

The Impact of the Internet News on the Political Awareness of the Youth

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Abstract

The Internet is an interesting source of information for many people today. Many studies investigated the Internet as a means of communication but little attention was given to its role in enhancing political awareness and civic engagement among the youth. Recently the interest in politics is noticeably on the increase, especially among the youth in several countries. This article aims at describing and explaining the role of exposure to the Internet news in promoting political awareness and citizenship among the youth, by providing the Moroccan context as a case study. Over the last decades, communication has become much easier, smoother and less expensive thanks to the Information Communication Technologies (ICT). The Internet as a valuable public sphere provides several avenues that encourage the youth to involve in different disciplines such as education, economics, and politics. Moreover, the advancement of technology has invaded different areas in life; a case in point is the irresistible dominance of the Internet use in the age of digital news and information. Roughly all different types of traditional media, such as television news, radio news programs, magazine advertorials and newspaper articles have extended its version into this new sophisticated field, namely the Internet. Thus, based on an exhaustive review of literature, this article addresses some interesting issues related to civic engagement, the Internet use and political awareness among the youth. Eventually the article ends with some critical insights and directions for prospective research.

Keywords: The Internet, political awareness, the youth, democracy, online journalism

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1. Introduction

Nowadays young people, who might find reading print news as a conventional and traditional method, can resort to the Internet which offers an array of interactive websites, blogs, forums and news sources. Clemmitt (2008) alleges that “the Internet has been a huge boon for information seekers. In addition to sites maintained by newspapers and other traditional news sources, there are untraditional sources ranging from videos, personal Web pages and blogs to postings by interest groups of all kinds” (p. 625). He goes on to argue that “in the new online age, readers no longer have the luxury of depending on a reference librarian’s expertise in finding reliable sources” (p.625).

The increasing influence of the Internet on society has been recently dominant, and concurrently the Internet as a medium of news starts receiving an effect through different use patterns by the audience. “Indeed, the fate of this medium hinges on the flow of information from the users to the Website and back again. There can be no doubt that the main force in this unfolding saga will be interactivity” (Selnow, 1998, p. xiv). This interaction between the Internet and its users has bred an interest in online news which is ubiquitous and vital in the digital age. It is an aspect of democratization. Therefore, querying the role of exposure to the Internet in providing the audience with online news and how it improves their political awareness is vital and should be highlighted.

The Internet has evolved throughout history and has been all the time the main tool for seeking information. Deuze (1999) outlines the Internet’s importance as a news medium which “offers the audience the possibility to surpass the journalist in their search for information and their choices for the way in which information is presented and eventually gets to them” (p. 385). Moreover, Pavlik (2001) thinks that “today it can be said that the Internet is a journalist’s medium. The Internet not only embraces all the capabilities of the older media (text, images, graphics, animation, audio, video, real-time delivery) but offers a broad spectrum of new capabilities, including interactivity, on-demand access, user control, and customization” (p.3).

Noriss (1999) in his paper raises one interesting question concerning the Internet’s effect about the increase of political engagement and political information of ordinary citizens, he argues that “within the next few years as political uses of the net develop and evolve further, and as the online community widens and changes, we need to monitor the consequences for campaigns and elections, for civic engagement, and for virtual democracy in the Internet age” (p. 10). His further study (Noriss & Curtice, 2006) illuminates “the social and political consequences of the rise of knowledge societies, in particular the capacity of the Internet for strengthening civic engagement” (p. 2). Researchers have been concerned with how the Internet as a news source can be an effective tool for information searching, however very few studies were about the effect of the Internet on political

awareness among the youth. As for the increase use of online news particularly among the youth, it is crucial to investigate which factors encourage people to use, adopt and trust the Internet as a medium of political information.

Actually the Internet is such a gateway to recent news and information regarding local and international issues. Davis and Owen (1998) claim that “the Internet burgeoned with political information” (p.6). It is not only an effective tool which has brought change in the field of business and commerce but also an aspect of technology that has enriched the political awareness of people. None can deny that “the information revolution that is bringing so many changes to commerce and the structure of economies is also beginning to affect political systems, this revolution is creating an environment for politics that is increasingly information-rich and communication-intensive and these developments have precipitated much discussion about the implications of technology for politics” (Bimber, 2001, p. 53). The Internet’s role, in fact, has made online media more interactive and widespread than all the forms of traditional media. Therefore, the access to political online news is becoming more straightforward than before and people today are able to keep track of what is occurring on the national level if not at the international scale. The amount of political news on the Internet represents an aspect of modern journalism and it is becoming an alternative to the print media.

The Internet allows people to do a range of activities. People use electronic mails or maintain virtual conversations in different chat rooms to keep in contact with their distant friends. Some people use video games on the Internet to have fun and amuse. Others search for a variety of data and information via search engines. Other people resort to the Internet for the sake of getting weather forecast reports, celebrity news, international or local news, sport news, business news, and political news (Nozato, 2002).

Flanagin and Metzger (2001) claim that the Internet is a multidimensional aspect of technology, they came up with two major dimensions of the Internet usage. The Internet is either used as mediated interpersonal technologies, which seek to maintain social bonding, social relationship maintenance, persuasion and problem solving or it can be used in the form of mass communication, which serves informational and leisure purposes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Media Exposure

The pervasive use of the Internet as an informative medium has changed the information environment whereby activists, political figures and citizens function (Woodly, 2008). The study of Woodly (2008) focuses on blogs as an aspect of media in general and the Internet in particular; He argues that blogs are a sort of up-to-date technology that has modified “the process of agenda setting, elite opinion formation and even strategies of political mobilization” (p. 110).

Woodly (2008) explains how blogs have changed political communication today, “first, blogs seem to have an increasing influence on traditional media” (p. 118). This is clear obvious as blogs allow people to interact more easily and instantly, in addition they can discuss current political issues in a live and vivid space. “Second, they’ve proved themselves to be effective tools of communication in opinion mobilization. And finally, non-media elites have begun to use blogs to survey and influence the debates that interested citizens engage in” (p.118).

Zaller (1992) believes that media exposure is a decisive factor while measuring political awareness; he argues that “communication specialists prefer self-reports of media exposure” (p. 293). Self-reports means questions devised to the respondents for the sake of understanding the frequency of media use in addition to the nature of the relationship between the user and media.

In the same vein, Kentmen (2010) contends that “the mass media’s influence on individuals as a source of information and attitudinal orientations calls for a close study of how individuals’ awareness of political issues varies in relation to different media outlets” (p. 625).

Many studies in media literature have examined the effects of new mass media introductions, such as newspapers, radio or television, on political information of citizens. A case in point is the rate of voting in the elections as an event which represents political participation. Two interesting insights are to be deduced. First, the introduction of a particular new mass medium can have huge impact on political awareness of citizens as voters, on voter turnout, and eventually on the policy of economy. Second, the amount and nature of this impact importantly depends on the existing media landscape. For instance, Gentzkow (2006) argues that the introduction of television as a news medium has cut voter turnout. His argument is that television provides less political information as opposed to newspapers and radio; he asserts that political awareness and voter turnout decrease when the audience switches to television.

Along with the same line, Gentzkow et al. (2011) investigate the effect of newspapers’ introduction on voter turnout. They find that the advent of newspapers to a market increased the rate of voter turnout. “Newspapers may simply inform (or remind) people of the fact that an election is taking place. Newspapers also provide information about the issues at stake and the candidates’ characteristics and platforms. Most theories of voting predict that individuals will be more likely to vote when they are better informed” (Gentzkow et al., 2011,

p.2995). Whereas, they confirm that the major effect can be associated with the first newspaper which announces news. Likewise, Strömberg (2004) concludes that the introduction of radio as a news medium had an effect especially in rural areas where supplementary news sources are rare such as newspapers which are hard to obtain. As to the Internet, it is the latest innovation in mass media, and it has specific characteristics which distinguish it from traditional mass media.

Several studies have been conducted on whether the Internet crowds out traditional media or vice versa. Gentzkow (2007) for example suggests a model for discussing whether online and offline newspapers complement or substitute each other and he concludes that the Washington Post online version outperforms its printed version. The model he suggested is “the fitted model to ask whether the print and online newspapers are substitutes or complements, and how the introduction of online news has affected the welfare of consumers and newspaper firms” (Gentzkow, 2007, p. 714).

Moreover, George (2008) in his work claims that the Internet attracts people. He categorized them as young, highly intellectual and educated people who are influenced by the Internet and as a result caused the rate of reading printed newspapers to be very low.

Researchers have found that the Internet, particularly social networking sites and different blogs, have played an important role in enhancing interest and engagement in political communication (Coleman & Moss, 2008; Coleman & Wright, 2008). The relationship between the Internet and interest in politics has been the concern also of (Erikson, 2008; Kennedy, 2008).

In fact a lot of talk recently has been about the question of whether the Internet does meet the expectations of the audience when they are looking for the recent news, whereas people still believe that the Internet remains as a prominent spring of news for many people. Research in the field of media has revealed that the majority of online news users are frequently inclined to browse the Internet “to get information that is unavailable elsewhere, for convenience, and the ability to search for news on a particular topic” (Pew Research Center, 1998, p.5). In the light of this, it is crystal clear that the Internet news, political awareness and the youth are three interwoven and interrelated components of paramount importance in this article.

2.2. The Internet

The Internet is a mysterious innovation; it is like an endless ocean of information that provides people with easy ways of communication. The Internet refers to “the electronic network of networks that links people and information through computers and other digital devices allowing person-to-person communication and information retrieval” (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman & Robinson, 2001, p. 307). People all over the world believe that the Internet changes society in different areas of life and one of these areas is politics. People nowadays resort to the Internet to read news and get informed on politics via news websites, social networking websites, blogs, forums, videos, online magazines, just to name a few. The Internet creates a virtual space where people can interact; it offers opportunities for plenty of people who otherwise cannot talk politics in their face-to-face environments due to the taboos, discomfort and discomfiture associated with politics (Stromer-Galley, 2002).

Across the Internet, people can have access to virtual spaces designed particularly for political conversations. Moreover, political conversations inevitably spring among the web users even in other spaces which are designed for different types of conversations. The Internet represents new media which is a primary source for political information and “the new media enhance the public's ability to become actors, rather than merely spectators, in the realm of media politics” (Davis & Owen, 1998, p. 7). The Internet and other various online services “provide users with easy accessibility to political information and electronic communication” (pp.15-16).

2.3. Political Awareness

Political Awareness as its name suggests refers to the information that everyone possesses on politics. For example the information people know about the election campaigns and the candidates, voting, interest in political speeches, and the interaction between government and society (Chaffee & Frank, 1996). Political awareness in general is exemplified through the amount of information the individual receives on politics. Amer (2009) claims that political awareness has been investigated using various terminologies such as “political sophistication, political information, political knowledge and political expertise. Political awareness is primarily a function of acquiring knowledge about politics” (p. 359).

Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) are two prominent figures who discussed thoroughly the concept of political awareness and involvement in politics. According to their work, political awareness refers to the amount of factual information that voters possess about politics. “On the whole, political awareness means access to political information, political participation, media exposure, interest in politics and education—with political information being the best indicator overall” (Amer, 2009, pp. 359-360).

This leads us to define the term politics since we are talking about information related to politics. People

think differently about both what makes a social interaction political, and how a political activity is better interpreted, analyzed and explained. Heywood (2004) contends that “politics is a social activity; it arises out of interaction between or among people” (p. 52). Heywood (2004) outlines the history of politics and its importance in the public life by looking at some stances of some eminent figures in politics.

There is, for instance, a tradition which portrays politics favourably precisely because it is a ‘public’ activity. Dating back to Aristotle, this tradition has been kept alive in the twentieth century by writers such as Hannah Arendt (see p. 58). In her major philosophical work *The Human Condition* (1958) Arendt placed ‘action’ above both ‘labour’ and ‘work’ in what she saw as a hierarchy of worldly activities. She argued that politics is the most important form of human activity because it involves interaction among free and equal citizens, and so both gives meaning to life and affirms the uniqueness of each individual. Advocates of participatory democracy have also portrayed politics as a moral, healthy and even noble activity. In the view of the eighteenth-century French thinker, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see p. 242), political participation was the very stuff of freedom itself. Only through the direct and continuous participation of all citizens in political life can the state be bound to the common good, or what Rousseau called the ‘general will’. John Stuart Mill (see p. 256) took up the cause of political participation in the nineteenth century, arguing that involvement in ‘public’ affairs is educational in that it promotes the personal, moral and intellectual development of the individual. Rather than seeing politics as a dishonest and corrupting activity, such a view presents politics as a form of public service, benefiting practitioners and recipients alike (pp. 57-58).

Political awareness that people possess is an outcome of their interest in politics. Smith (1989) believes that “interest in politics presumably causes people to pay more attention to politics and thus to learn more about politics... but knowing a good deal about politics is likely to make people more interested in it” (p. 192). In the same vein, Amer (2009) believes that:

An individual’s interest in politics is important because it is interest that motivates citizens to follow political events and acquire information. Political interest is also considered to be a consequence, as well as a cause of political activity (Brady et al. 1995; Verba et al. 1978). Those who are interested in politics will try to acquire and retain political information that will ultimately lead, in turn, to higher levels of political information and participation (pp. 360-361).

It is the interest in politics which triggers some people to look for information on politics. Their motivation behind trying to figure out what is happening in the political landscape exposes them to plenty of political information displayed by the Internet and other media outlets.

2.4. The youth

Chaffee and Frank (1996) believe that “a political system must socialize its youths to become adult citizens, and there is a good deal of research on the role of mass media in this process” (pp. 55-56). Cohen and Kahne (2012) wrote a report published by the Youth and Participatory Politics Research Network (YPPRN) on new media and youth political action. The survey takes the youth as an active population for research and it strives to ascertain different issues related to the youth participation in politics in the new media age. The politicians in their speeches and election campaigns do not only depend on the Internet to disseminate their propaganda but also manage to target the most active, dominant and dynamic age category within society namely the youth. Kohen and Kahne (2012) in their report show the importance of the youth in the study and one of the conclusions drawn is that “Forty-one percent of youth ages 15 to 25 engaged in at least one form of participatory politics. These acts of participatory politics occur at rates that parallel many institutionally based activities, such as contributing to a political party, attending a meeting or campaign event, wearing a campaign button, or signing a petition” (p. x).

Studies on the youth starting from the 1960s reveal positive correlations between political knowledge and watching television news (Atkin & Gantz, 1978). The same relationships are found for the newspaper reading and the political information of the youth (Chaffee et al., 1970). This indicates that young people rely on both television and print media to get information about politics at that time. However, what makes this present research different is that it looks at the impact of the Internet news use on how youth get informed about politics.

The youth are a suitable population for studying media effects, because they are the active population within society who are likely to experience any social phenomenon. Furthermore, according to different studies (Pew research center, 2012) the youth remains the most age category which tends to use technology heavily.

2.5. The Arab Awakening and the Internet Revolution

In 2011, the Arab world started to witness a wave of changes at the political, economic and technological level. Above the financial crisis which has frozen some sectors in different countries, the Arab world suffers from a new crisis namely the political crisis. The Internet’s role obviously has a lion’s share of what took place in

different countries when it comes to the decline of some regimes. In effect, the youth's interaction with the Internet was a key reason to push some presidents to step down; a case in point is what happened in Tunisia and Egypt.

These recent political transformations of 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen have justified the substantial role of political online news through social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and the Internet in equipping citizens with what is going on at the political landscape. Some researchers who have been following the events' development during the Arab spring call it as "the Internet revolution" (Curran et al., 2013). Besides, changes in the field of mass media bring about new challenges for researchers who are interested in the relationship between technology use and civic activities and raise plenty of research questions and debatable issues about the impact of the Internet political news on people.

2.6. The Internet and Political Communication

To understand the useful role of the Internet in political communication and to what extent this area of study is worth investigating, Oates, Owen and Gibson (2006) believe that "the explosion of the Internet that started in advanced industrial democracies and has spread through much of the globe provides new and unexplored pathways for communication. The inclusion of the Internet in the media mix raises new questions and challenges for citizens, journalists, politicians and governments alike" (p.1). The Internet remains such a public sphere for everyone, especially young people simply because they can interact, exchange news and information instantly, spread recent news either on politics or sport and last but not least establishing new relationships. It is an escapable habit for them to use the Internet as part of their daily activities. This public communicative sphere is illustrated by Habermas (1974) as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens" (p. 49). In the same vein, Papacharissi (2002) regards the Internet as a public sphere for political discussion; he sees that "as public sphere, the Internet could facilitate discussion that promotes a democratic exchange of ideas and opinions. A virtual space enhances discussion; a virtual sphere enhances democracy" (p. 11). The Internet is a virtual place through which people can create new identities anonymously, display their opinions freely and without being concerned with other's reaction like in face to face communication, it is way of making communication easier.

The advantages of the technology in this respect lie in its global reach, the equal chances to participate in debate that it opens up and the level of interactivity that it offers. Some would also argue that the potential anonymity that comes with online communication is an advantage: exclusionary tendencies that come with recognition of class, race, gender and even accent are marginalised in the electronic forum. (Buckler & Dolowitz, 2005, p. 4)

In this regard, the advent of the Internet as a breakthrough has not only provided people with endless information on political happenings, but also made them as they live within a "global village" (McLuhan, 1962). Currently the access to online news puts forward more opportunities for young web users to be in the know concerning online political news, and therefore a decrease in the use of traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers, and editorials) and a growth in online media use is noticed. It is a digital age and a new epoch of modern journalism which increasingly influences the Internet users and sometimes shapes their thoughts. "This is the new world of the global village" (McLuhan, 1994, p. 93).

Communication technologies have noticeably developed and granted a range of ways for young people to adopt and use the new forms of media. The diverse categories of people including, young and old people, male and female, the poor and rich, are capable to take part in various communication activities, through different platforms, forums, blogs, social networks and chat rooms via the Internet connectivity coverage. That is to say, by virtue of the Internet, more people from different age classes can use the new media and then engage in an interaction with online political news regardless of gender, race, age and region. The remarkable adoption of the Internet and social media is stated by Pew Research Center in a late survey conducted between November 14th and December 9th, 2012 and revealed that young adults tend to use prominent social media websites. Whereas, other age groups are inclined to use other sites and services. Users of Internet under the age of 50 have in particular propensity to use a variety of social networking sites and those aged 18 years to 29 years are the most likely age group to use social media (83%). The study as well showed that women are more likely than men to use these social networking sites. Moreover the variable of region came into play in a sense that people living in urban places are remarkably more inclined to use social networking websites than the users of the Internet in rural areas.

Table 1. The landscape of Social Media Users

	% of internet users who....	The service is especially appealing to ...
Use Any Social Networking Site	67%	Adults ages 18-29, women
Use Facebook	67	Women, adults ages 18-29
Use Twitter	16	Adults ages 18-29, African-Americans, urban residents
Use Pinterest	15	Women, adults under 50, whites, those with some college education
Use Instagram	13	Adults ages 18-29, African-Americans, Latinos, women, urban residents
Use Tumblr	6	Adults ages 18-29

Source: (Pew Research Center, 2013)

So, the significance of studying the Internet as a medium of political communication is clear and there is no doubt that the Internet use has facilitated communication and made it as a precious opportunity for young people to communicate, read news, learn, react, share news, and establish virtual communities. All these activities and services have fascinated the Internet users and have penetrated into their social life. More interestingly, the Internet remains as a main source for political information.

Recently an increasing interest in political communication has permeated among the youth due to the Internet news which facilitated the way the youth get informed on politics nationally and internationally. The Internet offers different news sources, social networking websites and blogs which provide people with political information when engaging in political communication with each other. Yet, one of the most interesting and controversial questions in the study of political communication is how the mass media help people to become informed in politics. In this respect, the Internet plays an important role in political communication. According to a study conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (Pew, 2008), the number of American people claiming that the Internet is their first principle source of presidential election campaign news has escalated by 23 percent since 2004, whereas the number of people relying on television as their source of news has decreased by 4 percent.

Table 2. Presidential Campaign News: Internet Boom in 2008

Presidential Campaign News: Internet Boom in '08			
<i>First or second mentions</i>	<u>Oct 2004</u>	<u>Oct 2008*</u>	<u>'04-'08 Change</u>
Television	76	72	-4
Internet	10	33	+23
Newspapers	28	29	+1
Radio	15	21	+6
Magazines	2	0	+1
Other	3	2	-1
Don't know	2	1	-1

Figures add to more than 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

*Based on combined surveys conducted Oct. 17-20 and Oct. 24-27, 2008. [N=2,011]

Source: (Pew Research Center, 2008)

These figures therefore are a clue which indicates the importance of the Internet as a news medium that facilitates the way the audience receives political information. It is clear that the Internet starts to override other types of media because of its features which are lucidly expressed by Tolbert and McNeal (2003) in the following quotation:

In the past decade new communications technology has changed the way many people gather

news and participate in politics. The most important of these new technologies is the Internet, which is becoming the mass medium for the twenty-first century. The Internet combines the audiovisual components of traditional forms of media such as newspaper and television with the interactivity and speed of telephone and mail. It facilitates communication flexibility, allowing individuals to choose what information to access and when to access. It also permits users to exchange large amounts of information quickly regardless of geographical distance (p. 175).

2.7. *The Internet and the Moroccan Context*

Morocco in recent years has known a political change due to the Arab spring in different countries and thanks to the amendments of the constitution in 2011. Moreover the interest of youth in politics has increased especially after the parliamentary election of 2011 whereby the new government was appointed by his Majesty, the King Mohammed VI on 3rd January 2012. The Internet use during this period of time was remarkable, and the widespread talk among the youth was about politics in general and the election campaigns in particular. This also created an interest in the Internet use in order to get the latest political news, whereas resorting to the print news is limited. This raises the question of “whether the Internet replaces or supplements traditional media outlets such as newspapers and television” (Gaskins & Jerit, 2012, p. 191).

As a matter of fact Moroccan youth participation in civic activities and political life via the Internet is such a clue about the growing interest in politics. The opportunities of taking part in virtual discussions have allowed the youth to express their attitudes towards politics openly and clearly at least on the local level.

Morocco as an African country is one of the countries which use the Internet more than many other countries especially in North Africa. In June 30th 2012, the Internet World Stats, Usage and Population Statistics, conducted a survey concerning the rate of the Internet users in Africa, the statistics show that Morocco is the third country in Africa after Nigeria and Egypt. This implies that Moroccan youth are likely to use the Internet more than other young people from other African countries and it is an indicator of the fact that the Internet is connected to political awareness among the Moroccan youth. The below graphs show the Internet users in the world by geographic regions in 2012 and the top ten African Internet countries respectively.

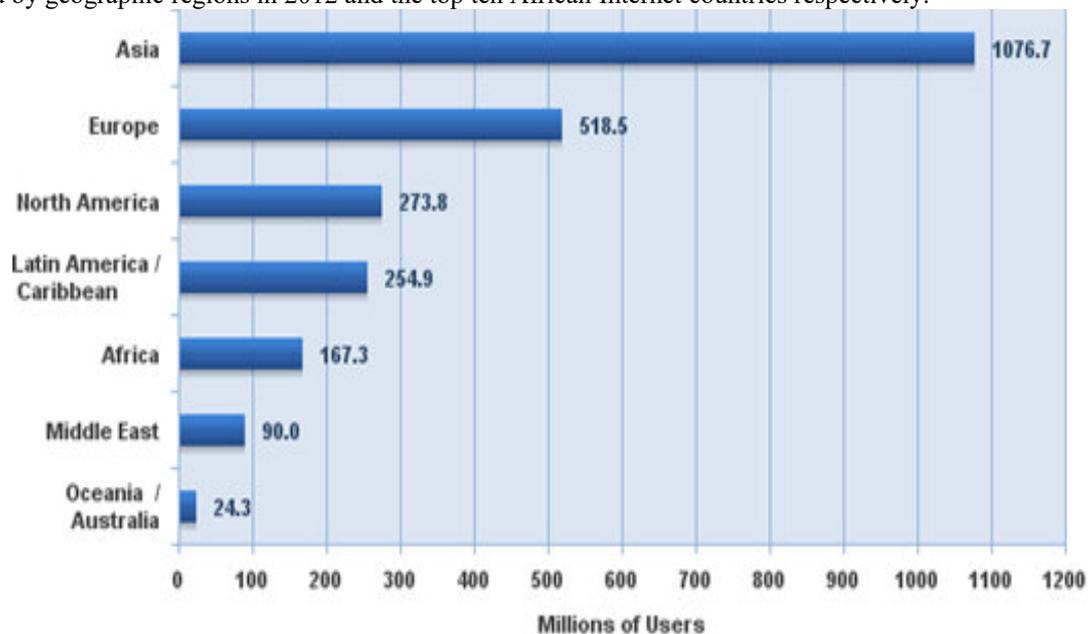


Figure 1. Internet Users in the World by Geographic Regions 2012.
Source: The Internet World Stats, Usage and Population Statistics (2012)

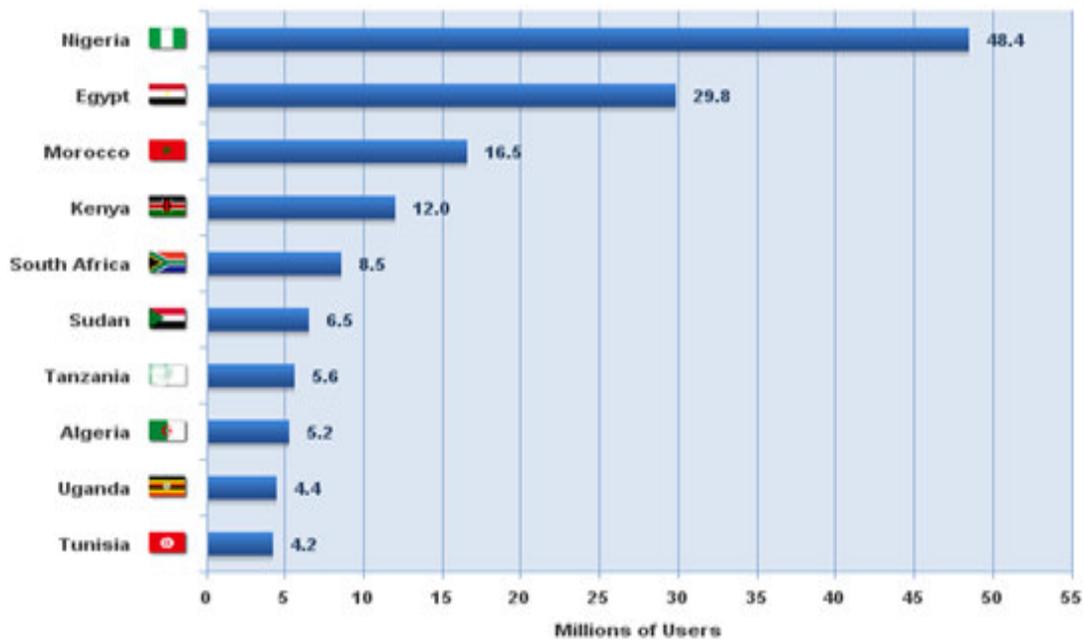


Figure 2. Africa Top 10 Internet Countries 2012.

Source: The Internet World Stats, Usage and Population Statistics (2012)

Compared to other African countries, Morocco is one of the countries where the Internet use is highly significant. The interest in political information has been remarkable especially after the Arab spring 2011 in different Arab countries. This interest in politics has urged the youth to seek political information in different media outlets particularly the Internet.

Some specialists of communication wonder whether the emergence and use of mass media in the Arab world would be an asset in political development (Hafez, 2001). Actually the advent of the Internet was heralded as a crucial power in the Moroccan political landscape. The Internet as a modern aspect of mass media has an effect on the Moroccan society and politics; this can be discerned in different critical studies conducted over Morocco where both mass media and politics contribute in the political development. Eickelman (2005) states that

An exclusive focus on religious extremism deflects attention from the more profound changes taking place throughout Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, and other places in the Arab world which are correlated with mass higher education and the new media, factors that have begun profoundly to affect how people think about authority and responsibility in the domains of religion and politics.

Throughout the Arab world, mass higher education has expanded significantly since the 1960s. As elsewhere in Muslim majority states, mass higher education has reshaped conceptions of self, religion, nation, and politics (p. 42).

3. Why to Reconsider the Relationship between the Internet and Politics

Researchers might tackle the link between the Internet and politics from the traditional perspective. In other words, usually the Internet is seen as a medium that serves to disseminate certain ideologies and a tool for propaganda, not to mention its role in instilling violence within societies. However, this view is somehow pessimistic and not fair. This way of looking at the role of the Internet leads to raise the question why and how should we reconsider the relationship between the Internet and politics?

First, the Internet as an eminent spring of information and political news in particular is becoming day by day more influential. For this reason, research in this arena is needed and much focus on the effect of the Internet political news on the youth should be allotted in the forthcoming researches. The previous research in the literature review was mainly about the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet as an aspect of technology; however, less attention was given to the role of exposure to the Internet news in enhancing political awareness among the youth. Oates et al. (2006) think that:

Young people have been using the Internet both to monitor conventional political processes, such as election campaigns, and to facilitate overt political activity. What researchers may be missing is proper empirical mechanisms for assessing the scope and intensity of this engagement. As Internet access has become nearly universal among young Americans, their facility with the technology has increased along with their trust in the veracity of the content on

the Internet. Young people have become producers of much political content, even as it remains largely outside the purview of mainstream media organisations and political elites (p.5).

Second, the political landscape in the whole world with special reference to the Arab world is changing towards democracy. This subtle change when it comes to the freedom of expression in the field of politics via the Internet was not noticeable in the past years either in Morocco or other Arab countries. Today the social networks and political news on the Internet play an essential role in supplying the youth with the latest developments concerning political scenery all over the world. Thus, we can notice the growing interest of young people in politics. Furthermore, the youth has recently started to use the Internet heavily in a high rate, yet they use it for different reasons. One should look at to what extent the youth really use the Internet to get political news, or its use refers to other reasons. One would say that certainly all the youth use the Internet for different purposes; however, the focus in this present article is on the use of the Internet news and its relationship with their political awareness.

Finally, measuring both exposure to media and political awareness as two key clues, will help prospective researchers to figure out deeply how the interplay between these two elements is useful in finding out the accurate measurement. Besides, comparing specifically young students has also significance simply because young people tend to use the Internet intensively. Moreover, taking into consideration other socio-demographic and socioeconomic variables (age, gender, field of study, educational level, and income) in studying the role of the Internet news in enhancing political awareness among the youth renders the research more significant and thought-provoking.

4. Conclusion

Since it was launched, the Internet has become a quick and rich source of information transmission. The World Wide Web as one of the vital services provided by the Internet is a sophisticated information system. More importantly, there are millions of sites connected through the universe in addition to an abundant amount of political information that people can use. Investigating the role of the Internet in promoting political awareness among the youth should be looked at from different perspectives and researchers should devote substantial research in this scope. The issue is significant due to many reasons, on the one hand, in past review of literature there is a lack of research related to the role of exposure to the Internet news in enhancing political information among the youth, on the other hand it is worth investigating the importance of the Internet not only in the field of education but also when it comes to political awareness among the youth. After 2011 which has been depicted as an eventful year due to the effects of the Internet on the uprisings in some countries, the youth have been following the main events related to national or international politics. In turn, Moroccan young people today are aware of what is taking place on the political landscape, yet this article serves to reveal how the youth get informed in politics? Does the Internet news use have an impact on political awareness? Do the youth attend news on the Internet or prefer other news media outlets? To answer all these questions, prospective researchers are required to consider new measurements and approaches in order to come up with effective findings and highlight how the Internet as a medium of news enhances political awareness and speeds up the process of democratization.

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