



KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
NEW MEDIA DISCIPLINE AREA

**SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON TELEVISION IN YEMEN: THE  
CASE OF BELQEES TV**

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MASTER'S THESIS

ISTANBUL, JUNE, 2018

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MASTER'S THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Kadir Has University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's in the Discipline Area under the program of New Media.

ISTANBUL, JUNE, 2018

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Hereby declare that this Master's Thesis is my own original work and that due references have been appropriately provided on all supporting literature and resources.

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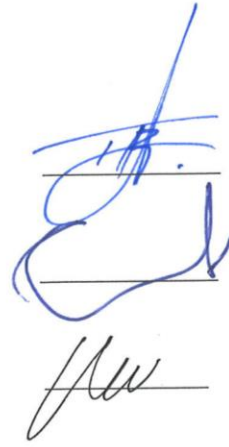
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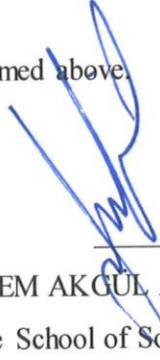
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## ABSTRACT

MOHAMMED ALRAGWI. SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON TELEVISION IN YEMEN:  
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Television industry experienced many changes in the digital era and social media is considered as the latest contributor to those changes as it becomes an important part of any TV station. This research is studying the impact of social media on television in Yemen with further focus on Belqees TV. The research includes reflections on the media convergence and its types of technological, structural, economic convergence and convergent audience. The study is using a mixed research method of quantitative content analysis and qualitative in-depth interviews in order to have comprehensive view of the research area. Findings of this study shows the role of social media in Belqees TV station, how much social media content is included in its programs, the motives and reasons of using social media as a source of content and how social media brings new organizational practices in the station.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Television, News, Entertainment, Media Convergence, Arab Spring, Yemen, Belqees TV

## ÖZET

MOHAMMED ALRAGAWI. YEMEN'DE TELEVİZYONU ÜZERİNDEKİ SOSYAL MEDYA ETKİSİ: BELQEES TV ÖRNEĞİ, YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ, İSTANBUL, 2018.

Televizyon sektörü, dijital çağda birçok değişiklik yaşamış olup, sosyal medya bu değişikliklere sevk eden gelişmelerin son örneğidir. Sosyal medya herhangi bir TV kanalının önemli bir parçası haline geldiği için bu değişimlere en son katkıda bulunan etken olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu araştırma, sosyal medyanın Yemen'de televizyonculuk üzerindeki etkilerini inceleyerek olup, Belqees TV örneği üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Araştırma, medya bütünleşmesi ve teknolojik, yapısal, ekonomik bütünleşme ve bütüncül izleyici türleri üzerine düşünceler içermektedir. Araştırma, araştırma alanının kapsamlı bir şekilde görülebilmesi için derinlemesine nicel ve nitel içerik analizi görüşmelerden oluşan karma bir araştırma yöntemi kullanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın bulguları Belqees TV istasyonunda sosyal medyanın rolünü, programlarına ne kadar sosyal medya içeriğinin dahil olduğunu, sosyal medyayı içerik olarak kullanmanın nedenleri ve sosyal medyanın istasyonda yeni düzenleme uygulamaları nasıl getirdiğini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Sosyal Medya, Televizyon, Haber, Eğlence, Medya Bütünleşmesi, Arap Baharı, Yemen, Belqees TV

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The introduction of internet changed significantly the way of communication in the personal and global levels. Since the 90's, the permeation of the internet and other new digital communication technologies has provoked deep changes in the so-called legacy media, including transformations in television consumption and production patterns (Owen 1999). The new tools and platforms such as instant messaging, the World Wide Web, RSS feeds, wikis, blogs, forums and social network sites allow individuals to freely contribute to information creation and dissemination. And as the importance of communication technologies increases in people's lives (Bergström 2015), communication becomes easier and faster with more opportunities for people to act simultaneously as receivers and providers as well. Eventually, as technology continues to develop, viewers gain more importance and play more active role in traditional media by assisting the media industry with new sources for developing new products and services.

Montpetit (2014) claimed that the internet is changing the TV business forever, and Gibson (2012) confirmed that by arguing that social media is augmenting our experience with television as it affects the production, consumption and dissemination of its content. People now are enjoying more opportunities and freedom to create their own news and get the other side of the stories by receiving news from the internet which is perceived as free of control (Rosenstiel 2005). After the existence of social media, we all become content producers; "We produce and package the moments that make up our lives — every day, sometimes several times a day — across myriad platforms and interactions. We have clearly entered a digital age that is being driven by the power of personal storytelling. Whether the tools are Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, or Twitter, life today is not only something you live; it's something you post" (Juris 2016).

Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter are making television more interactive and participatory. Users are able to offer their own commentary on the broadcast event, engage with other viewers and perhaps see those comments become part of the television content by displaying them on screen. Many producers started to open up their production process for audiences to engage in a dynamic process of co-creation that results in strong artistic outcomes (Ouma 2013). Broadcasters and operators used to decide whether a TV show lives

or dies, but the internet shifted some of that power to the audience hands by providing something that television cannot provide; such as more personalized and interactive content. Consequently, TV channels are trying to cope with the new media by providing more interactive programs in order to build more solid relations with their audience and attract new ones.

As this research is highlighting the impact of social media on TV programs, the following chapter includes discussions on the types of media convergence and their contribution in changing the TV experience. Then the chapter of social media in TV industry explains the impact of social media on news and entertainment programs with further emphasis on the role of audience in bringing some changes into TV industry. The context chapter is talking about media in Yemen, with particular discussion of the impact of social media on Belqees TV in terms of communication, content production and organizational practices within the channel. The methodology chapter explains the research design and the data collection methods, followed by the finding and discussion chapter, which presents the figures of how much social media content is being used in the channel's programs and discusses the impact of social media in bringing new practices in the channel's organizational structure. Then the study ends with some general reflections and recommendations for further studies.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **MEDIA CONVERGENCE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Even though modern researchers still unclear whether new media represents a new domain, based on old theories, or requires completely new mind-sets and questions (Kalamar 2016), new media and its characteristics as “digital, interactive, computer mediated communication, hypertextual, virtual, networked, and simulated” (Lister et al. 2009, p. 44) has its strong effects on traditional media in all aspects of production, distribution and consumption.

New media technologies provide consumers with fascinating benefits that never been obtainable by old media. Consumers now can use the Internet to download television shows, listen to streaming of radios, and read newspaper articles online. The Internet gives audience a quality content at little or no cost (Price & Brown 2010). Making contents available online has several benefits to media companies too. First, there is a promotional value attached to this strategy by recruiting new viewers online. Second, providing the latest episodes of TV series online helps viewers stay up to speed on recent developments and help networks to combat viewer erosion. Third, this enables distributors to compile more precise measurement figures for viewership on multiple platforms.

However, placing content online caused some challenges to media conglomerates. Programs aired on basic cable or satellite service generate revenue from advertising, and the advertisers use these programs because they are unavailable elsewhere; however, this service is diminished when the company opts to stream its programs online for no cost. Indeed, sales figures are declining for traditional, acquisition- and ownership-based models of media consumption. For instance, Wholesale DVD revenue dropped by 44 percent from almost \$8 billion in 2009 to \$4.47 billion in 2010. In the same period, CD sales fell off by 47 million units (Marx 2013). This issue forces networks to incorporate rights to online streaming into contracts, and decisions to making content available online depends on the licensing agreements that are made for each individual series or program. New media caused a change in the distribution process that the conglomerates used to maintain over film and television in the analog era and their old ways of producing media, marketing content, and connecting with their audiences are shifting as well (Perren 2010).

Consequently, as many media corporates continue to struggle to monetize their content, a grassroots organization called 'Creative America' backed by a broad coalition of more than ten film studios, TV networks and entertainment industry labor groups including NBC Universal, CBS, Viacom, Sony Pictures, Warner Bros, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, and many other media conglomerates, joined a campaign to support a congressional antipiracy legislation designed to grant enforcing agents wide-ranging authority to prosecute people and websites engaging in media piracy (Verrier 2011).

The existence of new viewing outlets such as YouTube and Hulu drives audience away from TV screens because of their lovely features of selectivity and self-control by users themselves. These outlets may violated the copyrights, but they managed to overcome this problem by signing agreements with media corporations to legally broadcast video clips from TV shows. For instance, YouTube signed an agreement with NBC Universal Television, to legally broadcast video clips from shows such as *The Office*. In 2006, the company, which showed more than 100 million video clips per day, was purchased by Google for \$1.65 billion ("Google Buys YouTube", 2006). As of 2010, YouTube shows more than 2 billion clips per day and allows people to upload 24 hours of video every single minute. To secure its place as the go-to entertainment website, YouTube is expanding its boundaries by developing a movie rental service and showing live music concerts and sporting events in real time. Likewise, in January 2010, Google signed a deal with the Indian Premier League, making 60 league cricket matches available on YouTube's IPL channel and attracting 50 million viewers worldwide (Timmons 2010).

Hulu website was established in 2007 following a deal between NBC Universal, News Corporation, and a number of leading Internet companies (including Yahoo!, AOL, MSN, and MySpace), the site gave users access to an entire library of video clips as well as older hits from the studios' television libraries without charge and syndicated its material to partner distribution sites. Even though Hulu is only available to viewers in the United States, it became the premier video broadcast site on the web within 2 years. In July 2009, the site received more than 38 million viewers and delivered more videos than any site except YouTube. In 2009, Hulu generated an estimated \$120 million in revenue and increased its advertiser base to 250 sponsors (Salter 2009). Its advertising model appeals to viewers, who need to watch only two minutes of promotion in 22 minutes of programming, compared with 8 minutes on television. Limiting online sponsorship to one advertiser per show has helped to

make recall rates twice as high as those for the same advertisements on television, benefiting the sponsors as well as the viewers (McFadden 2010).

On the other hand, Hulu model has been too successful for its own good, threatening the financial underpinnings of cable TV by reducing DVD sales and avoiding carriage fees. In 2009, Fox pulled most of the episodes of its *'Always Sunny in Philadelphia'* show from Hulu's site. Per the networks' request, Hulu also shut off access to its programming from Boxee, a fledgling service that enabled viewers to stream online video to their TV sets. And the distribution chief of Turner Network Television (TNT) refused to stream episodes of *'The Closer'* show on Hulu's site as he said "We have to find ways to advance the business rather than cannibalize it" (Rose 2009). Yet, TV stations realize that if they do not re-produce their own contents to fit online audience, they may eventually lose their value. Salter (2009) claimed that when a viral video of the *Saturday Night Live* short "Lazy Sunday" hit the web in 2005, generating millions of hits on YouTube, but NBC did not earn a dime. So, broadcast networks such as the Big Four and the CW have also begun streaming shows for free in an effort to stop viewers from watching episodes on other websites (McFadden 2010). All those new practices in the media companies led to the existence of a new unified and interrelated media known as media convergence.

## **2.2 Types of Convergence**

Media convergence is one of the partially new concepts that focuses on explaining the current emerged and interconnected feature of media. However, things may not just be combined or overlapped to form a convergent new way of communication. Pool claimed that "Convergence does not mean ultimate stability or unity. It operates as a constant force for unification but always in dynamic tension with change" (1983, p. 10), and Jenkins sees convergence as a point "Where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways" (2006, p. 3).

The convergence phenomenon has been debated among scholars over years, and different scholars had their own different views focusing on various aspects of this concept. For instance, Jenkins claimed that Pool's *Technologies of Freedom* (1983) was probably the first book to lay out the concept of convergence as a force of change within the media industries as he said:

A process called the "convergence of modes" is blurring the lines between media, even between point-to-point communications, such as the post, telephone and telegraph, and mass communications, such as the press, radio, and television. A single physical means—be it wires, cables or airwaves—may carry services that in the past were provided in separate ways. Conversely, a service that was provided in the past by any one medium—be it broadcasting, the press, or telephony—can now be provided in several different physical ways. So the one-to-one relationship that used to exist between a medium and its use is eroding. (2006, p. 23)

Some other subsequent definitions of convergence were mostly referring to convergence in media technologies. For example, Jenkins (2006) argued that old media never die or fade away. What dies are simply the tools we use to access media content such as the 8-track cassettes, the Beta tape, CDs and MP3 files. Delivery technologies become obsolete and get replaced; media, on the other hand, evolve. Old media are not being displaced. Rather, their functions and status are shifted by the introduction of new technologies. Latzer had similar definition of convergence as he argued that “Technological convergence is playing a leading role. It stands for a universal digital code across telecommunications and electronic mass media, for common protocols (IP), which are used for different technological (hybrid) platforms/networks (fixed-wire and mobile) and lead to service-integrating devices, such as TV-capable smart phones” (2013, p. 8). And Kalamar emphasized on the same aspect as he said that “The condition for the understanding of convergence is its technological basis” (2016, p. 192).

However, Lister et al. (2009, p. 202) agreed that convergence refers also to “The merger of media corporations in an attempt to provide a horizontal integration of different media products across a range of platforms”, and Kalamar (2016, p. 191) confirmed the same meaning of convergence as it “stands for media consolidation synonym”. Moreover, we can see clearly from the practices of the traditional media and telecommunication companies that they are making some changes in their business model in order to adopt to the ongoing changes in the media sector. This new business model is considered to be the example of organizational convergence which Bromley (1997) argues that is not a new phenomenon in the media sector, because journalists usually work simultaneously for radio, television and newspapers, and setting of digital newsrooms also facilitate cross-media work. Media



conglomerates are not sending several teams to cover a single story for television, radio, newspaper and digital outlets anymore, especially after the wide use of Web 2.0, digital TV, social media and wireless communication, but instead, one journalist, with the right skills and tools, can be assigned to cover any story for more than one media outlet at the same time. This new phenomenon is named as the ‘media convergence’, which refers to the process of blurring lines between individual and mass communication, traditional media and their sub-sectors and focuses on the integration of wired and wireless communications (Latzer 2013).

Moreover, Lawson-Borders (2006, p. 4) defines convergence as “An ensemble of concurrent possibilities of cooperation between printed and electronic media in the distribution of multimedia contents through use of the computer and Internet”. This means that the Internet becomes the gathering source of contents generated by different individual or corporate users and distributed through different platforms. Likewise, Pavlik (1996, p.132) defines convergence as the “Coming together of all forms of mediated communications in an electronic, digital form, driven by computers”, which confirms the disappearance of the traditional frontiers between old and new media sectors and offers more opportunities for the audience to participate actively in the process of content production.

The introduction of Web 2.0 enabled users to take more active role and create new terms of multimedia content consumerism, interaction and personalized use of internet environment (Kalamar 2016), and the interactivity feature of social media allowed its users work simultaneously as consumers and producers of the new content, which results in forming what we can call a ‘convergent audience’ (Bruns 2006). Currently, social media has become one of the media that is most commonly coupled with TV (Proulx & Shepatin 2012) and “As more people engage with social media, the volume of online conversations about television content while shows and commercials are airing within those platforms will increase” (Wieland 2013, pp. 9-10).

TV programs are utilizing the social media platforms to increase audience engagement by allowing broadcasters to actively develop dialogue with their viewers in order to understand their needs and get their feedbacks on the broadcasted contents. Today, “audience represents the public on one side and consumerism on the other” (Kalamar 2016, p. 191) and the content lifecycle can also be extended through convergence as the audience, days after the show, still continue to watch, comment and share the same content. Jeremiah Zinn from MTV Networks

said at a 'VideoNuze' event in New York, that "Overlaying commentary and contests on TV reruns extends the life of that content and can make it relevant even during a second or third airing", this audience behavior affects negatively the concept of Prime-time, as audiences simply download or time-shift to the program they wish to watch at the time (Ash 2011).

Another type of convergence is the economic convergence which occurs when a company controls several products or services within the same industry or when a single company may have interests across many kinds of media (McFadden 2010). Cook (2015) also stressed that this type of convergence aims to reduce competition on media market and form a homogenous media environment, where the same information reaches the consumer in different forms. For example, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation is involved in book publishing (HarperCollins), newspapers (New York Post, The Wall Street Journal), sports (Colorado Rockies), broadcast television (Fox), cable television (FX, National Geographic Channel), film (20th Century Fox), Internet (MySpace), and many other media outlets.

In short, from the literature review we can break down 'convergence' into four important types; technological convergence, structural convergence, convergent audience and economic convergence. Technological convergence where all sorts of media outlets, be it, television, radio, newspapers, computers, MP3, CD, DVD, webs, and many others outlets being combined into a single device. Second, structural convergence refers to the combination of media companies, products, users, producers, and processes into smaller groups with multi responsibilities. Third, convergent audience where consumers play an active role in rating, commenting, sharing, and making conversations about TV content or producing new content to be shown on TV. Fourth, economic convergence where a single company have interests across different kinds of media.

Since this research is more concerned with the interconnection between old and new media, particularly social media platforms, some scholars' definitions falls into this aspect. For example, Jenkins (2006, pp. 2-3) said that "By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want....Convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content."

One of the best examples of ‘media convergence’ is the ‘Dalet Galaxy’ software program which works as a Media Asset Management (MAM) platform tailored for end-to-end news production and distribution workflows. In this platform, media organizations can ingest all sources of media, be it wires, videos, audio, images or scripts, with all the tools for news agencies to plan, collect, research, write and manage stories, edit video and audio, and distribute instantly to television, radio, web Content Management Systems (CMS) and social media sites, such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. Then one story can be written and modified based on the final distribution outlets by only one content producer (Coutts-Zawadzki 2016).

### **2.3 Social Media and Convergence**

Social media can be simply defined as a “Group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 60). Indeed, Van Dijck (2013) claimed that most Web 2.0 platforms started out as indeterminate services for the exchange of communicative or creative content among friends who adopted a specific role of online interaction and developed a mediated routine practice. Eventually, these platforms (Blogger, Wikipedia, Myspace, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube and Twitter) began to offer web tools that sparked old and new online communication tactics which resulted in a massive usage by mostly all sorts of companies working in any type of business.

Van Dijck (2013) in her book *‘The Culture of Connectivity’* identified four major categories of social media. First, the “social network sites” (SNSs) such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and Foursquare. These platforms primarily promote interpersonal contact between individuals or groups. Second category concerns sites for “user-generated content” (UGC); they support creativity, foreground cultural activity, and promote the exchange of amateur or professional content such as YouTube, Flickr, Myspace, GarageBand, and Wikipedia. The third category is described as the trading and marketing sites (TMSs): these sites principally aim at exchanging products or selling them like Amazon, eBay, Groupon, and Craigslist. Finally comes the play and game sites (PGS) category, where users enjoy using platforms like FarmVille, CityVille, The Sims Social, Word Feud, and Angry Birds.

The role of the audience started to be considered as a way of innovation and viewers got the chance to be engaged with TV programs through new media technologies (Deery 2003).

Furthermore, Reitz (2012) argues that audiences have embraced social media in order to communicate with others who are physically distant. They also started to communicate with media companies in several ways such as voting on their favorite contestant or expressing their opinion on the social media page of the show. As a result, the interaction between the audience and broadcasters provides an opportunity for the two parties to understand each other and develop new content that meet the need of both of them. This new engagement and active participation of audience resulted in shifting or balancing the power between broadcasters and viewers. Thus, through interaction and dissemination of content, social media can help to establish authentic relationships between the audience and the broadcasters. And the act of co-creation as stated by Brown and Ratzkin (2011) can be deeply fulfilling for both audience and programmers, and a bonding experience for all concerned.

Convergence requires media companies to rethink the old assumptions about what it means to consume media. New media consumers are active but less loyal to media networks. They are more socially connected and noisy. Media producers should respond to these newly empowered consumers by encouraging them to have more participatory role in the production and distribution process. Convergence represents an expanded opportunity for media conglomerates, since content that succeeds in one sector can spread across other platforms (Jenkins 2006). The 'producer' nowadays is not a single individual or company anymore, it is what Bruns (2006) sees as representing the unification of producer and consumer in an interactive environment consequently forming a new perspective of seeing the media audience.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA IN TV INDUSTRY**

#### **3.1 Social Media and TV News**

I believe that the first impact of social media occurred on the news industry, where it affected how news is being gathered, processed, transmitted and received. The top-down model of journalism is obviously affected by social media; journalists are not fully playing the role of gatekeepers any more, but news consumers themselves are playing more active role in the process. Traditionally, news consumers were communicating with news producers by sending letters to news editors, but the introduction of “Web 2.0 challenges news organizations to extend the level of their direct engagement with audiences as participants in the processes of gathering, selecting, editing, producing, and communicating news” (Kerrigan & Graham 2010, p. 316). And the integration of social media with television news changed hierarchies and roles inside news organizations, shifted the boundaries between producers and consumers, and blurred the definitions between audiences as users, fans, citizens and publics (Gillespie 2013). This modern journalism allows its readers to participate actively in the news production process and gives them the opportunity to send their personalized feedback to key writers in the media industry (Thomas 2013). And this bottom-up trajectory offers greater flexibility and control to base-level journalists who seek to adopt technologies and incorporate them in their production practices (Bivens 2015).

News gathering process is experiencing some improvements like never before. For instance, as the traditional news gathering tools such as observations, telephone conversation, research and interviews, the internet provides new sources for journalists to find more stories. In the news-gathering phase of news production, journalists could exploit digital media tools like social media to improve their news gathering and acquire greater control over decisions about their news items (Bivens 2015). This type of newsgathering and disseminating stories has become an integrated part of online journalism, fostering access to information and becoming a particular form of broadcasting (Kaplan and Haenlein 2012). In addition, Kevin Bakhurst, the editor of the BBC News Channel 2005-2011, confirms that “many of our leading journalists and presenters now incorporate social media platforms into their work” (Eltringham 2012).

Bakhurst, the editor of the BBC News Channel 2005-2011, mentioned three highly valuable roles of social media in BBC journalism:

News gathering; it helps us gather more, and sometimes better, material; we can find a wider ranges of voices, ideas and eyewitnesses quickly. Audience engagement; how we listen to and talk to our audiences, and allowing us to speak to different audiences. A platform for our content; it's a way of us getting our journalism out there, in short form or as a tool to take people to our journalism on the website, TV or radio. It allows us to engage different and younger audiences. (2011, p. 10)

Indeed, platforms of Facebook, Myspace, Tumblr and Twitter are being associated with content production in many TV channels. Newman (2009) confirms that these social media platforms started being used at the BBC News during the July 7, 2005 London bombing attacks, commonly called “7/7”. For instance, during the London bombings, online media platforms helped to spread news and information as BBC received 22,000 e-mails and text messages, 300 photos, and several video sequences on the day of the attacks (Hermida & Thurman 2008).

The London bombing might be the event that pulled the trigger to attract the attention of news corporations to the potential role of social media in news production. And the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, 2009 Iranian elections and 2011 Arab Spring are amongst the international news stories broadcasted on BBC News where the role of social media in journalism was important for the institution; not just at the User Generated Content (UGC) level but also in terms of social media uses in journalism (Belair-Gagnon 2013). When a plane crashed in New York’s Hudson River “dozens of New York based Twitter users started sending ‘tweets’ about a possible plane crash in the city. The news spread like wildfire across Twitter verse. Indeed, Twitter users broke the news of the incident around fifteen minutes before the mainstream media alerted viewers and readers to the crash. The first recorded tweet about the crash came from Jim Hanrahan, aka Manolantern, four minutes after the plane went down, who wrote: "I just watched a plane crash into the hudson riv [sic] in manhattan” (Beaumont 2009).

In May 2009, the New York Times hired its first social media editor to expand the use of social media networks and publishing platforms to improve New York Times journalism and deliver it to readers. Also early in 2009, Sky News in the UK appointed a Twitter correspondent whose main responsibility is to cover breaking news. BBC also appointed its first social media editor in late 2009 to help the BBC team of reporters and producers engage more proactively with social networks as newsgathering and distribution channels for journalism (Bunz 2009). As of 2010, the BBC has 23 journalists working in a UGC center to process information, photos and text coming in from the general public. CNN also has a UGC site and 'iReport' is the section of CNN.com where the stories, photos, texts and videos are uploaded by the audience (Alejandro 2010).

As the time goes on, the use of social media content on TV programs is getting more attention from the broadcasters as they realize its importance and excellent feature to attract more viewers and make programs look closer to what the audience want. Subar (2014) stated that starting from the fourth week of June 2014, "The Today Show's Orange Room will feature trending topics live on an interactive touch-screen, powered by real-time data from Facebook. News anchor Carson Daly will be able to swipe through posts on the trending feed to show audiences what people across the country are talking about, and can then tap through a topic to find related Facebook content. From updates on top sporting events like the World Cup to breaking news to exciting celebrity stories".

However, social media guidelines e-mailed to journalists at Sky News in February 2012, included a request to send breaking news to the news desk before posting it on Twitter in order to ensure that the "news desks remain the central hub for information going out on all [Sky] stories" (Halliday 2012). I believe that the audience's interaction to any online content, especially news, in any social media platform, is an indicator of its newsworthiness. Comments might be the most preferred interaction by journalists because they use them productively to improve the current story or create other stories, which the readers are talking about already. Nielsen, a global information measurement company in the United States, conducted studies on social audiences in 2013 which shows "a correlation between the number of comments on a program and an increase in traditional audience viewing figures for a program" (McBride 2015, p. 11).

In 2009, Huffington Post interviewed Biz Stone, Twitter co-founder, and he commented on how surprised he was at how quickly and expertly news organizations like the New York Times, CNN and others began to use Twitter as he said “they just jumped in and impressed us with how they engaged, and their hybrid approach. Reuters, for example, began watching Twitter for trends, and found it worked. We gave help, support, and even our API (application programming interface) to the Reuters Lab people. Then CNN began using us to access information, and to find and create stories. Rick Sanchez at CNN, for example, is using both Facebook and Twitter and getting real time feedback and the Los Angeles Times took the Twitter feed about the wildfires and put it on their home page” (O’Connor 2009).

However, depending of the users’ content for news stories can be risky. Two media practitioners in BBC and AFP argued the accuracy and trust of social media stories. Alejandro (2010, p. 13) stated that Nic Newman, Future Media and Technology Controller, in BBC UK said that “for news gathering: trust, accuracy and identity are the main risks. Are people who they say they are? For news distribution, it’s resourcing ...to do this effectively and handle two-way implications” and Roberto Coloma, Bureau Chief, Agence France Press (AFP) Singapore said “the main risk of using social media for news gathering is accuracy. As for news distribution, you lose control over your information with each layer of transmission, as people condense, distort, interpret and comment on variations of the original report” (Alejandro 2010, p. 25).

The distance between professional and amateur journalists has shrunk because of the power of the Internet and social media. And regardless of the risks of using social media as a source of news, especially with regard to the credibility, authority, reputation and trustworthiness of the news organizations, many producers tend to include contents coming from social media in their programs. This usage of social media content is practiced in two ways; putting the content in a specific segment of the program, where news presenters will often end a segment on a particular subject by reading out certain comments obtained from viewers on Twitter (Thomas 2013) or produce a separated program focusing totally on social media contents.

News houses and journalists are getting the most out of social media by utilizing its content for their benefits. The availability of a massive amount of content on social media offers greater flexibility for journalists to adopt and incorporate the content in their production practices. Newman (2009, p.36) mentioned in his study that Robert Peston, BBC Business



Editor, said that “The comments are fantastic, though you do get some that are fatuous and rude. The key thing is that they give a sense of what resonates with people. And some people do have great ideas. It has certainly given lots of ideas angles to look at”. On the other hand, many journalists see social media content as confusing, distorting and superficial. And the fast distribution rate of social media content effects the news organization by rising issues about their authenticity and trustworthiness, especially when they are competing for breaking and exclusive news.

### **3.2 Social Media and TV Entertainment**

The easy and self-control way of finding entertaining content online encourages more people to use social media as their source of entertainment instead of watching TV programs or movies. Indeed, “Social networking is in its own right a reality show made for the web. It is its own form of entertainment” (Solis 2012). TV shows rating also becomes more dependent on the reviews and comments of social media users, “the more a show is discussed by the viewers, the more are its prospects of remaining popular in the market. Even simple hashtags and informal reviews like ‘MustSee’ make it easy to track the conversation and help determine the faith of the movie or series” (Saha 2017).

The best example for a successful effect of social media on TV entertainment is the *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* where producers made use of social media and digital content platforms to further expand the show’s brand. Ellen DeGeneres, the show host, has more than 150 million followers across these social media profiles and is the most followed TV personality on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, reaching and engaging with an incredible number of fans. She is ranked as the number one creator of digital content online, with more than 1.1 billion total cross platform views (The Oracles 2017). This success lead to huge expansion in the digital entertainment which eventually resulted in the creation of Ellen Digital Network. Social media platforms were not used only to market the show but to create more engagement and strong relations with the audience too. In the case of #MadeByYou TV Show, Ellen loves sharing the best videos sent in by her TV show viewers and online fans. Ellen’s team selects the best of these clips to create weekly episodes of #MadeByYou which debut on EllenTube (Petski 2016).

The interactive nature of social media encourages broadcasters to actively develop dialogues with their viewers in order to understand their needs and produce more personalized content

for them. For example, the producers of ‘Offspring’, an Australian television show broadcasted its first episode on August 2010, shaped story arcs as a result of online comments. After analyzing online comments on the show, producers discovered that viewers were interested in the ‘lifeguards’ character, therefore they changed the show in 2012 to reflect the lifeguards much more strongly. Producers always seek to get immediate feedback to help them decide whether they are on track for their target audience or not, and definitely social media platforms are the best place to make that conclusion (Ouma 2013).

Additionally, the season premiere of ‘The X-Factor’ show gathered 1.4 million comments, peaking at 13.374 comments per minute. The analysts on Twitter were busy with directing the users’ comments to the right team of the show. If a tweet is analyzed about an actor’s performance, a process should be in place to relay the detail to the production team, and if a post mentions the difficulty of downloading a digital copy of an episode, it should be forwarded to a customer service representative in the appropriate department. If a report is produced on volume and sentiment trends for a series, it needs to be available and communicated to marketing teams, executives, production teams and all relevant stakeholders within the organization (Benedict 2013).

We can see from the examples above that social media’s influence on TV entertainment is inevitable because of its giant benefits for TV programs. Goods (2016) claimed that as the new generation is more connected with entertainment industry and social media is the swiftest and most economical way to reach them, social media started to influence decision-making in the entertainment industry. Discussions on social media platforms become one of the evaluation tools of the success of any TV show. Greg (2014) confirmed that social media has clearly impacted and revolutionized the entertainment industry, as most television viewers and moviegoers consider it an irresistible form of entertainment. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are used to supplement viewing and changed viewers’ habits.

### **3.3 The Role of Audience**

As a result of its wide effect on the media industry, the social media content has successfully made its way into TV channels as an important segment of TV programs. Social media is now also being used as a supplementary tool for TV coverage. Nowadays, some professionals give blows-by-blows of events, trials and television broadcasts including contents from social media sites. And according to Julie Holley, the managing editor of television content at

Vocus Media Research Group, “social media has been a gold mine for TV because it is cheap to use, easy to implement technologically speaking (short and easy set-up time), and viewers want to be part of the conversation” (Vision 2013). Moreover, audiences are no longer being passive to TV programs, thanks to the interactive feature of new technologies, that enabled viewers to create two-ways of communication between viewers themselves in the first place, and between the viewers and the production company as well.

Today, many, if not all, television shows are trying to create more solid connections with their audience by offering them the opportunity to discuss different topics related to the content of their shows. For example, fans of *Project Runway* can go to Bravo’s Twitter page to see photos and comments on the show. In fact, different Twitter accounts about Project Runway are made by “super fans” which correct false information, create “spoiler alerts”, and promote show events. This practice confirms what Benedict (2013, p. 2) said that “the social media platform allows fans to directly help promote and encourage the growth of the audience base”.

Broadcasters are also using the advantages of social networks to deliver new types of content and interact with viewers beyond programs. For example, fans of *The Simpsons* can go to Fox’s Facebook page to see more photos and commentary and interact with other fans. Similarly fans of HBO’s *Game of Thrones* can visit the show’s Wikia page to contribute additional details and insights about the show. People aren’t just passively watching content on the media apps they download, they are actively consuming, sharing and interacting. This shift in viewing behavior isn’t surprising because big broadcast networks and major social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are pushing further into social TV. The viewing experience is no longer as we knew it, and this new phenomena requires broadcasters and content providers to stay dynamic and innovative to enrich the social television experience in order to stay relevant (Kamal 2015).

The interaction of social media users to the content of any TV program, whether this interaction is in a form of texts, photos, or videos, creates new content that can be re-used in the same program or feed other programs as well. For instance, The Sunday Brunch Executive Producer described how the production team uses social media to both solicit content for the formatted segments of live show (e.g. call outs for photos, videos along a weekly theme) and as a source of content in and of itself (often tweets, photographs, videos

posted on the above platforms by viewers reacting to the show's on-air content, which could then be integrated into the live show 'on the fly' (Strange 2017).

It seems that Twitter has been the most used social media platform as a tool of integration between the broadcasters and audience. Many TV programs such as drama, game show, talk show, sports, documentary, lifestyle and reality show tend to create a hashtag related to the program and encourage audience to discuss the program's content using the same hashtag in order to achieve certain goals; like promotion of the program, gaining higher viewership rates and collecting new ideas for the program's development. Producers leverage the audience conversations that occur on Twitter, and to sometimes incorporate those tweets back into the show itself. In other words, Twitter becomes not only a backchannel for the show, but it also becomes a part of the show itself (Harrington, Highfield & Bruns, 2013).

However, Twitter does not necessarily replace existing media channels, such as broadcasting or online mainstream media, but often complements them by providing its users with alternative opportunities to contribute more actively to the wider media sphere. This is true, especially when Twitter is used alongside with television, as a simple backchannel to live programming or for more sophisticated uses. For example, Australian breakfast television shows, such as '*Sunrise*', which incorporates viewers' voices and feedbacks from social media (Harrington 2010) and they regularly ask people to provide their thoughts about daily news topics through Twitter mentions of their official account. Similarly, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's live talk show '*Q&A*', which focuses mainly on political themes, asks its audience to use the #qanda hashtag, and it promotes the best tweets by displaying them at the bottom of the screen (Harrington, Highfield & Bruns, 2013).

In his article titled "6 TV Series That Integrate Social Media With Their Broadcast", Cohen (2014) mentioned examples of how TV programs integrate with social media as he highlighted how the TV series such as '*Bones*' (an American crime procedural drama television series) that aired on Fox in the United States from September 13, 2005, until March 28, 2017, created a new approach to solve crimes as fans engage in online conversations during the show to help solve the mystery. Using Twitter as their main platform, the show's social media gurus reply to Tweets while maintaining an open dialogue. Fans can vote for their favorite moment, get extra material, and help solve the crime via social media. This is a successful technique of getting audience members interested not only in each episode's

mystery but in the series itself. In addition, the producers of CBS's '*Person of Interest*' encourage fans to submit their photos via Facebook for a chance to see their photo appear on the show. The '*Syfy's Face-off*' series took a unique approach to use social media as a marketing technique. Instead of featuring live Tweets during the show, they monitor the Tweets during the first run of the episode. An hour later for the rerun, they feature Tweets from the fans. This gets the fans to watch the episode again to see if their Tweet shows up, and they call this tactic a "Tweet-peat."

Social media impact on TV is not always as positive as expected. Content in the social media platforms is being produced, distributed, and gets feedbacks instantly. Users are able to post content in real time and audiences do not have to wait until scheduled news broadcasts to receive information. Now, many TV channels have to choose whether to broadcast 'live' firstly on TV, or on social media platforms. Timing is another challenge for TV producers. In its report titled as '*Social Insights on the Television Network Industry*', Brandwatch, a social media monitoring company headquartered in Brighton, analyzed the social presence of 38 networks to understand the way they interact with audiences, and revealed major inconsistencies between when networks provide content and when the audience is most active in discussing television networks. The results show that "TV networks are failing to engage with their audiences at crucial times and consequently missing the chance to gain extra exposure and popularity. The report suggests that this failure could make audiences feel neglected or ignored when their mentions are not responded to in a reasonable timeframe" (Connelly 2015).

Users of social media are vulnerable to any content which may amplify the opportunity for content producers, but the real challenge is how to keep viewers interested in your content at all times. For instance, pages related to a TV show that is airing once a week has to keep telling stories about the show till the next episode is on air, and failing to do so may cause the show to lose some of its viewers. Even between seasons, audience has to be kept connected to the show too. Moreover, almost every show now is on social media and all other competitors are targeting the same audience. This competition requires every show to pose unique features that enable it to win over other shows. That is not everything yet, as social media requires continuous posting, content may not get the right amount of attention from viewers. This very competitive environment requires more efforts and ongoing innovation of new ways to attract more audience.

Additional challenge of the social media is its power to put an end to certain TV programs. For example, The Telegraph newspaper (2013) reported that *'The Wright Way'*, a British television sitcom written by Ben Elton, aired on BBC One channel in April–May 2013, did not return for a second series after a serious online criticism. Shane Allen, the BBC's controller of comedy commissioning, confirmed that “social media sites such as Twitter were partly responsible for the decision, as the program was swiftly and mercilessly savaged by online critics” (para. 3). Another victim of Twitter was *'The Good Life'* show, unscripted reality series, which was canceled after just six episodes because of the tweets of its star, Cee Lo Green, who caused controversy over his definition of “rape”. Green claims that women who are unconscious cannot be raped, saying people that have been raped “remember.” This statement drew immediate reaction especially from the anti-sexism and pro-equality site ‘UltraViolet’ which launched a petition to drop the show (Taylor 2017). Carley (2014) confirms that “the cancellation comes right after the singer’s controversial comments on Twitter about sexual consent”.

However, “television fans now make strategic use of social media to protest show cancellation” Guerrero-Pico (2017, p. 2072). The *'Timeless'*, a TV series of NBC network, is a good example of the fandom’s effects on TV programs, and its power to save beloved shows. The series quickly gained a loyal audience and even became the sixth biggest show on the network during the 2016-2017 season. But that was not enough to save it from the chopping axes, and NBC decided to cancel the series. Fans immediately launched efforts to get the show picked up by another network. And just three days later, the series star Matt Lanter appeared in a Facebook video to tell fans about their “successful” mission as NBC decided to un-cancel the show (Bruce 2017).

*'Fringe'* is another example of how the fans can save their favorite show from cancellation. Fringe is a science fiction series focuses on a special division of the FBI, which works in investigating a plethora of supernatural events related to so-called fringe science. In November 2010, FOX rescheduled Fringe from the stellar time slot of Thursdays at 9 p.m. to the inferior time slot of Fridays at 9 p.m., popularly known as the “Friday Night Death Slot” in American television, and which generally signals imminent cancellation for programs with low performance ratings. Consequently, fans launched an initiative called ‘The Fringe Movement’, which had the support of specialized media critics and the Fringe production team and cast, headed by actor Joshua Jackson and Fringe’s show runners, Joel Wyman and

Jeff Pinkner, who often joined these conversations from their own Twitter accounts, thereby creating a direct channel of communication between fans and the creative team. These conversations mainly comprised firsthand updates on the series' renewal status and constant calls to American viewers to tune into FOX's Fringe on Friday nights, and participate using FOX's official hashtag #Fringe. Fans dubbed this campaign as "Fringe Friday", and consequently, on March 24, 2011, Wyman tweeted Fringe's renewal for a fourth season, thanking the fandom for their support (Guerrero-Pico 2017). Shortly, social media is a double-edged sword which can help or harm TV programs based on the way is it used.



## CHAPTER 4

### CONTEXT

#### 4.1 Media in Yemen

Infoasaid (2012) claimed in its report that all local radio and TV stations in Yemen are run by the state-owned Yemeni General Corporation for Radio and Television (YGCRT) and are tightly controlled by the government. Dubai Press Club and Deloitte (2012) confirmed the government's exertion of a tight control over media outlets including television, radio and the written press in Yemen. In addition, Fanack (2017), an independent online media organization, claimed that before the unification of Yemen in May 1990, governments in the North and South Yemen banned private or party-affiliated publications and instead produced government-owned newspapers.

In July 2007, the statement of the Planning and International Cooperation Minister Abdul-Karim al-Arhabi triggered the race for private ownership of TV channels as he said "the government would encourage investment in field of information and remove any restrictions against setting up private TV channels and radio stations" (Almotamar Net 2007). Consequently, many private TV channels like *Al-Saeedah* started broadcasting in 2007, followed by *Suhail* in July 2009. Currently, Yemen has around 17 TV channels, where the government runs four terrestrial TV channels (Alwazir 2011).

Following the 2011 protests and ouster of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, some satellite channels in Yemen became popular as they began to give a wide coverage to the protests especially a London-based *Suhail* TV and Yemen's media started to feel a better media freedom as number of Yemeni-orientated satellite channels opened abroad. For example, *Yemen Shabab* TV was established in December 2011, followed by *Yemen Today* channel in January 2012 and *Al-Masirah* channel in 2012, then *Belqees* TV in October 2014 (Fanack 2017).

Radio is considered as more effective than newspapers in reaching a broad audience in the country particularly in rural areas. The first radio station, *Sana'a Radio*, started in 1946, whilst there were 14 radio stations in 2011 and all stations are owned by the government. The Ministry of Information administers and controls all broadcasting through the Yemeni



General Corporation for Radio and Television (YGCRTV) (Dubai Press Club and Deloitte, 2012). Until 2012, “there were no private radio stations in Yemen” (Fanack 2017), but “new television and radio stations and news websites have sprung up in the wake of the 2011 uprising that led to President Ali Abdullah Saleh’s resignation” (*Freedom House* 2015).

After North Yemen became a republic in 1962, the northern government began publishing two daily newspapers – *Al-Thawra* in Sana’a and *Al-Jumhuriya* in Taiz. Following South Yemen’s independence from British rule in 1967, the southern government published the daily newspaper *14 October*, in addition to the weekly *Al-Thawra* (Fanack, 2017). However, the unification did not bring much change to the print media as “No new daily papers were launched, and the existing four dailies (*Al-Thawra*, *Al-Jumhuriyya*, *14 October*, *Al-Sharara*) all remained in government hands. The new papers were published weekly, fortnightly or in some cases irregularly” (Whitaker 2015, p. 77).

In 2008, the Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate (YJS) listed approximately nine government-controlled newspapers, 50 independent publications and 30 party-affiliated newspapers in the country. Unlike local radio and TV, Yemeni newspapers offer a diversity of political opinions and viewpoints. Some publications are independent or affiliated to opposition parties (Infoasaid 2012). Even though, the results of the 2010 BBC World Service Trust survey reported that only 12 per cent of Yemenis read a newspaper every day (Fanack 2017), the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists thinks that "Yemen's outspoken press is one of the country's most important centers of dissent and political debate and, over the last two years, it has become noticeably bolder in exposing high-level corruption and tackling sensitive political issues" (Infoasaid 2012, pp. 64-65).

The internet was introduced in Yemen in 1996 (Fanack 2017) but it kept a low rate of penetration. The Social Research and Development Center (2013) highlighted in the findings of an internet survey titled as ‘Internet Usage Habits in Yemen’, that only 14.2% of Yemen’s population has access to internet and they are mostly in urban areas. Indeed, according to Internet World Stats (2012) Yemen has the lowest levels of Internet penetration in the entire Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region at 1.8% (420,000) of the population as of 2010, but the number jumped to 14.9% (3,691,000) in 2012 and kept growing to 6.7 million Internet users as of June 30, 2016 which makes 24.7% of the population. Battaglia (2018, p.7)

confirmed that “the index penetration rate is 25.1 percent and a lot is done by social media [...] Facebook became very popular even among illiterate people that share mostly pictures”.

#### **4.2 The Arab Spring Impact on Media in Yemen**

The growth of internet users in Yemen was accompanied by a growth in social media users as well, or more accurately, I believe that it is the social media that drives people to use the internet. And despite of the argument upon the role of social media in the Arab spring, it is mostly agreed that the Arab Spring, in a way or another, has participated actively in increasing the number of social media users. During the uprisings, protesters spent most of their time in their tents on streets, which eventually increased the time spent online and the usage of social media platforms. Thus, the new media content provided by activists were considered as a good asset and huge source of information for traditional media. Clearly, new media content during the Arab Spring, particularly user-generated video, has been routinely picked up, discussed, and rebroadcast by traditional news outlets within and outside the Middle East and North Africa region (Aday et al. 2012).

In Yemen, as traditional media was strictly controlled by the government, people started to use social media platforms as a substitute medium to get their voices heard locally and internationally. Alazzany and Sharp (2014) agreed that the Arab Spring in Yemen marked the beginning of the end of an era of government manipulation and control of private and state-owned media, but it does not guarantee its contribution to a greater democracy and freedom as the country still lacks professional and responsible journalism. Facebook pages set up to advertise protests in early February 2011 when hundreds of university students started protesting against the government. *The Internet World Stats* (2012) stated that Yemen has the lowest levels of Internet penetration in the entire MENA region, at 1.8% (420,000) of the population as of 2010, but months after the beginning of the Arab Spring, the rate of internet penetration jumped to 14.9% (3,691,000) in 2012 which indicates an effect of the Arab Spring to encourage more internet and social media users especially in Facebook.

Indeed, when looking at the increasing number of social media users in the Arab Spring countries, I can claim that ‘Facebook is the king’ in those countries, Yemen included. For instance, the total number of Facebook users in the Arab world has risen from under 20 million in November 2010 to 36 million in November 2011 (Hosn 2012). And Salem (2017) indicated that the number of Facebook users in the Arab region has steadily increased over

the past six years reaching more than 156 million users by early 2017. This number represents a year-on-year increase of close to 41 million, up from 115 million by the beginning of 2016. By early 2017, the penetration rate of Facebook accounts among the Arab population in the region stands at 39%, up from 28% a year earlier.

In Yemen, up to 2014, there were 4.8 million internet users which makes 18% of the total population and there were a total of 1.56 million social media users which makes only 5.9% of the total population (We are social 2014). However, *The Internet World Stats* (2017) claimed that the internet users' rate in Yemen has increased reaching 6.8 million users in 2016 and over 6.9 million internet users in 2017. Similarly, the number of active social media users increased too as shown in Table 1.

	Total Internet Users	Percentage out of Total Population	Social Media Users	Percentage out of Total Population
2014	4.8 million	18%	1.56 million	5.9%
2016	6.8 million	24.7%	1.7 million	6%
2017	6.9 million	25%	2.2 million	8%
2018	7.03 million	25%	2.3 million	8%

**Table 1: Internet and Social Media Users in Yemen**

However, the *Arab Social Media Report* (2015) stated that 93% of the total internet users in Yemen are current users of Facebook, where 92% of them access it in a daily basis. WhatsApp current users reached 92% of out of the total internet users, where 98% of them access it in a daily basis. In addition, Twitter is considered as the least preferred social media platform in Yemen with only 26% current users, where 40% of them have a daily access. Instagram usage rate is also low with only 31% current users, where 89% of them have a daily access. YouTube has 41% current subscribers, where 61% of its users have a daily access.

	Percentage of Users out of Total Internet Users	Percentage of Daily Access
Facebook	93%	92%
WhatsApp	92%	98%
YouTube	41%	61%
Instagram	31%	89%
Twitter	26%	40%

**Table 2: Percentages of Social Media Platforms' Users in Yemen as of 2015**

During the last four years, the number of social media users in Yemen never stopped increasing. Salem (2017) claimed that Yemen has 8% penetration rates for Facebook users with a growing rate of 1.5% and 421 thousands new users between 2014 and 2017. Facebook daily active users' rate is 37% where 72.1% of them are males and 27.9% females. For Twitter, the penetration rates of active users is 0.6% as of March 2016, and new active users joined Twitter between March 2014 and March 2016 is 24 thousands with a rate of 19% of the whole users. Currently, Twitter users in Yemen tweet around 2.6 tweets a day. But Yemen still has the worst gender balance on Twitter with 83% males and 17% females.

#### **4.3 Social Media and TV Programs in Yemen**

The usage of social media content is increasing in local and satellite TV channels in Yemen, especially after the Arab Spring movement in 2011. Social media content during the Arab Spring has been regularly picked up and broadcasted by traditional news channels locally and internationally. This action aimed to satisfy the audience need and attract new viewers too. In Yemen, as protesters were using social media platforms, particularly Facebook, as their first choice to upload photos and videos of the activities happening on streets, many TV stations started to adopt to this new practice by using the same content and re-broadcast it on TV screens.

For example, in 2012 the private station in Yemen, *Suhail TV*, started to produce a TV show called "Have Your Say" which allows audience to participate in the show by directly 'call in' the show or comment earlier on the show's Facebook page, then the show producers select certain comments to be presented during the show. Since Belqees TV is one of the new

channels which started broadcasting after the Arab Spring, it is a normal practice for the channel to use social media content in most of its programs. Aswan Shafer, the Programs Manager in Belqees TV, confirmed in an interview that almost all TV stations in Yemen have this type of programs that reflect social media activities because social media becomes part of the media industry (2018, pers. comm., 10 January).

#### **4.4 Belqees TV Station**

Belqees TV is a satellite television channel that broadcasts news and current affairs programs in Yemen. The channel is owned by a Yemeni woman journalist, politician, and human rights activist, Tawakkol Karman, the winner of Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. Belqees TV began broadcasting in October 2014 from Yemen, but after the attack of its office in April 2015, as one of the consequences of the current civil war, it started broadcasting again from Istanbul since May 2015 (Belqees TV n.d.). Although the channel is considered as the newest satellite channel in Yemen, its performance and fast development contributed to its success compared to other older channels in the country.

Furthermore, the channel's wide use of social media in its programs makes it a suitable choice as a case study for this research. For instance, the channel's Facebook page, as of December 2016, has over 1.7 million 'Likes', which is 1.1 million 'Likes' far from the second most 'Liked' TV channels in Yemen (*Al-Saeedah*). Since the channel is broadcasting from outside the country, its use of social media is increasing as many of its programs such as "Keyboard" and "The Stage" are committing specific sections to reflect its online viewers' comments and present them on TV screen.

#### **4.5 Media Freedom in Yemen**

In the last six years, journalists and media practitioners in Yemen were more vulnerable to risks and violation of their right of free expression as a result of the unrest political situation. The International Media Support (2012) discussed in its reports that many independent and opposition media outlets in Yemen have experienced direct attacks and several journalists were killed or injured. Around 588 violations against media workers were reported between February and December 2011, where 289 cases were in a form of physical violations.

Since Houthi rebels allied with former President Saleh seized control of the capital Sanaa in September 2014, the violation of media freedom in Yemen is escalating. In a recent report,

the Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate (YJS) recorded at least 200 violations of press freedom during the period of January to October 2015, where 10 journalists were killed and 14 imprisoned, of whom at least nine are said to have been tortured by the Houthis (Rodrigues 2015). In addition, a monitoring report prepared by the Studies & Economic Media Center (2016) revealed 275 violation cases during 2016. These violations included 12 cases of killing, 64 cases of abduction, 32 injury, 34 threat, 26 physical attacks, 13 attempted murder, and 24 storming, bombing and looting of houses and media corporations.

As a result, many international institutions ranked media freedom in Yemen at the bottom of their indexes. For illustration, Reporters Without Borders (2015) ranked Yemen at 168 out of 180 countries in its '2015 Press Freedom Index'. And as the situation got worse in 2016, Yemen lost two more points to be placed at 170 out of 180. In addition, the Freedom House reported that Yemen freedom of the press scored 78 out of 100 in 2015 and 83 points in 2016 indicating no freedom in the country. This unpleasant status of freedom is confirmed by Afrah Nasser (2017), a Yemeni journalist, as she said "the deadliest violation against press in Yemen was the death of two Yemeni journalists who reportedly were used as human shields by Houthi forces to protect a military installation. In another instance, blogger and investigative journalist Mohammed al-Absi, known for reporting on a number of Houthi-related-corruption stories, was poisoned. While many believe Houthis are responsible, the investigation is still undergoing".

Recently, a local photographer who worked with AFP was seriously wounded in a missile strike on Sunday 23rd of April 2017 in southwest Yemen (AFP 2017). And in 26th of May 2017, security officials confirmed the death of two freelance cameramen, named as Takieddin Hutheifi and Wael al-Abassi, in Yemen's third city Taiz as they were filming fights of government troops (CPJ 2017).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Television stations have been using social media platforms as tools of gaining more viewers, collecting feedbacks and feeding some segments in certain programs. However, the increasing amount of social media content appearing on television programs is getting the attention of the media practitioners and scholars as well. Social media content becomes part of many TV programs and producers are being more dependent on social media to get more compelling content.

All this dependency on social media has its positive and negative effects on television. The question here is about the implications of this practice in TV production and its possibility to eventually replace old practices of TV production. This research aims to emphasize on the impact of social media contents on television content production; how social media platforms are being used in TV stations, how much social media content succeed to be shown on TV screens and the benefits and risks of using social media in TV stations.

Studies about the effects of the social media in the Arab countries is relatively a new international practice especially after the Arab Spring that took place in 2011. And since Yemen was one of the effected countries by Arab Spring, this study is providing an additional unique example of this phenomenon rather than the popular cases of Tunisia and Egypt. The importance of this research is coming from its significant focus area of the effects of one media type (social media) on another media type (television) rather than democracy or political changes as in many other studies. The findings of this research contributes to the media convergence theory by providing examples of how media producers in Belqees TV work together with consumers to produce more compelling content.

In addition, this study shows the quantity of social media content used in Belqees TV programs and their different forms of content, be it videos, images or texts, with identification of the most used social media platforms in different program. The qualitative part of this research highlights the reasons of using social media in the channel and addresses the other practices in Belqees TV such as using social media platforms as a tool of contact and a medium of sending materials from the ground directly to the channel.

Although this research was carefully conducted, limitations of the study still can be found in some areas. As this research is focusing on the use of social media content and its effects on TV production in Yemen, the selection of Belqees TV channel as a case study is a suitable representative. However, the reflection on one TV channel cannot be generalized to the whole Yemen TV field, but it provides the base for a broader study on more TV channels. Secondly, the selected sample of 'one week' of the scheduled programs of Belqees TV may not be enough to have comprehensive results, because some weeks have more news than others depending on the political developments in the country. So, bigger sample could provide more significant results. Thirdly, the fast growth of social media requires continuous observation of its different platforms which also requires continuous researches in the field. Finally, the lack of previous studies on social media in Yemen, required additional time to collect more valuable information for the literature review, but it worth it, as this study will definitely provide the base knowledge for other researches on social media in Yemen.

## **5.2 Research Questions**

This research provides answers to the main question of the study which is about the social media impact on Belqees TV station, then shows reflections on the following questions;

1. How much social media content is used in Belqees' TV programs?
2. Why social media content is used in Belqees' TV programs?
3. What are the implications of the using social media in the organizational practices of Belqees TV?

Since the objective of this study is to understand how much social media content is being used by TV producers and what their most common used social media platform is, I have chosen the quantitative content analysis method to be used for this study. This method is a "research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something (violence, negative portrayals of women, or whatever) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular form of art" (Berger 1991, p. 25) and it provides a "quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson 1952, p. 18). In addition, using this method is relatively inexpensive and usually results in producing a reliable findings with a high chance for replication. The outcomes of this method will be represented by the percentages of social media content used in different TV programs and the forms of used content, be it, images, videos or texts.



In addition, this study also aims to find out the reasons why producers choose to use social media contents within their TV programs and explain the practices of using social media in TV stations. Thus, using in-depth interview method is very helpful to find out those reasons and practices. In-depth interviews are open-ended and guided discussions that involve conducting individual interviews with a small number of respondents. The main objective here is to discover their perspectives on a particular situation, idea and program (Boyce & Neale 2006). This method also allows interviewers to have a deeper understanding and gain extra detailed information about the participants and their organization, Belqees TV in this case, which will be utilized to have richer data and more comprehensive results when added to the quantitative analysis.

With an in-depth interview, the interviewers are able to get explanations and clarifications of certain information or practices observed from quantitative analysis. For example, the interviewee may explain the motivations of using social media within TV programs or provide examples of certain programs depending on social media content. This explanation enhances the value of all participants as everyone is selected to talk about specific sections of the study. Furthermore, flexibility and cost effectiveness are well-known advantages of this method. For instance, scheduling interviews with different interviewees can be done in one day period in the same location, which helps to work with a low budget and save some time and efforts. Interviews pursue more specific answers for ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions of complex issues and obtain more detailed information from a fairly small number of people, especially when using open-ended questions and unstructured interviews.

### **5.3 Data Collection**

With the aim of providing a better understanding of the research problem and obtaining more meaningful outcomes of this study, I decided to use a mixed method research which overcomes any possible weaknesses of a single design and enriches quantitative data with more insights from qualitative data. For instance, quantitative analysis does not provide a meaning of the reasons behind certain practices or actions, but the qualitative analysis mainly concerns in finding the invisible information behind actions. This mutual benefit results in providing a comprehensive answers to the research questions. Moreover, this research is using a ‘Sequential Explanatory Design’ where the quantitative data and analysis will take place first, then followed by collection and analysis of qualitative data which will participate in explaining and interpreting the quantitative findings.

As the channel is using a weekly scheduling method for its programs, selecting 'one full week' of the schedule makes a suitable representative sample of the entire programs. The selected week for quantitative content analysis is from 8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2017. In addition, the '*Keyboard*' show was also selected for this research as a specific example for TV programs that depends totally on social media contents for its production. As the show is broadcasted once a week, I have selected the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> episodes of the third season broadcasted during the month of April 2017. The show is pre-recorded and broadcasted every Sunday for 25 minutes.

For the qualitative analysis, in-depth interview method was used to find out the motives and goals behind using social media in Belqees TV programs. Interviews conducted with three personnel from a high management level in the channel which included the Programs Manager, News Director and Digital Media Officer.

The data was coded in different categories based on the genres of programs (news and documentary), types of news programs (Newsroom Stream, Bulletins, In-depth Analysis, Features, Newspapers headlines and Satirical News), types of the content (Political, Current Affairs and World News), forms of content (Video, Image, Text, Call in, Graphics, Studio guest), and the source of the supporting materials (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Skype, Phone call, TV Correspondent, News agencies, Archive, Websites, WhatsApp, YouTube, Graphics). Since Belqees is a 24 hours news channel, every single news was considered as one unit, even when the same news was repeated in the next hour, it was coded as a separated new unit. The bulletin news programs were treated in the same way too. But in case of 'In-depth Analysis', 'Features' and other news shows, the content was coded during the first run only and the re-run of the show was excluded.

All other contents presented on the TV such as promos, public service announcements, and breaks were not coded as they are not having any impact on the research interest. In some news, when the supporting materials is coming from a social media platform, such as Twitter, the actual post was not presented on screen, but re-edited and presented in a totally different way. In this case and other similar cases, the content was not coded because it was not presented as a social media content.

The data for this research was collected directly from the channel's digital archive. Because of the confidentiality issue and the huge size of the content, I was not able to have a copy of the content, but I was given a new set up username to access data from the digital archive via a normal PC in the channel's office. Data collection was very time consuming, because I spent around 105 hours watching and coding the 'one full week' programs, and for the convenience of the channel, I had to do the data collection in the channels' office after 5 pm or during weekends only. Moreover, in order to finish the data collection as fast as possible, I had to sleep over in the channel's office several times and spend full nights in collecting data.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter highlights the findings of the social media impact on TV programs in Belqees TV and discusses them in relation to the literature review. This chapter includes also specific findings and discussions of '*Keyboard*' show as an example of TV programs that totally depends on social media content for its production. In order to get a comprehensive view of the study, a mixed quantitative and qualitative research methods were implemented in this research. The quantitative method, content analysis, served in discovering how much social media content was used by producers in Belqees TV channel and helped identifying the preferred form of content in different programs. The qualitative method, in-depth interview, supported revealing the reasons and motives behind using social media contents in many TV programs and exploring other practices of using social media in the channel.

#### **6.2 Social Media in Belqees TV**

The Digital Media Officer in Belqees TV, O Zereik (2017, pers. comm., 18 December) claimed that as of Dec 2017 the channels' Facebook page had 1.8 million Likes, 42K followers in Twitter, 39K subscribers in YouTube with 12 million total views. According to Zereik, the social media team in the channel consists of five personnel working in managing the channels' social media pages by sharing contents and interacting with followers. Two personnel of the team are in charge of monitoring 'Breaking News' and following up its details; they monitor certain social media accounts for some pre-determined news agencies and websites and collect news coming from correspondents on the ground which may come via social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp or via e-mail. Posting content on the channel's social media accounts depends on the content itself. For example, the "Breaking News" content is being posted on Twitter in the first place, then Telegram, and when the whole story is ready, it is being shared on the website and broadcasted on TV news programs. The full length of any TV show is being posted first on YouTube, then short videos of the same show are to be re-produced and posted on Facebook page. The rest of the team works with contents coming from TV screen. That means, we select and re-edit what was broadcasted earlier on TV and post it on different social media accounts or upload it to the channel's official website too.

The News Director, W Ali (2017, pers. comm., 20 December) confirmed the use of social media in the channels' programs as they use social media to get news from official accounts of the government institutions or officials, even correspondents on the ground send the materials they collect via social media platforms. Thus, the news produced in the channel may have a lot of social media sources, but at the same time, these contents are not coming from normal users' accounts but official ones. In a weekly bases, the channel uses social media platforms to get a round 25-30 per cent of its news, this usage is represented in receiving contents from correspondents, monitoring certain official accounts for international news agencies like AFP, Reuters, and Anadolu, or from private and government institutions.

The Programs Manager, A Shaher, (2018, pers. comm., 10 January) claimed that the channel is using Facebook and Twitter the most. Facebook is the channel's choice among other social media platforms. Facebook is where the channel provides 'Live' broadcast for most of its programs. And since most of the social media users in Yemen use Facebook, the channel has to cope with this trend and pay more attention to Facebook pages.

### 6.3 Data Analysis

This study selected a sample of one full week (Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> till Friday 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2016) scheduled programs of Belqees TV which resulted in a collection of 4,291 units. The study also conducted three in-depth interviews with the Programs Manager, News Director, and Digital Media Officer in the channel.

<b>Genres of Programs</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
News	4139	96.5
Documentary	152	3.5
Total	4291	100.0

**Table 3: Genres of Programs in Belqees TV**

Numbers in Table 3 confirm the channels' mission as a 24 hours news channel. However, broadcasting 'Documentary' content in a News channel may look unusual when compared to

western media. But, using documentary content is not a new practice in Yemen, because most of TV channels in Yemen, if not all, are using the same broadcasting model used in the public channels, where documentary content is used to fill in the least viewed time in daily schedules which falls between 2-5 pm.

<b>Types of News Programs</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Newsroom Stream	2435	56.7	56.7	56.7
	Bulletin	1026	23.9	23.9	80.7
	News Feature	70	1.6	1.6	82.3
	In-depth Analysis	129	3.0	3.0	85.3
	Documentary	150	3.5	3.5	88.8
	Newspaper Headlines	437	10.2	10.2	99.0
	Satirical News Show	44	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	4291	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4: Types of News Programs in Belqees TV**

The majority of news programs consist of ‘Newsroom Stream’ content with 56.7%, followed by ‘Bulletin’ programs with 23.9% and ‘Newspaper Headlines’ program with 10.2%, then 3% of ‘In-depth Analysis’ programs and the remaining percentage is divided between ‘News Feature’ and ‘Satirical News’ Show. This data is supported by the channels’ News Director, W Ali, as he claimed that the channel has 11 ‘Newsroom Stream’ shows and 13 ‘Bulletin’ shows which are broadcasted alternately at the top of every hour (2017, pers. comm., 20 December).

#### **6.4 Social Media Contribution in Belqees’ TV programs**

The findings in this section show the percentage of each source of content in the channel, with specific identification of the percentage of different content coming from each social media platform such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other platforms. Forms of the content are also represented in this section showing different quantities of videos, images, and texts coming from different social media platforms.

<b>Sources of Content</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Facebook	59	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Skype	4	.1	.1	1.5
	Phone Call	66	1.5	1.5	3.0
	TV Correspondent	1446	33.7	33.7	36.7
	News Agencies	386	9.0	9.0	45.7
	Archive	283	6.6	6.6	52.3
	Websites	1975	46.0	46.0	98.3
	WhatsApp	6	.1	.1	98.5
	Studio Guest	5	.1	.1	98.6
	YouTube	5	.1	.1	98.7
	Graphics	56	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	4291	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5: Sources of Content in Belqees TV**

The sources of the content are represented mainly in 46% for ‘Websites’ and 33.7% for content coming from ‘TV Correspondents’ and 9% for ‘News Agencies’ and the remaining percentage is divided between other sources as shown in Table 6. For materials coming from social media platforms, the table shows 1.4% for Facebook and 0.1% for each source of WhatsApp, YouTube, and Skype.

The result shows a low rate of dependency on the social media platforms for content production. This result is less than what I expected, but the numbers look logical when we consider the number of social media users in the country. Till 2014, there were only 1.56 million active social media users (We are social 2014), then the number increased to 1.7 million users as of Jan 2016 (We are social 2016), and reached 2.2 million users as of Jan 2017 (We are social 2017). Therefore, having two million social media users is not really a big number, especially when we consider the users’ different interests and behaviors. And the selective behavior of the channels’ producers is definitely reducing the quantity of social media content within Belqees TV programs.

Surprisingly, there is no recorded use of Twitter as a source of content in the channel. But this result is not really surprising when we look at the rate of Twitter users in Yemen. The penetration rates of active Twitter users in Yemen was 0.6% as of March 2016, and within two years between Mar 2014 and Mar 2016, Twitter gained only 24 thousands new active

users with an increase rate of 19% (We are social 2017). This clearly explains the reasons of scarcity in using Twitter as a source of news not only in Belqees TV but in Yemen as a whole.

Indeed, the channel is having a different practice dealing with Twitter content. W Ali (2017, pers. comm., 20 December) claimed that, in terms of news, their audience prefer to see the face of the person who said the statement, rather than the statement’s text itself, and since the statement is already said by the news presenter, they consider showing the written text as a repetition of the same information to the audience, so they put the source’s photo instead. For example, they display the Prime Minister’s photo instead of his actual Tweet, and the news presenter reads out the tweet’s text. And in some cases, statements shared on social media are being very long, which is not appropriate to show on screen, therefore, producers re-edit them and present what is needed only. And when the statement posted on social media is in a video form, producers prefer to display the video without mentioning the social media involvement to it at all, because crediting social media in this case does not add any value to the content.

Forms of Content					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Video	2041	47.6	47.6	47.6
	Image	981	22.9	22.9	70.4
	Text	1142	26.6	26.6	97.0
	Call in	66	1.5	1.5	98.6
	Graphics	56	1.3	1.3	99.9
	Studio Guest	5	.1	.1	100.0
	Total	4291	100.0	100.0	

**Table 6: Forms of Content in Belqees TV**

As shown in Table 6, the forms of the supporting materials used in the channel consists of 47.6% Videos, 26.6% Texts, 22.9% Images and 1.5% for content coming from ‘Call In’ and 1.3% for Graphics.

What is interesting about this data is the 26.6% usage of ‘Texts’ in a news channel. First, this figure seems high when comparing it to the literacy rate for the country as 70% only (*World Data Atlas* 2015). When people watch TV, they are not expecting to see a lot of texts on the



screen, as much as they want to see video shots or at least images. In fact, the channel is displaying texts on TV screen in different ways; mere texts when quoting official statements or users' comments or texts accompanied with images. Using texts accompanied by images and having the news presenter read them may get some sort of acceptance by the audience, but displaying mere texts and leaving audience to read them by themselves may not be a pleasant experience for the audience. TV viewers nowadays tend to use their smart phones or tablets while watching TV programs, including news, and leaving them to read texts from TV screen will definitely make them less attractive towards TV. Consequently, this practice would, most probably, push the audience to make a decision between the TV and their smart phones, which certainly, they will prefer to turn into their smart phones to watch videos on YouTube or check images in Instagram rather than reading Texts on TV screen.

However, the channel's Programs Manager, A Shaher (2018, pers. comm., 10 January) argued that reducing the amount of displayed texts on screen is an important point, which they tried to overcome this issue by asking presenters to read some of the presented texts. In addition, the News Director (2017, pers. comm., 20 December) claimed that as the audience always expect to watch videos on TV, the channel's producers are trying as much as possible to show the supporting materials in a video form in order to make their news more representable. Moreover, he claimed that when producers use texts in news programs, they use them as a way of providing additional information to the main news, but not the news itself, and in some cases they use texts in a motion graphic form combined with music and images to make it more attractive to the audience.

In addition, when combining the results of the sources of content and their different forms, we get more valuable results. For instance, we can infer from the data that the total percentage of social media content used in Belqees TV programs is only 1.7% for all platforms. Moreover, although Facebook is full of videos, the data in Table 7 shows using no videos from Facebook in the channel's programs, and all other contents from other platforms were totally in video forms only. This brings us back to the argument about the channel's unique practice of re-editing social media content according to their own standards.

Source of Supporting Materials * Forms								
		Forms						Total
		Video	Image	Text	Call in	Graphics	Studio Guest	
Source of Supporting Materials	Facebook		0.5%	0.8%				1.4%
	Skype	0.1%						0.1%
	Phone Call				1.5%			1.5%
	TV Correspondent	33.7%						33.7%
	News Agencies	5.6%	0.2%	3.2%				9.0%
	Archive	6.6%						6.6%
	Websites	1.3%	22.1%	22.6%				46.0%
	WhatsApp	0.1%						0.1%
	Studio Guest						0.1%	0.1%
	YouTube	0.1%						0.1%
	Graphics					1.3%		1.3%
Total		47.6%	22.9%	26.6%	1.5%	1.3%	0.1%	100.0%

**Table 7: Percentage of Sources of Content in Different Forms**

### 6.5 The Importance of Social Media in Belqees' TV Programs

Regarding the benefits of using social media contents in Belqees TV programs, the News Director (2017, pers. comm., 20 December) discussed the important role of social media in the stages of collecting and producing news. Sometimes producers collect the first draft of news from social media platforms, then start checking the facts and do the needed editing or contact correspondents on the ground via Facebook or WhatsApp to ask for more supporting materials, which they send to the channel via its social media accounts. And due to the slow internet connection in Yemen, it is hard to receive materials through software programs like The File Transfer Protocol (FTP), so the channel prefers social media platforms for instant contact with their correspondents.

In addition, the Programs Manager (2018, pers. comm., 10 January) highlighted the social media contribution in reflecting the community's interactions to many current events happening in the country. Social media is the reflection of the public opinion. The channel's presence on social media is probably more than TV screen, because in social media the channel posts contents for 24 hours, unlike TV, where there is a strict schedule and some re-run programs. Moreover, the high rate of social media usage and interactions accompanied with the advantage of faster access to information via social media platforms, all this, is encouraging televisions to use social media networks to reach more followers and, in return,

represent more of their voices and interests. For instance, after the coup in Yemen in Sep 2014, all print media, one of the important sources of content, have been closed, and from then most of newspapers in Yemen share their news content in their websites and social media accounts. This new trend is pushing Belqees TV to be part of this competition in the social media platforms.

The Programs Manager, A Shafer (2018, pers. comm., 10 January) highlighted many impacts of social media on the channel as she said that “when we talk about social media, we are talking about the media itself. Social media is what the public opinion is concerned about and the supporting materials for our programs are partially coming from social media, [...] our presence on social media is probably more than TV screens, because in social media we are posting content for 24 hours, [...] we feel that many of our TV audience started watching our programs as a result of our activities in social media”.

Furthermore, the channel’s Digital Media Officer stressed on the impact of social media in creating new trustworthy sources of information as he said “we have some social media followers who have become a trusted source for us, such as the Yemeni students in Malaysia and Germany. They started sending us some materials related to their problems, and when they watched it, few hours later on our screen and social media pages, they kept sending more materials regularly” (O Zreik 2017, pers. comm., 18 December).

Regarding the news programs in the channel, the News Director, W Ali (2017, pers. comm., 20 December) claimed that “social media helps us in making our work much easier by decreasing the efforts of collecting news. In the past, we used to directly phone the sources and get from them as much statements and figures as possible, but now they put everything on their social media accounts with supporting materials too [...] social media shortens the time of transmitting the news to become more instant. In old times, when a government official travels around the world, it was difficult to contact him, but now we still can contact him via his social media accounts at any time anywhere. The same thing happens when trying to contact guests to be in any show or comment on some news”.

However, social media is not always helpful and beneficial. The programs manager claimed that “since the channel is covering mostly a political news, sometimes the negative comments from users affect the show’s host personally, but we understand that this is a normal reaction

towards political content” (A Shaher 2018, pers. comm., 10 January). The news director, W Ali (2017, pers. comm., 20 December) also confirmed many negative impacts of social media such as the high level of dependency of journalism on social media platforms in collecting, receiving, transmitting and sharing news. Secondly, social media turned to be a place of so much fake news and rumors. Thirdly, the impact of social media on the journalists’ profession and community status. The wide spread practice of ‘citizen journalism’ resulted in creating a skeptical audience and competitive environment of news production which sequentially caused the underestimation of the journalists’ role in the community.

### **6.6 ‘Keyboard’ Show**

This show is considered as the latest show added to the channels’ scheduled programs since August 2015. The show is “an interactive program, where all its content is about the latest activities happening on social media platforms” (O Zeriek 2017, pers. comm., 18 December). The show is doing a sort of ‘social listening’, where the producers are tracking online conversations around specific topics to discover opportunities or select appropriate contents. The show producers monitor online activities of the Yemeni users on different social media platforms, then select what is appropriate to be shown on the show that is broadcasted for 25 minutes every Tuesday night at 8:05 pm.

Almost all TV stations, especially in Yemen, have this type of program where they reflect the social media activities in a single show, because social media becomes an important part of the media industry. Currently, a lot of news programs and TV series are being broadcasted ‘Live’ via social media platforms, and similarly, TV stations reflect social media activities within its programs, this new practice serves as an example of the integrative relations between TVs and social media. For instance, the ‘Keyboard’ show is targeting the non-social media users to inform them about what is going on in social media platforms, which eventually brings new users to social media platforms. And likewise, the social media users will turn into TV to watch this program with high probability of staying to watch other TV programs too. This show is telling the audience that what you are writing on social media is also important and can be displayed on TV screens, and it allows the audience to feel the connected to this program as it values their views and presents their voices (A Shaher 2018, pers. comm., 10 January).

Forms of Content					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Video	38	15.2	15.2	15.2
	Image	97	38.8	38.8	54.0
	Text	114	45.6	45.6	99.6
	Call in	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

**Table 8: Forms of Content in Keyboard Show**

In this show, the ‘Text’ content is represented in over 45% of the show, and more than 38% of the content comes in ‘Image’ forms and 15% is for ‘Video’ content (Table 8).

This data shows that too much Texts are being used in the show, which is not a normal practice for a TV show, where the audience are expecting videos to watch. Even with a high value of what is written in Texts, videos are still the most preferred form of content for TVs. The Programs Manager, A Shafer (2018, pers. comm., 10 January) argued that the channel partially solved this problem by allowing the presenter to read out some of texts. And as the show is not mainly targeting the illiterate audience, who cannot read or write, the channel expect the viewers of this show to be able to read the texts shown on screen. And with the appreciation of the importance of this note, Shafer argued that if the presenter is going to read all the texts, producers will have to display less number of the users’ comments based on the limited given time, but the channel prefer to read some texts by the presenter and leave some others for the viewers to read by themselves. In addition, the users of social media, supposedly, have the ability to read and write, because the content is coming from what they write in trending hashtags or comment on different issues discussed online.

Sources of Content					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Facebook	152	60.8	60.8	60.8
	YouTube	25	10.0	10.0	70.8
	Websites	67	26.8	26.8	97.6
	Skype	5	2.0	2.0	99.6
	Phone Call	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

**Table 9: Sources of Content in Keyboard Show**

The content for this show is mainly coming from ‘Facebook’ with over 60% and more than 26% for ‘Websites’ and 10% for ‘YouTube’ (Table 9).

These figures confirm the statement made by the Programs Manager, as she referred to Facebook as the channel’s first choice, where most of the channels’ audience uses Facebook in a bigger number compared to other platforms, and most of the interactions between the channel and its audience is done via Facebook too. Moreover, since the channel is focusing on Yemen only, where Facebook is number one used platform, the channel has no choice rather than following its audience wherever they are (A Shaher 2018, pers. comm., 10 January). This data is also supported by TNS report as it stated that 93% of the total internet users in Yemen are current subscribers in Facebook, and 92% of Facebook current subscribers access it in a daily basis (TNS 2015).

### **6.7 Social Media and Organizational Practices in Belqees TV**

The Digital Media Officer in Belqees TV, O Zereik (2017, pers. comm., 18 December) confirmed the social media involvement in collecting materials from normal viewers as in “You Are Not Alone” show. Initially, normal viewers contact the channel via social media accounts and send their stories, then the social media team forward the content to the intended program’s producers who may contact the sender directly for more details then show his/her story on TV. For instance, after a wide spread of the “Don’t burry me” video of a child from Taiz city, someone contacted the channel via Facebook account and send the child’s family contact number, then producers in the channel contacted them and produced some news reports and highlighted the story in other programs too.

The channels’ News Director, W Ali (2017, pers. comm., 20 December) claimed that the channel use social media as a source of news production in different methods. Most of the time, producers inform the audience about the source of their supporting materials as Twitter or Facebook, however, when they use social media platforms as a tool of contact with government officials via his/her social media account to get a confirmation of any content or get more details, they consider that as an exclusive statement to the channel, and in this case, the channel choose not inform the audience about the involvement of social media in the news collection process. Sometimes the audience are informed about the social media involvement in the news production by the news presenter or by displaying the related Tweet

or Post on screen, however, the channel still not prefer to show the actual Tweet or Post but re-edit it to fit the channel's standards.

Furthermore, the channel's Programs Manager discussed additional approach of using social media as a way of contact between the channel and the public. Sometimes the online viewers contact the channel via its social media accounts and suggest certain topics to be discussed in its programs or send some materials to be shown on screen. In this case, even when the materials are coming via social media accounts, the channel does not inform the audience how the social media was involved in the content production (A Shafer 2018, pers. comm., 10 January).

Likewise, A Shafer (2018, pers. comm., 10 January) highlighted the use of 'social listening' technique and its effects on the programs' production. For instance, after the 2014 coup in Yemen, there were some discussions about the Yemeni identity and how people are losing their feelings of belonging to their country. So, the channel's reaction to those discussions was the introduction of a brand new program titled as "Yemen: the origin of the story" which focused on restoring the identity of Yemeni people. Also, the issue of 'selling humanitarian aids' was discussed widely on social media in 2017, these discussions attracted the channel's attention to cover this issue in its different programs. In the above cases, the audience were not participating directly in the program's production, but their discussions on social media were the trigger that encouraged the channel to allocate certain time to cover those issues.

Finally, the reactions of social media users enforced some changes and existence of new programs in the channel too. For example, some of the comments received from online viewers were asking the channel for more space for their direct participation and having the chance to express their views directly to the audience, but the channel was not having any program that allows public participation. As a result, the channel came up with a new brand program titled 'The Stage', still currently running, where the audience can call in and express their opinions or send their views in a video format via WhatsApp or even they can write comments on the program's Facebook page to be displayed later on TV screen (A Shafer 2018, pers. comm., 10 January).

In general, Belqees TV is using every social media platform in a different way. Facebook is the most used platform in all departments and it is considered as the first choice for producers

to collect images, videos, and feedbacks from online users. This practice resulted in having more followers on the channels' Facebook page compared to other social media accounts. Although contents coming from different social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Skype makes only 1.7% of the total content in the station, producers still pay attention to this amount of content as long as it adds value to their programs.

Using content from social media on TV programs becomes everyday practice in Belqees station. News programs and shows such as 'The Stage' and 'Between Brackets' dedicate certain segments for social media content. The 'Keyboard' show is the newest show on the channel that is totally depends on social media content where 72.8% of its content comes from Facebook, Skype and YouTube.

Moreover, the channel practices certain types of media convergence such as structural convergence. O Zereik (2017, pers. comm., 18 December) claimed that two of the social media department officers work physically in News department, where they are in charge of monitoring and editing social media news contents. They monitor 'Breaking News' and follow up more details from certain social media accounts for some pre-determined news agencies and websites. They collect news coming from correspondents, which may come via social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp or via E-mail. Then they post news based on its nature, for example, the "Breaking News" is being posted primarily on Twitter then Telegram, and when the whole story is ready, they share it on the website and broadcast it on TV news programs. Other social media officers are working with each show's production team, where they collect and edit contents coming from TV screen then share it on social media platforms and monitor the users' feedbacks then direct the valuable ones to the production team again. Another practice of media convergence is represented in the consumers' participation in producing more contents for Belqees TV programs. Consumers become producers too by sending some contents to the station via its social media accounts, mostly via Facebook, or comment on the questions raised by the production team in different programs. These examples explain the convergent structure of the channel where the final produced content is more important than the process and structure of production.



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This study aimed to fill the gap in the literature for social media and its impact on television in Yemen. The study covered the influence of media convergence and the Arab Spring in social media. In addition, this research brought the attention of TV stations to the impact of social media on TV industry with examples that help to get a better understanding of the current impacts and prepare for its future prospects.

#### **7.1 Overall Discussion**

Dependency on social media increases everyday as TV stations tend to use it for content production and marketing purposes as well. These practices are examples of media convergence “where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways.” (Jenkins 2006, p. 3). This type of convergence is represented in almost all Belqees TV programs. The channel considers social media as one of its sources of information, indication of the public interests and an evaluation tool of the channel’s performance. The Programs Manager, A Shaher (2018, pers. comm., 10 January) underlined the role of social media in making decisions whether to cover certain issues or not based on their wide discussion on social media platforms. Producers select the most discussed topics on social media and produce similar, but more detailed and professional, content regarding the same topics and share them on the channels’ social media accounts to encourage its users for more beneficial and valuable discussions. For example, “The Stage” show is using social media platforms to interact with audience by asking them, prior to the weekly episode, to respond to questions posted on social media accounts related to the upcoming topic of the show, then select some of the users’ comments and show them on screen during the ‘Live’ streaming of the show. The same method is used in the “Between Brackets” show, which has one segment called “Facebook”, dedicated for displaying some of the users’ comments on pre-determined topics. This practice confirms how Jenkins (2006) described media convergence as an expanded opportunity for media conglomerates, since content that succeeds in one sector can spread across other platforms.

Audience are not merely receivers anymore. Lister et al. (2009, p.202) confirmed the idea of Henry Jenkins as he argued that “the convergence is most importantly occurring not in the

labs of technologists or the boardrooms of corporations but in the minds of the audience. It is we who are convergent – moving freely across a range of media platforms making connections between story worlds where the convergent activity has to do with the ways we make meaning of a fragmented media landscape”. This kind of convergence is also represented in Belqees TV as the Programs Manager claimed that “nowadays it is not easy to enforce certain views on the audience because they become part of the content production too. Everyone is a producer himself and has his own social media accounts. Some social media users produce contents that attract higher number of views more than some TV shows. So, it is preferred to create a kind of interaction with those users, and if we cannot win their support, they will go to another channel or stay with their own pages” (A Shaher 2018, pers. comm., 10 January).

On the other hand, “social media is like a mine land, where you have to be very careful of your steps and know exactly where to dig for information” (A Shaher 2018, pers. comm., 10 January). Social networks are not optimized to provide factual news. Social media users are so selective in reporting news which results in providing inaccurate information to the public. Therefore, it’s important to verify whether the news is true or not before sharing it. And the limited time to find details about what really happened is also a very challenging factor for journalists (Garlick 2015). Hiers (2014) also claimed that “more information isn’t necessarily better, particularly when it consists of unsubstantiated second- or third-hand accounts. Bad outcomes can include libel and loss of reputation for irresponsible news publishers. But waiting to verify stories and sources can result in a news source being dismissed as slow and behind the times”.

However, A Shaher (2018, pers. comm., 10 January) argued that since social media provides a lot of uncertain news, Belqees TV always double check its news to be a hundred percent correct. The channel has news collection policy that does not prioritize the ‘exclusiveness’ of news but its ‘credibility’ is what really matters. Belqees TV is very concerned with the inaccurateness of social media news, therefor, when the source of any social media news is known as a journalist, this makes his/her news more certain, but producers still need to double check. And when the news is shared by non-journalism background user, producers still may use the content under some conditions; like the scarcity of other sources for the same content and the amount of value provided in the content. For example, when the ‘Chapala’ storm hit the Yemeni island of Socotra in November 2015, there was only one

video about the storm shared on Facebook, the same video was everywhere, so the channel contacted the user, who posted the video, and got more details about the damage caused by the storm, then definitely broadcasted that video on TV. Using contents coming from social media depends on the type of the content, if it is political news, Belqees TV already has certain accounts to monitor, and in some cases, the communication officers in government institutions tend to create Facebook or WhatsApp groups to share their activities directly with TV stations. They tend to use this tool in order to have a faster and easier way of sharing contents with as much media institutions as possible (W Ali 2017, pers. comm., 20 December).

## **7.2 Recommendations**

This research sketches the base for social media impact on TV programs in Belqees TV which can be the starting point for further studies in the field because the reflection of one TV channel cannot be generalized to all TV stations in Yemen. In addition, the selected sample of ‘one week’ of the scheduled programs of Belqees TV is not enough to have comprehensive results, because usually some weeks have more news than others depending on the development of events happening in the country. Therefore, further studies should have larger samples and include data from other TV stations to form a larger representation which provides more significant results and better understanding of the study area.

Furthermore, this research focused on the effects of social media on TV news and other programs at the same time. However, in future studies I recommend to have separate studies for TV news and other programs because every type of the programs has different audience and production process. Moreover, this study revealed some uncovered practices in the channel, such as using social media platforms for communication purposes between the channel and its correspondents, treating different sources differently and re-editing some contents to fit the channel’s standards before broadcasting them on screen. All these practices require more studies to include all sorts of impacts and practices of using social media in the channel as a whole. Finally, the non-stop development of social media and the growing rate of its usage require continuous observations and continuous studies as well.

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## APPENDIX A

### Coding System

Variables	Values
Days	1= Saturday 2= Sunday 3= Monday 4= Tuesday 5= Wednesday 6=Thursday 7= Friday
Genre	1= News 2= Documentary
Type of News	1= Newsroom Stream 2= Bulletin 3= News Feature 4= Current Affairs 5= In-depth Analysis 6= Documentary 7= Debates 8= Newspaper Headlines 9= Satirical News Show
Type of content	1= Political 2= Documentary 3= Current Affairs 4= Economic 5= Comedy 6= World News
Forms	1= Video 2= Image 3= Text

	<p>4= Call in</p> <p>5= Graphics</p> <p>6= News Presenter</p> <p>7= Studio Guest</p>
<p>Source of Supporting Materials</p>	<p>1= Facebook</p> <p>2= Twitter</p> <p>3= Instagram</p> <p>4= Snapchat</p> <p>5= Skype</p> <p>6= Phone Call</p> <p>7= TV Correspondent</p> <p>8= News Agencies</p> <p>9= Archive</p> <p>10= Website</p> <p>11= WhatsApp</p> <p>12= Official Source</p> <p>13= Live stream (Guest)</p> <p>14= Eye Witness</p> <p>15= YouTube</p> <p>16= Graphics</p>

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Guidelines**

#### **Digital Media Officer**

- Tell us about the nature of your work?
- How do you choose the pages you monitor for news collection?
- What is your preferred social media platform used by the channel?
- Why do you have a social media department in the channel?
- What are your numbers on social media platforms?
- What is your first platform choice to post any content?
- Do you participate in content production for the TV programs?
- Do you produce certain programs for social media only?
- Do you respond to the followers' comments?
- Have you made any changes in the TV programs as a result of the audience's interactions?
- Why every show has its own social media pages?
- Did you get any ideas from the followers for your shows?
- Do you sponsor you content?
- What is yours strategy in using social media platforms?
- How do you build a relationship with the followers?
- Have you ever received a fake content and broadcasted it on TV?
- How do you see the future of TV and social media?
- How do you use Twitter?

#### **News Director**

- What do you do in the news department?
- What is the news production process in Belqees TV?
- How did the social media platforms effect your news production process?
- Those social media sources, should they be journalists or not?
- How the social media affected the number of staff in your department?
- How do you confirm the certainty of the content?
- How much content do you use from social media?
- Does using social media make your work easier or harder?



- What is your preferred platform to collect news?
- What is the preferred form of content for you?
- How do you choose the accounts to monitor?
- Do you inform the audience that your source is coming from social media? How does that effect your credibility?
- Will the social media replace the correspondents on the ground?
- Do you have any news program that depends on social media?
- Does your audience feel that they participate in making your news?
- Any negative effects of social media?
- Will the future of journalism be more dependent on social media?

### **Programs Manager**

- What is the circle life of any of your programs?
- Where do you get your contents from?
- Why do you use social media content in your programs?
- What benefits you got from using social media?
- Did you get any ideas from social media to be added to your programs?
- Is there any special program being produced only for social media?
- What are the most used social media platform in your programs?
- How the social media content effected your relations with the audience?
- Have you made any changes in your programs as a result of the social media interactions?
- Why 'keyboard'?
- In the program there are a lot of users comments displayed on screen in a text format, but the literacy rate in Yemen is not high, how to do you deal with this problem?
- What benefits do you get from this program?
- Any future programs focusing more on social media?
- How do you see the future of TV programs with the rise of social media?
- Do you think that broadcasting from outside the country forced you to use more of the social media contents?

## APPENDIX C

### List of Interviewees

1-Name: Omar Zreik

Position: Digital Media Officer

Date of interview: December 18, 2017

Duration of interview: 48:14 minutes

2-Name: Walea Ali

Position: News Director

Date of interview: December 20, 2017

Duration of interview: 01:20:48 hour

3-Name: Aswan Shaher

Position: Programs Manager

Date of interview: January 10, 2018

Duration: 01:06:33 hour