into force in January, 2014. Whilst this Law is theoretically intended to cover crimes of terrorism, the definition also includes:

> [D]isturb[ting] public order, destabilise national security or state stability, endanger national unIty, suspend the Basic Law of Governance or some of its articles, undermine state reputation or status, cause damage to state facilities or natural resources, attempt to coerce any of its authorities into a particular action or inaction or threaten to carry out acts that would lead to any of the aforementioned objectives or instigate such acts. (Law of terrorism Crimes and Financing 2013)

The campaigners viewed this legislation as potentially the biggest threat to their activities since, “Anyone could be arrested under the terms of this law.” (W8). However, formal legislation itself is not really important, because the authorities can still arrest anyone without cause, or because the law is so vague. Even before this legislation was passed, campaigners believed they were under threat. For example, W4 commented, “Once they [the Ministry of the Interior] decide to arrest you, they will do it.” Other activists mentioned what could be described as ‘veiled threats’. W7 said she had received messages from the government via a friend asking her to stop her activities. According to her, messages were ‘friendly’ messages asking her to desist without a formal order.

7.6.2. Prison and travel bans

The imprisonment of one of the members of the campaign changed its structure, as well as causing some concern for the campaigners. Thus, as we noted above, some activists withdrew from the campaign, without telling anyone. In some cases, the risk of imprisonment was a motivating factor. One activist even asserted that they had agreed that if another activist was jailed, they would all surrender themselves to the police, although, conversely, the threat of imprisonment might also be seen as having increased the activism of a minority. For W8, the imprisonment of a colleague had pushed them to do more as it underlined that is a right worth fighting for.

The Saudi authorities have also announced that any woman caught driving her car can be held in custody for three days, and the vehicle impounded until the woman’s guardian comes to the police station and both have signed a pledge not to let her drive again. Even though custody is a threat to activists, it does not appear to act as a deterrent for activists, as it is only for short periods of time. One activist said:

> When I first drove my car I was ready to be taken into custody. I packed my bags, clothes, and vitamins for three days. I knew they would do it. To release me they would ask me to call my male guardian to pick me up from custody. I was ready to say: “No. I will not call anybody”. (W4)

Another female activist commented: “Prison is scary, but I am sure that the government will not jail women” (W7). A third female activist made the following point:

> I think the government will reach a stage that makes it impossible for them to jail women, because of the international pressure. My personal viewpoint is that the government cannot jail women in 2013 for driving a car. Even if I were jailed, this would not change my beliefs. As a group, we women decided that if the government jails one of us we will collectively go to the police and hand ourselves in. This actually happened once. In one case, an activist drove her car, and had been arrested. Four of us went to the police station and said to them: “Here we are; arrest us as well”. The policemen laughed at us and said: “We will hand them over to you, we do not want them” (W9).

Aside from detainment, the other main punishment used to deter activists is being banned from travelling abroad for an unspecified period of time. Some activists consider this, the most serious threat since most of them need to travel abroad regularly for different purposes, and any such ban would impact significantly on their personal lives.

7.6.3. Censorship, anonymity and the Protection of Personal Data

The campaign website[1] was blocked for the first time a few days after it had been launched and then on two further occasions later on in the campaign. This blocking has negatively affected the campaign. The blocking made the government’s position on the campaign clear which had a detrimental impact, since people became too scared to log onto the website, even after the blocking was lifted, as they thought the government might track or censor them. There is no direct evidence to support this but it certainly reflects campaigners’ beliefs. However, some activists argue that the fact that the government made its position on the campaign clear was useful since this sent a message to those opponents of the campaign who had accused it of being launched by the Saudi government.

Both male and female interviewees in this campaign mainly use their real names on Twitter and other social networks as they stated and most display their real photos with their profiles. It is clear that interviewees were unafraid of doing so, as some asserted that governments already knew them, and some claimed that they had already met some Saudi officials, as mentioned previously. One activist said she had received a friendly message from the government.

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[1] The campaign has two domains; http://www.oct26driving.org has been blocked.

Moreover, it should be understood that remaining anonymous may harm the campaign and activists' claims as it may lead the public to distrust the campaigners and their campaign. As discussed earlier, people tend to link anonymity with certain countries or some international organizations. The most important point is that the campaigners stress that they want to be clear that they are claiming their rights as Saudi citizens. One activist said that she refused to use an international number for WhatsApp as this may make the group seem suspicious (W1).

In general, it seems that the blocking system, which is used in Saudi Arabia to block the websites, has not affected the campaign greatly. One activist said the blocking system used has proved ineffective in preventing the campaign, commenting:

> The blocking system is ancient, an outdated system. There is not just one but twenty types of software you can use to bypass the blocking system. When a child starts learning how to use the Internet, the first thing to learn is how to use this software. There is no need to learn programming language. You just download it (W3).

One activist argues that the campaign has benefited from the website being blocked, noting:

> I think the website blocking has two sides. On the one hand, it makes the website inaccessible. On the other, it helps the campaign and gives it more publicity, even internationally. It makes people more convinced that the campaign is having an influence on people, and people said "It has been blocked because its discourse is effective and it is a serious campaign (W8).

Similarly, W3 argued:

> I am sorry to say it, but the blocking system is one of the worst things that could happen in the whole world. You know that when you ban or block something it simply increases people's desire to know more about it. Forbidden fruit is the sweetest. They ban books here, we bring them from elsewhere. The blocking system does not affect the campaign. Every time they block us we will launch another website (W3).

The only negative effect of the blocking of the campaign website was seen during the collection of signatures for a petition as a number of interviewees asserted. For example W9 observed that "blocking our website annoyed us during the signature collection, but it does not affect our campaign" (W9). Another campaigner said "The website blocking has slowed down the growth of the campaign but it does not affect the campaign". (W7). W1 explained in more detail how the blocking system affected the campaign during signature collection for the petition:

> We have been influenced negatively by the blocking system. Once it destroyed our efforts. We launched a petition on our website, and were expecting to reach 150,000 signature in a few days, because we already had 2,000 or 3,000. They suddenly blocked the website. Then we lost this huge turnout. When people visited the website and found it blocked they did not come back again, even when we used another petition website. We barely reached 16, 000 signatures (W1).

Importantly, censorship and monitoring has also affected the campaign, as discussed earlier in the campaign membership section. The fear of being monitored made campaigners more cautious about inviting activists to their offline meetings, as W1 explained:

> One of the negative aspects of the Internet that you do not who you are taking to. You may be talking to an intelligence agent pretending to be an activist or someone just looking for girls to flirt with. We have to do our own research. If we do not think someone is OK then we do not respond to him or her (W1).

7.6.4. Traditional media coverage

Whilst many campaigners are connected to the media, they do not necessarily share a positive view of the role of Saudi media in the campaign and some activists distinguish between the press generally and individual columnists. Overall, activists were satisfied with the national media coverage they received when the campaign was launched. Reviewing pre-campaign press coverage from October 1st 2013 to October 24th 2013, supports this claim as a number of news stories and columns supported women’s right to drive. Overall, the media coverage was positive until the Ministry of the Interior announced its statement about the campaign.

According to some activists, there was a dramatic change in the media coverage after the Ministry of the Interior statement, which was released on 23rd October 2013, just a few days before the driving protest. The statement noted:

> That campaigns, which have been circulated lately in social network and some media forums, calling for gatherings and prohibited protests in the name of "women driving/women's right to drive" [are violations] of the laws in force in the Kingdom. [These laws] prohibit whatever leads to disturbing social consensus opens the gates of disorder or follows the wishes and dreams of those courting controversy […], the Interior Ministry emphasises that the relevant agencies will enforce the laws immediately with all firmness and power against all violators. It also appreciates at the same time the many [positive] comments made by citizens which assert the importance of preserving security and stability and keeping distance from whatever brings about division or discrimination in society, Allah’s guidance is the only true guidance, (Saudi Press Agency (SPA) 2013).

Activists claimed that from this point onwards, “Media coverage turned against us. Some reports described us as ‘traitors’.” (W1). Furthermore, according to the activists, three TV stations that had previously hosted them refused them any more airtime. Unsurprisingly, therefore, activists believe that the Saudi media is not a reliable platform for campaigning.

An analysis of a sample of Saudi newspaper websites, including *AlRiyadh, AlJazirah, Alwatan, Alyaum, Alsharq* and *Okaz* over the period from 25th October to 31st December 2013, shows that with one exception, there was no positive coverage of the campaign. Indeed, much of the reporting was actively hostile with headlines like: “Members of *Shura* Council: women driving is sedition, and we should not allow them to sully the country’s reputation.” (Bilal, 2013); “Community awareness defeats suspicious calls about women driving cars.” (Alshibani, 2013) and “The women of Kingdom respond to the Ministry of the Interior statement and refuse to drive cars.”(Khudair, *et al.* 2013). The only exception is a report published by *Okaz* stating the need for female doctors to be allowed to drive (Anbar, 2013).

In short, whilst Saudi media had an initially positive attitude towards the campaign, it appears that the government pressurised the traditional media to change its stance. Only one Saudi journalist suggested that there was overt evidence of this intervention, and W3 stated that journalists who used to write about the campaign had told her that Editors-in-Chief turned against them after October 24th, the date of the Ministry of Interior’s statement. As a result, activists argued that the campaign relied on online channels to communicate, organise and mobilise more than conventional media because of the restrictions imposed there. One activist stressed that, “This campaign is entirely reliant on social media for mobilising because there is no ‘formal’ media we can publish in.” (W2).

7.6.5. Societal and Cultural Limitations

Interview data reveals that there are a number of societal and cultural limitations which influence the campaign’s performance. These mainly relate to views about gender and religion. The issue of gender is, of course, a vital and contested factor in the campaign, shaping even the use of the Internet as a means of communication and mobilisation. Some female interviewees complained about the presence of men in the campaign. One interviewee argued, “We women don’t like men working with us. We don’t like the hierarchical structure, and men usually tend to steal women’s efforts.” (W7). Other female activists shared the same concern about the campaign being formally structured by men. They believe the campaign should remain unstructured to keep it a ‘popular campaign’. In addition, some thought that having a structure, “Could send unwanted signs to the government.” (W7). Such activist statements reflect both the fear of being seen as a formal organisation, in a country where such organisations are banned, as well as potentially creating a negative image of the action amongst the wider population.

However, one male activist claimed that the campaign would greatly benefit from men for several reasons. He emphasised that the presence of men gives the campaign what he called, “A human rights’ dimension.” (W8), as well as the men being able to concentrate purely on taking responsibility for the campaign, whereas the women might be affected by family needs and concerns. He argued that women in Saudi society are strongly influenced by family tradition and might sometimes be asked not do something by other family members, parents or husbands in particular. Men are largely free from such obligations.

In addition to gender, religion plays a vital role in the campaign, since both sides use religion to support their point of view. Some activists said they are trying to play down the religious aspect of the women driving issue, as they argue this opinion is related to tradition, rather than religion. Even so, using religion in favour of the campaign cannot be ignored. Activists themselves have used religious quotations and opinions expressed by Islamic scholars, and the interviews show that some activists have tried to encourage well-known Islamic scholars to support the campaign. Furthermore, it can be gleaned from the interviews that the activists are looking for a ‘specific’ type of Islamic doctrine, not available in Saudi Arabia, to provide a ‘modern’ view on women’s issues. For example, activists have invited two female Muslim scholars from Morocco and Malaysia to Saudi Arabia to talk about women’s rights in Islam.

Furthermore, some activists’ stress that the speaking online environment is not free as some people might rude in their comments as a result of activists’ expressing themselves. For example one female activist said:

> “When I started tweeting, I discovered some kinds of people that I did not expect to exist in Saudi society. I was only communicating with my own community. After using Twitter I got to know new segments of society. I was expecting that there would be people who disagreed with my way of thinking. Some people are intellectual and others average but I did not expect that the irrational people might be harmful. Originally I just tweeted straight away without thinking. Then I was surprised that some people are very threatening in a very frightening way. I was afraid for myself and my children. Some anonymous users threatened me. Some of them slandered my husband, my father and me, because he did not know how to bring me up. Once, some one told me “watch your children; we know how to reach them.” (W3)

The same interviewee attributed part of this harassment to her profile avatar as she appears unveiled, which according to her it means to some people that she is not religious. She was the only interviewee who expressed such feelings but there are a large number of negative comments on the videos that were circulated by Twitter or YouTube.

7.7. The Future of the Campaign

Activists are optimistic about the campaign's future in general, and the '*October 26th Campaign*' in particular. One activist describes the Internet as, "An effective weapon." (W7). They predict that campaigns in general will significantly increase in the near future, and that it will become more difficult for the government to control them, "The cause which motivates campaigns, suppression of freedom of expression, still exists here, so more campaigns will come." (W2, W5). Even so, the activists' optimism is tempered by the fear of the strength of the recent anti-terrorism law, as noted above. One activist explained his fear of the law, "It is so vague, anybody could be imprisoned and every campaign could be stopped." (W8).

Although some activists accept that the '*October 26th*' Campaign may have lost its earlier momentum, they are determined to maintain their campaigning to pursue their claims. One activist argued, "If the campaign loses its momentum, as expected, the main activists should maintain their campaign and achieve the '*October 26th*' Campaign goals as a core group." (W8), This statement tends to underline the point that the campaign is an '*Organisationally Brokered Network',* since the activist was relying on the core group to continue making their demands, not individualised supporters.

7.8. Conclusions

"Without the Internet, the campaign would not exist." This type of phrase was repeated in almost all the interviews and the activists strongly believe that it forms the backbone of the campaign, "I can tell you how important the role of the Internet is, when I compare the '*October 26th Campaign*' with the 1990s campaign, when there was no Internet." (W7). Some activists argue that the Internet has also assisted them in explaining their ideas and persuading the audience, as well as defending themselves, which was impossible prior to the Internet era.

Moreover, campaigners recognise the Internet as providing a strong alternative to more traditional forms of media. It allows activists to publish their news without intervention, as well as publishing this in a quicker way, "I was tweeting from the police station when I was stopped." (W7). The activists have their own TV show '*Driving Cabin'*, as well as publishing all the videos they want to share with the audience directly. Similarly, they make all the campaign content available at all times on the Internet. In this respect, "The Internet delivers the information to everyone. It has also put an end to our lack of visibility." (W7).

It can be seen from the videos and photographs that have been uploaded onto Twitter and Instagram that the supporters of the campaign have become more visible to the public and willing to express themselves. People online demonstrate their virtual solidarity to the campaign and the women's actions in ways that would have been unthinkable previously. In some cases, they show their solidarity by attaching the campaign logo to their profile photographs on social media. Furthermore, they claim they have succeeded in spreading awareness of campaign issues, as well as persuading more people to support women driving, although this claim is difficult to measure. Certainly, analysis of the replies on the campaign's Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram accounts might not support this. One activist argues that

> The Internet has allowed our voices to be heard in the way we wanted. Whenever the media covered your stories, it still did not deliver the message you wanted; it is the editor's version not yours. These ways of delivering the message in the media are mostly distorted. But when you speak online, it means you have a presence in the sphere, it gives you publicity, and you have your voice repeated every day. Your presence in the media is not guaranteed. You may appear in the media for one day, and then you will be absent for months. It is not you who controls your presence, it is them. (W9)

There is no doubt that using the Internet for campaigning for the right to drive has made women's voice louder. This can be seen in various ways as mentioned earlier. For example this chapter includes a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior which is a direct response to the online campaign. Moreover, the meeting between Saudi official and some campaigners came after launching the campaign online. In addition, public engagement also reflects the momentum that the campaign has gained within Saudi society.

However, the Internet also makes it possible for campaigners to identify their opponents, and determine how to challenge them. The Internet creates a space for different opinions to be aired. As such, this interaction helped campaigners to understand the other side's opinions and what these are based on. One activist explained, "The Internet gave us the space in which to get to know their thoughts, to know to what extent we beat them, to know their latest outbursts." (W3).

Furthermore, the Internet has assisted campaigners in identifying other activists who share similar interests and solidarity, as it became the new virtual public sphere in a society which has traditionally lacked civil society institutions and freedom of speech, (see Chapter Two). In short, the Internet makes the campaign more visible.

Internet technologies have also eliminated geographical boundaries for the female activists. Tweet locations and interviews showed that activists are from different cities and the Internet reduces the need for face-to-face meetings. Besides that, the Internet provides an alternative to demonstrations which are banned under Saudi Law. Activists became reliant on the Internet for mobilising because the unique feature of online activism in Saudi Arabia is that the Internet is not just another option, it is the **only** option. It is clear that a number of activists in the '*October 26th Campaign'* have been encouraged by Internet technologies to work on campaigns for the first time in their lives. Activists strongly believe that the Internet has helped to break down the barriers of fear. Almohareb (2010), argues that the Internet has not only increased levels of freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia, but has also had a knock-on effect on increased levels of freedom of expression in the Saudi Press.

The campaign's origins, activist profiles and their interview responses, and the SNA analysis, all strongly indicate that the campaign can be categorised as an '*Organisationally Brokered Network'*, meaning it is a traditional collective action using a new technology. Several pieces of evidence support this claim. First, the campaign is based on previous campaigns such as *'My Right, My Dignity',* which interviewees clearly referred to as an organised campaign fighting for women's rights. Secondly, there is an informal leader for the campaign and although she has no specific power over campaigners, interviewees point out that she is a respected individual which makes other activists listen to her. Thirdly, despite activists' denial of any kind of organising or organisation, interviews indicate that there is a semi-formal organisation and tasks with allocated roles and their denials in this respect can be understood within the legal and social restrictions imposed by Saudi society.

8. CHAPTER EIGHT: THE TEACHERS' RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

8.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the second case study, concerning the teachers' rights campaigns in Saudi Arabia. It is based on interviews with core activists conducted in 2013 and social network analysis covering the period 2009-2015. Again, the focus is on the role of the Internet technologies in mobilising and organising the campaign and also the ways in which it is shaped by the contextual environment. The Teachers' rights campaign, which is one of the earliest online campaigns in the country, represents a different style of Internet activism compared to that in the women driving campaign (*October 26th*) analysed in the previous chapter. It offers the opportunity to assess and compare different models of online activism. The campaign itself encompasses a variety of models with three different online forums, each with their own policies and styles of behaviour due to differences in their point of view, although all claim the same rights throughout.

8.2. Origins and Background

The main issues which motivated the campaign date back to 1995 (1416, AH[1]), when teachers claimed that the Ministry of Education had violated the guidelines relating to educational careers, established by the Council of Ministers in 1982 (1402, AH), and that both male and female teachers were being hired at lower level career positions than those stated by law. Around 200,000 teachers were affected by this behaviour, preventing them from obtaining what they should have been entitled to in terms of salaries. Soon after the campaign was established, other grievances were added to the list of campaigners' demands as explained below.

According to one interviewee T7, the campaign began with one post on the Alshref online education forums,[2] which is mainly designed for teacher discussion about educational materials. A teacher posted a statement saying that teachers should reclaim the rights that had been 'stolen' from them, using all legitimate means. According to activists, people noticed the post, and it went viral. An online news website, Alweeam,[3] covered the story and this gave general publicity to the forum. However, this new publicity for the forum and the 'daring' post worried the owner of Alshref, as it was not judged by him to be in the forum's interest. This led to him closing this thread and asking teachers not to discuss this issue on 'his' forum. A few months later, teachers' demands were once again being discussed on the original forum after the issue of demanding rights went viral. Within a few days, a new forum entitled 'SA Teachers' Network'[1] was launched by a teacher who was interested in what had been posted at Alshref. This forum, launched in mid-2007, was dedicated to campaigning purposes only. The initial aim was to mobilise teachers to collect funds in order to cover a lawyer's costs.

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[1] Dates in brackets refer to the Islamic or Hijri calendar, which is the official calendar in Saudi Arabia.

[2] www.alshref.com/

[3] http://www.alweeam.com.sa

According to activists, many teachers moved to the new forum and within three months, it had become well known and activists began taking legal action. According to T1, at this point *Okaz* newspaper ran a negative headline claiming that it was: 'A new way to steal people's money'. One of the campaigners went to the newspaper to meet the editor-in-chief, providing documentation to prove the seriousness of the campaign. The newspaper printed an apology to the campaigners the next day, (T1). Paradoxically, though, what teachers describe as 'negative coverage' had a very positive impact on the campaign itself. While initially they struggled to collect less than a quarter of the costs after the negative news report, almost three quarters of the lawyer's costs were rapidly raised by bank transfer, without even having to use online donations. It appears that people started asking about the campaign, and then went online to get more information (T1 & T6).

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[1] www.ksa-teachers.com

Table 7: Timeline showing the Key Events in the Teachers' Campaign

Event	Date
First online thread post calling for teachers' rights	09/08/2007
First online forum dedicated to the campaign KSA Teachers launched	15/08/2007
Negotiations started with the lawyer	8-9/2007
Contract signed with the lawyer	11/2007
Statement of claims filed with the Administrative Court	29/12/2007
Saudi Teachers' Forum launched	10/01/2008
A six-member ministerial committee formed by royal decree to study the teachers' status	07/09/2008
A royal decree issued to improve teachers' pay grades by creating new jobs	26/04/2009
Teachers met with the king	27/05/2009
Administrative Court rejected the teachers' case due to the royal decree	27/05/2009
Formation of a committee to improve teachers' pay grades announced (for the first time)	16/02/2010
Formation of a committee to improve teachers' pay grades announced (for the second time).	23/06/2010
Formation of a committee to improve teachers' pay grades announced (for the third time).	02/03/2011
Formation of a committee to improve teachers' pay grades announced (for the fourth time).	23/4/2011

Note. (Source: T9)

8.3. Campaigns Demands/Objectives

The teachers' demands covering the period 2007 to 2013 were as follows:

- Improve career progression to the grade deserved within the scale, for a specific number of teachers, according to the educational career guidelines approved by the Ministry of Civil Services, 25/04/1982 (01/07/1402, AH). This can be explained by Tables 8 and 9 which show the increase in teacher salaries after their campaign. Table 10 provides details relating to the situation of teachers until the end of 2014, and the improved salaries once the Ministry of Education agreed to upgrade them.

Table 8: The Difference between Teachers' actual Salary Level and new Salary claimed

Gender	**Class**	**Year Employed**	Grade	Actual Salary SR	aimed Salary Cl SR	Grade Gap
Male	1996/1417	1996/1417	20	17 534	17 534	None
Female[1]	1996/1417	1996/1417	13	14 086	17 534	7 Grades
Male	1997/1418	1997/1418	18	16 406	17 070	1 Grades
Female	1996/1417	1996/1417	13	14 086	17 070	7 Grades
Male	1998/1419	1998/1419	16	15 478	16 406	2 Grades
Female	1998/1419	1998/1419	13	14 086	16 406	6 Grades
Male	1999/1420	1999/1420	14	14 550	15 942	1 Grade
Female	1999/1420	1999/1420	13	14 086	15 942	4 Grades

Note. Retrieved from: T9

- Put all the teachers entering the profession in the same year at the same level. Teachers were given a different salary even if they were hired in the same year. They argued for equal treatment and to be given a salary in accordance with their year of entering employment.

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[1] Education used to be gender segregated, with males and females having a different pay scale and career structure. On 24th March 2002 the General Presidency of Female Education merged with the Ministry of Education.

Table 9: Salary for Teachers who graduated in the Period 1997-2005, with educational Qualifications, before and after the Settlement

Class Year	Current Salary (SR)	New Salary (SR)	Difference (SR)
1997/1418	12 149.35	12 159.35	10.10
1998/1419	11 704.95	11 715.05	10.10
1999/1420	10 816.15	10 826.25	10.10
2000/1421	9 614.25	10 381.85	767.60
2001/1422	9 614.25	10 381.85	767.60
2002/1423	9 235.50	9 452.65	217.15
2002/1424	8 000.25	8 563.85	563.60
2003/1425	7 682.10	8 119.45	437.35
2004/1426	7 363.95	7 675.05	311.10
2005/1427	7 045.80	7 675.05	629.25

Note. Retrieved from: T9

Table 10: Salary of Teachers who graduated in the Period 1997-2005, without a Teaching Qualification[1], before and after the Settlement

Class Year	Current Salary (SR)	New Salary (SR)	Difference (SR)
1997/1418	12 149.35	No change	None
1998 /1419	11 704.95	No change	None
1999 /1420	10 816.15	No change	None
1421/ 2000	9 614.25	9 927.35	313.10
2001/1422	9 614.25	9 927.35	313.10
2002/1423	9 235.50	9 927.35	691.85
2002/1424	8 000.25	8 579.00	578.75
2003/1425	7 682.10	8 134.60	326.25
2004/1426	7 363.95	7 690.20	311.10
2005/1427	7 045.80	7 672.80	200
2006/1428	6 369.10	7 672.80	876.70
2007/1429	6 050.95	7 672.80	1 194.85

Note. Retrieved from: T9

- Count the years of service from the date of starting the job for teachers who entered the profession under the terms of Article 105[2] or an Article 105 contract. The 'current' contract at that time did not count any years of teaching experience in private schools nor did it take into consideration qualifications for the purposes of upgrading teachers.

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[1] Some Saudi universities provide bachelor degrees which also qualify graduates to teach in education, rather like the UK B.Ed. qualification; other universities offer standard bachelor degrees.

[2] Article 105 is similar to the so-called UK zero contract, or casual contract. This allows ministries to hire staff with no guarantee of work. Employee pay depends on how many hours they work. Neither sick pay nor holiday pay is included, and this does not count towards years in service for pension purposes.

- Place teachers on the pay scale in accordance with their years of experience. At that time, all teachers who were newly employed in schools were put at the same level, on the pay scale, regardless of any previous experience they might have had.
- Pay the difference between these grades, with effect from the date of the re-calculated pay grade and apply this retroactively.
- Change the policy on paid leave. In 2013, the Ministry of Education asked teachers to return to school two weeks before the actual start date of the first term.

The legal action which was initiated by the Internet forum began in 2007 (1428, AH) following what teachers called the Ministry of Education's 'infringement' of their rights for over a decade. One year after the lawsuit started against the Ministry of Education, the Administrative Court held several sessions to deliberate. King Abdullah issued a Royal Order on 18th January, 2008 (09/01/1429, AH) requesting the formation of a ministerial committee to consider the case and suggest the best way forward (Alribai, 2013). Six months after forming the ministerial committee, which was headed by the Minister of Civil Services, a Royal Decree was issued to re-assign some 205,000 teachers to the appropriate pay grade. However, many teachers have subsequently complained about the decisions made by the ministerial committee, arguing that it did not comply with the terms of the Royal Decree. The outcome proved disappointing to many teachers and did not meet all the demands they originally initiated through the case. Only the pay grade issue was solved, without considering their appropriate career level, which still meant lower levels of monthly salaries, and failure to count years of service.[1] In addition, they were not paid the net salary differences, which in some cases amounted to 300,000 SR, and were against the regulations of the Ministry of Civil Services. As a result, a number of teachers requested that the King should reconsider their case. The former Minister of Education, Abdullah Al-Obaid, supported the teachers and addressed the King about the possibility of reconsidering their case. Consequently, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz AlSaud issued a further Royal Decree requesting that the ministerial committee re-open the case. The decree was issued to apply Article 18A to improve the teachers' pay grades with effect from 2nd January, 2009 (05/01/1430, AH).

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[1] Article 105 is similar to a casual or a zero-hours contract. This allows ministries to hire staff with no guarantee of work. Employees' pay depends on how many hours they work. Neither sick pay nor holiday pay is included and no years of service would be counted.

After the Royal Decree to apply Article 18A was issued, the Administrative Court ruled that the lawsuit brought by the teachers against the Ministry of Education would be suspended. Ahmad al-Maliki, the solicitor acting for the teachers, appealed the case at the Court of Appeal, but the decision was made in favour of the adjudication of the Administrative Court and the case was closed. Teachers were still unhappy with Article 18A, claiming that it ignored the years of teaching experience, putting teachers with 11 years' experience on the same salary point as those with just one year of experience. Teachers argued that Article 18A had been misapplied or misinterpreted by the ministerial committee.

8.4. Scale of the Campaign

By 2013, there were nearly half a million teachers in Saudi Arabia, in some 33,000 schools across the country (MOE, 2013). Around 200,000 (40%) of them were affected by the 'unfair' job classification by the two ministries (Ministry of Civil Services and Ministry of Education). In addition, all of them were affected by the policy relating to paid leave days. The size of the campaign can be gauged from the published figures for two online forums dedicated to the teachers' campaign that indicate some 200,000 active members in each forum. If the vast majority of the registered members in the forum are teachers, as would be deemed logical (although membership is not limited to this group), this means about 40% of all Saudi teachers are members of the campaigns. There might also be a crossover of membership. The number of teachers who actually paid for the lawyer was, of course, far lower than this number. When interviewed, the activist who dealt with the fund-raising refused to release data, on the grounds that they have been told by the authorities not to do so. However, statistics extracted from the Internet Archive project,[1] indicate the size and growth of the campaign online (see Tables 11 and 12).

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[1] https://www.archive.org

Table 11: Size and Growth of the Saudi Teachers Forum on www.saudi-teachers.com

Date	Members	Active Members	Total Threads	Campaign Threads	Campaign Posts	Total Posts[1]
16/02/08	522	504	905	172	1,121	4,673
14/06/08	2,896	No Data	2,948	39	485	20,209
18/12/08	6,557	No Data	7,233	1,902	21,771	79,123
07/03/09	12,593	No Data	12,916	1,902	21,771	169,346
19/07/09	20,258	No Data	20,660	9,924	172,766	302,060
28/08/09	21,151	No Data	24,115	11,138	188,977	357,922,
10/02/11	72,961	No Data	52,400	20,019	304,612	779,634
10/05/11	79,537	No Data	61,582	24,085	389,470	930,535
04/01/12	94,444	No Data	82,784	31,984	496,683	1,259,668
23/07/12	105,526	No Data	98,432	37,516	578,833	1,500,385
05/12/12	113,549	No Data	106,141	40,317	609,326	1,596,913
14/03/13	119,139	No Data	110,427	42,103	631,396	1,665,087
15/07/13	121,863	No Data	113,161	43,138	639,496	1,710,659
16/12/13	126,105	No Data	115,210	43,714	643,660	1,743,861

Note. February 2008 to December 2013. Retrieved from https://www.archive.org)

Table 12: Size and Growth of Saudi Teachers Forum on www.ksa-teachers.com

Date	Members	Active Members	Total Threads	Campaign Threads	Campaign Posts	Total Posts[2]
24/08/07	1,731	1,731	1,147	246	2,859	10,578
26/12/07	9003	4806	8619	5364	76,068	105,082
29/02/08	13,296	6,539	14,383	8,728	126,293	179,080
24/04/08	16,503	5,345	18,408	10,511	150,511	224,648
26/05/08	18,369	4,850	20,165	11,406	160,043	241,789
26/09/08	21,106	2,793	24,911	14,146	193,337	290,280
26/12/08	28,444	7,056	45,151	16,424	230,310	565,183
18/03/09	50,275	20,913	41,322	24,458	418,111	567,220
25/09/09	67,245	No Data	61,976	34,002	592,119	852,177
30/12/09	78,578	No Data	70,751	37,066	639,679	958,504
27/03/10	89,240	No Data	81,318	37,066	639,679	1,105,273
22/07/10	96,336	No Data	92,005	44,597	740,019	1,233,671
19/12/10	105,617	No Data	98,279	47,035	765,115	1,302,477
25/02/11	117,417	No Data	103,984	48,831	792,516	1,409,284
14/08/11	146,767	No Data	121,991	58,855	920,075	1,654,949
30/01/12	207,822	No Data	141,729	66,489	1,016,322	1,905,194
17/06/12	245,009	No Data	152,278	70,013	1,065,926	2,095,882
12/11/12	277,203	No Data	163,731	73,274	1,087,393	2,239,795
03/03/13	312,502	No Data	170,364	74,797	1,101,372	2,352,782
30/07/13	331,839	No Data	175,735	75,932	1,110,374	2,453,159
17/12/13	363,130	No Data	179,552	76,861	1,115,815	2,512,095

Note. August 2007 to December 2013. Retrieved from https://www.archive.org

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[1] In this context, ‘thread’ here refers to a new post, while ‘post’ means replies or comments on posts. ‘Campaign Threads’ refers to the sub-forum within the forum, which is dedicated to the campaign.

Importantly, the campaign has been divided into mainly three groups or sub-campaigns, due to disputes about the censorship and campaign strategies in some cases. However, notionally all of these share the same broad demands or objectives. More specifically, there are three groups.

KSA teachers' forum

This is arguably the core group in the teachers' campaign. Other groups who are separated from this forum/group believe that the KSA Teachers' Forum practises heavy censoring on the forum's content. Initiators from the other two groups in the campaign stated explicitly that they left the forum because of this censorship.

Saudi teachers' forum

The second forum, Saudi Teachers, believes that strict self-censorship of this kind can dampen individuals' desire to work towards the campaign's goals. Moreover, they think that strict censorship also reflects fear and weakness in campaigning for their claim. One initiator who left the KSA Teachers' forum complained about the group's censorship policy. He then launched the second forum with the other activists who argue that participants should not be censored so strictly, and that members do not all need to share the same beliefs as the forum initiators. Core activists believe that the forum is open to all, and allowing people to post their opinions does not mean collective endorsement of these. Despite the assertions concerning the openness of this group, its initiators did admit practising a certain degree of censorship so it can be considered open only in relative terms to the KSA Teachers' Forum.

Overall, this forum appears to consider using the media to be the best way to reach their campaign goals, rather than legal action. They contend that legal action is a long, drawn-out process, and the media can influence decision makers more efficiently, (T4).

Teachers' voice forum

The third group, Teachers' Voice Forum,[1] separated from the Saudi Teachers' Forum as they claim to have suffered from censorship because they were a minority calling for a more pro-active campaign taking direct action, such as demonstrations and sit-ins. Both the KSA and the Saudi Teachers' Forum are clearly opposed to this type of action, which they see as against the law, and fear that direct action will impact negatively on the rights they seek. However, the Teacher's Voice believes it represents a key means of making officials listen to their claims. The initiator of the Teachers' Voice Forum clearly stated:

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[1] http://www.voice-teachers.net

> We are getting bored of suing Ministries; we are getting bored of talking to the media. The only way to gain our rights is to go on demonstrations and collectively visit the King and all the other officials who are responsible for our case, (T6).

8.5. Campaign Mobilisation and the Role of the Internet

8.5.1. Activist profiles

All of the interviewees for this campaign are men. Two women who worked for this campaign declined to be interviewed without giving any reason. Interviews demonstrated that the bulk of campaigners are comparatively young (most are from the 25-36 age group) and not surprisingly, well-educated (all those interviewed hold degree and some have postgraduate qualifications). This reflects the fact that the 25-36 year old age group is the one most affected by what they describe as the unfair job classification scheme.

Knowledge of computer packages and Internet skills does not appear to have been a driver for those who initiated the campaign. For example, one key activist (T2) confirmed that he has very limited knowledge of the Internet in particular. He had not heard about Wikipedia, for instance, and he did not have a Facebook account nor was he a member of any other forums. He confessed, "Look, all I know about the Internet is how to log onto online banking, one property website, the forum, and Twitter. I don't even use email regularly." (T2). When asked why he became so popular among teachers and has the title of 'Controller General' in the forum, he thought this was the result of his role in signing the contract with the lawyer for the teachers at the Administrative Court. In contrast, T6 was an expert in computer programming and said he had become an unofficial management software consultant for the Ministry of Education. Other campaign initiators (T2,T3) gave themselves scores of 6 and 8 in computer and Internet skills (where 10 equates to professional). Moreover, all the interviewees believe that there is no relationship between the level of computer and Internet skills and being active in an online campaign. This is because using the forum does not require members to be technologically adept, "If you can use MS Word, you can use the forum." (T5). Thus, there are seemingly few technological barriers to getting involved in the campaigns.

Analysing a range of campaigns relating to teachers' rights indicates that the campaigners share the same goal, although the sets of objectives vary and are not of the same order of priority. It is clear from the interviews that there was one originator for each specific goal/objective. For instance, T3 can be described as the originator of the teachers' paid holiday campaign, so his main objective is to change the number of days which are classed as paid leave. T4 and T5 admitted that one of the main problems with teachers' campaign is the different prioritisation of goals among initiators.

In addition, the involvement of teacher initiators in other campaigns indicates the influence that the teachers' campaign has had on other social campaigns in Saudi Arabia. For example, one interviewee said he is also working with other campaigners who believe they have been unfairly treated by commercial companies or government department banks. A later interview conducted with an initiator of the '*Man Divan*'[1] campaign, clearly indicates the major influence of the teachers' groups on this campaign. Similarities include changing the lawyer and adopting an online forum instead of Twitter only. The initiators who were interviewed were convinced that many subsequent social campaigns have also benefited from the teachers' experiences. The Internet has thus led to a 'spill over effect' as mentioned by a number of scholars such as Vasi (2006) and Della Porta and Diani (2006), meaning that, "Some movements depart from others, in order to pursue more specific or otherwise related aims." (Della Porta & Diani, 2006:26). In the case of teachers, some activists have almost become professionalised campaigners, a development that would not have happened in Saudi Arabia without the Internet. For example T8 said:

> I heard about the *Man Divan* story, and I felt sure that they had been neglected and wronged. I sent them a message offering my help. They are young people, and they welcomed me. I found that their lawyer was not an expert, and they did not know how to use the Internet to engage with a wider group of people and communicate with them. First, I put them in touch with a university professor at law school who specialises in franchise laws, which is the main point in their case. They had also been using Twitter only. I found that Twitter would not help them to connect all the 700 people affected by this case. So, based on my experience, an online forum would be the best platform for this type of arranging and planning. (T8)

It is interesting to note that none of the campaigners interviewed had participated in any other campaigns (online or offline) before the teachers' campaign. One teacher said:

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[1] This campaign involves some 700 young Saudis who signed a franchise contract with a Saudi men's clothing company (Ajlan & Bros). These young people got a loan from the Saudi Credit and Saving Bank and paid it to the owner of the brand, Ajlan and Brothers Company. The people who signed the contract felt that the company and the bank had defrauded them. They then sued the company and won the case.

> I did not engage with the teachers' campaign previously. Basically what I used to take spontaneous individual action without consulting anybody. Like other teachers I read the resolution released by the Ministry of Education regarding teachers' paid leave holidays, and I thought it was illegal and clearly violated other articles in the Civil Service Law. I went home and wrote a detailed letter to the Minister of Education, explaining why this resolution was illegal, listing the articles that were violated by the Ministry's resolution. I then went to the Ministry and hand it into his office. After doing that, I took a photo of the letter and tweeted it. Within a few minutes the letter was everywhere, WhatsApp, teachers' forums, online newspapers. People started talking about what they called an 'administrative offence'. Teachers started sending complaints to the Ministry. Some teachers' forums urged teachers to contact the Ministry about the case. Exactly one week later the Ministry withdraw the resolution. (T3)

However, prominence in the campaign has brought activists into contact with initiators from other campaigns wishing to create their own online campaigns. These new connections highlight the growth of what might be seen as an online activists' learning network. The findings underscored that people are initially motivated by personal rights, and then their successful online efforts enthused them to work towards other online campaigns in which they do not necessarily have a vested interest. This clearly demonstrates a deepening effect which, although not created by the technology itself, certainly assisted by the ease of networking online.

8.5.2. The Internet and the formation of the campaign

Although the Internet has been the bedrock of the teachers' campaign, some of the activists who were interviewed argue that they found out about the campaigns through direct communication with the initiators, either via text messages or phone calls. They also mentioned that some leaflets had been distributed among teachers in their schools. One teacher said:

> "We started promoting the idea via text messages and calls to friends, telling them that a new online forum had been launched and we needed them to participate. The first aim was to encourage teachers, both male and female, to come altogether to claim their rights by hiring a lawyer. A few months after joining them, we started advertising on other forums for free. We would advertise for another forum on our forum and they would advertise for us" (T4)

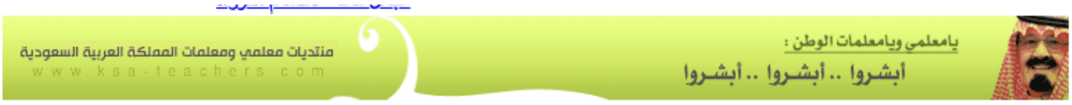

يامعلمي ويامعلمات الوطن :
أبشروا .. أبشـروا .. أبشـروا
منتديات معلمي ومعلمات المملكة العربية السعودية
www.ksa-teachers.com

Figure 26: One of the banners used to promote the teachers' campaign, citing from a speech made by King Abdullah addressing teachers.

The first initiator said that he got to know most of the activists after initially posting in an educational forum (T6). Two interviewees confirm that by saying:

> I learnt about the campaign from an online education forum called Alshareef; someone posted a thread with an idea to claim our rights. A teacher friend of mine told me to visit the forum and see the thread. I then visited and registered, and replied to the thread, encouraging other people to claim their rights (T7).

Another said:

> I received a text message from a friend referring to an online forum. He told me I had to register to support them. Teachers wanted to claim two main rights. I was affected by one of them and I liked the idea. Later we left the that forum because some individuals wanted to control everything, and not everything that we said was published (T8).

However, activists also mentioned that a 'second generation' of activists and other supporters came to the campaigns and the forum via the Internet, rather than through any personal contacts. This was, in part, because the campaign gained momentum when initiators started advertising by using banner ads on other Internet forums.

Although it is difficult to prove definitively, it seems that the teachers' campaign is probably one of the very first online campaigns in Saudi Arabia. However, it seems that the online campaign alone was not seen as trustworthy enough by teacher communities and needed newspaper coverage to give it credibility, (T1). Thus, it appears that campaigners need to make personal contact first to gain trust and can then move online. Indeed, when some activists decided to launch other Internet forums, they used existing personal contacts to convince others to join the new forums. So, personal communication is used initially to encourage a number of people to promote the forum first, and then others will follow.

8.5.3. Campaign target audience

When they started in 2007, initiators aimed to mobilise teachers across Saudi Arabia to obtain their rights. However, they did not initially intend to pursue this either by direct negotiations with the Ministries of Education and of Civil Services, or by taking legal action. Some initiators said they also aimed to raise awareness among Saudis about teachers' problems and to refute those who argue that teachers have everything they need and that they usually complain about everything, (T2). This reflects a commonly held stereotype in Saudi Arabia that teachers enjoy low working hours, and more than three months' holiday a year, in addition to a relatively high income.

Teachers have also targeted media through the Internet, although that was not necessarily their plan when they started. All the teachers interviewed valued the role of traditional media in supporting their campaign and drawing people's attention to it as well as, "Keeping the issue fresh in the audience's minds." (T2). Importantly, the most crucial role that traditional media played in the campaign was to give it, and the campaigners, credibility among teachers and the general public. Activists also claimed that the media cannot be directly engaged without the Internet. T2 said it is, "Not possible to go to the media and say, 'I'm going to organise teachers to claim their rights.' […] We went online and then the media started contacting us through the forum." Clearly, teachers would not have gained this media attention if they had not started an online campaign. In other words, traditional media was important for mobilisation but the Internet was the key to engaging traditional media.

According to one activist, conventional media (newspapers, television and radio), as well as online news websites, have played a crucial role in supporting the campaign. Even so, there have been huge differences in the amount of news coverage that the campaigns received from television and radio on the one hand, and the press and electronic newspapers on the other. Whilst radio and television carried about five or six news stories, there were more than 120 articles in the daily newspapers alone, and a similar number in online newspapers between 2007 and 2011; this number continued to grow (T1). This interviewee had kept a full archive of all print media and online media coverage. During the interview the researcher was able to see all these stories indexed and filed, and was allowed to capture this data.

The emergence of this media attention was not simply random. Some initiators mentioned media planning to distribute news stories in the media and on their forums. For example, T2 and T6 indicated that there had been some discussions in the supervisory team's private forum before putting out press releases.

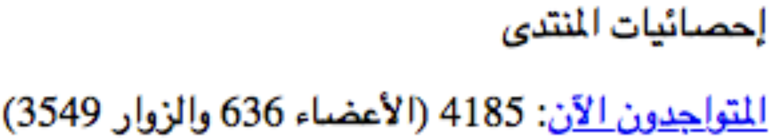
Some stories could not be published. For example, news about negotiations with the Ministry of Education was not published since this would affect the ongoing process. In addition, in some cases, teachers tried to keep news about the court hearings away from the media and the forum because it might have affected the outcome of the case. T1 quoted a judge as saying, "Keep this case away from the media and Internet." The interviewee believed that the media and the Internet put pressure on judges to make a case a matter of public opinion, which then makes it difficult for them to give a verdict quickly. Similarly, some interviewees also thought that news ought to be sent to the traditional media first, and then supervisors could publish it on the forum. This tactic may have been intended to give some newspapers scoops as a means of gaining a more favourable relationship.

With a few exceptions, the nature of the media coverage has generally been very helpful to the campaign, even that relating to the direct action such as the demonstrations. When the campaign received negative coverage, interviewees argued it was not intentional and that it was caused by the fact that journalists had misunderstood the stories they had covered. Teachers began to overcome any negativity by sending press releases directly to journalists, so they did not have to write the story themselves. Occasionally, journalists even asked campaigners to write stories for them. Hence, personal contacts between journalists and teachers created an ethos of sharing, and a number of the teachers even worked as freelance journalists in newspapers, increasing the chances of coverage.

8.5.4. Mobilisation applications

Despite the extensive coverage in the traditional media, online forums such as KSA-Teachers, Saudi-Teachers, and Teachers' Voice, as mentioned previously, have clearly still played a key role in the campaign. Initiators use forums to call for action, including signing petitions, calling for demonstrations and sending telegrams. All calls for action are pinned at the top of the forums to make people aware of them. Undoubtedly, online forums were the most important tools provided by the Internet to launch the campaign. The distinctive character of the online forum gave the campaign the sense of organised *collective* work, which may also serve their needs. This means that the online forum gave activists the ability to conduct truly collective action when needed. This could be provided by giving campaigners the ability to accept the monitoring of content, and create administrative positions, where activists can appoint a general supervisor, sub-supervisors and so on. The campaigners used the online forum in 2007 because of their popularity at that time (Al Nashmi *et al.,* 2010). All the interviewees clearly highlighted the vital role played by online forums in every aspect of the teachers' campaign. Moreover, despite the expansion of other Internet applications, such as social networking tools, activists still rely heavily on Internet forums for the bulk of their activities.

Nevertheless, the growth in popularity of Twitter in Saudi Arabia cannot be ignored; therefore, activists adopted Twitter mainly as a means of ‘marketing’ forum posts. This means that if there is an important post the forum will share it via Twitter. It suggests this method of marketing the forum’s postings increased non-member visitors in both forums. For example, during week days, the average number of KSA- Teachers forum’s visitors is 5531; 159 of them are members and 5472 are guests. These numbers can be seen in the bottom of every forum’s main page. All numbers here are retrieved from the forum’s archive stored at www.archive.org, and cover a period of 30 days. The following print screen shows an example of visitors and member’s number in the forum. The illustration shows there are 4185 visitors, 3549 users are unregistered and 636 registered.



إحصائيات المنتدى

المتواجدون الآن: 4185 (الأعضاء 636 والزوار 3549)

Figure 27: A print screen from the KSA-Teachers forum, showing the numbers of registered and unregistered visitors.

Moreover, the initiators have also created another mobilisation tool: a ‘prepared statement’ which can be sent to the Ministry of Education website by clicking on ‘contact us’ or ‘contact the Minister’. The aim of sending a ‘prepared statement’ is to maximise participation by minimising effort required. Campaigners were unable to gauge the impact and efficiency of prepared statements, but T2 and T3 argued that it demonstrated to the Ministry of Education the volume of teachers who are engaged with this issue and the strength of feeling amongst them.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the online forum affordances gave campaigners some form of organisation. Unlike other types of social media such as Twitter, the design of online forums gives some individuals power over others, which results in a type of hierarchical organisation. Looking at the content of the forum shows that threads posted in two of the forums KSA Teachers and Saudi Teachers focus on rights for both male and female teachers. The threads posted show that forums are about teachers’ rights in general and not limited to the campaign’s legal case. For example, a number of teachers posted different threads asking about their personal cases regarding their education, such as a female teacher seeking legal help from other teachers in one forum, when the head teacher of her school suddenly transformed the staff room into a storage room without notifying teachers. What is clear in both forums is the absence of gender segregation in threads and posts. Male and female teachers communicate with each other normally, although they do not work collectively offline as the following section will show.

There are also a number of YouTube clips and Facebook pages which relate to the teachers' claims, but interviewees said these are personal efforts put together by individual teachers who wanted to help. However, this had been done without core activists' acknowledgment. It seems that campaigners are happy with any form of support from people, even if they are not core activists. This suggests that the campaign activities are not entirely promoted or controlled by core activists and may imply a connective logic for the campaign as discussed in the following section.

8.6. Campaign Organisation and the Role of the Internet

This section will focus on the campaign's organisational features and the role which the Internet plays in facilitating the structure and shape of the action, and whether the Internet is promoting decentralised grassroots activity or not. More specifically, this section will present the findings about campaign membership and activists' responsibilities, and the internal communications, as well as the organisational structure of the campaign.

8.6.1. Campaign membership

One of the roles of forums is to recruit individuals to join the core activists' area, where they can work systematically as a group towards campaign goals. Teachers who are posting and replying to people actively, or who have achieved individualised successes in the campaign are likely to be contacted by core activists and asked to join the supervisory team (T2,T3). Clearly membership of the teachers' campaign is strongly related to the individual's activity on the forum. While the activists might not know active participants in the forum personally, the activity level of users is a sign that they are potential core member of the campaign. This does not mean that all individuals who are active on the Internet generally could be core members of any of the campaign groups. As discussed earlier in the section about mobilisation applications, some individuals have produced YouTube content, but core activists do not know them and did not work with them. This suggests that participating in a forum is precisely what makes participants more visible or more likely to be a core member. Activists emphasized that anyone can help to support their claims. Thus, it is difficult to establish criteria for membership or to distinguish who can be labeled in this way. However, it is easy to identify the core activists in the campaign as will be shown in this section.

Importantly, usually anyone can register either of the two forums KSA-Teachers, and Saudi Teachers. However, newly registered forum members may not be able to post a thread before completing some activation steps, such as posting a specific number of replies to show they are a keen supporter. Sometimes, new members cannot post directly and their thread/reply must be approved by a supervisor before they are allowed to post directly. Moreover, sometimes during the campaign, only members of the Saudi Teachers forum can access the forum content. When one activist was asked the reason for this, he was not able to give a clear answer. However, this might be understood as a technical procedure. The forum's servers have a limited capacity, meaning it can only accommodate a certain number of visitors. If this is exceeded it might make the forum slow down or completely fail. On some occasions, for example, when there is something new to report, visitor numbers rapidly increase, and due to the lack of financial resources, forum supervisors cannot accommodate all these visitors, so they only allow registered members to access forum content. Figure 27 show on average that the number of unregistered visitors is usually higher than that of registered visitors. Thus, by following this procedure, forum supervisors might be able to ease the pressure on the servers.

In contrast to the women driving campaign (*October 26th*), (Chapter Seven), none of the interviewees mentioned a need to run checks on any of the members selected before they joined the core groups. This is due to the fact that activists believe that they are operating within accepted social political and legal boundaries and their demands are actually stated in the Civil Service Law; it is just a 'technical issue' or every day issue.

The interviews indicated that activists tended to use their personal contacts in the early stages to build up the campaign team. The tasks and roles which need to be fulfilled by campaigners vary, so the work cannot always be easily organised. Creating formal roles and tasks is subject primarily to external factors such as Administrative Court requirements or orders from the Ministry of the Interior. For example when the Ministry of Education agreed to improve the pay scale for some 'graduate classes', it found that some important documents were missing. Thus, a number of teachers worked with the Ministry for a short time to locate the relevant documents and avoid delays in their case.

Other more permanent roles include forum supervision, which involves monitoring postings to ensure they are in accordance with the forum guidelines, as well as suggesting topics to be discussed. Some activists have a largely technical role; the first forum creator did this job because he is an enthusiastic teacher and a computer expert.

Identifying active users in the forum and promoting them to a higher level of participation such as supervising a forum, representing the campaign in the media, or representing the campaigners at the Ministry of Education, all explicitly show how communication and organization interrelate.

Representing the campaign in the media has been one of the initiators' key tasks. For example, if a TV station contacts any member regarding the campaign, this individual is expected to consult with the rest of the group. Then, collectively, they can give activist permission to go, or decide to use another activist instead (T2). It is not clear if there are set criteria concerning who is allowed to formally represent the campaign, but according to T2, anyone can represent the campaign in newspapers as long as the activist has the relevant information to be able to speak clearly and knowledgeably on TV or on the radio. Overall, activists can take such actions individually and without having permission from the group, but then they do not speak on behalf of the campaign, which might suggest the campaign is not strongly centralised or formalised.

Nevertheless, analysis of the interviews with activists involved in the SNA (KSA Teachers' Forum) clearly shows that after an initial period of 'stabilisation' in the campaign, from 2013 onwards, a more formal hierarchical structure was created. This comprises:

- Forum Owner: This individual owns the forum and is legally responsible for it.

- Board of Directors: This group is responsible for the forum's plan of action, financial affairs, appointing the Supervisory Committee members, and discussing issues with the Legal Committee.

- Legal Committee: This group is consulted on anything relating to legal matters.

- Supervisory Committee: This group is responsible for generating forum issues and is empowered to authorise posts and, if needed, to delete posts or threads.

- Forum Moderators: These individuals are responsible for monitoring forums, removing posts, member registrations, and some technical issues. This formal structure seems to have arisen as a result of what might be termed ‘recognition’ by the Ministry of Education and activists now wish to appear more organised and professional when negotiating with the Ministry. That said, there are two levels of participation. Participants can take part on their own through what Bennett & Segerberg (2013), refer to as ‘personalised action’, supporting the campaign by posting suggestions, sending letters to officials and so on. The second level are the core campaigners, with people at this level taking action on behalf of teachers in general, such as officially representing teachers on the media or when talking to officials.

8.6.2. Internal communication

The interviews illustrate two levels of intercommunication among the various teachers’ campaign. The first type of intercommunication is between all the campaigners who are members of the forums via posts from members. Interviewees acknowledged the importance of membership debates in shaping the campaign and adding further demands.

The second level of intercommunication is amongst core activists. In all the forums which were sampled, there are so-called ‘supervisor forums’. This is a sub-forum based on the main page of the forum, where visitors can see the names of all members, but access to this sub-forum is restricted to the core activists. In these closed sub-forums, supervisors discuss what they believe to be promising ideas and actions that could help the campaign.

These two levels of communication indicate that campaigns might be directed by the supporters and not only by core activists, suggesting a ‘*Self-Organised Network’*. To put it simply, supporters also have some power and they can direct the campaign or at least, can contribute.

8.6.3. Campaign structure

The Jeddah floods in section 6 of this paper explained how the campaigns were launched inadvertently, initially without any leaders. Moreover, the interviews indicate that the teachers’ campaign have not taken one fixed structure, but have evolved their structure in response to internal and external factors, such as Administrative Court laws and the intelligence services requests (see below). Overall, the Internet was the medium in which the campaigns were formed and, in part, they continue to be influenced by the use of technology and the online forums in particular. In retrospect, though, appointing and announcing a lawyer for the campaign can be seen as the turning point towards a more formally shaped organisational structure. According to T2, the organisational pattern of the campaign changed considerably after a lawyer was appointed for the campaign and started to work with the campaign initiators. Interviewees (T2, T3) mentioned that the adoption of the hierarchical structure was to gain a large number of ‘powers of attorney’ across the country, in order to deliver these to the lawyer so he could start suing the Ministry of Education. They argued that the greater the powers of attorney became, the bigger the case would be, and that would attract more people. What looks like an organisational hierarchy started to emerge with the establishment of the so-called ‘General Supervisor’. The current General Supervisor (T2) was appointed to this position for the campaign in the first forum because he was the only person who had contact with the campaign lawyer, having recommended this individual and signed the contract with him on behalf of the teachers. He emphasised that his main role then is to update campaigners with any news from the lawyer. This indicates that the Internet helps campaigners to gather people around a shared issue, but this crowd needs some kind of co-ordination to achieve campaign goals.

However, although there is a General Supervisor in the teachers’ campaign, this alone does not mean that it is a centralised campaign; simply that the General Supervisor has the most important task within the campaign. For instance, the General Supervisor cannot take decisions alone; these need to be discussed in a supervisory forum with all the initiators before they are approved. Moreover, activists who represent the campaign in the media or those supervising forums are subject to similar guidelines.

The involvement of the lawyer and legal requirements as well as some security issues, put an end to the offline, organisational hierarchy and slightly changed the campaign strategy at the same time. According to the Saudi Law of the Administrative Court, citizens are not allowed to sue the Ministry of Education, or any governmental entity, if the people involved live in different regions. Instead, they need to sue the Ministry in the relevant regional branch of the Administrative Court. As a result, the campaign has been divided into several regional groups rather than being one case referring to all the teachers in the country. Moreover, in an off-the-record interview with an initiator, T3 indicated that he had received a phone call from the Ministry of the Interior asking him to stop any ‘offline’ activity (see section below).

For these reasons, the pay-scale lawsuits in the Riyadh region and some other regions have not proceeded, although they continue in the Makkah region. Activists in other regions support the campaign on the Internet either through their posts on the forum or by other online activity such as YouTube.

Both the structure of the online forum, and the length of time that the case has continued, have helped to shape an organisational framework. It is clear that the forum represents the campaign collectively as a group of activists because there is an owner, who registered the domain, in addition to a number of moderators who have been given the power to censor and monitor the forum. The members of the forum have also agreed to abide by its conditions in order to post themselves and to read the posts of others. Furthermore, the forum itself is recognised by the campaigners as the voice of the campaign. Consequently, content must be monitored and, in some cases, posts are subject to pre-authorisation before posting. Given all these characteristics, the online campaign follows a fixed, hierarchical structure, revealing that this campaign is conforming to an '*Organisationally Brokered'* pattern (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; See Chapter 2); yet, the formation of the campaign as well as the social network analysis reveals a different pattern (see Figures 30,31, and 32).[1]

To track this development of the campaign structure, a SNA has been carried out on the campaign's online forum[2] for the period from 2009 to the first quarter of 2015. To do that, data has been divided into three sets, roughly equal in size in terms of number of posts. This analysis was carried out in two stages. The first stage involved extracting data from the KSA Teachers' Forum covering the period 2009-2015, (Table 13).

Table 13: showing the number of posts, threads, edges and authors in different analysed years

Data and year	Number of posts	Number of authors	Number of threads	Number of edges
Data 1 (2009-2011)	1914	1313	27	1441
Data 2 (2012-2013)	1985	438	20	489
Data 3 (2014-2015)	2561	611	289	1592

Each of the three data sets was analysed separately to create a social network (showing nodes and edges). A node in this campaign is thread (topic) which registered members can create. Links occur when a same member comments on more than one thread. The results confirm the development of the campaign structure over the years. The first data set (covering 2009-2011), shows poorly connected threads, indicating an unstructured or loosely structured campaign at that period. The second data set (2012-2013), shows well-connected nodes, which means that they are transforming towards collective logic whilst the third set (2014 and 2015), show that the campaign is maturing or improving its connection between nodes (see Figures 30,31, and 32).

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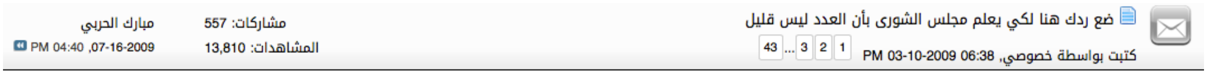
[1] Data were sub-divided into three data sets by year to track changes over time. No data were available for the first 16 months of the campaign due to technical difficulties (see Chapter 4). It is also important to mention that the extracted data is a sample of the whole data for the forum.

[2] The analysis was carried out only on the sub-forum of the campaign not the whole forum.

These nodes and edges reflect communication of the population on this forum, and all calculations are representative of it as well. In other words, this is not a sample taken from the threads. However, one might consider the issue of generalisation. Not all teachers in Saudi Arabia discuss politics online; hence, there is likely a selection effect. The results of the analysis suffer from this selectivity because only active teachers with Internet access are likely to be engaged in such activities.

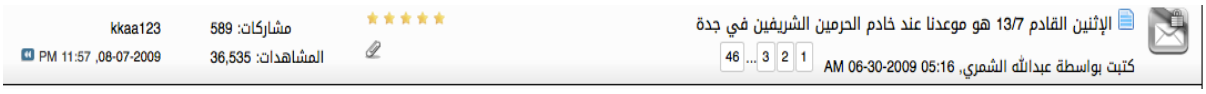
To summarise the meaning of this SNA, I argue that in studying discussion forums it is better to analyse data by focusing on threads, not people. So the graphs show nodes where each node is a thread. Threads are connected if the same people participated in both threads. In this way, we can see the development and the intensiveness of conversations across the forum. The following tables and graphs show that in the first period between 2009-2011, there are significant numbers of posts and threads but they are less connected with each other. This means that participants are participating in diversity of isolated threads. The second data set for the 2012-2013 period indicates that people are participating in less threads but more posts, and overall there are fewer numbers of participants. This might reflect the emergence of core active campaigners who take part in the forum. The third data set, which was for 2014–2015, shows a higher number of posts, authors, threads and edges. However, there were many isolated nodes, and the links were still reflected by the number of nodes, which is shown in the middle of the visualisation of the third data set. This indicates that people are gathering around specific subjects meaning that campaigners are not only large in number but are also better connected in this third phase.

Moreover, in-depth examination of the threads that gained larger number of posts and communication reveal that they have no one specific character. Generally, there were a number of characteristics to these threads including (a) asking for demonstrations of solidarity; (b) pinned threads which means forum’s supervisors put them in the top of the forum; (c) threads that ask participants for ideas on how teachers can claim some particular rights; (e) updates about some existing claims; (f) In some cases authors put a link it a thread, but members cannot see the link before posting a reply. So the posts content will be repeated throughout the threads most are like “thank you so much for that”; (g) calling for actions such as: sending telegraph to the king; requests for a gathering (demonstration) on a specific date; or sending an email or letter to the Ministry of Education.



ضع ردك هنا لكي يعلم مجلس الشورى بأن العدد ليس قليل
كتبت بواسطة خصوصي، PM 03-10-2009 06:38
1 2 3 ... 43
مشاركات: 557
المشاهدات: 13,810
مبارك الحربي
PM 04:40 ,07-16-2009

Figure 28: : A thread asking people to post a reply to show Shura members that the number of affected teachers is high (557 posts).



الإثنين القادم 13/7 هو موعدنا عند خادم الحرمين الشريفين في جدة
كتبت بواسطة عبدالله الشمري، AM 06-30-2009 05:16
1 2 3 ... 46
مشاركات: 589
المشاهدات: 36,535
kkaa123
PM 11:57 ,08-07-2009

Figure 29: A thread calling for a gathering in front of the Royal Court in Jeddah to meet the King (598 posts).

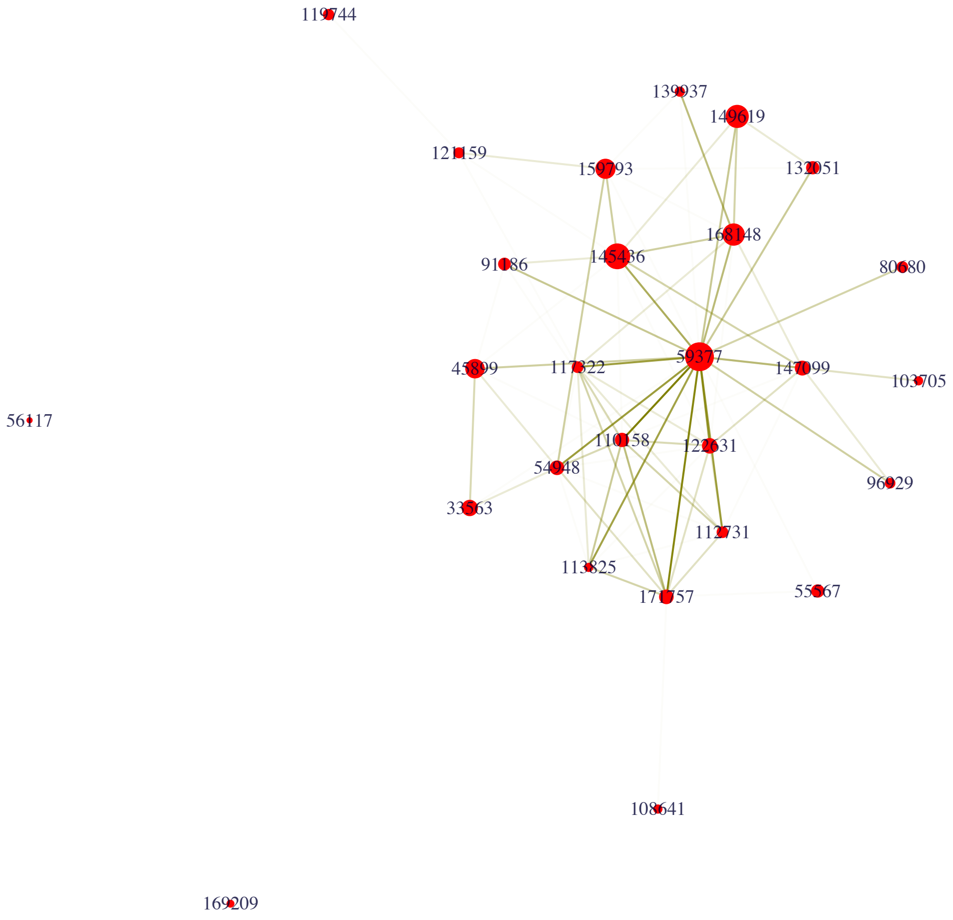

119744
139937
149619
121159
159793
132051
168148
91186
145436
80680
59377
45899
117322
147099
103705
56117
110158
122631
54948
96929
33563
112731
113825
171757
55567
108641
169209

Figure 30: Data set 1 (2009-2011) has poorly connected threads (refer to CD appendices for larger view)

Key to Figures 30 ,31 and 32	
Green edges (links)	The link between two threads (topics). This happens when the same people post (comments) in different threads. The darker edge reflects that more people posted.
Red Node	Each node represents a thread (topic), which could have been written by any member, and members can post their comments on the thread.
Node Size	Reflects the number of posts in the thread.
Numbers on Nodes	Represent the thread ID number; the purpose is to identify the thread only. In the third data set, numbers have been removed to make a clearer illustration.

As seen in Figure 19, data set 1 (2009-2011) has 1316 authors with 1441 edges. Moreover, examining data set 2 (2012-2013), it is apparent that this has fewer nodes (438) with fewer edges (489). However, although there are considerably fewer nodes, these are much better connected.

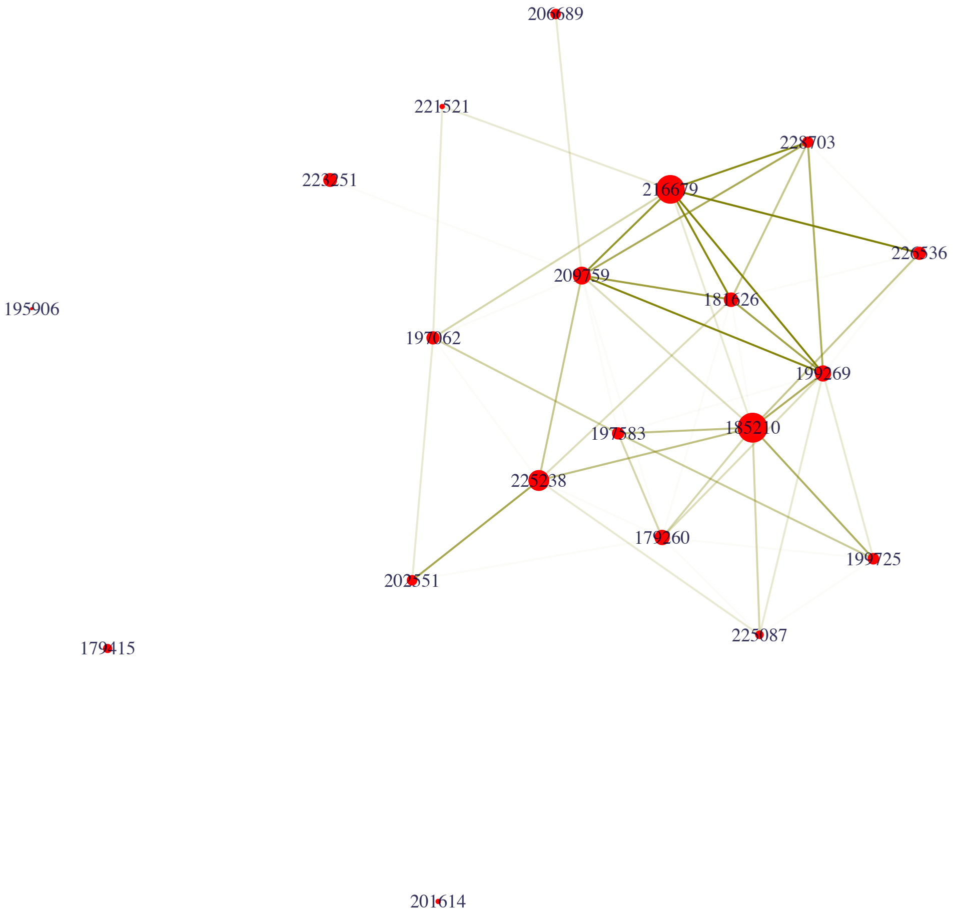

206689
221521
228703
223251
216679
226536
209759
181626
195906
197062
199269
197583
185210
225238
179260
199725
202551
225087
179415
201614

Figure 31: Data set 2 (2012-2013) has well connected Nodes (refer to CD appendices for larger view)

In the period from 2012 to 2013, a new pattern of connections among participants emerged. Nodes became highly concentrated around particular threads, which may be the pinned threads.[1] Instead of writing and replying to all posts, people's interactions began to be triggered by a particular topic and then they clustered around threads. It is possible that campaigners created these threads to mobilise people around a specific action. Analysis also shows that a few threads were popular among a wide audience. Comparing the first and the second set of data, it is clear that the first is poorly connected, perhaps illustrating a '*Self-Organising Network'* as the typology of the campaign whilst the second indicates that the campaign later moved towards being an '*Organisationally Enabled Network'*, combining conventional collective action and digital networked connective action.

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[1] This is a thread pinned on top of sub-forums because of its importance.

As Figure 21 illustrates, data set 3 (2014-2015) has 683 nodes with 1592 edges. Here connections are maintained, showing that the campaign is developing into a more '*Organisationally Brokered Network'.*

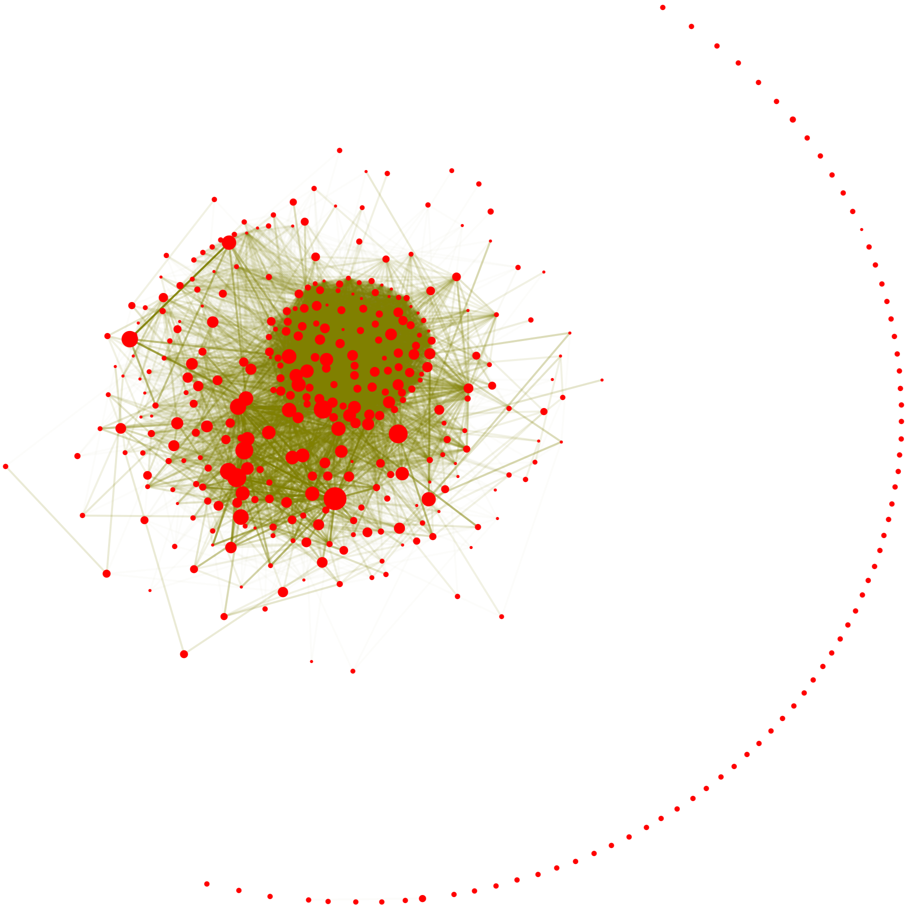

Figure 32: Data set 3 (2014-2015) shows Maintenance of Connection (refer to CD appendices for larger view)

Overall, tracking the teachers' campaign, using interviews, and SNA, suggests that in fact they have the characteristics of all three typologies described by Bennett and Segerberg (2013): *Collective Organisationally Brokered Networks, Self-Organising Networks,* and

Organizationally Enabled Networks. This explicitly demonstrates the vital role of both the systematic environment in shaping the campaign as well as technological opportunities. The formation of the campaigns shows the role that the Internet plays in creating a virtual space for activism where 'real world' space is not accessible. The Internet also gave the teachers tools to form a campaign to demand their rights. This includes going online to organise and mobilise, as well as giving them a legitimate status to mobilise traditional media, when the systemic environment cannot offer them this status. However, the campaign is categorised as a '*Self-Organising Connective Action Network'* in its early stages (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). In most cases, individuals did not know each other before using the Internet; there was no organised plan, and the campaign was shaped by individuals' experiences. However, the later stages of the campaign reveal that its structure was affected by the political and legal environment, in particular censorship, and the Saudi judicial system. A campaign affected by factors of this kind is more likely to become an '*Organisationally Enabled Connective Action Network'* (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) because campaigners may try to avoid any formal organisation. The teachers' campaign became loosely organised, due to the structure of the forum and the nature of action being conducted. Also, some changes took place to cope with Saudi legal regulations. I argue that the lifecycle of movement which discussed earlier in the framework by (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Macionis, 2008) might provide a better explanation for the campaign formation and structure. This means lifecycle of movement can be seen in the Saudi context, but it is online rather than offline.

In the context of the '*Organisationally Brokered Network'* typology, there are four areas which reveal that the teachers' campaign are now evolving through means of the Internet to form something akin to a traditional style trade union. These include:

- Representation: The campaign has come to represent large numbers of teachers (on one forum, the number of registered members has reached more 250,000 members, which is almost half of the teacher population) and in doing so, is now seen as a credible representative voice by public authorities so much so that it has been contacted by officials and representatives of government. A number of government officials have met with representatives of the teachers' campaign, suggesting that they now have authority to represent the views of others. The late King Abdullah met two core activists to listen to their claims and promised that something would be done

(Alsaleh, 2009).[1] The former Minister of Education, Prince Faisal Bin Abdullah, also did so (Alhisini, 2009). The former Chief of the Saudi Royal Court and private secretary of the late King, Khalid AlTwijeri, contacted the campaign via Twitter to talk to them regarding their demands (Alzahrani, 2014). In addition, T8 said that the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education has registered on the online forum as a member to speak directly to teachers.

- Formalisation: Some parts of the campaign have crystallised into formal organisational structures, hierarchies and identified positions. As we have seen, the campaign has adopted spokesmen as a collective voice to speak on behalf of the campaign. Currently, one forum has a fixed organisational structure with its own Board of Directors, and when they meet officials, they refer to themselves as the Teachers' Committee.
- Professionalisation: The campaign has employed outside professional help (lawyers) to assist with campaigning and no longer simply relies on its own internal resources and amateur activist skills.
- Goal expansion: The campaign expanded its remit from the original goals into professional development goals for the teaching profession as well as campaigning for teachers' rights. For instance, more recently, sections have been added to the online forums to cover all teachers' interests, including news, training events, courses and teaching opportunities.

However, the four areas that were mentioned show the collective logic of the campaign, but clearly this logic is gained from the Internet not offline, as the offline space does not offer a place for such actions. Importantly, this logic evolved from a connective logic, as the campaign started loosely on the Internet.

8.7. Systemic Shaping Factors

Findings indicate that a number of systemic factors influenced the teachers' campaign. These include security concerns, censorship and judicial legislation, as well as some societal and cultural limitations. This section demonstrates that the systemic environment also shapes Internet activism because the activists are trying to gain offline achievement (legal case) but their work and plans have to adhere to offline regulations, namely the Administrative Court laws.

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[1] He literally used a phrase in Saudi Arabic which literally means "On my nose" and carries the meaning of "Consider it done", used when an individual is promising to ensure something happens.

8.7.1. Security and censorship

Security and surveillance were constantly on activists' minds. The interviewees noted several instances of security surveillance. T3 recalled a phone call from the Intelligence Department in the Ministry of Interior asking him not to hold any type of meeting 'offline'. They called him directly, knowing his real name, yet he has never published these details on the forum. Moreover, being banned from holding meetings needs to be understood within the framework of all demonstrations and similar acts in Saudi Arabia being prohibited by law. According to T3:

> After we decided to hold regional meetings with teachers to make a legal case for each region instead of just one in Jeddah I received a call from someone who knew all my personal information asking me not to hold any meetings of this kind. I never use my real name in the forum, only a pseudonym, but all the core members knew my real identity.

However, it is important to state that using a pseudonym in a forum might not due to fear of censorship; rather it is a cultural habit. Saudis have always tended to use pseudonyms in forums since these became popular in the country. Even users in hobby-based forums such as forums for those interested in handicraft or pets owners in Saudi Arabia use pseudonyms when they are talking online.

T2 said that after years of working on the teachers' campaign, he had been asked by the police to come and sign a pledge that he would not continue to work on such campaigns. Consequently, he started to operate individually and plans to sue the Ministry of Education as an individual in his own right. Perhaps the starkest threat to the campaign was that, during one of their so- called 'demonstrations', police came to the scene and arrested the teacher who had organised the event. He was then jailed, subjected to questioning but released after one day without charge, and returned to work as normal.

It is obvious that activists practised self-censorship, because they feared the website would be blocked by the CITC. Although none of the teachers' forums had experienced any blocking at the time of writing, they stated clearly that they are concerned about the possibility of their forums being blocked because this would seriously undermine the whole campaign. Consequently, the self-censorship practised by initiators can be described as a pro-active step to avoid this happening. For example, one of the forums has an unwritten policy of heavily censoring forum content. When activists asked what sort of content they usually remove/delete in the forum, a forum supervisor suggested any content which might be libellous (T2). When asked to clarify what would fall into this category, it was suggested that this mainly consists of insults to officials or individuals. The forum supervisor justified this strict monitoring by explaining that content must not breach any laws which might lead to the forum being blocked, as then all their efforts would be in vain and they would lose the outlet for their voices. Importantly, at various times, this forum practised what was called pre-publishing monitoring. Unlike mainstream forums where people can post directly and then everyone can read the comment instantly, in the KSA Teachers' Forum, supervisors must approve posts before they are published publicly. One activist in this forum clearly stated:

> "We monitor the forum to protect our claims. I believe that there are three main issues that will not be allowed here in this forum. First, any calls for demonstrations will not be allowed because outsiders or dubious entities might use such demonstrations or gatherings for their own purposes. Second, heated arguments are not tolerated, as this can make individuals angry and cause disputes. Third, not all information can be revealed. Sometimes we know new information about our claims, but we do not tell people straightaway as this may harm the claim. If anyone reveals such news at the wrong time, it is removed or will not be posted. In general, you cannot allow absolute freedom, as users might misuse the space"(T4).

A thread in the Saudi Teachers forum, posted by the forum's Deputy Chairman of the Board, states that participants are not allow to address three main issues:

> "Users are not allowed to abuse divine beings or God's prophet and his companions, or to talk about content which is of a religious nature. Users are not allowed to abuse any government officials, or talk about politics. Racial and sectarian issues are strictly not allowed" (Sharahili 2007:n.p)

8.7.2. Societal and Cultural Limitations

Since the teachers' campaign focused on demands related to 'employment' issues, they did not face the same level of social disapproval as the '*October 26th Campaign'*. However, interviewees indicated that gender also plays a vital role in the campaigns for teachers' rights and was one of the factors which caused division amongst the campaigners (T1, T2, T6). Despite the fact that all teachers' campaign seek rights for both male and female teachers, interviews indicate that the female teachers largely preferred to work for their rights separately from the male campaigners. For example, in one of the two main forums, there are just two female administrators from a total of 35. The male interviewees revealed negative views regarding the role of female teachers in the campaign at all levels. One said that the females fear harassment from males (T2). He also said he tried to highlight what he described as, "The weak role" played by women in supporting the campaign. For example, he photographed the powers of attorney received from male and from female teachers, and displayed them together to show the discrepancy in numbers to encourage more women to support this initiative, but this did not work.

Secondly, according to one activist, women may think that they can obtain their rights if they work separately from men, because they believe that Saudi officials will be more lenient towards them as women. According to T6, who went to the Saudi Royal Court to try to meet King Abdullah:

> It was suggested in our forum that we should meet the King to explain our case directly to him. When we arrived there, I discovered a lady was trying to work separately on behalf of female teachers only, with help from her brother, and she met the King alone without me; I could not meet him like this.

In this context, female teachers did establish an online forum in order to work separately from men but this did not last for long and interviewees were unable to explain the reason for this, and those women who were contacted by the researcher declined to be interviewed. The Internet clearly does make it easier for men and women to talk freely, in contrast to the offline world, where religious and social barriers still play a vital role in strictly regulating relationships between the sexes.

Campaign initiators were not in agreement with regard to women's activism. T7 believed the Internet gives Saudi women an unprecedented tool to demonstrate their feelings about issues that affect them in a traditional society. He suggested that in the Internet era, women can play as vital a role as men, as this 'method' does not contradict the traditions of Saudi society. In his opinion, female teachers are more co-operative in posting than the male teachers, who are more likely to be interested in leadership rather than just being interactive with the issues; this could be related to the case of the women driving campaign where W7 expressed the same opinion. In the opinion of T7, men are more likely to take action on the ground, while women are more likely to interact online, by posting ideas and information. He argued that there are two main reasons for this: women's time and emotional engagement. He indicated that women have more time to spend supporting the campaign, while men are outside the home most of the time. He also believed that women re-tweet more than men in the campaign's favour:

> When a man reads an interesting tweet he can easily skip it, but when a woman reads a nice tweet she cannot skip it; she re-tweets it because of the emotional aspect of women's character.

Thus, he believes that rather than being inactive, female campaigners are active in their own way. Although there is no direct empirical evidence to prove this, the specific social context of Saudi Arabia can be expected to produce such differentiated gendered attitudes. However, the male activist's quote cannot be verified as fact, and unfortunately, it was not possible to hear from female activists about their reasons for participating in this way. Moreover, women might be more committed to work collectively than men in an online environment. The previous case of the women driving campaign is evidence of this. Moreover, working online might be the safest way for them to participate in the campaign. So their efforts can be clearly noticed online. One activist argues that women might not think it safe to participate in such a campaign offline so they dedicate their time to participating online. He commented:

> Women might not be able to participate in face-to-face meetings, as they do not who they will meet. They might meet males who just wanted to flirt with them. Even giving out their mobile numbers could be an issue for them. Due to social sensitivity far fewer women gave powers of attorney than men. I understand why. They might think it is socially inappropriate to appear in the court if needed.[1] Other women might not be allowed to do so by their families (T1).

In contrast, though, other campaigners said women are active in both offline and online activism. T6 and T8 said that from a total of 23 people who attended a small demonstration (or 'gathering' as they prefer to call it), in front of the Ministry of Civil Services, nine of these were women. In this context, another campaign[2] which is aimed only at women teachers shows that female teachers are active both online and offline. This campaign, which has been given a sub-forum in one of the teachers' forums, involves women working actively by themselves and they successfully reached their goals in 2014 (Amer & Annashmi, 2014). This supports the idea that women seem to be active in both the public and the virtual domain when they work in a women's only campaign, similar to the women driving campaign examined in the previous chapter.

8.8. Future of the Campaign

When the first campaign started about pay scales and financial rights, the activists' sole motivation was to claim their personal rights through collective action. One campaigner said he did not join any further campaigns because, in his own words, "I got what I wanted or some of it." (T5). In contrast, there are numbers of interviewees who have got what they demanded or some of it, but continue to campaign with others who are claiming their rights, purely to show collective solidarity. This means they have no personal interest in the campaign but want to work collectively to ensure everyone's demands are met. This reveals a collective identity among campaigners, the motive being group, not personal, demands.

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[1] Attending court in the Saudi context is a sensitive issue for both genders. Even if an individual is subjected to injustice by someone else, he or she might prefer to remain a victim rather than attending court. This might be related to stereotypes which view those who go to court or the police station as troublemakers.

[2] This campaign refers to 20,000 female teachers who are on zero-hours contract schemes, and are exempted from the Royal Decree concerning full-time jobs. This is therefore a totally different campaign, even they share the same forum.

These campaigns are not necessarily related solely to teachers' rights. Some interviewees stated clearly that they are now working to reclaim other rights in general. For example, T7 stated:

> I believe I will go on. Every day we see many problems that need to be solved; newspapers are not a good medium for getting your message across […] I believe officials are paying attention to what we do online.

It is clear that the campaigns' purpose has also developed from seeking only those 'rights' which concern teachers, to focusing over time on other rights and claims, particularly after finding that the Internet can be used to help to do more (T7). Moreover, when T3 was asked about when he planned to stop online campaigning, he said, "I will not stop even if I've got all my rights; there are still many missing rights to seek." He mentioned that he has now moved to another job in the education field but is still campaigning for students' rights.

8.9. Conclusion

As with the '*October* 26th *Campaign*', one of the most frequently repeated phrases among initiators was: "Without the Internet, there is no campaign." They firmly believed in its organisational and mobilising power and considered that the comparative freedom online has been invaluable in the Saudi context. Moreover, T3, for example, thinks that the Internet has put a great deal of pressure on the Ministry of Education, not because of the co-ordination between teachers in this case, but rather due to the dissemination of their case across the country, which could not have happened without the Internet.

Nevertheless, the research also indicated that an online-only campaign, without any corresponding offline action, would be unlikely to succeed. For example, the teachers' campaign would not be successful without the lawsuit. It suggests that campaigns should be hinged on an offline action, and not just online campaigning. Another teacher gave the example of a Twitter hashtag he used, which he believes would not have been successful without a statement he sent to the Ministry of Education. The teacher wrote a letter and sent it to the Ministry of Education, after that he published it online where people united around this action.[1]

The case study has also underscored the role of the systemic environment in shaping the campaign. It shows that this plays a vital role in the Internet and that campaigning online is, therefore, not free from restrictions. Systemic environment factors such as Saudi culture relating to gender and formal censorship played a key role in transforming the campaign from connective to collective action, thus challenging Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) claims.

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[1] A copy of the letter can be seen on: https://pbs.twimg.com/media/A_Sj5WaCAAARyQ8.jpg:large. On Twitter there was a hashtag about the letter (#تقليص_ إجازات_ المعلمين).

9. CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

9.1. Introduction

We began this thesis by asking three questions about the role which the Internet plays in connecting and mobilising activists: How does this contact originate? What sorts of models of collective action does the Internet facilitate? How does Internet campaigning challenge the systemic environment and vice versa? This chapter will draw together the findings in relation to these key questions in three main areas: mobilisation, organisation, and the systemic environment.

With regards to mobilisation, it is argued that the Internet in the Saudi context, creates a public sphere which is a prerequisite to activism. The Internet has widened and deepened the levels of activism in the country. Whilst the activist class is still small, much broader audiences can be reached than previously, both domestically and internationally. On the organisational level there are indications that campaigns in this ND country are not necessarily moving directly to connective action structures, suggesting that societies need to be socialised with collective action before moving to a connective logic.

The research also indicates that the systemic environment strongly shapes the campaigns that were studied and their use of Internet tools; an influence which is reflected in three aspects: the technological and media environment, the political environment and at the level of societal and cultural change.

9.2. Mobilisation Online: Wider and Deeper

In a wider context, the Saudi case reinforces the claims in the literature concerning the role of the Internet in opening up a sphere for political deliberation generally and in the ND context in particular. More specifically, it confirms the argument put forward by Fung *et al.* (2013), and others such as: Rheingold, 1993; Chase & Mulvenon, 2002; Best & Wade, 2005; Diamond, 2010; Howard, 2011; Khazaeli & Stockemer, 2013; Shirky, 2009, 2011. The Internet in Saudi Arabia has offered, “An alternative space outside the restricted political public sphere.” confirming Miazhevich's (2015:434) view of the Internet’s role in semi-authoritarian countries.

In Chapter Six, it was noted that the majority of Saudi Internet users spend more than two hours a day online, whilst for just over a quarter of them, this figure rises to over eight hours’ use daily. Moreover, Saudis are active Internet users rather than passive browsers; they like to share and post. Chapter Six also showed that Twitter is currently widely used for discussions whilst previously, before the emergence of this application, online discussion forums were used for the same purpose.

This high penetration of the Internet and the virtual space has enhanced the political participation in this ND country, reflecting findings by Khazaeli and Stockemer (2013), who reported a positive relationship between the high penetration of the Internet and the quality of political institutions. They argued, "[The] Internet will have a more significant influence on governance practices in those states than in democracies." (Khazaeli & Stockemer, 2013:466). Both case studies as well as others referred to, such as the Jeddah floods (Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2014), (see Chapter Six), clearly show that Internet use in Saudi Arabia has influenced government practices and policy responses. Chapter Eight showed that a number of Royal Decrees have been issued as well as number of committees which have been established to deal with teachers' demands. Using the Internet to demonstrate the destruction caused by floods in Jeddah culminated in the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission and led to government admissions of corruption in the awarding of construction contracts. On another level, when a video of the Saudi Chief of Royal Protocol Mohammed AlTobayshi captured slapping a photographer went viral online, the Royal Decree ordering AlTobayshi's replacement was swiftly announced by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA 2015).

The relative freedom of expression on the Internet and the ability to use the Internet for creating media outlets, (Balkin, 2004; Yang, 2013), allowed Saudi activists to bypass the restrictions on activism in the public sphere, transforming the Internet into the preferred environment for activism. The majority of the activists who were interviewed for this study clearly stated that without the Internet there would be no activism in Saudi Arabia. This Saudi context supports Aouragh and Alexander's (2011) emphasis on the specific role played by the Internet in democratic and ND countries. While activists in democratic countries can campaign on the ground, activists in ND countries use the virtual space afforded by the Internet. As Aouragh and Alexander (2011) have argued, whilst in democratic countries, the Internet simply serves as a *tool* for activism, in Saudi Arabia it functions as both a tool and a space for activism.

In practical terms, besides creating a space for activism the Internet has empowered Saudi activism, in both the capacities of widening and deepening, notably, its appeal amongst citizens who have traditionally showed little interest in social activism.

A number of scholars have addressed the Internet's role as a mobilisation tool for wider audiences, including Gillan and Pickerill (2008); Bennett and Segerberg (2012) McLaughlin (2003); and Steinberg (2015), and its unique ability to facilitate what Tarrow (2005) and Kavada (2014) referred to as, 'Transnational activism regardless of borders'. Both case studies confirm that in terms of widening activism, Internet technology undoubtedly allowed Saudi activists to reach a broader/more diverse audience within the Kingdom and beyond. It also allowed them to target groups in a way that could not have happened previously. Activists in the women driving campaign succeeded in reaching a diverse audience which included not only the Saudi government and citizens, but also national and international media and organisations, with individuals from 116 countries signing up to the campaign's English language hashtag (#oct26driving), (Yuce et al., 2014). The *October 26th* campaigners were clearly aware of the potential reach of the Internet and its ability to reposition them as 'transnational activists', with one activist stating:

> We are part of the international community, and the Internet helps us to reach this community [...]. Our discourse is an international discourse [...]. The Internet helped us to reach all people with our real message, instead of contacting a specific person or medium, or a specific correspondent. [By using the Internet] you can now speak to all humans, whoever they are. By using the Internet we can show the truth to people who care about human rights throughout the whole world, (W2).

This wider participation can be compared to the phenomenal success of the pen seller of Beirut campaign which helped to transform an initially localised issue into a global news story. Chapter Two showed that the man who lives in Beirut has been helped by people from around the world, and the initiator himself, who started the campaign, lives in different country and has no face-to-face contact with supporters (Gunter, 2015; Simonarson, 2015).

The Saudi context confirms the vital role of the Internet in widening mobilisation and participation. This thesis argues that in the Saudi case, it exceeds the traditional media in widening aspects of mobilisation for two main reasons. First, as discussed in Chapter Six, the relative freedom of expression on the Internet as compared to that offered by the traditional media, enabled activists to create personalised messages (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) targeted at a wider audience. Chapter Seven, for example, showed that campaigners broadcast footage of 'ordinary' women driving their cars in Saudi streets, shot by the women themselves. These messages reach a wider audience than the usual messages or stories which appear in traditional media. Footage of this kind cannot be streamed in conventional media, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to distribute among citizens without the Internet.

Second, as noted in Chapter Six, the number of Internet users in Saudi Arabia is continuing to grow rapidly, whilst in contrast, readership of traditional press is declining, demonstrating the difficulties facing the Saudi newspaper industry. At the national level, therefore, use of the Internet by activists is likely to increase in importance in coming years.

In terms of deepening levels of activism, the findings of this study challenge the claims made by some scholars, such as Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010), and Gladwell (2010), that Internet activism, or what they somewhat disparagingly describe as 'Slacktivism', has had little real effect on political participation. As argued in Chapter Two, using research to date, both advocates and opponents of the Internet's role in political participation have focused on the outcomes in terms of offline participation only, ignoring the fact that Internet-based political participation can facilitate change. Online mobilisation has helped Saudi activists to achieve some goals offline, leading, in some cases, to offline participation, as was the case for both campaigns. In the *October 26th* campaign, women mobilised online, then filmed themselves driving their cars in order to mobilise more women. Similarly, in the teachers' campaign, the success of online mobilisation encouraged them to take their case to the Administrative Court, arrange demonstrations and make their case before the King.

Internet affordances and citizens eager to claim their rights have increased the number of social campaigns in Saudi Arabia. Research into tracing the origins of Saudi online activism showed that, although the Internet was introduced to the public in Saudi in 1999, activism did not begin to emerge until 2006 or 2007, suggesting that the Internet alone is not enough to facilitate activism, but citizen participation and adoption of the Internet have contributed significantly to social activism in the state.

9.3. Organisation: Grassroots Individualism or new Hierarchies?

Prior studies have noted than organisational change often occurs in activist organisations or in the 'collective' concept in general when activists use the Internet. The literature shows that numerous scholars have acknowledged this change (see: Diani, 2000; Norris, 2002; Bennett, 2003; Bimber, 2003; Van De Donk *et al.*, 2004; Benkler, 2006; Chadwick, 2007; Shirky, 2008; Castells, 2009; Castells, 2012; Van Dijk, 2012; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Bennett and Segerberg's (2012, 2013) main argument is that online communications obviate the need for hierarchical organisation because, in the age of the Internet, people can act individually.

One unanticipated finding in the case studies was the tension in the activist groups within the organisational structure between those wanting a grassroots-type model or decentralised operating model, and those favouring a more institutionalised and hierarchical organisation. This tension was seen most clearly in the women driving campaign. Despite the fact that features of the Internet allow activists to act without any great need for organisation, some Saudi activists reject this concept of connectivity and prefer to make the campaign collective, following a more oligarchic pattern. Although both case study groups began in a relatively unstructured fashion, more formalised hierarchies have emerged over time.

Bennett and Segerberg (2013), describe this as an, '*Organisationally Brokered Network*', a form of organisation in which activists use the Internet like any other tool at their disposal, such as leaflets and demonstrations, while they control the campaign. They claim that the Internet itself does not change the dynamics of the activism or the nature of the links between participants.

Whilst some activists within the *October 26th* campaign are trying to be less formal and less hierarchical by allowing any Internet users to take part in the campaign, those who advocate a decentralised approach seem to be powerless in comparison to those who want to be more institutionalised and formalised. It seems that only a few campaigners support the decentralised approach.

The teachers' campaign are transforming from, '*Organisationally Enabled Action*' following the same patterns as the *October 26th* campaign. Interviewees asserted that the more recent stages of the campaign had witnessed the emergence of a clearly hierarchical organisation. There are now formal structures and committees, including a named Discussion Forum Owner, a Board of Directors, a Legal Committee, a Supervisory Committee and Forum Moderators.

However, even campaigns having different origins do not necessarily move directly to connective action structures or logic, suggesting that there may be a wider variety of models than Bennett and Segerberg (2013) indicate. In the Saudi case, for example, connective action has eventually led to more traditional collective action structures and hierarchies. It is possible that societies require socialisation by means of activism before following a connective logic.

9.3.1. An adaptive organisational model?

Both of the Saudi case studies contradict Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) assertion that collective action cannot be formed entirely online. The restrictions on offline collective action in Saudi Arabia as a ND country appear to have forced activists to start collectively from the Internet and act online and offline spaces.

The Saudi case studies reveal that campaigns can follow a collective logic or the traditional hierarchical organisation but using the virtual space of the Internet instead of the offline public space. Due to restrictions on the ground, citizen activists search for and locate like-minded people who share the same goals, and then start traditional hierarchical organisations online. Both campaigns follow a similar pattern reflecting the lifecycle of social movements discussed by scholars such as (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Macionis, 2008), as discussed here in Chapter Two. However, this lifecycle of teachers' campaign can be seen more clearly on the Internet. Teachers' campaigners started complaining individually about what they claimed to be 'stolen rights' and their complaints attracted individuals who shared the same concerns, leading them to tell other teachers about the campaign. In the process, a hierarchical organisation emerged, a lawyer was hired, and other actions took place. By the time this study started, both campaigns were in the phase of decline or institutionalisation as scholars of social movement have demonstrated. However, it is not possible to determine whether both campaigns have 'declined' or not. It was demonstrated here that both campaigns have achieved some degree of success in achieving their stated goals Moreover, there is also some evidence of 'suppression' as well as other reasons for decline as (Macionis, 2008) illustrated.

Without the Internet however, this process cannot take place. Chapter Five established that there was no tradition of social activism in the pre-Internet period in Saudi Arabia, and ordinary citizens are not familiar with activism as a practice. This is because there are some restrictions and limitations imposed on activism and the term itself remains a sensitive one. However, when moving online, individuals find themselves able to voice their concerns and to encounter like-minded citizens. Activism then tends to start in a typically traditional way, which can be labelled as 'collective'.

In short, the Internet itself did not alter the collective logic of activism in Saudi Arabia, as the systemic environment plays a key role in shaping activism there. More importantly, repression and censorship play a role in shaping online collective action, as activists found it safer to work in closed circles to avoid censorship or repression. In the context of a systemic environment it could also be said that the organising structure was influenced by a culture that privileges hierarchy. Literature shows that some scholars such as (Kavada, 2013) addressed the effect of organising culture in the degree of hierarchy, degree of professionalisation, and leadership and lines of control.

The Internet creates a space for activists to conduct their activism in a classic way, in the form of traditional collective action, where hierarchical organisation still exists, and there is no desire to move from collective to connective logic, as the literature suggests. This is due to the absence of a tradition of collective action in the country. The transformation to connective action may occur in the future, once the Saudis have absorbed activism as a practice, and have experience of collective action.

9.4. The Systemic Environment

Addressing the environment in which the cyberactivism take place is crucial when studying this phenomenon. Chapter Three suggests that the Internet plays different types of roles within different political systems. However, researchers are divided on the nature of the role which the Internet plays in the ND context and whether the Internet can democratise or not.

The potential of the Internet and its role in political and social change has been over-exaggerated. In this case, the Internet is not an exogenous agent, as technological determinists have argued, (see Chapter Two), and it does not have absolute power. The campaigns studied here did not challenge the political system as a whole, just elements within it. The reason for using the Internet in both campaigns was because it acted as a virtual public space, where campaigners can claim their individual rights.

Nevertheless, there are a number of aspects where the Internet has influenced the systemic environment, notably, with regard to the traditional media. The campaigns have been influenced by the systemic environment. The uses of the Internet by campaigners have also influenced some societal and cultural aspects of the systemic environment. To address this systemic environment in more detail, the following sections focus on three key aspects: the technological and media environment, political environment and societal and cultural change.

9.4.1. The technological and media environment

Many of the cyberactivism studies discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Five, such as Holt *et al.,* 2013; Tang and Lee, 2013; Starbird and Palen, 2012; Al-Saggaf and Simmons, 2014 have focused on the activists’ use of what could be described as popular applications such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube which represent the best known social networks (The Social Media Hat, 2015).

What this study has shown however, is that activists' choice of Internet applications has little to do with the technical features of an application or its generally perceived popularity globally; instead they choose the applications most commonly used by the social sector they wish to target. For example, neither of the campaigns which were studied used Facebook despite its general popularity and its reputation as a tool for cyberactivism. Currently, in the Saudi context, it does not necessarily reach the desired audiences. In contrast, women driving campaigners used the *KEEK* application to announce their campaign, which is barely known in many other countries. In this case, activists used *KEEK* not because of its technical features, but because of its popularity with the targeted audiences.

KEEK popularity in the Saudi context is similar to '*Path*' popularity in Indonesia. Even after a sharp decline in its popularity worldwide, a South Korean technology company acquired the *Path* application[1], because it is flourishing in Indonesia (Kokalitcheva, 2015; Russell, 2015). In this case, *Path* may play a more important role for activism in Indonesia than other applications and certain applications seem to particularly appeal to specific societies or sectors of societies. For example, statistics show that the social network *Pinterest* is more popular among females than males, with statistics indicating that 85% of *Pinterest* users are female (Smith, 2015).

Similarly, the teachers' campaign used discussion forums in 2007 because of their popularity in Saudi Arabia at the time and, interestingly, they continue to use this format. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate some smart uses of the Internet tools by activists, which reinforces the findings of the literature about the activists' ability to adopt new tools to support their activism. For instance, in the women driving campaign, activists use *WhatsApp* in an interesting way. Findings indicated that women were not willing to send films of themselves driving via e-mail but used *WhatsApp* for sharing video content. This was adopted by campaigners because of its popularity among the targeted audience, and proved successful.

Such differences and preferences in application uses in various contexts can be understood with regard to Pinch and Bijker's, (1984) findings about the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) which was discussed in Chapter Two. They clearly stated that, "Technological artifacts are culturally constructed and interpreted." (Pinch & Bijker, 1984:421).

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[1] '*Path*' is a mobile social network similar to Facebook, but with limited capacity in the number of friends.

In a broader context, this thesis suggests that cyberactivism studies should focus on the uses to which applications are put rather than studying specific technological applications. It is important to take a wider view of cyberactivism rather than a segmented one based on the uses of a specific Internet tool. This research suggests that activists are not limited to particular applications, using different ones to target specific audiences, rather than focusing on one application because of the global popularity of its features. Hence, future studies need to move beyond simply examining popular tools used by campaigns and focus on activists' uses of the Internet in general, in order to better understand this as a social phenomenon.

9.4.2. The Inter-relationship between traditional media, celebrities and cyberactivism

The advent of the Internet has clearly impacted on traditional media environments and to some extent, has weakened their influence, as well as giving activists a new tool to bypass traditional media restrictions due to the conflict of interest as argued in Chapter Two. However, this study indicates that there is an inter-relationship between traditional media and cyberactivism, and there is also a need for celebrities to promote campaigns online. That means campaigns cannot rely only on their online efforts to promote and interact with a wider community.

The positive influence of the virtual public space on the freedom of expression in the traditional media has been noted by Awad (2010), and Tang and Sampson (2012:468) amongst others. Both of the Saudi case studies indicate that news about online campaigns was also reported in the conventional press. This can be compared with the original women driving campaign in the pre-Internet era in 1990. At that time, the media only published official statements about the campaign and coverage of the story was uniformly negative, with no opportunity for the campaigners' point of view to be heard. More recent Internet-based campaigns relating to the same issue have been reported in the traditional media which has also begun to publish different points of view about the campaign issue.

Notwithstanding the controlled media environment and the loyal press in Saudi Arabia, (see Chapter Five), findings show that the traditional media have helped online activists in both campaigns to reach a wider audience, and have served to validate the campaign, particularly that run by the teachers. Importantly, all the campaigners agreed that this engagement with the conventional media could not have happened without the Internet. As Chapter Six demonstrated, this coverage of cyberactivism and other online stories became a daily practice in the Saudi traditional media. Stories that go viral online are most likely to be covered by the media, given that the Internet has become the Saudi public space, and journalists report on what is happening there.

However, it is worth noting that in the Saudi case, positive news coverage of activism can be published if there is no real conflict of interest between campaigners and the government. The Internet has helped in the weakening of government control over traditional media. Prior to the advent of the Internet, the conventional Saudi media only published negative coverage of activism, or completely ignored it. The wider use of the Internet in the country is changing this, making it possible for campaign news to be covered by traditional media.

More specifically, the positive media coverage of the teachers' campaign could have referred to the nature of the teachers' demands/cases as a legal case against one or two government departments and there is no official restriction on the media covering such stories. In contrast to the teachers' campaign, the traditional media has had a volatile relationship with the women driving campaign. Firstly, it initially received positive support and coverage, but as soon as the government declared its attitude towards the campaign, the media either ignored their stories or covered them negatively. The influence in the latter case can be seen when comparing the 1990 and the 2013 campaign, where there was no media coverage or negative coverage.

This influence of the Internet can be compared to the Chinese case. In 2002 and 2003, guidelines issued by the Central Propaganda Department in China warned journalists that they were not allowed to cover social disturbances, illegal organisations, demonstrations or similar events. Despite these warnings, news on these issues made its way into the Chinese media, including the state media (Steinhardt, 2015). After analysing major protest news published by 12 news outlets in China, Steinhardt found an increasing amount of coverage of protest news stories in the period 2004-2010. Steinhardt states that, "Technological change and the continuous pressure by a loose collation of assertive media workers and Internet users played vital roles in the transformation of media representations." (Steinhardt, 2015:131).

In creating this relationship with the traditional media, the Internet has helped activists in two distinct ways. First, it helped their voices to reach the media. This case is similar to protest coverage in traditional democracies. For example, the Student Occupations in London 2010, saw the use of Twitter and Facebook by protesters attracting the attention of the mainstream media and columnists and, "Many tweets found their way into mainstream media's live news feeds, which helped amplify the students' message to a wider audience." (Theocharis, 2011:12). Secondly, even if the campaigners' voice did not reach the media directly, journalists found themselves obliged to cover campaign stories because people were talking about them in the virtual public space. Commercial newspapers and broadcasters, under pressure to attract larger audiences, couldn't ignore such popular stories. If traditional media is seeking to maintain its audiences, it has to cover such campaigns, otherwise, potentially more of their audience will migrate to the 'freer' atmosphere online. This claim can also be supported by Awad's (2010) findings that the Internet has influenced journalistic practice and the level of media freedom. The majority of Saudis use the Internet and there is a high level of content sharing because it is viewed as a relatively free space. Awad (2010:247), argues that most officials in the MoCI (Saudi Ministry of Cultural and Information) agreed that, "Online coverage of some local issues has put them under strong pressure to allow the national press to follow these issues."

Despite the ability of activists to address targeted audiences without the traditional media, this study has shown that activists still need to resort to traditional methods in order to expand their audience, confirming Gibson and Kelly's (2000) claim that, "Although the Net is an important new tool, activists still largely rely on coverage in the traditional media and cannot rely solely upon the emerging communications networks." (Gibson & Kelly, 2000, cited in Wright, 2004). Similarly, in their study of the 15M protests in Spain, Micó and Casero-Ripollés (2014), noted that activists themselves had argued that, "Without the support of the traditional media, it is difficult to widen a protest socially." (Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014:868).

Activists within the Saudi teachers' campaign also voiced the opinion that support from the conventional media functioned as a form of validation for their online activities. Similar claims were made by Gamson and Wolfseld (1993), about the social movements' needs for media in the pre-internet era. They argued that:

> Beyond needing the media to convey a message to their constituency, movements need media for validation. When demonstrators chant, "The whole world is watching." it means that they matter, that they are making history. The media spotlight validates the fact that the movement is an important player. Receiving standing in the media is often a necessary condition before targets of influence will grant a movement recognition and deal with its claims and demands, (Gamson & Wolfseld 1993:116).

Though Gamson and Wolfseld's (1993) statement was in the context of the relationship between social movements and traditional media, the Saudi case suggests their argument continues to hold true in the age of the Internet as well. Traditional media may be able to offer campaigns better validity than the Internet because activists report *themselves* online, while others report them in traditional media. Also, the credibility of the Internet in Saudi Arabia at that time might cause this need. This claim can be supported by Alarabai (2009), regarding the credibility of the Arabic news websites in Saudi Arabia. The study concluded that while the Saudis rely on the Internet when obtaining news, they still tend to trust the traditional media, compared to online news website.

In the context of traditional media, activists involved in the women driving campaign, highlighted the need for celebrities to draw attention to their campaign online. Although as activists, they could launch the campaign themselves online, they still needed the additional endorsement of a celebrity in order to gain wider media attention. Activists argued that this would guarantee a wider audience for their campaign because the power of celebrities extends into other media domains as well as online audiences. To gain the attention of more passive spectators, campaigners need the credibility of those with existing online audiences. These findings reflect those of Fatkin and Lansdown (2015), who studied two American online charitable campaigns: ‘Giving Tuesday’ and ‘SnowedOutAtlanta’. Researchers found that one of the two studied campaigns gained more tweets and online traction as it received more help from celebrities.

Thus, the Internet provided activism with an alternative medium, and it helped activists to engage the traditional media. The Internet also helps make coverage of activism part of the daily news in the traditional media, which was impossible before the Internet in the ND context of Saudi Arabia. However, activism still requires traditional media to widen and validate Cyberactivism campaigns. Furthermore, the Internet seems to reinforce the power of celebrities, with online campaigns needing them to promote their campaigns online so they can attract a bigger audience than activists themselves can do by using the Internet alone.

9.4.3. The political environment

The role of the Internet in democratisation has been widely discussed among scholars and politicians, since its emergence. Researchers such as Fung *et al.*, 2013; Benkler, 2006; Rheingold, 1993; Chase & Mulvenon, 2002; Best & Wade, 2005; Diamond, 2010; Howard, 2011; Khazaeli & Stockemer, 2013; and Shirky, 2009, 2011, have all discussed this notion both in terms of theory and practice in ND contexts.

The flow of information and the relatively free virtual public space in ND countries can provide citizens and communities with tools to extend their power when confronted by authoritarian regimes. Clearly, such change cannot be brought about solely by the availability of a free space for political participation (in the form of discussion and action). It also depends on citizens feeling the need for change and being willing to take action for change. In the Saudi case, the Internet allows people to enhance their political participation and empowers citizens' voices within the current political system, rather than challenging the political system. Both of the campaigns studied indicate the importance of citizens in general being able to make voices heard online on different matters. Saudi activists were able to launch campaigns to demand their rights in a way that would not have previously been possible before they had the ability to exploit the Internet for activism. As many of the activists stressed, "Without the Internet, there would be no campaign." Campaigners managed to achieve some, but not all, of their demands, indicating the change in political participation in the Saudi context. The Internet has become a 'battlefield' in Saudi Arabia, where activists attempt to challenge some elements of the regime, whilst it responds by trying to limit those online activities it judges to be potentially threatening. This suggests that neither the claims of the technological determinists nor those of the cyber-utopianists are fully borne out in the Saudi context. As mentioned earlier, findings demonstrated that there have been some achievements and some failures but the most important point which emerged in this context from those activists was that even partial successes make them more determined to continue to campaign for their rights.

The Internet gives individuals the possibility for socialisation or politicisation which is potentially fostering the development of a semi-professional class of activists for the first time in the Saudi context. People have found a space where they can socialise with their issues and claim their rights. Both of the campaigns studied here can be considered to be social campaigns with reformist rather than radical aims, since activists in these campaigns are aiming to gain their rights within existing social and political boundaries.

Furthermore, online campaigns in Saudi Arabia caused an 'online' spill-over effect, similar to that discussed by scholars such as Vasi (2006) and Della Porta and Diani (2006). Whether this fundamentally changes the system over time or brings about some form of democratisation remains to be seen.

In the teachers' campaign particularly, the spill-over effects cannot be ignored. Many campaigns have followed their strategy, and numerous parallels can be identified between the teachers' campaign and other campaigns like '*Man Divan*' in terms of their strategy, media engagement and bringing of a legal case. The spill-over effects have been noticed between campaigns in different political contexts as Earl and Kimport (2009) have found. They argue that the Internet was, "Positioned to accelerate the diffusion of protest practices." (Earl &

Kimport, 2009:220). In the Saudi case, the Internet has undoubtedly accelerated the diffusion of activism, and the teachers' campaign has established the norms for cyberactivism practice in the country.

The case studies examined in this research confirm that in the Saudi context, simple models of democratisation via the Internet are far too crude. So far, online participation has not been about moving to democracy or challenging the system per se, but about claiming rights within the current political system in Saudi Arabia. It is not clear that this activism will necessarily lead to widespread political change, following the well documented Arab Spring model.

In a country like Saudi Arabia, where Islam is dominant, the issue of democracy as a concept is viewed suspiciously by the religious establishment, represented by the *General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Ifta*. Answering a question about democracy they state:

> Democracy is a man-made system, meaning rule by the people for the people. Thus it is contrary to Islam, because rule is for Allah, the Most High, the Almighty, and it is not permissible to give legislative rights to any human being, no matter who he is,[1] (Islam Question and Answer, n.d.).

According to the official opinion of Muslim scholars in the state, the transition to democracy, or changes to the system of government in particular, represent an unwanted step. In addition to that, changing the political system would mean disobedience to the ruler (see Chapter Three). In this context, Luciani (2006:274) argued that, "Democracy's universal value is denied; it is viewed as a purely 'Western' product. They claim that the indigenous, authentic product is Shura, and that people do not see a need to trade local tradition for imported models and institutions."

It is true that not all Saudis accept this official religious opinion. There are other voices challenging official religious discourse concerning democracy, as discussed below. It is hard to determine which is more accepted among Saudis, but the practice and claims by both campaigns tend to follow the official religious opinion, even when there is a chance to extend their demands.

The research for this study was conducted in the immediate aftermath of the Arab Spring which was seen as a hugely significant series of events in terms not only of both potential political and social change, but also because of what it seemed to say about the role of internet technology in the region (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; Shirky, 2011; Anderson, 2011; Howard *et al.,* 2011; Lotan *et al.,* 2011; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012;

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[1] It is important to read the full text of their reply (see bibliography) as this provides further discussion about the authors' opinions of democracy in different situations.

Aouragh & Alexander 2011; Starbird & Palen, 2012; Saleh, 2012; Lynch, 2011; Rane & Salem, 2012). In 2012, there was a widespread expectation that the Arab Spring offered a potential model for online activists in the region and beyond and prompted, “Speculations of the domino effect.” in the region as Karolak (2013) expressed. Scholars such as Lacroix (2011), have asked whether Saudi Arabia is immune to this wave or not. He claimed that the same underlying factors that caused uprisings in Arab Spring countries exist in Saudi Arabia, including a high unemployment rate, corruption and a generational gap between the ruling elite and the people they rule. However, the findings here actually indicated that Saudi activists felt that the Arab Spring exerted a negative influence. For example, activists in the women driving campaign paused their campaign because they did not want to be accused of exploiting Arab Spring events elsewhere, believing this might have unwanted consequences. Teachers were also concerned about external influences in general. In both cases, activists were clear about their uses of the Internet and did not want to be linked with any overtly ‘political’ movements.

Overall, the Internet’s role in democratisation cannot be generalised within the ND context, it may vary considerably according to the context. Comparing the Saudi case with the countries which experienced dramatic change during the Arab Spring can clearly reveal that the uses of the Internet for political participation is closely linked to the systemic environment in general, and not only the political system. There are other social differences between the Gulf Countries and the Arab Spring countries, like income and the political system, which suggest the Internet plays a country-specific role (systemic environment) which is more important than the political system or the classic dichotomy of ‘Democratic versus ND’.

9.4.4. The dictator's dilemma?

In the context of arguments about democratisation and the Internet, this research extends our knowledge of the so-called ‘Dictator's Dilemma’. Kedzie (1997), Shirky (2011) and others, have argued that the Internet presents a challenge to both democratic and ND regimes. Chapter Three showed how governments have tried to control the Internet in order to reduce the possibilities of citizens challenging regimes. A number of methods and actions have been taken by different governments to block the Internet, including both offline and online actions.

To some extent, the Internet is still recognised as posing a dictator's dilemma in Saudi Arabia where the government has taken a number of actions to block the influence of the Internet in the country. However, the Internet has actually helped the state to deal with citizens' demands. In other words, the way that Saudi Arabia has dealt with citizens' demands shows that it is not against *social* activism, but it is against taking this activism out onto the streets, as the Head of the Saudi Ideological Security Directorate (ISD) has admitted (Chapter Six). Throughout the whole of the teachers' campaign, for example, only one teacher has been jailed, and this was due to the fact that he took offline action by organising a demonstration. Similarly, in the women driving campaign, those who were stopped by the police were those who took offline action, such as females driving their cars. In contrast to that, both case studies showed that some meetings with government officials had taken place following online demands. This suggests that the Internet is far from promoting democratic revolts or protest per se in Saudi Arabia and it is helping the Saudi government to keep activism as a social issue limited to the Internet, where the government can censor and monitor this more easily.

Saudi policy in this scenario is very similar to the Chinese policy that was demonstrated by King *et al.* (2013) in Chapter Three. The study found that the Chinese government care only about the development of online discussions to collective actions. The study which analysed millions of online posts found that, "Looking bad does not threaten their hold on power so long as they manage to eliminate discussions associated with events that have collective action potential." (King *et al.*, 2013:29). In the Saudi context, governments rely on self-censorship to tackle the issue, while the Chinese government relies on the censorship and content removal systems.

The Internet also allows the authorities to identify issues and problems and respond to them in ways that previously would not be possible. This can be beneficial as an 'early warning system' for regimes. This, in turn, highlights the idea that not all ND countries deal with the Internet in the same way. For example, the Saudi government's reaction to cyberactivism differs from that of the Chinese regime, because the Internet is viewed as having different pros and cons by each regime. Moreover, the Saudi government's policy on cyberactivism focusing on social issues cannot be generalised to political cyberactivism, as it treats political activism in a different way. The salient example in this context is the state treatment of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) members and their organisation. The organisation, which was established in 2009 after the Jeddah floods, aims to promote human rights awareness, rooting this in Islamic principles, demanding political rights such as establishing a parliament and political parties, documenting human rights' violations in Saudi Arabia and co-operation with Saudi authorities to reduce such violations (ACPRA, 2009;

Alhargan, 2012). This organisation has been banned, and all its 11 founder members were arrested. Five of them are being detained without trial or are awaiting re-trial. Three are free, pending the outcome of their trials. The other three are serving prison terms of up to 15 years (Amnesty International, 2014).

Hence, in relation to state responses to the Internet, this study confirms that self-censorship is just as important as formal technological restrictions in the ND context. Authoritarian regimes are far from powerless to respond and have a range of resources to try and shape Internet uses. Beside self-censorship, the study confirms that the existence of vague laws and regulations also plays a vital role in limiting online opposition, as noted by Sakr (2006). One teacher has clearly stated that

> A few months after launching the online forum we established a new rule. No thread was to be posted before we reviewed and approve it. We did this because there were some encroachments. For example, in one thread someone very badly abused the Minister of Education. Abuse of this kind will harm our claim. In addition, people may write about security issues or irrelevant matters. Some people used to swear. This would lead to the forum being block or closed down. We did not come for that. We came to this forum for a very specific goal; we do not want anyone to spoil that. (T1)

The literature, specifically Gunitsky (2015), highlighted a number of mechanisms used by governments to tackle the Internet. While it is hard to say that mechanisms identified by Gunitsky can be seen in the Saudi case, it is also hard to deny them. Research findings confirm arguments concerning self-censorship by scholars like George (1998); Rod and Weidmann (2015); Ghobadi and Clegg (2015) as discussed in Chapter Three. In the teachers' campaign, it is clear that the supervisors of the discussion forums act as gate-keepers when they monitor forum content and, in some cases, they do not allow comments to be published before they are approved by supervisors. Such a practice can clearly be considered as self-censorship. Activists explained that they do that because they know that their forums may be shut down, or they will be questioned if any unwanted content appears on the forum, which will affect their claims. This self-censorship was the main reason for disagreements amongst campaigners and for the campaign to split into three separate campaigns, according to the level of self-censorship in each forum. Self-censorship is a pro-active step; it means activists are implicitly adhering to the rules and they want to claim their rights within these rules.

Self-censorship may also explain the relatively low number of individuals imprisoned for Internet activities in Saudi Arabia. If individuals impose self-censorship on their online activities, there is less content likely to violate Saudi legislation. Indeed, the Saudi government's policy for tackling the Internet threat seems to rely on self-censorship, which is similar to its policy towards traditional media as argued by Rugh (2004). Self-censorship cannot be powerful without advanced technological power, where the government can detect opposition on the Internet. Brundidge and Rice (2009:325) argued that, "In some cases, regulations are employed to supplement technical controls, which can create a climate of self-censorship among Internet users."

Vague legislation is also seen as a main threat to campaigners, in the women driving campaign particularly. Online participants could be jailed for a very long time under the recent Counter-Terrorism Law. For example, online activities could be defined as acts of terrorism on the grounds they may be classed as disturbing the public order of the state. This suggests that vague legislation could be added to the tools used by regimes to tackle cyberactivism. For cyberactivists, a number of vague laws can be used against them such as the 'Anti-Cyber Crime Law', where some articles are broad and are open to several interpretations as discussed in Chapter Five. This is also the case with the 'Law of Terrorism Crimes and Financing', where Article Three in Chapter Two states:

> Notwithstanding the principle of territoriality, the provisions of this Law shall apply to any person, Saudi or non-Saudi, who commits, aids, attempts, instigates, participates or conspires to commit - outs, the Kingdom - a crime provided for in this Law, and is not tried for, if such a crime aims to: [..] undermine the interests of the Kingdom, its economy or national or societal security, (Law of Terrorism Crimes and Financing, 2013).

Combining both these mechanisms helps the government to control the virtual space on the Internet. When Internet users know that they may face such sentences, they tend to keep their distance from the 'grey areas'.

The current findings add to a growing body of literature on the issue of the 'Dictator's Dilemma' that suggest that 'old methods' of limiting activism and freedom of speech, like vague laws and self-censorship, are still a powerful means of tackling new media threats to the political system. Self-censorship imposed by vague legislation has been used by journalists in traditional media long before the advent of the Internet and the government still uses this for the new media. Saudi Arabia has not blocked any social media like Iran (Etehad, 2014), and nor has it blocked social networks and created its own national versions, as is the case in China (Bamman *et al.*, 2012; Feng & Guo, 2013). About 90% of blocked websites offer pornography and only 10% are religious and political websites (see Chapter Six). The two powerful tools of self-censorship and vague regulation have effectively reduced the need for technologically advanced blocking solutions.

9.4.5. Societal and cultural change

Without a doubt, the Internet has facilitated the communication between the opposite sexes in the Muslim world generally, as both Howard (2011) and Guta and Karolak (2015), have argued. The issue of segregation is not simply a cultural tradition limited to Saudi but pertains, in differing degrees, to all Islamic cultures. However, in the political participation context, the research highlighted two main issues in this regard. First, both case studies confirm that the Internet has enhanced women's presence in Saudi society which is usually described as male-oriented (Nassif & Gunter, 2008).

Both cases demonstrate women's participation in activism. This participation contrasts with the pre-Internet activism in the country, where at least in the campaigns mentioned in Chapter Five, the only female participants were involved in the women's pro-driving campaign in 1990. On the Internet, Saudi women can participate politically in the same way as their male counterparts and make their voices heard about more general social issues as well as women's issues. There is no difference between both genders in this regard.

Second, this study found that while women are enthusiastic about, and active in, cyberactivism, they often still prefer to work separately from men in collective action. Saudi women online can interact freely with men without any religious or cultural barriers, but when it comes to collective work, they prefer to work with other women. So the use of the Internet empowers women to participate in activism but it fails to successfully amalgamate both genders in one collective action. In fact, analysis of the findings from the case studies highlights gender conflict and segregation in the campaigns which were studied. In both campaigns, activists showed a marked preference for working with individuals of their own gender. This could be related to a certain extent to societal influences in Saudi Arabia, since there is strictly enforced segregation between both genders in daily life. For example, women have their own schools, government departments and private sector companies where men are for the most part, not allowed to enter. However, the findings suggest another explanation for this conflict and preference for gendered segregation on the Internet. In the women driving campaign, female activists claimed that their dislike for working with men is not due to Saudi societal influence; one female activist asserted that they believe that women simply prefer to work with women.

This explanation merits closer scrutiny. Gender segregation in Saudi society is physical, not communicational, since men are allowed to teach women in school via the Internet, but not to attend female classes in higher education schools. As the case of male teachers shows, there are precedents for male-female co-operation via the Internet. Interviewees gave different explanations which seem to match some cases in different context. One said women do not like to work with men because the latter steal their efforts. Such a claim could be compatible with some studies which asserted that men tend to take over the leadership roles in movements, while the women have to take on other tasks within the movement (Johnson, 2011). Leadership might be understood as male activists taking the credit for others' efforts, with leaders being in the limelight at the head of the campaign. This leaves other activists, often females, to do the day-to-day running of campaigns.

Another female activist argued that men liked to create organisational structures for campaigning while the women do not. Such a claim is supported by Robnett (1996), who indicates that black women in the US civil rights movement, "Exercised crucial but informal and less publically visible leadership responsibilities." (Robnett, 1996, cited in Johnson, 2011:141). Others, like Taylor 1999, argue that, "Gender hierarchy is so persistent that, even in movements that purport to be gender-inclusive, the mobilisation, leadership patterns, strategies, ideologies, and even the outcomes of social movements are gendered." (Taylor, 1999:09). Dodson's 2015 study suggests that men and women tend to prefer to participate in different ways in actions, pursuing their own gendered strategies of working.

Similarly, in the mixed gender teachers' campaign, other reasons were cited for working separately. Female activists tried to work separately to gain what might be called 'the sympathy vote'. In Saudi society, people are more likely to sympathise with women than men, even if both are in the same situation. As Johnson (2011), notes:

> In cultural contexts that associate femininity with weakness and emotionality, movements identified as feminine may gain short-term advantages because they are perceived as non-threatening but are ultimately likely to be dismissed as politically ineffectual by the targets they seek to influence, (Johnson 2011:140).

Traditionally, Saudis are more likely to believe that women need help from others whilst men can fend for themselves and female campaigners tried to segregate themselves from men to make the most of this advantage. Interviewees (Chapter Eight) provided an example of this strategy, explaining that when a mixed group of teachers went to the Royal Court to meet the late King Abdullah and discuss their demands, the female representative was granted an audience whilst her male counterpart was not, indicating that perhaps exploiting their femininity was a carefully considered tactic on the part of the female campaigners.

In a wider context, the Internet has facilitated Saudi women's participation in social campaigns in a way that was not possible before this technology existed. By using the

Internet, females are able to work for a common cause with males whilst still being seen to respect cultural traditions and customs, an important consideration in the Kingdom's conservative context. Moreover, Saudi female activists were also able to exploit the potential of the Internet to create multiple interconnected networks, allowing them to work towards the same end as their male counterparts but using the strategies and tactics which they preferred.

9.5. Conclusion

"Without the Internet, there is no campaign." This was the most frequently repeated sentence during the interviews. Social campaigns, in particular, would not flourish without the Internet in Saudi Arabia. If the Internet is considered to be merely a tool in democratic countries, it is clearly more than this in the Saudi context, providing a virtual space for engagement. The Internet has created a new generation of activists who have never engaged with activism before. The word 'campaign' has entered the vocabulary of commonly used words. Campaigning online has put more pressure on the government and on traditional media to listen to their demands and to interact with campaigners' demands. What is discussed on the Internet is also discussed in traditional media. Despite the risks, campaigns are growing at a rate that was previously unthinkable and some appear to be on the verge of becoming formalised.

The social campaigns at the centre of this thesis are unique cases in the ND context. These campaigners are not attempting to change the political system, but simply to challenge certain elements of it. Activists and the public more generally, still practise self-censorship, particularly in light of vague legislative threats. As long as the campaigns remain online, the authorities see them as less dangerous.

10. CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS

10.1. Introduction

The importance of this research lies in providing an understanding of the nature of the impact of the Internet in ND countries. It also looks at how this can be used to strengthen social campaigns and facilitate a new profile for activists in a country which does not have an existing tradition of collective action.

The study was designed to examine the impact of Internet technologies on social campaigning in a ND context (Saudi Arabia). The research also sought to explore the overarching theoretical concerns regarding the extent to which a Saudi Arabian case adds to our understanding of the notion of activism in the digital age. In order to do this, it set out to answer three main research questions. Firstly, what role does the Internet play in mobilisation? Secondly, what sort of models of collective action are facilitated by the Internet? Thirdly, how does Internet campaigning challenge the systemic environment and vice versa? This conclusion addresses these three main areas, via a discussion of the empirical findings, the theoretical implications and recommendations for future research.

10.2. The Empirical Findings

The main empirical findings are detailed in Chapters six and seven of this thesis and discussed in Chapter eight. This section will synthesise the empirical findings to answer the study's research questions.

10.2.1. Individual level (Mobilisation).

What role do Internet tools play in mobilising and connecting activists and how does this occur?

In particular, Internet affordances created a space for activism where activists get to know like-minded people. Whilst activism in the offline public space in the Saudi context is carefully controlled by government, the Internet serves as both a space and a tool, differing from its role in democratic political systems, where it serves largely as a tool, rather than a space. Aouragh & Alexander (2011) argue that it is necessary to distinguish between the Internet as a space and as a tool. In the former case, the Internet can be used to express and articulate dissent; in the latter case it serves as a tool for organising dissent. As a space it offers “a dynamic ability to shape opinion and contribute to the ‘tipping point’” (Aouragh & Alexander 2011) whilst its role as a tool is to allow activists to mobilise people, reaching wider audiences, and communicate, so functions like any other tool used for the same purpose such as SMS or phone calls. In the Saudi context, using the Internet as a space has benefited activism more. The previous chapter showed how offline space is controlled and constructed by the state rather than society. In such a context, activism as a social phenomenon might not emerge easily in a controlled public space.

The Internet has also amplified campaigners’ voices and power. The Internet makes it possible to reach a wider audience, some of whom would have been impossible to reach otherwise. Even those who are not using the Internet, have been indirectly influenced by the Internet, because it has become a major source of news for society in general.

The findings of the study indicate that a new profile of activist has emerged in Saudi Arabia after the growth of Internet usage throughout the state. Most of the activists interviewed had not engaged in any form of activism before the Internet. Not only that, but their experience in cyberactivism has also been shared with other people wishing to do the same. Furthermore, the Internet has encouraged people to campaign on social issues by lowering the costs of participation. Campaigning activities have become normalised to the extent that newspapers discuss them relatively freely. The government, on occasions, has had to respond; something to which it was previously unaccustomed. In short, the Internet has helped widen the range of participants and the attentive public, making campaigning a part of daily life in the country.
Comparing cyberactivism with pre-Internet activism can demonstrate the differences which have been wrought by the Internet. Previously, it was hard to conduct any campaign due to public sphere restrictions and only a few social campaigns can be detected before the Internet was freely available. Today it is easy to launch a campaign online and to find people who will support it and then work with others to bring about change, largely without any interference from the government. Indeed, it has now become difficult to keep track of the numbers of campaigns that have been launched online as they grow year on year.

10.2.2. Organisational level

What sort of models of collective action are facilitated by the Internet?

Despite the claims regarding the distinctive collectiveness, or connective structures, which online campaigns have adopted in other parts of the world due to the characteristics of the

Internet, it seems that the Saudi social campaigns which have been studied do not follow the same connective structure. This may be understandable in the women driving campaign, due to its roots and the fact that some of its members have experience of working collectively. On the other hand, the teachers' campaign appears to be moving towards the traditional structures of collective action, even though it started connectively from scratch on the Internet. It increasingly appears to be taking on the characteristics of a nascent trade union.

In the Saudi case then, the Internet works as a space where people meet others who share the same ideas, then start working collectively, rather than connectively, to achieve their demands. This is because there is no tradition of activism and it is difficult for people to understand the concept of connective action.

10.2.3. Systemic level

How does Internet campaigning challenge the systemic environment and vice versa?

In ND contexts, it was expected that the systemic environment would play a crucial role in shaping cyberactivism and Saudi Arabia is no exception here. The political and social context has a strong influence on the Internet, and consequently, on all aspects of cyberactivism, including mobilisation, organisation and actions. For activists, the main threat to cyberactivism in the country is the vagueness of current legislation and self-censorship. Both of these threats have impacted on cyberactivism and limited activism issues to mainly ones such as women's rights and calls for adequate housing and salaries. These two threats have also put more pressure on cyberactivists, as there is no clear 'red line', demarcating legal, from illegal, behaviour. This makes cyberactivism a risky activity.

In addition, the Saudi social system still exercises a major influence on social cyberactivism. Women remain dependent on a male guardian. They may not become fully engaged because they worry about their families; their male guardian will be involved in any security issue which relates to female activities. For women, being an activist is not a decision that can be taken alone, as any consequences are likely to affect the whole family. In the context of this social pressure, messages from activists aiming to mobilise people are also subject to the demands of the prevailing social order. Ignoring this can negatively impact a campaign.

Interestingly, it was expected that conventional media would be opposed to social campaigns. However, the findings show that the media helped activists most of the time. Yet, this support would not have been achieved without the Internet. In the 1990s, the women's driving campaign received negative coverage in conventional media. The corresponding campaign in 2013 however, received positive coverage, until the newspapers were asked to change their attitude by Saudi officials. Even then, columnists continued to maintain a positive attitude. Something similar has happened in the case of the teachers' campaign, which received positive coverage from the media because journalists, as well as MoCI officials, understand that negative reporting or a news blackout is unlikely to work in the Internet era, given that the majority of Saudis are online and can find these campaigns easily. So the Internet has helped activists to change traditional media attitudes in such contexts and then use this to the campaign's advantage.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that some Saudi officials and Islamic scholars remain cautious about the Internet and have criticised online content and discussions. There is also no doubt that the government does censor and monitor the Internet as the Ideological Security Directorate has stated in Chapter Six. The government prefers campaigns to be kept online and as long activists claim their rights on the Internet without taking any 'illegal' offline action, it is unlikely that the government will disrupt them. In both of the campaigns which were studied, the only people who were jailed or questioned by the police were those who took offline action. Generally, it is easier for the government to keep its eye on cyberactivism than it is to tackle offline activism. Importantly, the case studies here concern activism on social issues, which could be considered as non-threatening, unlike wider political reform campaigns.

10.3. Theoretical Implications

There have been some attempts to theorise cyberactivism differently since it can be considered to be unlike traditional activism in regards to the power exercised by individuals and their ability to act individually. Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action provided the main theoretical framework in this thesis and helped to explore the role of the Internet in encouraging activism in Saudi Arabia. However, the findings of this thesis call for a re-evaluation of some theoretical approaches when studying cyberactivism in a ND context.

It has been argued that, when theorising cyberactivism in ND countries, there is a need to take the systemic environment into account, as when using the classical, social movement theories in similar contexts. Scholars, such as Reddy (2014), insisted that theorists who studied social movements in Africa and the Middle East have found that the social and political structures there make such classic theories, "Not neatly applicable." (Reddy, 2014:339). The same is true for theories of Internet activism. Although Bennett and

Segerberg (2013), included some ND countries when they formulated their model, it could be argued that this is ‘not neatly applicable’ in the Saudi case. On the basis of the research conducted here, theoretical approaches to cyberactivism outside Western democracies need to take into account the following:

Focus on all the uses made of the Internet as a whole, and should not purely focus on popular Internet applications, since popularity may differ from country to country; what is popular in the West may not be popular elsewhere, due to differences in social context and user needs. This thesis underlined that activists used some applications because of their popularity among the targeted audience and not because of their worldwide popularity or their technological features.

Although the idea of connective logic is popular in the Internet era, it might be important to re-examine the concept in the ND context. This is because this assumption is mainly based on data relating to cyberactivism in democratic countries. This concept of connective logic is not limited to Bennett and Segerberg (2013), but also to scholars who have argued about this concept or logic under the guise of different terms such as collectiveness like in (Kavada 2010)

10.4. Recommendations regarding Future Research

While this research has attempted to answer the research questions concerning the impact of the Internet on social campaigns in ND countries, using Saudi Arabia as a case study, there are a number of issues which require further investigation in the area of cyberactivism, and in the ND context in particular. Exploring the following issues in future research would help to extend current knowledge about cyberactivism in both contexts:

Is the Internet a ‘Dictator’s Dilemma’ in all cases?

This thesis show that cyberactivism relating to social issues may not be viewed as threatening to the state, since the Saudi government shows its interest and responds to what people discuss and claim online. It could become increasingly important to study governmental responses to social activism, without adopting the ‘Dictator’s Dilemma’ term as a necessary starting point.

Has the relationship between activists and traditional media been changed after the Internet?

Even in ND countries, conventional media have begun to realise that they no longer represent the only news outlet. So, ignorance of activism campaigns and negative reporting are more likely to affect news organisations than activists' activities, since the activists can now seek out alternative news outlets for their news. Thus, if the news is not in the traditional media, the audience may continue to drift to other news outlets. That suggests a wider implications for the new cycle and newspapers especially.

How far does gender make a difference to ways of working online in certain cultures?

Interviews suggested that women did not want to work with men, even online. This finding deserves further exploration since there are none of the obvious reasons for continuing the gender segregation which persists in the public space offline. Similarly, some interviewees said that women are more active in supporting the teachers' campaign in areas such as re-tweeting, posting, and replying to threads, because they are more emotionally engaged.

While the use of Internet functions and features can help activism to flourish in ND, it is important to emphasise that making the most of these features and functions also depends on the users' skills and the context in which they are employed, as argued by (Kavada 2012). This thesis has demonstrated that the use of the Internet for activism in Saudi Arabia has widened and deepened activism in Saudi Arabia but at the same time in this context, the Internet can also be said to constrain some aspects of activism.

This thesis shows that the Internet became both a space and a tool for activism in the Egyptian case studied by (Aouragh & Alexander 2011). New activist profiles emerged in this state since many online activists had never engaged with activism before the Internet. Its affordances and their skills helped them to campaign online. Online activism activity in the campaigns studied in this thesis has also had a spillover effect. Some campaigns have benefited from the experience of others such as the *Man Divan* campaign and teachers' campaign. Internet use by campaigners has also helped them to widen their targeted audiences and go beyond geographical boundaries, and also to attract media attention both locally and internationally.

Campaigners use of the Internet in collective action does not necessary facilitate a different model of collective action. The two campaigns studied here show that hierarchical organization still forms online, and that collective identity is clear in both campaigns. Political, cultural, and social contexts have influenced the organizational structure of both these campaigns. Furthermore, the teachers’ campaign reflects the model lifecycle of a social movement as discussed previously in the framework by (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Macionis, 2008). In the Saudi context, this lifecycle emerged online.

Employing the Internet has helped activists in the Saudi context to achieve some goals and to challenge the systemic environments in some respects. However, the political system in particular is not powerless, and self-censorship, and vague legislation can be viewed as some of the weapons which the political system employs in tackling online activism in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendices

Appendices A: Adult Informed Consent from and data sheet

Adult Informed Consent from and data sheet

1. **Title of the research project**
   From cassette to the Internet
   How the Saudi social activists use Internet as an alternative media for media and communion purposes.

2. **Project objectives:**

- Identify the Internet applications that are used by cyberactivists in Saudi Arabia, and the method of use by studying the application/websites they are using in their activism, to s the reasons/way of using.
- Trace the strategies, goals of Cyberactivism, and the obstacles facing cyberactivists in Saudi Arabia, in order to for better understanding of Cyberactivists' motivations.
- Examine the success of using the Internet in the Arab spring and its impact on Saudi Cyberactivists, as well as how Saudis could use the uprising in Middle East for their favor, be exploring the interaction between Saudi cyberactivsts and other activists around the world.

3. **Names of the researcher:**
   Abdullah Abalkhail – University of Salford – United Kingdom

4. **Description of human subject involvement**
   Interviewee will be asked questions about his/her online activities.

5. **Length of human subject participation**
   The participant will be interviewed/ observed for no more than 2 hours.

6. **Risks & discomforts of participation**
This project is deemed as no more than minimal risk. The study team does not foresee or anticipate any direct risk to the subjects."

7. **Expected benefits to subjects or to others**

"Although you may not receive direct benefit from your participation, others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained in this study."

8. Confidentiality of records/data

You will not be identified in any reports on this study. Records will be kept confidential to the extent provided by University of Salford. Your name will not be in any part of the study. Codes will be used instate.

9. Availability of further information:

If significant new knowledge is obtained during the course of this research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation, you will be informed of this knowledge."

10. Contact Information:

Email: a.m.abalkhail@edu.salford.ac.uk

11. Voluntary nature of participation

Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled."

Alternative forms of treatment may be available in the event you do not wish to participate in the proposed study. You may skip or refuse to answer any interview question.

12. **Documentation of the consent**:

One copy of this document will be kept together with the research records of this study. Also, you will be given a copy to keep.

13. **Consent of the subject:**

I have read of the information given above. Abdullah Abalkhail has offered to answer any questions I may have concerning the study. I hereby consent to participate in the study.

ADULT SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

Printed Name Consenting signature date

14. **Audio/Video Recording of subjects**:

Interviewee agreed that audio and/or video recording devices will be used. Upon completion of the study all recorded data will be either destroyed, erased, archived, or kept for future studies, etc.

Signature Date

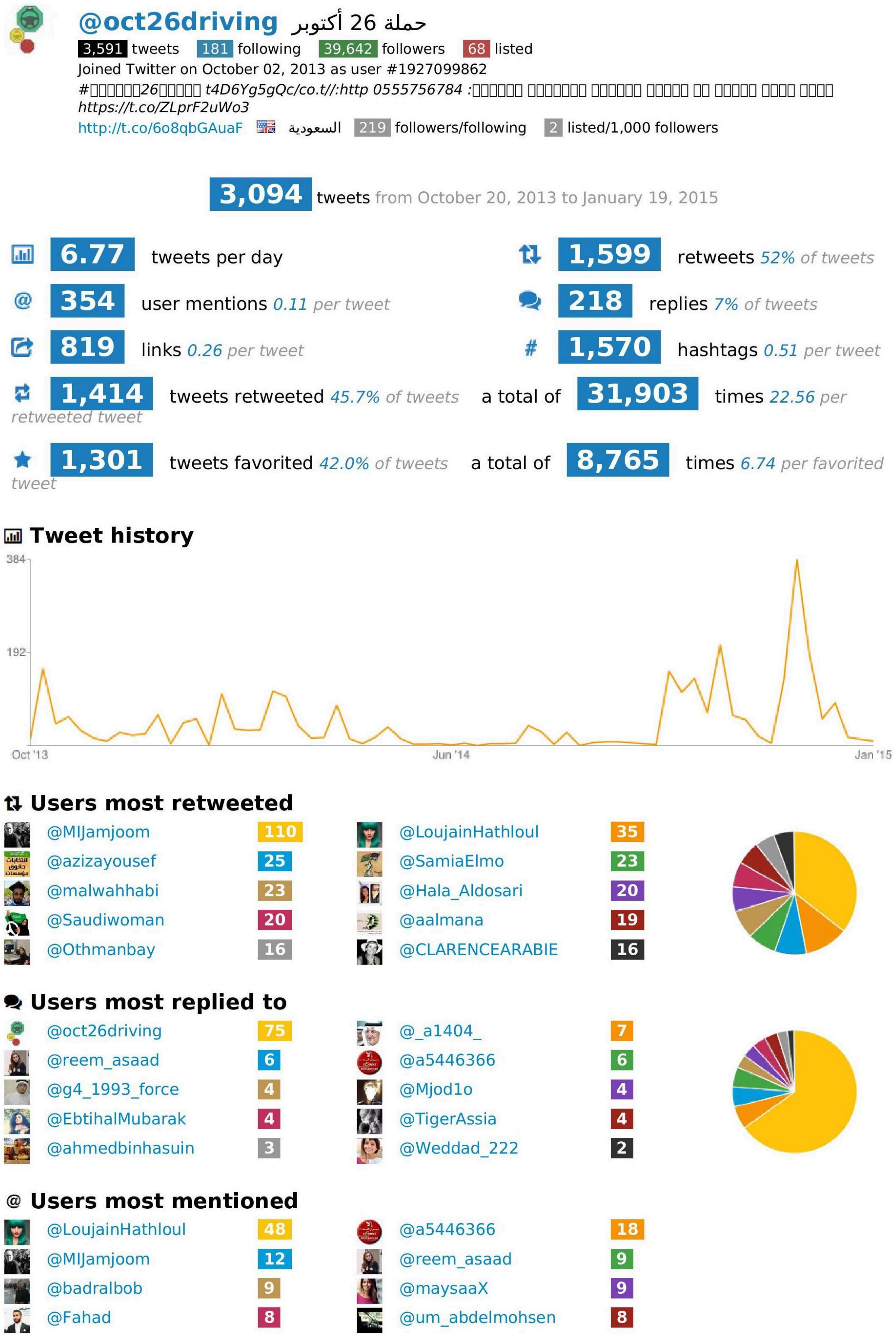
I do not wish to have my interview recorded, however wish to participate in the research project.

Signature Date

Appendices B: Activists' Interviews Questions

- Demographic information
- What are your motives to join the campaign?
- What are your demands?
- Are there any restrictions on activists?
- Why do you use the Internet in the campaign?
- Are you in contact with other campaigns?
- Do you expect that this campaign will stop?
- Do you expect to be among other campaigns?
- Do you think that the Internet has contributed in the appearance of the campaigns?
- Do you have any contributions in other campaigns?
- How do you see the influence of the applications and the Internet in general on people?
- What determines whether or not to use the application?
- Do you plan produce a message? How?
- Is there a targeted number? A specific audience? Do you think that the applications masses are different?
- Do you think that there are other ways besides the Internet to collect more people?
- Do you ask people to produce a message?
- Which messages you think are better in Influencing others?
- Do you produce a unique message to a specific application or one for all
- Is the society's culture and religion affect in choosing the technique and tactic?
- Do you think that different means lead to different results? Do you deliberate to change means and tactics?
- What does the collected number means?
- Are you walking on precedent footsteps?
- Do you expect to continue? For how long?
- Are there any connections or friendships?
- Is there any organization in any form?
- Is there any previous experience in other campaigns?
- Is general, is there any belief that the Internet has changed something in reality, for example: women driving in the streets and so on?
- How do you see the size of the workers in the campaign?
- Do you think that there are any supporters and workers there?

Appendices C: October26th Campaign Twitter account analysis (Source: Twitonomy paid service)



@oct26driving حملة 26 أكتوبر

3,591 tweets 181 following 39,642 followers 68 listed

Joined Twitter on October 02, 2013 as user #1927099862

#□□□□□□26□□□□□□ t4D6Yg5gQc/co.t//:http 0555756784 :□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□ □□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□
https://t.co/ZLprF2uWo3

http://t.co/6o8qbGAuaF السعودية 219 followers/following 2 listed/1,000 followers

3,094 tweets from October 20, 2013 to January 19, 2015

6.77 tweets per day

1,599 retweets *52% of tweets*

354 user mentions *0.11 per tweet*

218 replies *7% of tweets*

819 links *0.26 per tweet*

1,570 hashtags *0.51 per tweet*

1,414 tweets retweeted *45.7% of tweets* a total of **31,903** times *22.56 per retweeted tweet*

1,301 tweets favorited *42.0% of tweets* a total of **8,765** times *6.74 per favorited tweet*

Tweet history

Users most retweeted

@MlJamjoom	110	@LoujainHathloul	35
@azizayousef	25	@SamiaElmo	23
@malwahhabi	23	@Hala_Aldosari	20
@Saudiwoman	20	@aalmana	19
@Othmanbay	16	@CLARENCEARABIE	16

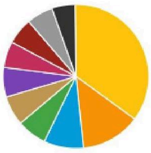
Users most replied to

@oct26driving	75	@_a1404_	7
@reem_asaad	6	@a5446366	6
@g4_1993_force	4	@Mjod1o	4
@EbtihalMubarak	4	@TigerAssia	4
@ahmedbinhasuin	3	@Weddad_222	2

Users most mentioned

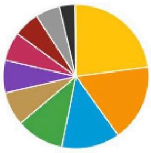
@LoujainHathloul	48	@a5446366	18
@MlJamjoom	12	@reem_asaad	9
@badralbob	9	@maysaaX	9
@Fahad	8	@um_abdelmohsen	8

@SamiaElmo	8	@_a1404_	7



Hashtags most used

#u0642u064au0627u062fu062926u0627u0643u062au0648u0628u0631	233	#u0642u064au0627u062fu0629_26u0627u0643u062au0648u0628u0631	174
#u0623u0633u0648u0642_u0628u0646u0641u0633u064a	131	#u0642u064au0627u062fu06292929u0645u0627u0631u0633	107
#u0642u064au0627u062fu0629_u0627u0644u0645u0631u0623u0629_u0644u0644u0633u064au0627u0631u0629	76	#saudi	74
#u0642u064au0627u062fu06292931u0646u0648u0641u0645u0628u0631	65	#u0642u064au0627u062fu06292928u062fu064au0633u0645u0628u0631	58
#u0647u0648_u0644u0647u0627	55	#u0627u0644u062du0631u064au0629_u0644u0644u062cu064au0646_u0648u0645u064au0633u0627u0621	35



Tweets most retweeted

حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 10:21 AM - 1 Dec 2014 via Twitter for iPhone - 1,141 retweets 72 favorites [...]
Police came and took @LoujainHathloulhXXo6bFBg5/co.t//:http .contact lost we before just sent Photos الشرطة أخذت لجين

حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 7:32 AM - 26 Oct 2013 via Twitter for Android - 775 retweets 202 favorites [...]
#قيادة_26اكتوبر #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة بين البدايع وعنيزةyoutube.com/watch?v=LtqW7L...مقطع لي وأنا أعلم أمي الجميلة قيادة السيارة

حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 2:11 PM - 24 Sep 2014 via Twitter for iPhone - 476 retweets 30 favorites [...]
ولإرسال صور وفيديوهات تأييد من خلال الواتساب 0555756784goo.gl/oZqBMMلسماع وقرأة وتوقيع بيان حملة #قيادة26اكتوبر

حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 9:12 AM - 28 Dec 2013 via Twitter for iPhone - 466 retweets 6 favorites [...]
#قيادة28ديسمبر لنشر صور وفيديوهات مؤيدة لقيادة المرأة أرسلوها لواتسآب 0597355407 او ايميل oct26driving@gmail.com

حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 3:22 PM - 30 Nov 2014 via Twitter for iPhone - 398 retweets 134 favorites [...]
صامدة من أجل حق السعوديات بقيادة سيارتهن بأنفسهن بدل الإلزام بسائقين. خيار@LoujainHathloulالان عدت ست ساعات والنبيلة الشجاعة
وليس إجبار.

Tweets most favorited

حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 7:32 AM - 26 Oct 2013 via Twitter for Android - 775 retweets 202 favorites [...]
#قيادة_26اكتوبر #قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة بين البدايع وعنيزةyoutube.com/watch?v=LtqW7L...مقطع لي وأنا أعلم أمي الجميلة قيادة السيارة

حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 7:40 AM - 30 Nov 2014 via iOS - 280 retweets 146 favorites [...]
youtu.be/m7r-p7FHxqoلجين الهذلول في طريقها للحدود السعودية وهي تقود بنفسها! #أسوق_بنفسي #قيادة26اكتوبر #هو_لها

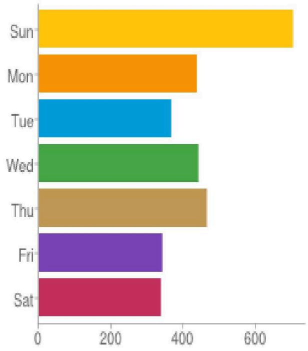
حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 3:22 PM - 30 Nov 2014 via Twitter for iPhone - 398 retweets 134 favorites [...]
صامدة من أجل حق السعوديات بقيادة سيارتهن بأنفسهن بدل الإلزام بسائقين. خيار@LoujainHathloulالان عدت ست ساعات والنبيلة الشجاعة
وليس إجبار.

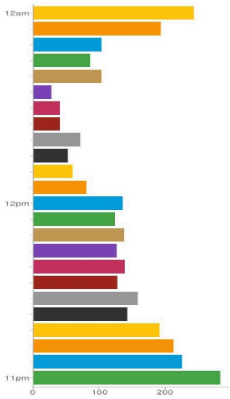
حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 5:22 AM - 1 Dec 2014 via Twitter for iPhone - 184 retweets 91 favorites [...]
تابعونا هناك حدث كبير اخر سيحصل خلال الساعات الآتية بإذن ا. #قيادة26اكتوبر #أسوق_بنفسي #هو_لها

حملة 26 أكتوبر @oct26driving - 6:42 PM - 6 Dec 2014 via iOS - 331 retweets 87 favorites [...]
youtu.be/rd9TGSHHvgl تتحدث عن #اعتقال_لجين_وميساء #الحرية_للجين_وميساء #لجين_قلب_الأسد @dalalkakiالأستاذة دلال كعكي

Days of the week

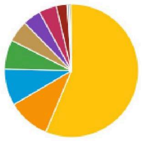
Hours of the day



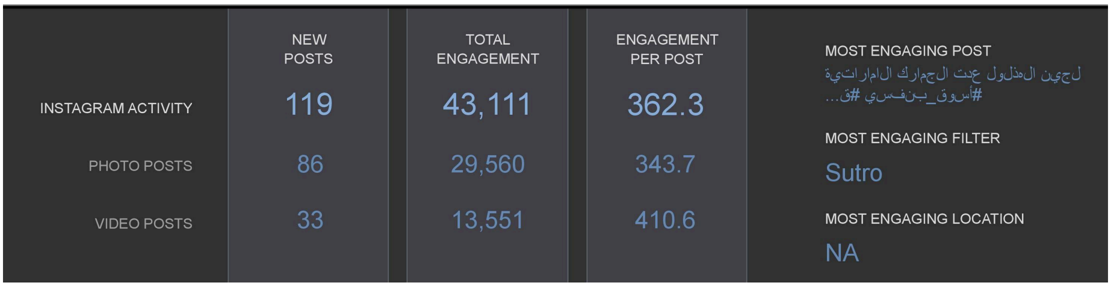


Platforms most tweeted from

Twitter for iPhone	1746	Instagram	316
iOS	275	Twitter for Android	219
Twitter for iPad	161	Tweetbot for iu039fS	135
Twitter Web Client	132	TweetDeck	81
Mobile Web (M5)	15	Twitter for Websites	11



Appendices D: October26th Campaign Instagram account analysis: (Source: Simply Measured)

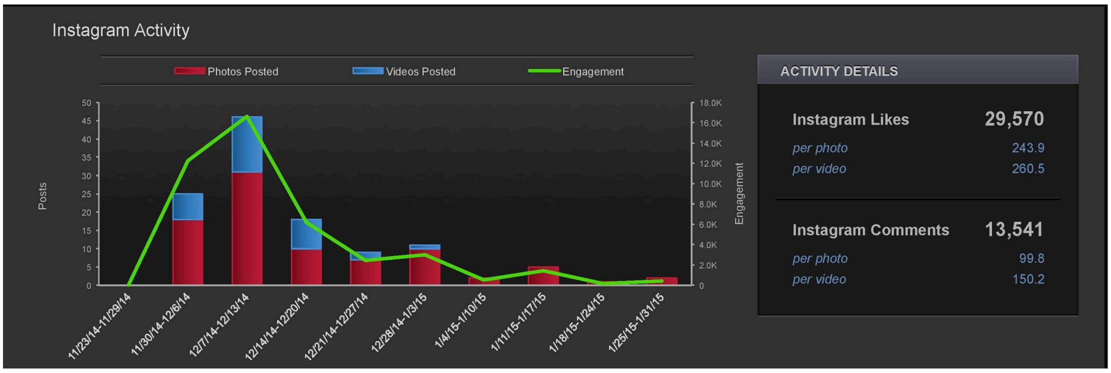


	NEW POSTS	TOTAL ENGAGEMENT	ENGAGEMENT PER POST
INSTAGRAM ACTIVITY	119	43,111	362.3
PHOTO POSTS	86	29,560	343.7
VIDEO POSTS	33	13,551	410.6

MOST ENGAGING POST
لجين الهذلول عدت الجمارك الاماراتية #أسوق_بنفسي #ق...

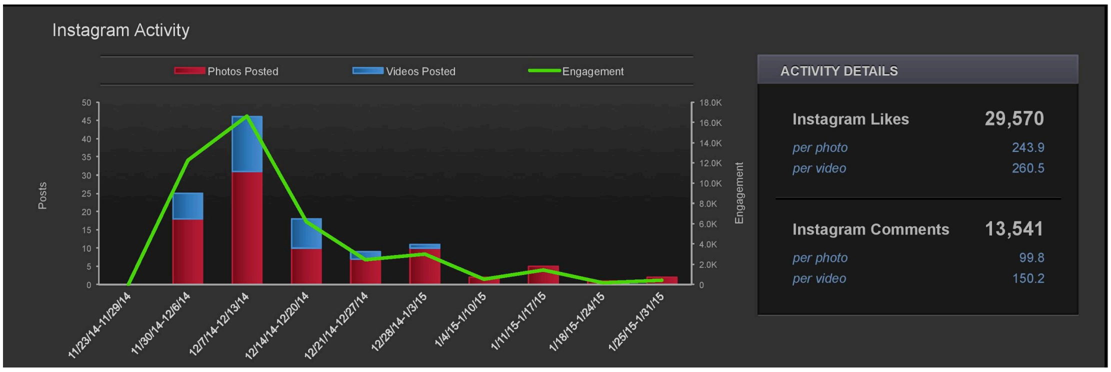
MOST ENGAGING FILTER
Sutro

MOST ENGAGING LOCATION
NA



ACTIVITY DETAILS

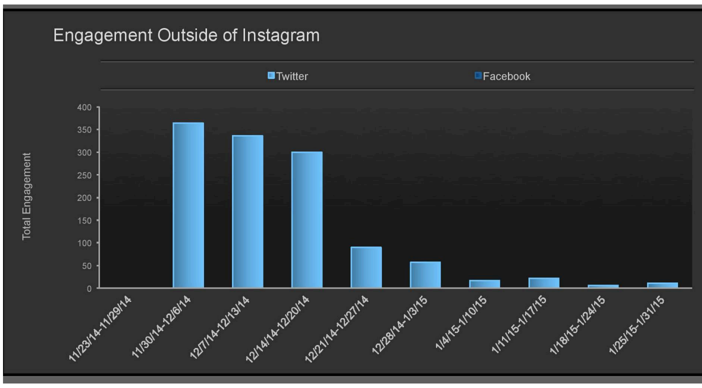
Instagram Likes	**29,570**
per photo	243.9
per video	260.5
Instagram Comments	**13,541**
per photo	99.8
per video	150.2


Instagram Activity

ACTIVITY DETAILS

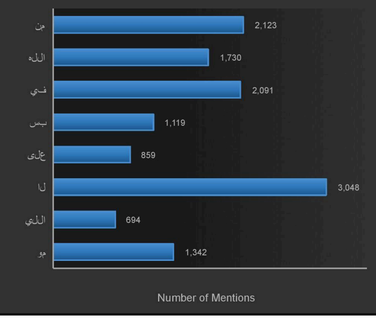
Instagram Likes	**29,570**
per photo	243.9
per video	260.5
Instagram Comments	**13,541**
per photo	99.8
per video	150.2

Engagement Outside of Instagram

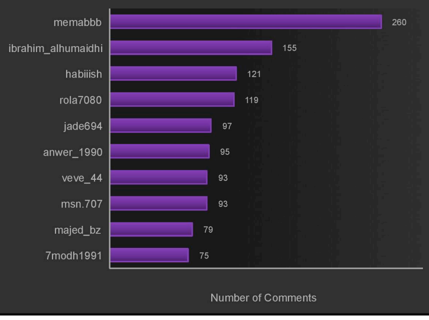


	NEW PHOTOS	NEW VIDEOS
Tweets *per post*	**681** *8.0*	**522** *16.3*
FB Likes *per post*	**0** *0.0*	**0** *0.0*
FB Comments *per post*	**0** *0.0*	**0** *0.0*
FB Shares *per post*	**0** *0.0*	**0** *0.0*

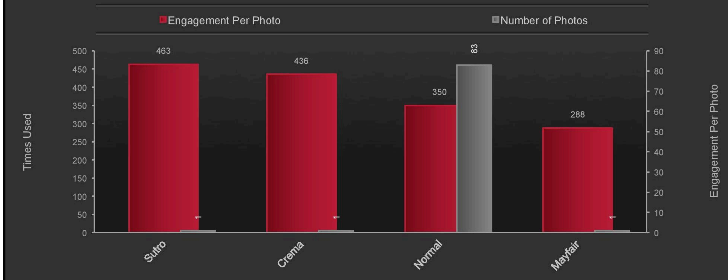
Keyword Analysis (Comments)



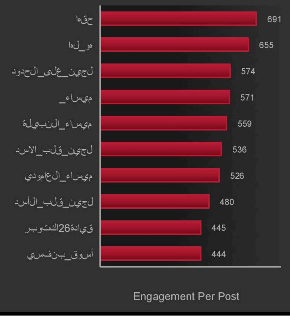
Most Active Commenters



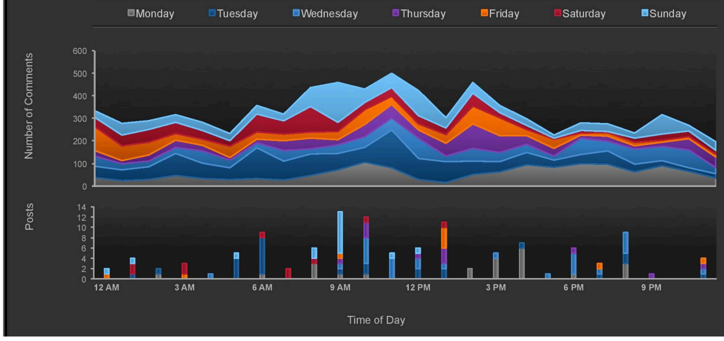
Top Photo Filters (By Engagement)



Top Photo Tags



Comments and Posts by Day and Time



TOP DAY FOR ENGAGEMENT

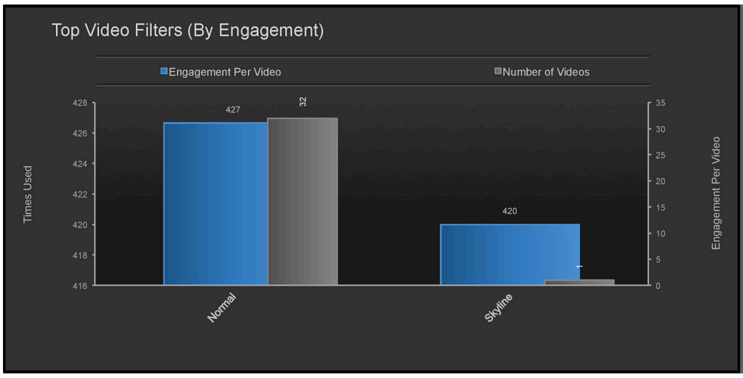
Tuesday

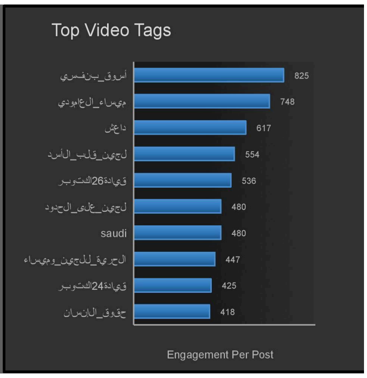
19.8% of your total comments

TOP TIME FOR ENGAGEMENT

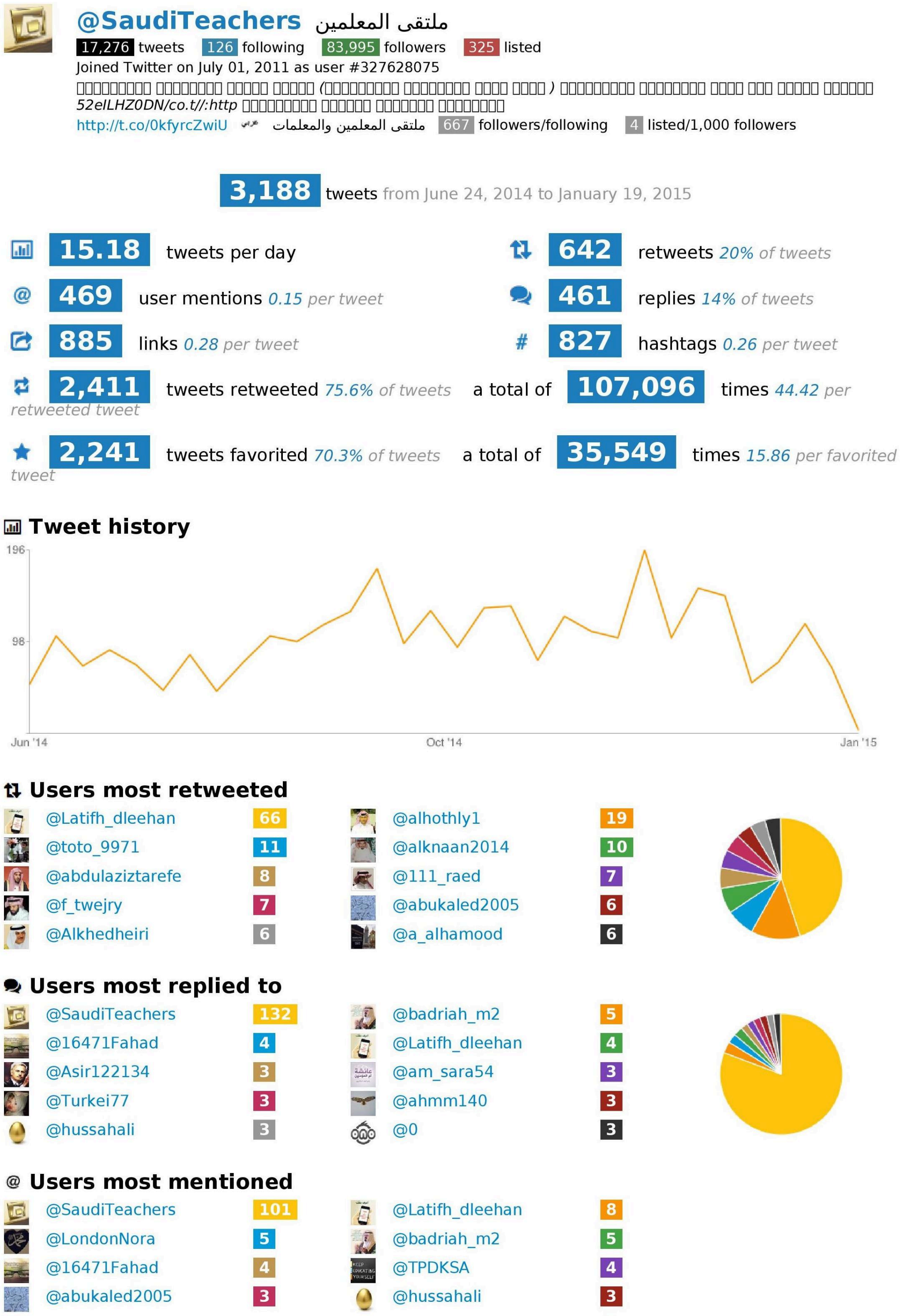
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

6.3% of your total comments


Top Video Filters (By Engagement)


Top Video Tags

Appendices E: Twitter Analysis of Teachers campaigns account on Twitter @SaudiTeachers (Source: Twitonomy paid service)



@SaudiTeachers ملتقى المعلمين

17,276 tweets 126 following 83,995 followers 325 listed

Joined Twitter on July 01, 2011 as user #327628075

□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□ (□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□) □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□□
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http://t.co/0kfyrcZwiU ملتقى المعلمين والمعلمات 667 followers/following 4 listed/1,000 followers

3,188 tweets from June 24, 2014 to January 19, 2015

15.18 tweets per day

642 retweets *20% of tweets*

469 user mentions *0.15 per tweet*

461 replies *14% of tweets*

885 links *0.28 per tweet*

827 hashtags *0.26 per tweet*

2,411 tweets retweeted *75.6% of tweets* a total of **107,096** times *44.42 per retweeted tweet*

2,241 tweets favorited *70.3% of tweets* a total of **35,549** times *15.86 per favorited tweet*

Tweet history

Users most retweeted

@Latifh_dleehan	66	@alhothly1	19
@toto_9971	11	@alknaan2014	10
@abdulaziztarefe	8	@111_raed	7
@f_twejry	7	@abukaled2005	6
@Alkhedheiri	6	@a_alhamood	6

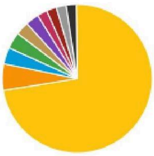
Users most replied to

@SaudiTeachers	132	@badriah_m2	5
@16471Fahad	4	@Latifh_dleehan	4
@Asir122134	3	@am_sara54	3
@Turkei77	3	@ahmm140	3
@hussahali	3	@0	3

Users most mentioned

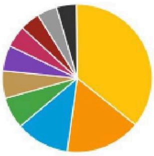
@SaudiTeachers	101	@Latifh_dleehan	8
@LondonNora	5	@badriah_m2	5
@16471Fahad	4	@TPDKSA	4
@abukaled2005	3	@hussahali	3

@toto_9971	3	@ahmm140	3



Hashtags most used

#u0631u062au0648u064au062a	84	#u0645u0644u062au0642u0649_u0627u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645u064au0646	38
#u0645u0641u0636u0644u0629	27	#u0627u0644u064au0648u0645_u0627u0644u0639u0627u0644u0645u064a_u0644u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645	16
#u0646u0638u0627u0645_u0646u0648u0631	14	#u0642u064au0627u0633	13
#u0633u0624u0627u0644u064a_u0644u0645u0644u062au0642u0649_u0627u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645u064au0646	11	#u0642u0631u0648u0628_u0645u0644u062au0642u0649_u0627u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645u064au0646	10
#u062au0628u0648u0643	10	#u0627u0644u062cu0627u0645u0639u064au0627u062a_u0627u0644u0642u062fu064au0645u0627u062a_u064au0646u0627u0634u062fu0646_u0627u0628u0648u0645u062au0639u0628_u0645u0643u0631u0645u0629	10



Tweets most retweeted

ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 2:24 PM - 25 Dec 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 1,575 retweets 45 favorites [...]
#مهنة_التعليم_مصدر_رزق_سهل أخي المعلم,أختي المعلمة هل ترى بأن مهنة التعليم مهنة متعبة في الآداء,أم سهلةكشرب الماء؟ متعبة=رتويت سهلة=مفضلة

ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 10:28 AM - 9 Oct 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 1,428 retweets 86 favorites [...]
#رسالتي_لوزارة_التربية للمعلم/ـة : هل تنتظر فرصة مناسبة للابتعاد عن" التدريس" بالتحويل لإداري أو طلب تقاعد مبكر..؟ نعم =#رتويت لا = #مفضلة

ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 5:29 PM - 24 Jun 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 871 retweets 32 favorites [...]
تصويت عام للجميع/ #الموظف #المعلم #العسكري #مجلس_الشورى هل تؤيد قرارجديد يسمح بـ التقاعدالمبكر"25 سنة عمل" براتب كامل؟ نعم=رتويت لا=مفضلة

ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 3:16 PM - 13 Jan 2015 via Twitter Web Client - 774 retweets 766 favorites [...]
saudi-teachers.com/vb/showthread.... التربية تنفي : نسبة النقل 55% غير دقيقة - ملتقى المعلمين والمعلمات

ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 4:16 AM - 8 Nov 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 714 retweets 50 favorites [...]
إن صح خبر التغريدة أدناه,فنتمنى أن يكون من ضمن الحاضرين أعضاء بـ (لجنة حقوق المعلمين والمعلمات),لنقل "واقع"مشاكل وهموم المعلم. تؤيد = #رتويت

Tweets most favorited

ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 3:16 PM - 13 Jan 2015 via Twitter Web Client - 774 retweets 766 favorites [...]
saudi-teachers.com/vb/showthread.... التربية تنفي : نسبة النقل 55% غير دقيقة - ملتقى المعلمين والمعلمات

ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 4:28 AM - 22 Aug 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 434 retweets 286 favorites [...]
saudi-teachers.com/vb/showthread.... خاص من ملتقى المعلمين والمعلمات / إهداء حـمّل توزيع كامل مناهج مواد المرحلة الابتدائية للفصل الاول 1435 – 1436 هـ

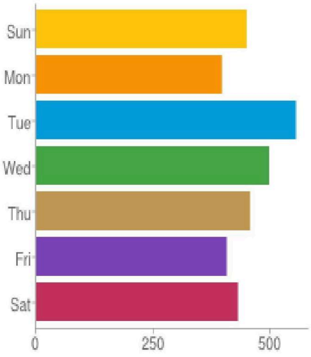
ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 7:27 PM - 12 Jan 2015 via Twitter Web Client - 95 retweets 262 favorites [...]
saudi-teachers.com/vb/showthread.... منظومة استراتيجيات التدريس بـ"التعلّم النشط "13 مثال بالفيديو +ملف توضيحي

ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 10:08 PM - 19 Aug 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 108 retweets 179 favorites [...]
saudi-teachers.com/vb/showthread.... للمعلمـ/ـة الإجازة الإضطرارية 5 أيام "للعام المالي القادم" تبدأ 1436-3-9هـ *ضوابط الغياب بعذر أو بدون عذر :

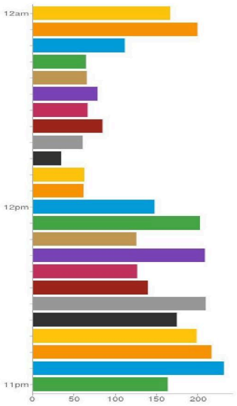
ملتقى المعلمين @SaudiTeachers - 10:28 AM - 15 Oct 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 276 retweets 176 favorites [...]
استطلاع رأي للمعلمـ/ـة: بشأن شرط سنة التقدم في مفاضلة #النقل_الخارجي 1- #رتويت = إلغاء"شرط سنة التقديم" 2- #مفضلة =مع وجود" شرط

سنة التقديم"

Days of the week

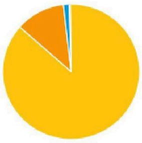


Hours of the day

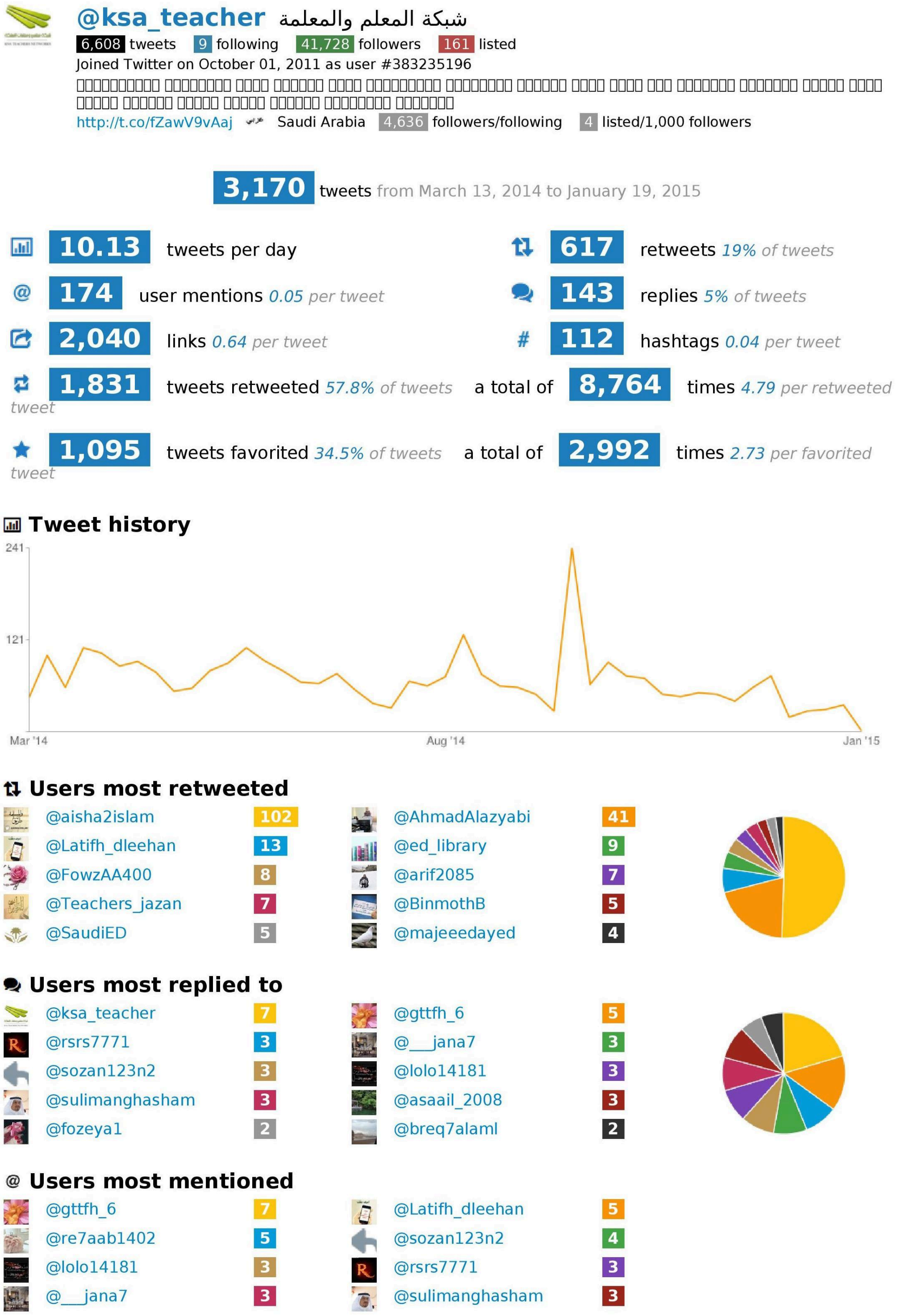


Platforms most tweeted from

Twitter Web Client	2764	Twitter for Websites	372
Twitter for Android	44	Twitter for iPhone	8



Appendices F: Twitter Analysis of Teachers campaigns account on Twitter @ksa_teachers (Source: Twitonomy paid service)



@ksa_teacher شبكة المعلم والمعلمة

6,608 tweets 9 following 41,728 followers 161 listed

Joined Twitter on October 01, 2011 as user #383235196

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http://t.co/fZawV9vAaj Saudi Arabia 4,636 followers/following 4 listed/1,000 followers

3,170 tweets from March 13, 2014 to January 19, 2015

10.13 tweets per day

617 retweets *19% of tweets*

174 user mentions *0.05 per tweet*

143 replies *5% of tweets*

2,040 links *0.64 per tweet*

112 hashtags *0.04 per tweet*

1,831 tweets retweeted *57.8% of tweets* a total of **8,764** times *4.79 per retweeted tweet*

1,095 tweets favorited *34.5% of tweets* a total of **2,992** times *2.73 per favorited tweet*

Tweet history

Users most retweeted

@aisha2islam	102	@AhmadAlazyabi	41
@Latifh_dleehan	13	@ed_library	9
@FowzAA400	8	@arif2085	7
@Teachers_jazan	7	@BinmothB	5
@SaudiED	5	@majeeedayed	4

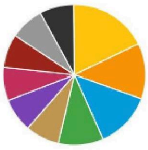
Users most replied to

@ksa_teacher	7	@gttfh_6	5
@rsrs7771	3	@___jana7	3
@sozan123n2	3	@lolo14181	3
@sulimanghasham	3	@asaail_2008	3
@fozeya1	2	@breq7alaml	2

Users most mentioned

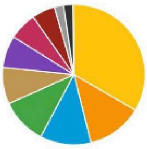
@gttfh_6	7	@Latifh_dleehan	5
@re7aab1402	5	@sozan123n2	4
@lolo14181	3	@rsrs7771	3
@___jana7	3	@sulimanghasham	3

@arif2085	3	@asaail_2008	3



Hashtags most used

#u0631u064au062au0648u064au062a	32	#u0627u0644u063au0627u0621_u0627u062cu0627u0632u0629_u0631u0639u0627u064au0629_u0645u0648u0644u0648u062f	12
#u0631u0633u0627u0644u0629_u0627u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645u064au0646_u0648u0627u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645u0627u062a_u0644u0643_u064au0627u0648u0632u064au0631_u0627u0644u062au0631u0628u064au0629	11	#u0627u0644u0646u0638u0627u0645_u0627u0644u0641u0635u0644u064a	10
#u0627u0644u0628u062fu064au0644u0627u062a_u0627u0644u0645u0633u062au062bu0646u064au0627u062a	8	#u0641u0636u064au062du0629_u0642u064au0627u0633_u0646u062cu0627u062d_10_u0628u0627u0644u0645u0626u0647_u0641u0642u0637	7
#u0627u0644u064au0648u0645_u0627u0644u0639u0627u0644u0645u064a_u0644u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645	6	#u0645u0633u0627u0628u0642u0629_u0627u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645_u0627u0644u0645u062fu0631u0628	5
#u0645u0622u0633u064a_u0627u0644u0645u0639u0644u0645u0627u062a	2	#u0627u0644u0646u0642u0644_u0627u0644u062eu0627u0631u062cu064a	2



Tweets most retweeted

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 10:11 PM - 30 May 2014 via Twitter for Android - 565 retweets 11 favorites [...]
ماهذه القسوة يا إدارة تعليم الاحساء : السماح للطالب طاعن معلمه بتادية الاختبارات وحرمانه من الدراسة شهرين.. ما ارخص حياة المعلم لدى وزارتنا

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 8:44 PM - 3 Jan 2015 via Twitter Web Client - 120 retweets 6 favorites [...]
رجاءمن كل من يقرا التغريدة ريتويت لا اراكمksa-teachers.com/forums/t241236حالة انسانية :مريض بالسرطان بحاجة لمساعدتكم بالعلاج ا□ مكروها

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 12:15 PM - 10 Jun 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 95 retweets 14 favorites [...]
عـــــاجـــــــلksa-teachers.com/forums/t236610 .. ألف مبرووووووووووك .. حكم قضائي بعودة الدرجة لدفعة 1421هـ بند 105 التفاصيل على الرابط

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 1:43 AM - 8 Jun 2014 via Twitter for iPhone - 67 retweets 12 favorites [...]
تعميم مخالف وبه استغلال للبديلات وتكليفهن باعمال ليست من مهامهن حسب التشكيلات المدرسية ريتويت لايقاف هذه المهازل http://t.co/yPkeKSc3LF

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 5:37 PM - 24 Dec 2014 via Twitter Web Client - 67 retweets 15 favorites [...]
قال أحد المستشرقين:إذا أردت هدم حضارة أمة فهناك خطوات ثلاث 1-هدم الأسرة 2-هدم التعليم 3-اسقاط القدوات والمرجعيات يعلم ا□ قطعوا شوطا كبيرا

Tweets most favorited

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 8:28 PM - 25 Aug 2014 via Twitter for Android - 25 retweets 49 favorites [...]
وسيتم نشر فهرسة مواضيع المرحلتينksa-teachers.com/forums/t238223المكتبة الشاملة لتحاضير وعروض وتوزيعات المرحلة الابتدائية المتوسطة والثانوية قريبا

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 9:37 PM - 5 Sep 2014 via Twitter for Websites - 27 retweets 39 favorites [...]
ksa-teachers.com/library/catego...جميع مايتعلق بالصف الاول الابتدائي ..مئات الملفات من تحاضير وعروض واوراق عمل

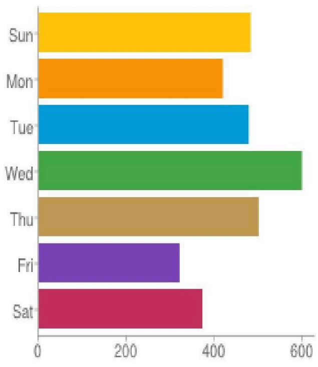
شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 9:51 PM - 5 Sep 2014 via Twitter for Websites - 23 retweets 31 favorites [...]
ksa-teachers.com/library/catego...جميع مايتعلق بالصف الثالث الابتدائي ..مئات الملفات من تحاضير وعروض واوراق عمل وتوزيعات حديثة .. #ريتويت مشكورين

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 9:58 PM - 5 Sep 2014 via Twitter for Websites - 28 retweets 31 favorites [...]

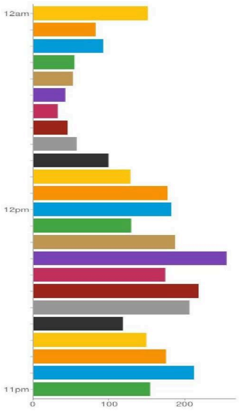
جميع مايتعلق بالصف الرابع الابتدائي ..مئات الملفات من تحاضير وعروض واوراق عمل وتوزيعات حديثة .. #ريتويت مشكورين ksa-teachers.com/library/catego...

شبكة المعلم والمعلمة @ksa_teacher - 1:17 PM - 20 Aug 2014 via Twitter for Android - 26 retweets 30 favorites [...]
#التقويم_الدراسي للعام الدراسي 1435/1436 هـ وإجازة شاغلي الوظائف التعليمية في جهاز الوزارة وإدارت التربية والتعليم
http://t.co/UNnEkd8Zhg

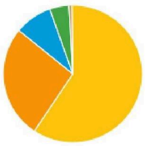
Days of the week



Hours of the day



Platforms most tweeted from

twitterfeed	1887	Twitter Web Client	842
Twitter for Android	277	Twitter for iPhone	142
Twitter for Websites	22