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News Literacy for a Responsible Online News Experience against Harmful Messages:

Implications for political engagement of Egyptian and Spanish Youth

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This exploratory study has the main goal of positioning news literacy as a mediating factor toward fostering political engagement, by investigating its role in enhancing youth's online news experience preparing them against harmful content. News literacy is defined as a multi-structural construct with three main constituents; motivation, knowledge and skills. The study is applied on a sample of young people from Egypt and a sample of young people from Spain, based on which comparative analysis is conducted. The study's main goal is accomplished through delving into youth's online news experience, assessing their level of news literacy and inferring implications for political engagement. In that sense, the notion of harmful content emerges with focus on fake news and hate speech as two main types of misleading content encountered on the internet in general and on social media in specific. This calls to question whether citizens are 'responsible' when it comes to their online news behavior. Accordingly, correlations between news literacy and other variables are tested. Findings reveal a positive correlation between news literacy and: the ability to identify fake news, the ability to identify hate speech, engagement to news, caring about veracity of content before sharing, motivation to seek news and political engagement.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"If the global communication society has come hand in hand with disproportionate promises and unfulfilled utopias, today it is compulsory to examine and evaluate why this has transpired. It is now imperative to abandon blind trust in technology and to deepen our critical spirit. We need to develop an aware attitude that is capable of weighing the positive and negative effects of the changes and especially one that is able to inspire new technical developments that mesh with human beings' aspirations"

(Tornero & Varis, 2010)

Nowadays, like never before, we are witnessing an era mainly characterized by polarization and information chaos. Despite the perception that technology is progress, when applying this to the status of information and democracies, it becomes closer to regress. With politicians and capitalists striving to control the public opinion, with more citizens empowered by the ability to create and disseminate content to thousands, the ecosystem of the media has massively transformed. With this change comes challenges to all the actors involved; journalists – the resource rich original gate keepers of information, and citizens – the resource poor content creators/disseminators. Challenges to journalists in most instances come at the expense of quality journalism, while challenges to citizens result in misinformed/dis-informed citizenry.

With the power given to individuals through the online environment, questions arise about whether or not they are qualified and prepared for such new role. Lines blur between what is real and what is not, fact and fiction, hatred charged and informative. As much as informing citizens has always been the role of the news media, citizens should take responsibility with the new power they have over information.

According to Oxford dictionary, the primary definition of the word 'responsible' is: "Having an obligation to do something…as part of one's job or role". Hence, citizens take a share of responsibility over their knowledge and information status.

1. 1 Purpose of the study

This exploratory study has the main goal of investigating the role of news literacy in enhancing youth's online news experience and fostering their political engagement. The study is applied on a sample of young people from Egypt and a sample of young people from Spain, based on which comparative analysis is conducted.

This study's main goal is accomplished through delving into youth's online news experience, assessing their level of news literacy and inferring implications for political engagement. In that sense, the notion of harmful content emerges with focus on fake news and hate speech as two main types of misleading content encountered on the internet in general and on social media in specific. This calls to question whether citizens are 'responsible' when it comes to their online news behavior.

News literacy is regarded as a recently emergent sub-field of media literacy that targets empowering citizens through knowledge and critical thinking skills when dealing specifically with news content (Ashley, Maksl, & Craft, 2013;Powers, 2014; Fleming, 2016). The essentiality of having a separate subfield of news literacy goes back to the fact that news media are essential for providing the public sphere with the essential information to debate and take decisions based on becoming informed citizenry. Hence, misperceptions can impact the well-being of democracies by leading citizens into making wrong decisions based on which actions are taken.

With this in mind, the main objectives of this study are:

- Comprehending news literacy as a subfield of media literacy essential for democratic well-being
- Positioning news literacy as a weapon against harmful content; Fake news and hate speech
- Investigating the essentiality of news literacy for political engagement
- Understanding youth's perception of professional news media
- Exploring youth's exposure to harmful content and their ability to detect it
- Investigating youth's online news experience
- Comparing between the case in Egypt and in Spain

1. 2 Research problem statement and justification

Determining the research problem is the first and most important step in carrying out any research; as the steps that follow mainly depends on it. Setting a research problem guides the use of a suitable research method, data collection tools and other important research steps through pinpointing the data required (Tayie, 2016).

Despite the fact that disinformation and misinformation existed historically in the media environment, the current state of "information disorder", as named by Wardle and Derakhshan (2018), is unprecedented. Not only is this having an impact on an individual basis, but further on societies and countries symptomized with division and polarization. In both countries studied, these symptoms could be witnessed. Since January 25th 2011 revolution there has been a remarkable increa the political involvement of Egyptians who became more than ever involved in the public sphere. Also, with the coverage of the events at the time, citizens started to realize that the media content in many instances can be inaccurate or even faulty, let alone the spread of rumors and falsehoods online. On the other hand, speaking of Spain, according to a BBC article, Catalonia's media "has been a key factor in fuelling polarization" when it comes to Catalonia's independence issue (Hedgecoe, 2017). Taking into account the extent to which youth are connected to social media platforms, the heated political environment and the chaotic information scenes, it becomes interesting to investigate and compare between both countries' findings.

Therefore, the research problem can be determined through the following statement:

With the chaotic online information environment charged with fake news and hate speech, created with the intention to misleadingly manipulate the public opinion, news literacy is positioned as a weapon against harmful content online and as a key towards a responsible news experience through which youth are able to make informed decisions and become more politically engaged. Consequently, the researcher aims at exploring correlations between news literacy and other relevant variables; harmful content exposure and detection, engagement to news and political engagement.

1. 3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study hypothesizes that the more news literate youth, are the better able they are to have a responsible online news experience and hence become more engaged politically. This means that they would have the motivation, knowledge and critical skills to be able to identify credible reliable news as well as harmful messages that are widely spread through social media; fake news and hate speech.

Accordingly the study puts forward the following hypotheses:

- H1:A: News Literate youth are better able to *identify* explicit hate speech and/or hatred inciting news coverage on social media (Facebook/Twitter)
- H1:B: News Literate youth are better able to *identify* fake news on social media
- H2: News Literate youth think or care about the *veracity* of news items before reacting to or sharing them on social media (Facebook/Twitter)
- H3:A: News Literate youth are more motivated to seek news than their less news literate counterparts
- H3:B: News literate youth are more *engaged to news* than their less news literate counterparts

Further, the study explores the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the youth's patterns of *news use* like on social media (consumption, production, reactions to news content…etc.)?
- RQ2: What is the correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's *perception of current events knowledge*?
- RQ3: What is the correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's political engagement?

1. 4 Theoretical Framework and Rationale for the study

- ❖ **Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy (Potter, 2004) and Media-Related Selection (Arendt, Steindl, & Anna Kümpel, 2016):**

For the sake of this study, Potter´s (2004) Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy and its adaptation to News Literacy measurement by Maksl, Ashley, & Craft (2015) and Media-Related Selection (Arendt, Steindl, & Anna Kümpel, 2016) form the theoretical base of

News Literacy measurement and of understanding users' news experience. The study addresses News Literacy as a multidimensional construct which consists of: Motivation, Knowledge and Skills. Accordingly, this theoretical framework allows for the measurement of the three mentioned constituents of news literacy and forms a sufficient theoretical base to build the study on.

Four basic ideas shape the Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy: the idea of automaticity (automatic processing of information which weakens meaning making and critical thinking); media shapes most of these "automatic routines" of thinking when consuming media (here filtering information becomes challenging); the personal locus of individuals (media consumption goals, the ability (or lack of ability) to control events and the motivation to think critically); and the "information processing tasks of filtering" information (deciding which messages deserve one's attention and which ones do not) (Powers, 2014).

Media-related selection (MRS) on the other hand is an attempt by Arendt et al. (2016) to combine three theoretical tenets of selection, taking into account the two main actors in the news experience; journalists and users. The three theoretical concepts addressed under MRS are gatekeeping (journalists' selection), selective exposure (users' selection where confirmation bias is taken into account) and news sharing on social networking sites (journalists and users sharing behavior is considered). MRS as a theoretical tenet complements the Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy in the sense that it tackles automaticity of selection from the audience's sides and unconscious reactions to news driven by audience's stored attitudes.

Potter's (2004) theory has been adapted more than once differently by scholars of news literacy. It has been adapted to two of the most significant news literacy studies (Craft, Maksl, & Ashley, 2013; Maksl et al., 2015) in attempts to measure news literacy. The main target of the authors was to test how knowledge structures and "personal locus" (e.g. motivation) interact to shape different levels of news literacy for individuals. For instance Maksl et al (2015) found that more news literate youth are more intrinsically motivated to seek news.

Another adaptation of Potter's (2004) theory to news literacy is in the study by Fleming (2016) attempting to set theoretical basis to Stony Brook's news literacy intervention

through her "Cognitive Model of the Stony Brook Approach to News Literacy" (Fleming, 2016).

1. 5 Organization of the Dissertation

Following Chapter 1, the dissertation begins by introducing contextual information through an overview of the social structure of Egypt as Chapter 2. The Literature review is then developed in three chapters: 3, 4 and 5. Chapter 3 demonstrates News Literacy literature with the aim of conceptualizing the concept, understanding its significance and how it has been addressed academically. Chapter 4 aims at conceptualizing of the notion of harmful content through providing relevant literature review. Chapter 5 demonstrates the conceptualization of political engagement and how it is approached in this study. Chapter 6 presents the theoretical framework and methodology of the study.

In the following chapters findings and analysis of the study are presented. Chapter 7 presents findings and analysis from the qualitative and quantitative study on Egyptian participants. Chapter 8 presents findings and analysis from the qualitative and quantitative study on Spanish participants. Chapter 9 demonstrates the comparative analysis between the findings in both countries. Chapter 10 presents the final remarks, recommendations, limitations and conclusion.

Chapter 2

The Social Structure of Egypt

Over the past decade, the world has been witnessing an unprecedented phenomenon of effortless accessibility to information, rapid communication and a wide range of services; but with the merits come challenges.

Egypt, as one of the most heavily populated Arab countries with more than 100 million citizens, has been witnessing a rapid increase in the internet use. According to Internet World Stats website, Egypt's internet penetration reached 48.7% in 2018, with close to 50 million internet users among which 35 million are Facebook subscribers (Internet World Stats). According to Herrera and Bayat (2010) youth with access to the internet still "do influence and drive generational changes with far-reaching civic, cultural, and political consequences" (Herrera, 2012)

This has been most prominent during the Arab spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen. In the wake of the Tunisian revolution, Egyptians' calling for a democratic rule turned into a reality when millions took to the streets on January 25th revolution toppling a 30-year-old autocratic regime. This was later followed by another wave of the revolution on June 30th, when Egyptians managed to topple another one-year-old political regime; the Muslim Brotherhood's.

With such massive changes, the whole world started turning to Egypt and the Arab World's people. Egyptian citizens started realizing that their voice can be strongly heard and can result in changes on the ground. Consequently, their attention started shifting more to political news and their awareness of their role as politically active citizens became emphasized.

This chapter presents an overview of the social structure of Egypt. It also discusses recent political and social changes which occurred in Egypt over recent years especially after the events of January 2011. The role of social media in accelerating these changes is also discussed.

2. 1 A Historical Overview:

The mass media institutions do not function in a social vacuum, but in a society which contains other social and economic institution. These different institutions are affecting and being affected by each other (Tayie, 2015). The present study, exploring the role of news media literacy in youth's online news experience and the impact on political engagement, deals with mass media as part of the social structure. Therefore, the study of the social structure in Egypt is of considerable relevance to the present study to provide context.

Egypt is the home of one of the most ancient civilization of mankind. It is part of Africa and is linked to Asia by the Sinai Peninsula. The port of Alexandria has linked Egypt to other Mediterranean countries whilst the Nile has linked Egypt to Africa. Egypt is therefore uniquely situated to participate in all aspects of African, Arab and Mediterranean cultures (Hopewood, 1982). The two parts of Egypt, Lower and Upper Egypt were united by Menes in 3400 BC (Vatikiotis, 1969). The two parts are different from each other, Lower Egypt, which is richly agricultural and intensively inhabited occupying the Nile Delta. As Lower Egypt face Asia, Europe and the Mediterranean, it must have been in contact with many different peoples over the years (e.g. Phoenicians and Greeks). Upper Egypt is narrow and because it faces directly into the desert, it has a limited outlook towards Africa (Hopewood, 1982).

The history of previous years is not our present concern, but it has some relevance to the recent changes in the social structure of Egypt. Vatikiotis (1969) argues that three main events may be determined as influencing events in the emergence and development of modern Egypt:

1) The Arab-Islamic Conquest in the seventh Century,
2) The non-Arabic Islamic conquests from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries (i.e. Kurdish Turkish and Ottoman), and
3) The European conquests which started with the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt in 1798 and ended with the British Occupation of Egypt in 1882.

The Arabs came to Egypt led by Amr Ibn Al-As in 641. The Egyptians had the choice between adopting Islam as their religion or retaining their religion and paying poll tax (Morsat, 1985, p. 2). Due to the tolerance of these new comers, and the mass acceptance of Islam by Egyptians, after the seventh century Egypt gradually became part of the Islamic-Arab tradition and civilization and eventually its center. Arabic became gradually the

major language, Islam the major religion and Egypt's destiny was henceforth linked to the destiny of the Arab World (Hopewood, 1982).

Being an Arab and Islamic country, Egypt became part of the Ottoman Empire. During this time, Egypt was ruled by the Mamlukes who were under the Turkish Sultan. During this period, the native Egyptians had no role in the government of the country. This ended by the end of the eighteenth century (Marlowe, 1965).

Ever since, rulers of Egypt always sought to extend their dominion and power over the Islamic and the Arab World. That started during the time of Mohamed Aly who ruled Egypt early in the nineteenth century (1805-1848). He tried to extend his power at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. He also tried to exclude European influences. But Egypt was one of the first Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East to come under direct European influence (Marlowe, 1965). This ended with the British occupation of Egypt in 1882.

Britain occupied Egypt to secure the navigation of the Suez Canal and the route to India. For Britain, Egypt was both a market for British manufactured goods and a source of cotton for Lancashire mills. (Hopewood,1982). Egyptians struggled hard and they formed nationalistic movements against the British occupation. Egypt was declared on February 1922 as an independent sovereign state on condition that the relationship between the British Empire and Egypt remain strong. Meanwhile British troops stayed in the Suez Canal zone until they were entirely evacuated by the Egyptian government in 1957 (Vatikiotis, 1969).

The population of Egypt has increased from two and a half million in 1800 to more than 95 million in 2017 (Central Authority for Consensus, 2017). Historically the Egyptians have been tied to the Nile Valley and Delta (north of Egypt), where they have depended for their life, on the water of the River (Hopewood, 1982). With the growing population ownership of land was a major determinant in the social structure as agriculture had always been the main activity of people in Egypt. However, the distribution of land was unequal as the great proportion was owned by capitalists who lived in the city. By 1914, small holders who represented 9% of land owners owned only a quarter of agriculture lands (Hopewood, 1982). The owners of large areas of land formed a group with common interests and landownership placed them at the top of Egyptian society. Their main interest was to

maintain their status and the gap between these rich people and rural poor was vast (Hopewood, 1982).

There was a unified agricultural policy in Egypt after 1870 when everyone who owned or rented land in the Delta area grew cotton. Ever since cotton has become the cash export crop of Egypt. Mohamed Aly's plan for the development of Egypt was manifested in the emergence of an economy based, to a great extent, on one exportation crop – cotton (Hopewood, 1982). According to his policy, the exportation of cotton was necessary to obtain hard currency. This led to the integration of the country into the world economic system. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 strengthened this tendency as cotton was important to the industry in Britain.

During World War I, nationalist leaders descended among the fellahin (farmers) who represented the majority of Egyptians to seek political support. Therefore World War I brought rural people into closer contact with urban citizens. People in cities were living with foreigners who were settled in but not attached to land or the country. These foreigners were mainly Jewish, Greek, American, Italian and French. The foreign minorities were directing economic, commercial and services enterprises to the whole population (Hopewood, 1982, Vatikiotis, 1969).

Foreign investors initially came to Egypt early in the nineteenth century. Egypt has always been open for foreigners even since the time of Mohamed Aly. While he was ruling Egypt, markets were open for foreign products especially those imported from Britain. These foreign products were competing with home-made products. Not surprisingly this competition put foreign products ahead of those produced locally as the Egyptian national industry was still in its infancy (Tayie, 1983). In consequence, Egypt was forced to produce only raw materials, especially agricultural crops which were needed by industry in the west and in Britain.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of foreign banks and foreign businessmen increased noticeably. At the same time many privileges were granted to foreign investors to encourage them to conduct business in Egypt. In 1936 a treaty was signed between Egypt and Britain. According to this treaty, most British troops were to be evacuated from Egypt.

In 1952 Egypt became an independent state and not a kingdom after a revolution which overthrew the royal family which used to run Egypt for more than two centuries. Ever since 1952 Egypt became a republic not a kingdom as it used to be. Egypt was ruled by Gamal Abd El Naser, leader of the 1952 revolution, as from 1952 till 1970 when he passed away, who was followed by Anwar El Sadat (1970-1981).

2. 2 January 2011 Events: A Turning Point

Former Egyptian President Mohamed Hosny Mubarak came to power in 1981 after the death of President Sadat (1970-1981) who was assassinated by a group of soldiers during a military march in October 1981. Upon his arrival to power, Mubarak renewed "the Marshal Law" which was already there and it was renewed in 2010. Egyptian Economy was progressing during the 1990s then the situation started to decline with the turn of the 21st century. That was a global recession as well. At the same time, Egyptians were getting nervous about the economic and political atmosphere which was mainly characterized by the power of businessmen and the emergence of the so called "political capital", businessmen were controlling political life. Moreover, there were also some negative conducts of the security forces (police) against any protests or demonstrations which were mainly calling for political and democratic reforms (Freedom House: Egypt Report, 2011). When the presidential succession was pending during former president Hosny Mubarak's rule, waves of the uprising were apparent in Egypt as serious pressures were hovering around the political structure. Calls for freedoms and fairness were escalating since 2005 allowing an innovative political approach, which in turn gave way to the formation of political movements.

Political anger increased in 2010 in line with the deterioration of Mubarak's health. There was also a popular anger after the November 2010 Parliamentary Elections. There was no opposition in this 2010 parliament, at the same time atrocity and injustice increased. The revolution in Tunisia also was an ignition to encourage young people in Egypt to revolt and protest. Corruption was also widely spread in all governmental levels.
The revolution is a technique of social change techniques which includes social, political and economic conditions and circumstances. The changing process leads to destroy the actual regime and establishing a new regime. Success of the revolution leads to destroy the actual regime and emerging a new regime. At the same time, the revolution does not end

the function of the constitution in a chaotic way (Centre for Research and Studies, 2016, p.2).

So far Egypt witnessed five recent waves of revolutions (Al Gabour, 2009, p.79):

1- The renaissance revolution led by Mohamed Aly in 1805.
2- The Oraby revolution in 1881.
3- The revolution of Saad Zaghloul in 1919.
4- The 1952 revolution led by the Egyptian Army and Naser.
5- Finally the January 2011 Revolution led by young Egyptians.

The latest revolution of 2011 was a unique revolution as it was led by young people who relied on the use of the new media. The role of social media in enabling Egyptian youth's political participation was prominently highlighted in April 2008. They created a page on Facebook to plan and organize a general strike of workers in textile factories in Al Mahla Al Kobra (North of Cairo) to protest against their low payments and the deteriorating working conditions. The strike, which was attended by more than seventy thousands protesters, was terminated by force of the security forces and the use of gas. It is worth noting that the number of the Internet users jumped from 1.5 million in 2004 to 13.6 million in 2008.

In 2009, a young Egyptian activist called Mahmoud Al Heeta, who was a university student, created a group on Facebook called "Al Baradei President for Egypt". Tens of thousands of young Egyptians joined this group. This online group was transformed into a popular movement to support Mohamed Al Baradei to be the new president for Egypt. In April 2010, Wael Ghoneim, another young Egyptian activist, created a new page for Al Baradei. The number of subscribers in this webpage exceeded 100,000 and was mainly consisting of young people. When Al Baradei created his own page on Twitter, more than 10 thousands joined in a short period of time. (Al Gabour, 2009)

In June 2010, Waeel Ghoneim created another webpage on Facebook; "We are all Khaled Saeed" in the wake of killing Khaled Saeed; a young Egyptian from Alexandria, who was tortured to death by the police, with the aim of calling on people to rebel against police brutality and corruption. The page then expanded its activities and discussions to protest against the violation of human rights in Egypt, and the bad conduct of police. Subscribers of this page exceeded a quarter of a million in September 2010. These subscribers were all

reporting news, exchanging information and sharing photos and video clips in support of an uprising. This page became stronger and more influential than any other medium or source of information in Egypt. At the time when the number of the page members reached 365 thousand, a call for street protests to rebel against injustice and police brutality was made (Masin, 2011, p. 19).

During the January 25th revolution/events, the Egyptian government resorted to shutting down the Internet and mobile phone connections from January 28th till February 1st, 2011. This action from the side of the government was a clear admission of the strength of social media and the Internet in mobilizing young people. Despite all these actions from the governments, the number of subscribers of the webpage (We Are All Khaled Saeed) jumped to 640,000 thousand. After January 25th, the number of Internet users in Egypt increased by 1.9 million reaching 23.1 million, and the number of Facebook users also increased by a million users reaching 5.2 million. The number of Twitter users jumped from 26.8 thousand to 44.2 thousand. More than 8.7 million web pages on Youtube were viewed during the last week of January 2011 (Lou, 2011, p. 2).

Following the 18-day uprising, Mubarak succumbed to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the Egyptian military's ruling authority, who promised a new constitution, parliamentary as well as presidential elections. The Islamist Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist groups won the majority of the parliamentary seats, allowing them to gain power. Although the parliament was dissolved by a court decision, the Islamists won the first post-revolution presidential elections and Muslim Brother leading figure Mohamed Morsy was crowned Egypt's first elected civilian president on June 2012. Towards the end of Morsi's first year in power, an estimated 22 million petition forms were signed to overthrow him. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians took to the streets to protest against Morsi's alleged abuse of power for the benefit of the Muslim Brotherhood. "A group of young activists started a petition calling for Morsi to step down. They called themselves "Tamarod," which means "rebellion", and demand new elections, calling for mass protests on the June anniversary of Morsi's inauguration" (Childress, 2013).

Former Minister of Defense Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, now the president of Egypt, overthrew Morsi and appointed a new military-led government. He also dissolved the 2012

Constitution, arrested scores of Muslim Brotherhood members and shut down Islamist TV channels on charges of promoting violence. The Supreme Court Chief Judge Adly Mansour became Egypt's interim president according to the constitution. When the transitional year ended, Sisi ran for presidency and won the elections to start his four-year term as president in June 2014. He also ran for a second term presidency which he won overwhelmingly.

There is no doubt that social media play an important role in accelerating if not causing political changes in many countries. Poor living conditions, inequality, and widespread corruption in these countries were the main reasons for the uprising. Social media gave the chance to people to express their views and allowed new movements to emerge. Social media were very effective in directing the attention of young people towards political events and became important platforms for political movements. They also broke the feeling of fear and allowed people to express their views freely. Social media also played an important role in democratic movements that occurred in the Arab world and that resulted in the removal of heads of states in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen.

2. 3 Role of Social Media in Changes

Young people in Egypt were active in using the new media for political discussion as from the turn of the 21st century. New media acted as a unique platform for political discussions/engagement and digital protests among the youngster. The new media were indeed encouraging young people to be more politically active. The number of bloggers increased rapidly. At the same time, their blogs and exchanged comments have shown a great deal of dissatisfaction about the political, economic and social conditions in the country. These bloggers were also very critical of the abuse of authority of the police during Mubarak's era.

The new media were very useful and effective in organizing efforts of the Egyptian youth. Egyptian bloggers could claim that they were the first to criticize Mubarak's regime openly. As from 2004 bloggers began to move from the virtual world to the real world, protesting in the streets of Cairo and other governorates (Al Malky, 2007). The formation of "Kefaya" (meaning enough) and other political movements were also supported by these bloggers. Kefaya movement lasted for almost two years (2004-2006) generated by a group of Egyptian elites who were engaged in political demonstrations calling against former President Hosny

Mubarak presidential continuance or the succession of his son Gamal Mubarak. This movement, although inspiring, failed to assemble the public base needed for its success. In 2005-2006 another movement followed, which realized the social base required, incorporating specific social segments from Egyptian workers, teachers, bus drivers, among other civil servants. The calls were for equality, financial welfare and economic liberalization.

Young Egyptian bloggers were also brave enough to disclose a lot of misconducts, torture and brutality of police when dealing with citizens whether in prisons or elsewhere. At this point in time, street protests became more frequent than ever. This represented a new form of political participation which was not practiced in Egypt before. It also marks the beginning of the real political participation/engagement of Egyptian youth.

While none of these activities were known neither to local rights organizations nor to international rights advocates like Amnesty International, it was Egyptian bloggers, writing in the distinctive local dialect of Egypt, who were most responsible for publicizing these issues, bringing them into the public sphere, and transforming them into legitimate issues for public debate (El Mahdi, 2009).

Social media were the main platforms for organizing street protests and demonstrations. It is well known that the initial protests of January 25th, 2011 were scheduled on police day to show objection and dissatisfaction of the police behavior. The protesters were also criticizing the back then Minister of Interior Habib El-Adly who was in power as a minister for more than 13 years. The protests represented a kind of a challenge to the lawlessness of the country's police and security forces.

Credit for planning these protests has been variously attributed both to April 6th Movement (which originally began as a Facebook group in March 2008), and to the "We Are All Khaled Said" Facebook group, which was founded after the appalling murder by a police officer of a young man from Alexandria named Khaled Said in June 2010. The founding of April 6th Youth Movement in 2008, and "We Are All Khaled Said" Facebook group marked the beginning of the real political participation of young Egyptians. It is also because of the spread of and changes in the usage patterns of social media that political participation emerged vigorously.

Chapter 3

Conceptualizing News Literacy

This chapter aims at delineating news literacy as a multidimensional construct and reviewing relevant literature. Accordingly, the chapter begins by a general background and understanding what news means to set base for the discussion. Constituents of news literacy are then presented and discussed followed by an argument inspired by the literature on the main actors involved in the field of news literacy. In order to understand it as a measureable variable, operational definitions of news literacy emerging from the literature reviewed are demonstrated. This is followed by a section of news literacy compared to other literacies, and then significance of news literacy is discussed by shedding light on relevant themes. The following sections include: objectives and learning outcomes of news literacy, its different approaches, knowledge areas and skills of news literacy according to the reviewed literature and finally the research gap in the studies addressing news literacy.

3. 1 Defining News Literacy:

3. 2 Background:

News literacy is considered a recently emergent field that started developing in the middle of the past decade (Ashley, Maksl, & Craft, 2013);Powers, 2014)News Literacy has been indirectly addressed through media literacy long ago, through the focus on news as one genre of media content. **However, the emergence of news literacy as an independent subfield only goes back to 2006** (Fleming, 2016). It is a field that attracted the attention of many journalists and has actually been led as an independent field by professional experienced journalists who turned into educators (Beyerstein, 2014; Powers, 2014).

That said, it is recognizable that an academic base is still underway for news literacy; since it still lacks a solid base of literature in the "academic world" (powers, 2014). Media literacy scholars and educators address news literacy as a subfield of media literacy that focuses solely on news content. Consequently, there are still debates and lack of agreement with regards to clearly defined objectives of news literacy which is deemed essential in order to be able to measure it, integrate it in the pedagogical practices as well as assess its effectiveness pragmatically.

According to Beyerstein (2014):

"*News literacy—a field pioneered by journalists rather than theorists or psychometricians—is still a young discipline that needs time to accumulate a body of evidence for its efficacy. But rightly or not, defining its goals in terms that are clearly measurable is integral to its effort to sell itself as an indispensable part of the nation's education system.*"

Consequently, there are different approaches that sought to define news literacy, however, much like media literacy, there is not a universally agreed on definition of how to gauge, explain or teach news literacy so far. Being the recent field it is researchers and academics are "only beginning to formalize goals and applications of news media literacy" (Ashley et al., 2013; Fleming, 2014) Press, 2015; Fleming, 2016). Many scholars agree that "news media literacy" is a field that emerges with the main purpose of teaching people the application of media literacy skills such as "critical thinking" and "deconstructing arguments" to "news consumption" while accentuating the "democratic value" of news (Hobbs, 2010 a); Ashley et al., 2013) Press, 2011; Mihailidis, 2012; Vraga & Tully, 2016). From a pedagogical perspective, news literacy education should stress on spreading knowledge to news consumers about the obstacles and constraints news producers face, how news contribute to "democratic" societies and "role of individuals to critically consume journalism" (Ashley et al., 2013)(Mihailidis, 2012; Potter, 2013; Vraga & Tully, 2016)

From a less pedagogical perspective, Mihailidis wrote that "News literacy, conceived under the umbrella of media literacy education, offers a new path towards addressing the possibilities and pitfalls that are created by the intersections where journalism, citizenship, and technology meet" (Mihailidis, 2012, p. 1)

Fleming (2016) proposes a further refined conceptualization of news literacy based on her former (2014) study and the Center of News Literacy of Stony Brook University and building on the tenets of media literacy; "*news literacy is the ability to access, evaluate, analyze and appreciate journalism*". That said, Stony Brook educators besides other scholars in the field agree that news literacy is "*the ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports*" (Powers, 2010)(Klurfeld & Schneider, 2014; Powers, 2014; Fleming, 2016). The mentioned definitions go in accordance with the

one introduced by the News Literacy Project: "*how to know what to believe*" which focuses on dimensions of critical thinking and judgment for credibility (Klibanoff, 2012).

3. 3 What is News?

"Telling stories of social life, news is a social source. A source of knowledge, a source of power, news is a window on the world" (Tuchman, 1978)

Attempting to present ground for arguments and debates with regards to defining news literacy, scholars brought attention to the importance of initially defining news (Malik, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013).

Defining news has been a longstanding argument with witnessed attempts to set theoretical grounds and context for it. In order to be able to define what news is, it is essential to shed light on how news is made, or from a sociological perspective, who shapes the news; the society or the journalists and newsmakers. Hence, there are different approaches by sociologists to understanding news, one of which is the most traditional and among the very first as introduced by Tuchman (1978):

"any society´s definition of news is dependent upon its social structure. The social structure produces norms, including attitudes that define aspects of social life which are of either interest or importance to citizens"

This approach of delineating what news is puts the power of defining news in the hands of the society, hence, based on this view newsmakers attempt to reflect or "mirror" society's interests and concerns through selecting occurrences to be covered as news stories. This view acknowledges that news coverage of specific incidents can in turn change people's perception of certain issues, however still it suggests that "definitions of news remain dependent upon the social structure, not on the activities of news workers and news organizations" (Tuchman, 1978, p.183). In accordance, Gans (1979) states that "phenomenologically inclined researchers have made a major contribution to understanding journalists and their work by showing that whatever the nature of the external reality, human beings can perceive it only with their own concepts, and therefore always "construct" reality" (Gans, 1979, p.79)

Contrarily, the interpretive approach to defining news suggests otherwise. This approach does not imply a passive role from the side of newsmakers, journalists and news organizations in deciding what is news as, as suggested by the traditional approach. On the contrary, this approach argues that "social structure" does not necessarily evidently define "norms defining what is newsworthy". And hence, it becomes clear that with newsmakers applying these norms, they are the ones who decide what is newsworthy, as this approach argues (Tuchman, 1978, p.184).

The interpretive approach also states that "news does not mirror society" and that it rather "helps to constitute it as a shared social phenomenon, for in the process of describing an event, news defines and shapes that event". According to Gans (1979), "News is...the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality".

This means that news construct the occurrences of a society depending on how reporters, journalists or newsmakers perceive them, that is the "media perception" which is defined through a whole process which begins by the selection criteria of news content (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). This means that a description or a "representation" of such occurrences is introduced which delineates how people recall them and think about them in addition to the reader´s "reconstruction" of the meanings embedded in news which contributes to the issue (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Van Dijk, 1988).

So, this approach sheds light on the "activities of newsworkers" in defining "social phenomena". In that sense, an example on the coverage of deviance could be mentioned to explain that, according to the interpretive approach, such coverage helps society define "what is deviant and what is normative" and also reflects the high value news place on "order" as opposed to "disorder" defined through the frequent coverage of such stories (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979). The coverage of protests, for instance; at the beginning of the Arab spring revolts in Egypt, the news media insisted on "imposing" certain "meanings" of threat, turbulence, danger and lack of safety by dubbing revolutionaries "a bunch of trouble makers" implying their small number and their unfavorable description in an attempt to influence the society. Contrarily, after the ouster of the regime, the *frame* has changed to describe them as revolutionaries implying that they are heroes who freed the country. In these two examples, you can see how deviance is differently approached and delineated by news media in an attempt to influence perception.

According to Malik et al. (2013), the definition of news can occur through three approaches; anthropological, systematic/prescriptive and empirical. The anthropological approach mainly defines news as pieces of information about events/incidents that are happening apart from our view or in parts of the world we cannot directly experience. The systematic or prescriptive approach describes news as "information that informs and empowers citizens to participate in civil society and democratic process". Finally, the empirical approach explains news as it is perceived by audiences; that is what people believe the word news means to them based on what they most perceive as newsworthy which resonates with Tuchman´s traditional view of news previously explained (Malik et al., 2013)(Tuchman, 1978).

Press (2011) defines five themes of thinking about news, which all relate to different aspects of news literacy:

- ❖ *News as a narrative* (how news connects us, access to news, engagement with the news)
- ❖ *The social process that creates news* (the constructed nature of news, bias, objectivity and subjectivity; of relevance to the theoretical context by Tuchman, 1978)
- ❖ *Understanding the journalistic process* (knowledge about the news production stages)
- ❖ *The theme of critical thinking* (identifying sources of information, reliability, verification)
- ❖ *The role of social media in modern news environment* (social media as delivery platforms not news sources)

Mihailidis (2012) refers to news as content that "adopts the traditional formulation of civic information about current affairs, and community issues relevant to awareness, engagement, and participation in local and democratic processes". Accordingly, he introduced the Concentric Model for 21st Century News attempting to redefine the processes and dynamics that occur in the newsroom with "journalists" and "citizens" almost equally included and connected through "mobile", "digital" and "participatory" platforms that achieve high level of "spreadability" (Mihailidis, 2012, p.8).

Evidently, Malik et al.'s (2013) systematic approach of news definition as well as Mihailidis's (2012) Concentric Model, both present the core of what news literacy is concerned with. Their approach implies the significant value of differentiating between news and any other media content by focusing on the unique role of news. This role of informing and empowering citizens leaves news media as an essential actor in any democracy. It is also essential to combine both Tuchman's traditional approach as well as the interpretive approach of understanding news; that is "newsworkers" as well as the society composed of citizens contribute actively to what could be regarded as news.

Hence, authors support the rapidly changing reality of news and journalism which includes citizens as content creators thanks to platforms and technological evolution. This underscores the essentiality of news literacy as an endeavor to prepare citizens as well as journalists.

3. 4 Constituents of News Literacy: Motivation, Knowledge and Skills

Commonly, academics agree on two aspects that are deemed most essential for news literacy; knowledge and motivation (Fleming, 2014; Maksl, Ashley, & Craft, 2015)(Fleming, 2016)

Figure 1: Constituents of News Literacy

According to Maksl et al. (2015), news literacy can elementarily be defined as the "***knowledge*** *and* ***motivations*** *needed to identify and engage with journalism*". The approach of the authors in their study mainly focuses on the **knowledge** structures needed and the personal **motivations** (political interest can be an example) that should be present in order to gain **skills** of "identifying" news and "engaging" with it (Maksl et al., 2015). The skill of identifying news refers to the individual's ability to differentiate between news and any other content delivered through the media.

Furthermore, *engaging* with professional journalism has been mentioned as a core mission for news literacy by different authors (Fleming, 2016; Maksl et al., 2015; Toepfl, 2014; Fleming, 2014; Malik et al., 2013). This comes as a result of younger generations averting from professional journalism with the advent of peer-citizens- based platforms of information. Consequently, news literacy stresses on the urgency of engaging with as well as *appreciating* professional journalism (Fleming, 2014).

With regards to **knowledge** as a facet of news literacy; it refers to the structures of knowledge individuals should acquire in order to have the base that enables them to gain skills of news literacy. Knowledge has been approached differently by different scholars with a lot of common concepts agreed on as will be discussed in more detail later. Accentuating the importance of knowledge as a constituent of news literacy, Reese's (2012) definition of news literacy mainly highlights the importance of certain knowledge areas to be attained in order for an individual to become regarded as news literate. These **knowledge areas** include the news making process, news production techniques, and the "constructed" nature of news messages. According to Reese (2012): news literacy should reflect

"*an understanding of how news "works," including the underlying media and technological systems that support certain meanings embedded in media "texts" and the creative process that yields them*." (Reese, 2012).

Attempting to delve deeper into this area of how news construct reality, essential aspects should be highlighted; how news represents reality and how the perception of newsmakers interferes and plays a role in the process. Without news, any occurrence would be a personal matter to those involved rather than a "public issue".

Accordingly, news promote daily happenings by turning them into events with specific "character" they give through associating them with certain particulars and by that defining what news readers have access to. for instance, as mentioned by Tuchman (1978), through the way news selects some happenings in a riot (killings, wounds, citizens objection…etc) they turn it into a matter of "public concern" and at the same time by repetition they "shape a public definition of what a riot is" without the public taking into account "the process that shaped riot-as-occurrence into riots-as-news-events" (Tuchman, 1978).

Another essential concept that should be understood and should become essential component of understanding how news shapes reality is the concept of "framing". The frame represents the general context selected by the newsmakers to tell the story/event while the strip is a "slice or a cut of the stream of ongoing activity". Accordingly, the frame gives context to the occurrences of an event. Thus a strip without a frame is meaningless and cannot be apprehended. According to Tuchman (1978), in the process of searching for frames "two processes occur simultaneously: An occurrence is transformed into an event, and an event is transformed into a news story. The news frame organized everyday reality and the news frame is part and parcel of everyday reality, for, as we have seen, the public character of news is an essential feature of news" (Tuchman, 1978).

Hence having a basic understanding and becoming aware of news construction process and the context within which it occurs becomes as essential knowledge for news literacy.

The second constituent, **Motivation**, is regarded as the most critical facet in "information behavior". If individuals are highly motivated, they will accordingly seek information which will urge them to discover ways to "evaluate" it (Malik et al., 2013). Motivation has been emphasized on in most instances. Motivations' importance goes back to the assumption that it impacts news content processing as a result of impacting the degree of attention we give to news media information. In turn, this affects the "subsequent elaboration" after being exposed to news. For instance, **political interest can be measured as an indicator to the political attitudes** formed after exposure to news.

With regards to the third constituent, **skills**, literature on news literacy show a significant emphasis initially on critical thinking skills with less emphasis on collaboration, production or communication skills. Dealing critically with news content has always been raised as an issue crucial to healthier and more beneficial consumption/use of news. Most

people fall in the trap of blindly believing what the news has to say without questioning how or why this piece of information is disseminated. This brings to attention the concept of "natural attitude" introduced by Alfred Schutz (1962), as noted by Tuchman (1978), which refers to the fact that most people tend to "accept their world (whatever its contents may be) as "natural," as the way things are" (Tuchman, 1978). Accordingly, under this concept, the idea of "taken-for-grantedness" is emphasized; where individuals take their world and surroundings for granted, which applies to news consumption. Despite the cognitive activity done by news audience in making meaning out of the text, they tend to take for granted the fact that news media provides them with "today´s news" (Tuchman, 1978). This goes back to perceiving news providers as well established institutions "which guarantee a steady flow of reliable news" (Van Dijk, 1988). Hence, they count on the newsmakers to shape their news of today including the attributions and suggested meanings without, in many cases, questioning or critically considering the process of creating and disseminating news. In today's world, with the doubled pressures on journalists, especially that of immediacy of news dissemination versus quality of content, such attitude is considered problematic.

The reason behind that as explained by Tuchman (1978) is that:

"we take for granted the embeddedness of the news net in legitimated institutions and the existence of centralized news gathering, as handed down to us from the nineteenth century."

This, despite stated long ago, perfectly applies to what is happening with the news media and individuals´ use today and explains why some deal with the news content more passively than others. Consciousness while exposed to media messages is emphasized by Potter (2004) by demonstrating the psychology concept of *automaticity* referring to unconscious exposure to information. As explained by Potter (2004), "automaticity is a state where our minds operate without any conscious effort from us" (Potter, 2004, p.7). Such state leads to apathy when it comes to information use; where individuals develop an attitude of indifference toward consulting multiple news/information sources as an attempt to seek quality content. Hence, they passively get exposed to whatever is on their way which affects the whole news exposure experience.

Skills and knowledge areas are further discussed in details later in a separate section.

3. 5 Who Should Define News Literacy? (Different Approaches to News Literacy; Academic and Journalistic)

According to Powers (2010), "Rebooting the News" is a conference that was held in 2008 in which journalists and journalism educators assembled in an attempt to conceptualize news literacy and stress its necessity. Consequently, a "consensus statement" was signed by the conference participants aiming to underscore the significance of news literacy. The statement said: "Because news surrounds us, news literacy is an essential life skill for everyone"

On the other hand, attempts to set the underpinnings of News Literacy as a new emerging subfield, Press (2015) mentions, include the National News Literacy Summit held in Chicago in mid-September 2014. This summit included "journalists, educators, academics, and administrators" who came together to debate the news literacy state and attempted to agree on specific dimensions to it. The conclusion of the summit was frustrating to some since there appeared to be a lack of agreement on the "common values or the way forward" of news literacy as a "field or discipline". On one hand, the tensions between media literacy and news literacy educators emerged raising questions like: how do both fields relate to each other and how is news literacy different among a lot of other queries. On the other, there appeared to be tensions between journalists and academics/educators on the different methods the field can be approached and also on the conceptualization of it.

The main outcomes of the summit, according to Press (2015) focusing on the instructional approach of news literacy, stress on three areas, with lack of agreement on them demonstrated; news literacy's learning outcomes, curricula and teaching methodology. So the main emphasis is on the **knowledge acquired** in the process of teaching news literacy and less on the **skills developed** as a result.

Intending to present possible resolution to the tensions between the different parties when it comes to news literacy, scholars stress on the essentiality of a collaboration between journalism educators/academics and journalists (Masterman, 2001; Hobbs and Jensen, 2009; Press, 2011; Press, 2015) to reach and enhance the goals of news media literacy. The role of educators adds depth to journalistic perspectives on the different facets of news literacy through knowledge of the media landscapes, systems…etc. Evidently, journalists'

part is demonstrated through elucidating the "journalistic process" and "craft" of journalism (Press, 2015).

Figure 2: Collaboration between academics and journalists for News Literacy
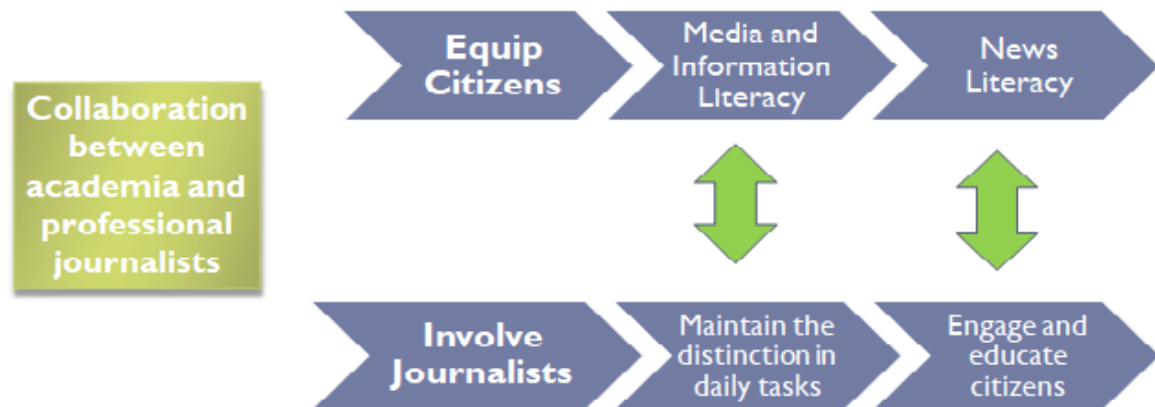
According to Hornik & Kajimoto (2014), the academic educators or scholars usually introduce to students the "macro-view approaches" to media which deals broadly with different concepts and theories. However, this is not enough in a practical sense of analyzing a news story for instance. Consequently, the "micro-view analytical tools" which were introduced by Stony Brook's Center for News Literacy mainly focus on journalistic practices and real life experiences of journalists. Both together help students formulate a more or less complete frame of news literacy. This resonates with Hobbs' (2010a) criticisms to Stony Brook's approach to news literacy focusing on the journalistic perspective with less input from academic educators when developing lessons and curricula which is discussed in more details later.

Likewise, Press (2011) makes a statement that the perspectives of journalists and academics about news literacy are in accordance with each other. Journalists put emphasis on the dimension of "create" in the definition of media/news literacy by shedding light on news production and also accentuated the role of social media. Both flourishes are essential to news literacy; news production gives insight to the process of constructing and creating news and social media represents the news filter to many youth which raises the issue of quality of information while engaging youth. This statement emerged as a result of conducting interviews with journalists and linking and comparing their input to the

academic perspectives of news literacy. Press (2011) reached the following definition of news literacy (who is news literate?):

"the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms (Aufderheide,1993), recognizing and critically examining hidden meanings in news media, identifying sources of information in the news media, including sources cited within news media texts, and developing an understanding of news media consumption habits." Besides, Fleming's view of the essentiality of championing free speech and the freedom of the press was emphasized less bluntly throughout the interviews.

3. 6 Operationally Defining News Literacy

Different scholars sought to define news literacy operationally with a focus on a set of measureable constituents. Press (2015) reflected a journalistic perspective on news literacy through the following set of elements the author deem necessary for news literacy. The elements below reflect two constituents of news literacy; knowledge and skills. An individual who is news literate should:

- Be able to recognize and *critically examine* hidden meanings in news messages
- Be able to *identify sources* of information in a news story
- Understand his/her own news media consumption habits (*knowledge of the self*)
- Have *knowledge* of news media ownership and how this affects news content
- Understand the issue of ownership concentration and its effects

With a more in depth emphasis on knowledge structures/areas – and less on skills – as an essential component of news literacy, Ashley et al. (2013) present items that investigate the individuals' awareness of contents that are considered essential for news literacy. This is reflected through examining their knowledge of concepts under three domains: Author and Audience (AA), Messages and Meanings (MM) and Representation and Reality (RR). The AA domain mainly examines knowledge about ownership, news agendas and audience bias; the MM domain focuses on issues such as different interpretation of the same message, news effect (on opinions and attention), real aim of news (versus the ideal objective), production techniques effect on audience, media bias; and the RR domain focuses on knowledge about constructedness of news media messages, selection criteria of news content, the ideal versus the real role of journalists (awareness of some of the normative principles of journalism).

Powers (2014) focuses on the cognitive process of news consumers as audiences rather than on the ability to produce news content in the approach to news literacy. According to Powers (2014) news literacy can be operationally defined as:

"demonstrating the **critical thinking** ability and **awareness** necessary to **access**, **filter** and **evaluate** credible news from diverse sources."

This definition emphasizes on the necessity of knowledge areas which act as indicators to a set of skills or competencies news literate news consumers should have.

Consequently Powers's (2014) definition focuses on two main constructs of news literacy: Critical thinking ability and Awareness (self-awareness and awareness of the factors that affect news credibility and diversity). With regards to knowledge and skills, it focuses on awareness of and understanding factors affecting news credibility and diversity as well as knowledge of the self as *indicators* for the ability to access, filter and evaluate news content. This definition is based on two main theoretical premises; the first being the most widely agreed on definition of media literacy "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of formats". The second is Potter's description of media literacy "as a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media and to interpret the meaning of messages we encounter". Besides these two media literacy definitions, the study also incorporated Schneider's (2010) definition of news literacy ,when interviewed by Powers (2010), "the ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports".

Hence, for the purpose of this study, news literacy is operationally defined as follows:

Demonstrating ***knowledge*** of key news media dimensions and ***awareness of motivations*** of seeking news content which are deemed necessary to have the ability to ***critically access***, ***filte***r, ***evaluate*** and ***produce*** news content from and on different sources/platforms (online) in order to become an active citizen who is ***politically engaged***.

(Powers, 2014; Mihailidis, 2012; Potter, 2004)

Evidently, this definition presents news literacy as a multi-dimensional concept by including three main constituents; knowledge, motivation and skills.

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Knowledge areas are based on Potter's (2004) Cognitive theory of Media Literacy to include knowledge about:

- News Content (current events knowledge)

- News Media Industry (ownership, economics and control)

- News Media Effects (consequences of exposure to news)

- Real World (reality versus news media's *constructedness*)

- The Self (awareness of one's motivations of seeking news content in addition to habits of news use)

3. 7 News Literacy and Other Literacies:

The term literacy is used with the inference that media, information and news content are never fully obvious and that they require knowledge and skills in order to be able to "read" them and create or "write" one's own content. Perez Tornero and Varis (2010), demonstrate literacy as "the acquisition of any kind of code that facilitates and fosters communication". Hence media literacy entails knowledge, use and skills that enable deciphering the "codes" of the media (Perez Tornero & Varis, 2010). According to Hobbs (2010b), different terms that describe various specified literacies have emerged including news literacy among others. Despite distinguishing between these literacies through research and academic underpinnings, they do overlap in many instances. Media literacy has always addressed news content which deems news literacy as a subfield of media literacy dedicated specifically to addressing required knowledge areas and competencies essential to become news literate.

Media literacy and information literacy has been the most common types of media content related literacies for many years. Through Media and Information Literacy initiatives the two fields are now regarded as overlapping by scholars despite having different origins and being concerned with different angles of literacy. According to Livingstone, Couvering and Thumin (2008) media literacy and information literacy can be differentiated through the perspective from which they regard the media.

Media Literacy views media as the "lens or window" through which individuals can "see the world" and so it becomes also a platform through which they can express themselves (Malik et al., 2013). The origins of media literacy are linked to media studies, humanities and "educational context" and so it mainly addresses issues of "critical understanding" through focusing on the "qualitative and interpretive" approach (Toepfl, 2014; Malik et al., 2013). On the other hand, Information Literacy views media as a "tool" that disseminates information to individuals which they can utilize to deal with the world. The origins of information literacy are linked to library, "information science", "human-computer interaction" and cognitive psychology. It mainly addresses the issue of "access" (Toepfl, 2014; Powers, 2014; Malik et al., 2013).

With the advent of the internet, news literacy can be regarded as an intersection of media literacy and information literacy; since news is informative content that is disseminated through media (Toepfl, 2014; Malik et al., 2013). However, what distinguishes news literacy is the uniqueness of its role which targets "[training] consumers to think like journalists" (Miller, 2010).

Toepfl (2014) stated that based on recent literature review on media literacy, most scholars agree on four areas of knowledge and skills as composing media literacy:

- Media industries
- Media messages
- Media audiences
- Media effects

As many scholars agree, there is not one universal definition of media literacy; however Aufderheide's (1993) definition stands as the most commonly agreed on conceptualization; media literacy is the ability to "access, analyze, evaluate and communicate media messages in a variety of forms". For instance, Maksl et al. (2015) emphasize that there is not one definition of media literacy, however they state the most common approaches based on literature. These approaches state that media literacy mainly aims at:

- Enhancing critical thinking
- Analysis and evaluation
- Conscious processing of mediated messages
- Ability to produce media messages

Consequently, in most instances news literacy is regarded as an "emerging subfield" of media literacy by media literacy founders and scholars who believe that it is most feasible to apply media literacy's "broad goals and frameworks" to content of news media (Hobbs, 2010a; Mihailidis, 2011). Literature reviewed shows that news literacy and media literacy share the first three goals, where news literacy seeks critical thinking and criticizing news messages, analysis and evaluation, and processing news messages by understanding how they are constructed (Maksl et al. 2015; Fleming, 2014; Powers, 2014; Toepfl, 2014). However, there is less interest in producing news messages; it is not prioritized in news literacy as is the case in media literacy as will be further discussed later.

However, both fields emphasize on preparing individuals against "automaticity" or taking information delivered through news and media content for granted. Instead, audiences should have independency and further autonomy in processing information by maintaining a critical stance and utilizing knowledge areas to form their own attitudes and opinions toward issues (Reese, 2012).

"We want people to be able to stand back from news media objects, aesthetically, politically, and intellectually" (Reese, 2012).

There are divided views with regards to news literacy and other literacies; where media literacy scholars view it as part of media literacy's broad perspective, while academics with professional background regard it as a separate field that has common grounds with media literacy (Schneider; Miller).

According to scholars (Fleming, 2016; Powers, 2014), there are two central theoretical grounds through which media literacy has been approached: protectionism and empowerment. **Protectionist** approaches mainly place the highest emphasis on shielding audiences against the potential harmful impacts of media messages. Accordingly, media literacy's protectionism entails "media and public health literacies, media reform movements, digital ethics and online safety advocates, and critical media literacy programs" (Fleming, 2014). Despite apparently overlapping in the area of empowerment, media literacy and news literacy as well can possibly overlap in the protectionist pedagogic. Discussing engaging children to news content, Hobbs et al. (2011) mention the possible negative impacts that might result from children being exposed to dramatic negative content of news media (natural disasters, wars, crimes … etc.). Consequently,

they present the findings of an experiment that was done on "children, parents and terrorism news" showing that media literacy for parents can help decrease the negative effects of news content on children by controlling "threat perceptions and anxiety". This reflects the protectionist perspective of media literacy focusing on news content; which is one that demonstrates the significance of news literacy for parents and children. Media and specifically news literacy can help parents and educators explain to children how they can benefit from news content changing the negative impact into a positive one. For this to occur parents and educators should be able to deconstruct news content and explain to children how and on what basis news is made, the economic and political contexts that affect news and "how it is produced" and how this impacts individuals' various interpretations to news. Not only would this help diminish the potential negative impact of news, but it will further prepare children to become engaged citizens who understand their roles in a democracy. This comes as the core of news literacy education.

On the other hand, **empowerment** pedagogics focus on media literate citizens' ability to become critical toward "power structures" and accordingly the power they are given in that sense to have an evident impact on politics, society and institutions. . By this, media literacy started including the components of analysis, assessment and evaluation of media messages as core pillars. It further developed to become recognized as a key block in building actively engaged citizenry (Powers, 2014). Hence, empowerment media literacy cluster includes "visual, news, information, and digital literacies in addition to youth media, broadband access, and digital media and learning" (Fleming, 2016).

Thereof, speaking of critical media literacy, the main focus is on enhancing the critical ability and empowering to question aspects like "corporate ownership" and the impact of media institutions and become aware of representations of "race, class and gender" in content constructed by the media. That said, it becomes evident that there are common tenets between media literacy's theoretical cluster of empowerment and news literacy.

According to Potter (2013), media literacy aims at developing general skills when consuming media as well as skills specific to the different media genres; news included. Attempting to shed light on evidently common principles between media literacy and news literacy, Press (2015) used one of the most popular news literacy initiatives in the U.S., that is Stony Brook University's news literacy intervention, to set the argument. Taking this

intervention as a news literacy intervention model, Press (2015) states that it shares a lot of concepts with media literacy's interventions, such as:

- Focusing on the *constructedness* of media messages through production elements and techniques; reality versus representation
- There can be different *interpretations* for the same message based on the different decoding process that goes back to "different schemas" of individuals
- Identifying *bias* as a concept and addressing its role in both "the encoding and decoding process"
- "Media messages are generally created for profit or to exercise power"

Put together as common principles of Media literacy and News literacy, these concepts call for the importance of dealing with the media, including news content, with a critical eye.

Moreover, endeavoring to examine and explore the link between both fields, Vraga & Tully (2016), tested the assumption that those who have better media literacy background will better respond to news media literacy messages by accessing and recalling information stored in their brain. This was mainly based on the supposition that a news literacy public service announcement (PSA) will be more effective when it reinforces already existing media literacy values and knowledge. Findings of this study show that students enrolled in media courses were higher on the level of news media literacy than those enrolled in non-media course. Hence, this supports relevance and overlaps between media and news literacy.

As can be inferred from the literature, media literacy has been widely debated. However, most scholars agree that its main pillars are knowledge areas, learning outcomes which refer to the competencies or skills gained as a result of gaining knowledge. This can apply to news literacy as well; it should be broken down into knowledge areas, personal contexts and skills, inspired by Potter's approach to media literacy (Powers, 2014).

In view of that, the first step to reach a definition of news literacy would be acknowledging that it is a subfield of the bigger umbrella of media literacy. And consequently, as highlighted and proposed by several scholars who attempted to define news literacy (Ashley et al., 2013, Maksl et al., 2015, Fleming, 2016), the theoretical basis of news literacy should be based on that of media literacy with adaptation to news content.

3. 8 Significance of News Literacy: Why is News Literacy Essential?

3. 9 Media Related Skills Essential for the 21st Century:

According to scholars, media literacy education has always included news content as a main component (Masterman, 1985 Cited in Hobbs et al., 2011). One of the common tenets between news literacy and media literacy is that both emphasize the significance of "an inquiry-based model of teaching and learning" in which students engage in analyzing content critically besides boosting creativity through encouraging them to create their own content. According to Perreaux (2010) cited by Press (2015) today's youth can be dubbed as "'infovores' who spend much of their time online pursuing news websites" and it is questionable whether they have news literacy skills that equip them to do so.

Many scholars emphasize the importance of acquiring news and media related skills in today's world to become better prepared as citizens (Fleming, 2016; Press, 2015; Beyerstein, 2014; Mihailidis, 2012; Press, 2011; Hobbs, 2010b). Hence, news Literacy scholars emphasize the importance of this subfield primarily because of the unique role news content has in a democracy; fostering democracy through a well-informed empowered citizenry. News is considered a highly crucial genre of media content because of the exclusivity of its role. As Ashley et al. (2013) emphasize, news is the main source of information for "self-governing citizens"; it mirrors one of democracy's most important pillars, which is having a free flow of information.

According to Hobbs et al. (2011), this happens to have been a key aspect in the bigger field of media literacy as well. Media literacy scholars have always emphasized on its role in fostering citizenship through citizens' acquiring key skills to become empowered to act in real life. These skills are mainly to "access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms" and how this can lead to active social and political participation. Such cluster of skills was also highlighted by Mihailidis and Thevenin (2013) as part of they call "participatory competency" where the more citizens are able to contribute and become active online the better this can reflect on their real life contributions and collaboration. Hence, obtaining skills of identifying, filtering, analyzing, evaluating and responsibly communicating news and information content online can have an impactful role in encouraging active citizenship.

Despite the fact that news content has been addressed under media literacy for a very long time, the significance of the news' role in democracies' call for having a separate sub-field of media literacy that focuses vertically in depth on news content; that is, news literacy. News Literacy potentially equips audiences with the necessary skills to benefit from the content disseminated through news media to a great extent. Further, core objectives of news media literacy education include engaging citizens (especially younger generations) with the news, fostering "civic engagement" as well active "democratic participation" (Ashley et al., 2013; Powers, 2014; Mihailidis, 2012).

The essentiality of having a separate subfield of news literacy was further accentuated by Schwarz (2012), focusing on media literacy in the Netherlands, who mentions that despite media literacy skills most of the time being linked to their importance for civic engagement, news literacy is lacking to a great extent. Consequently, the author mentions, news media are essential for providing the public sphere with the essential information to debate and take decisions based on becoming informed citizenry. This lack is suggested to go back to media literacy's focus on new media while regarding news media as traditional media that is not as essential. The author suggests that news media can be regarded as the main building block for teaching almost all media literacy skills through focusing on news content.

3. 10 Technology, Social Media and Implications for News Use and News Making

News literacy is regarded as an essential literacy in an age where younger generations are highly engaged with multiple information platforms on the internet.

This reflects high fragmentation of information and news sources as well as fragmentation of audiences. According to Toepfl (2014) this emphasizes the need for a "wider range of skills and knowledge" than previous that prepares audiences to engage with the ramified media environment currently existent (Toepfl, 2014; Powers, 2014; Fastiggi n.d.). With the multiplicity of platforms for information, citizens tend to seek "headlines" rather than in-depth reading of content as a result of being overwhelmed with the sheer volume of information (Mihailidis, 2012).

Despite the fact that young generations are known to be fluent in the language of technology, this does not necessarily mean that they have the skills to critically deal with

it. This mainly refers to the massive loads of information youth encounter on the different digital platforms today. Here the overlap of digital literacy and news literacy applies; where youth should be equipped to critically approach the information they encounter on the digital platforms. A study done by the Associated Press (2008) cited in Press (2011) revealed that with youngsters being overwhelmed with information, they tend not to engage in critical analysis of news. They feel satisfied and report being media literate despite the fact that they only check the headlines of articles without checking the content for reliability and verification.

Not only has the changing media landscape impacted audience's use of news, but it further has its share of influence on journalists and on the news making process. As Mihailidis (2012) points out the news media landscape has been changing dramatically with the advent and constant rapid evolution of new technology. One of the drawbacks is the fast pace and immediate nature of the internet that stands as an obstacle for journalists to investigate and double check their information; they usually have to make the choice between speed and quality.

Accordingly, Mihailidis (2012) states four major technological innovations that deserve attention for their impact on the "flow of information" and "future of journalism":

- **New Civic voices**: referring to the extent to which citizens became empowered by social media tools to voice their opinions to the masses. Citizens are no longer confined in the limited space of commentary under the news articles; they have spaces especially dedicated to their input on events where the role of citizen journalism is highlighted.

- **Mobile technologies**: thanks to the ease of using the user-friendly mobile technology, massive numbers of citizens have access to content on a regular basis. They can further instantly report on events and comment on them from anywhere at any time with the features of speed and immediacy appear. From the journalists' perspective they have tons of sources of information, citizen-created, to go through.
- **Participatory tools**: internet's participatory nature
- **Spreadability:** of information

3. 11 Engagement With Versus Resistance to News

According to Hobbs (2010b), a considerable percentage of youth today avoid news because they perceive it as stressful. This resonates with Woodstock's (2014) study on news resisters; those who intently avoid news because they believe it "disempowers" them rather than empower them to act. Hobbs (2010b) also mentions how psychologists discourage children's exposure to news because of its negative impact on them, which brings to mind the protectionist pedagogic. Despite that, scholars still emphasize on the importance of including news content and current events related topics in the daily life routine, and in schools in case of children, shedding light on how positively this correlates with youth's involvement with professional journalism as well as their civic engagement (Hobbs, 2010b; Chohan et al., 2016; Maksl et al., 2015; Fleming 2014; Toepfl, 2014; Malik et al., 2013).

Research revealed that younger generations regard news as "boring adult stuff" that they regard as irrelevant to them or their lives (Malik et al., 2013). The increasing lack of interest in news and civic engagement is suggested to have occurred as a result of too much information available, or as highlighted by Blair (2011), "information overload" resulting from the multiplicity of information/news platforms (Maksl et al., 2015). In that sense news literacy has a crucial role of **showing youth how news is relevant to their lives**; engaging them with professional journalism, besides helping them **"make sense"** of the information they are exposed to (Maksl et al., 2015; Fleming 2014; Toepfl, 2014). Understanding how youth define news would be a crucial basic step for any news literacy program. This was stressed by Toepfl (2014) in his study which highlighted defining the news media landscape as an essential component of news literacy.

Not only is news literacy essential to audiences, it is as well crucial to journalists (Maksl et al, 2015). It is essential for audiences in order to understand their news "consumption habits", their "motivations" of engaging with news media; to understand their perceptions and interpretations (how they "make sense" of what they consume); and the impact of news on them (how they are affected by their "news consumption"). On the other hand news literacy's importance to journalists lie in the fact that it will lead to increasing and maintaining audience's demand for professional/quality journalism – as for instance highlighted by Schneider's News Literacy intervention in Stony Brook University in the U.S. Also news literacy will aid journalists in achieving their goal and fulfilling their main

task of establishing adequately informed citizenry and hence fostering engagement (Maksl et al., 2015).

3. 12 Identifying News: The Rise of Fake News and Appreciating Professional Journalism

The significance of differentiating between the different genres of information and different sources is deemed as a core dimension in news literacy. At the present time, professional news institutions are losing their monopoly over information gatekeeping with the advent of technology backed news aggregators such as Google and social media platforms such as Facebook. Emphasizing the vitality of identifying quality information that is reliable and credible to preserve making informed decisions, Hobbs (2010b) states that:

"*We must help people of all ages to learn skills that help them discriminate between high-quality information, marketing hype, and silly or harmful junk. We must raise the visibility and status of news and current events as powerful, engaging resources for both K–12 and lifelong learning while we acknowledge the challenges faced by journalism today and in the future*"

News literacy equip news audiences against misinformation and further makes them hold critical stances toward content that might be confused as news while in reality it is commercial or promotional (Beyerstein, 2014; Press, 2011; Miller, 2010). Examples include native advertising or sponsored journalism, in which journalists engage in writing paid articles which appears as news journalism to audiences while in fact they carry promotional commercial messages. Besides, with the multiplicity of platforms that circulate information, spreading rumors and false news became prevalent. News consumers who lack awareness about the difference between professional journalists and other sources of information are vulnerable to believing information that is not verified or lacks main features of credibility. This calls for the need for arming news and information consumers/users with the necessary competencies to deal with the massive flow of information efficiently and effectively.

Accordingly, educators of news literacy such as Miller (2010) recently agree that many students rely on non-professional sources of information for news, such as social media,

while ignoring potential quality content of newspapers. Further, many distrust the media holding the impression that all content is impacted by political and/or commercial agendas. This goes back to lacking the ability to draw the line between genres like professional news reporting, sponsored content and opinion editorials

This is further acknowledged with statistics showing **the rise of social media as main sources of news** to youth, raising a red flag with regards to differentiating between fake and real news. According to Pew Research Center, 62% of the U.S. population get their news from social media; 44% of the 67% Facebook users report that they use the social networking site for news. This leaves Facebook leading social media as a source of news. The study also shows that the majority of Facebook news users accidentally get exposed to news while doing other activities. Additionally, a recent Buzzfeed News Analysis report that focuses on Facebook as a news source states that fake news about the U.S. elections generated far more activity ("shares, reactions and comments") than real news from professional sources. Such findings resonate with a Reuters Institute study which shows that the spread of fake news circulated by false news websites on social media is more or equivalent to that of news by professional news sources/brands (Fletcher et al., 2018). Further, a New York Times investigation on Russian disinformation campaigns during the 2016 US elections revealed that bots (autonomous programs that are designed to interact with users and machines…including activities on social media such as retweeting) and trolls (persons or human beings who intentionally write comments/stories/posts to mislead on social media) are the main tools used by Russians to influence the American public opinion through social media according to two experts interviewed (Parlapiano and Lee, 2018).

These statistical reports and studies show that it is essential to empower youth with necessary knowledge and skills to be able to differentiate between fake and real news and to understand the importance of such differentiation and its implications. Hence, news literacy counteracts "automaticity " or audiences' – many times- unconscious processing of media messages; selecting and filtering information without consciously and critically considering the reliability, accuracy and the true genre of this information (fact or fiction, news or promotion, fresh reports or recycled news…etc.) (Potter, 2013).

3. 13 Understanding the News Industry and News Making Process

According to Press (2015), youth tend to hold attitudes toward the media without actually understanding its nature and without sufficient awareness or knowledge about the media systems. Despite news being an essential portal of information to the public sphere, it is worth noting and highlighting that news carry a lot more than information that reflects reality; it is rather a representation of reality that is constructed based on many factors. In order to become well informed and be able to gain knowledge and act based on news, citizens should deal with news content with a critical mind. For this to occur, individuals have the right to understand the processes of news *making*, which entails other necessary knowledge areas about the news. This is highly valid especially with the multiplicity of information sources which blurred the line between professional journalism and other types of information suppliers; particularly with the increasing challenges facing traditional news media.

According to Gans (1979), journalism can be regarded as an "empirical discipline" where news include "findings of empirical inquiry" in addition to "assumptions...about the nature of external reality" which could be named "reality judgements". Hence, Gans (1979) states that news include main constituents among which are "reality judgements" in addition to "values" or preferences; in which "reality judgements are never altogether divorced from values" (Gans, 1979). This means that despite professional journalism ideally at its core maintaining the main values or principles to inform citizens through an accurate, truthful and objective lens on reality, it is impossible to perfectly implement that. Hence, besides intending to objectively report on occurrences, there exist values that guide selection, description and framing of what can be disseminated as news events.

In his book on news selection, Gans (1979) displays theories guiding news stories selection. One kind of theories is the "journalist-centered" which argues that selecting the story depends on professional journalists' preferences/biases/perception of importance. Another type of theory attributes the selection process to the news organization; relating it to commercial interest or their structure and organization of work. The third type is related to the event itself or "event-centered"; the "mirror theory". This theory was rejected by many and started declining in the 1960s with media academics and critics pointing at the process of how an event is transformed into a news event or news story and that it does not reflect or "mirror" happenings (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978); hence implying the constructedness of news content. However, it remains essential since it addresses the idea

that this is how journalists begin when intending to cover a story, by looking at what is happening in the "external reality" (Gans, 1979)

As stated by Gans (1979), other theories and approaches attributed story selection to economic interests (economic determinists and Marxists), or to political agendas and national interests (Cultural theorists). There are pressures and contextual factors that impact the ideal role of journalism and challenge the industry; such as economic and political agendas/pressures; where journalists are in addition exposed to annoyances and stress from "groups and individuals" be it from the sources from which they seek information or from audiences besides being controlled with deadlines or restraints of budget (Gans, 1979; Van Dijk, 1988). Some argue that a huge determinant in the process is the sources which are powerful enough to disseminate their ideas through information they give to journalists who are accessible to them, thanks to their power.

Further, the medium or technology used to disseminate use impacts the story selection process (Gans, 1979), which could be easily witnessed today especially on accounts of professional news brands on social media platforms.

Consequently, realizing and understanding the working environment of news media industry, how news messages are constructed, and the impact of news content on audiences are all knowledge areas that anticipate news literacy. These are common issues that apply to journalism worldwide calling for the need to understand the news media industry, how it realistically functions and how it represents rather than reflect reality. With a global perspective Reese (2012) mentions that:

"The problems of ethnocentrism, news sensationalism, dramatic visuals, reporter pack mentality, lack of historical context, reliance on a narrow group of sources, and distorted emphasis ...They are tendencies of news media... generally and the subject of numerous Western-based research critiques."

Hence, Hornik & Kajimoto (2014) state important dimensions inherent in news literacy that shed light on its essentiality:

- "Appreciation of the *power of reliable information* and the importance of a free flow of information in a democratic society."
- "Understanding *why news matters* and why becoming a discerning news consumer can

change individual lives and the life of the country" fostering engagement with the news

- "Understanding how journalists work and make decisions and why they make mistakes" reflecting the *social process of news making*/working conditions of journalists

- "Understanding how the digital revolution and structural changes in the news media can affect news consumers; *understand our news responsibilities as publishers as well as consumers*"

3. 14 Objectives and Learning Outcomes of News Literacy

With all the arguments that surround defining news literacy Malik et al. (2013) suggest raising the question of what **the purpose of news literacy** is and regards the main purpose as "empowering citizens". Hence, the authors propose a set of critical items that should be components and aims of news literacy:

- *Understanding the role news play in a society (systematic definition of news)*
- *The motivation to seek out news – why is it important?*
- *The ability to find/identify/recognize news – critical thinking*
- *The ability to critically evaluate news (understand it in context, understand the motivations and interests behind news production)*
- *The ability to create news; best way to learn is to do it firsthand – citizen journalism as a powerful force for civic engagement*

(Malik et al., 2013)

Powers (2010) quotes President Obama emphasizing on the importance of seeking news that provide evidence for claims and information, and also becoming aware of our personal biases and seeking multiple sources of information that reflect different viewpoints to be able to make up our own autonomous opinions and attitudes.

Ever since its emergence there have been endeavors to outline the objectives as well as the learning outcomes of news literacy. Accordingly scholars agree on a set of objectives and learning outcomes that are essential to news literacy. Four main objectives were repeatedly mentioned by news literacy scholars:

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- Building critical thinking by fostering "healthy skepticism" toward news media that enables citizens to question and identify reliability and credibility (Fleming, 2010; Hobbs, 2010a; Ashley et al., 2010; Miller, 2010; Powers, 2010; Press, 2015)
- Promoting engagement with the news media and countering news resistance or disengagement (Hobbs, 2010a; Powers, 2010; Press, 2015; Martens & Hobbs, 2015)
- Creating a more engaged and more informed citizenry; aware of the importance and relevance of citizenship essential for a democracy to thrive (Miller, 2010; Powers, 2010; Press, 2015; Martens & Hobbs, 2015)
- Appreciating professional quality journalism (Miller, 2010)
- Supporting and advocating for free speech (Fleming, 2010)

More focused on the pedagogical perspective to news literacy, there were several learning outcomes that were regarded as essential by most scholars:

- Building communication skills and encouraging the ability to create and disseminate news/media content (Hobbs, 2010a; Press, 2015; Martens & Hobbs, 2015)
- The ability to identify sources in a news story and detect whether they are clearly identified by the journalist and what this implicates (Hobbs, 2010a, Hornik & Kajimoto, 2014; Fleming, 2010; Press, 2011)
- Awareness of news messages/content *constructedness* (Hobbs, 2010a)
- Detecting accuracy or inaccuracy in news content (Hobbs, 2010a)
- The ability to differentiate between journalism and other genres, and between news and opinion (Hornik & Kajimoto, 2014; Miller, 2010; Powers, 2010)
- Differentiating between assertion and verification in a news story (Hornik & Kajimoto, 2014; Powers, 2010; Klurfeld & Schneider, 2014)
- Developing an understanding and awareness of one's news media consumption/use habits and of personal biases (Fleming, 2010; Powers, 2010)
- Recognizing and critically investigating implicit messages in news media (Fleming, 2010)

Further Hornik & Kajimoto state the following as essential learning outcomes of news literacy interventions:

- Differentiate between professional **journalists** and other **information sources**

- "Analyze the difference between **assertion** [and] **verification**"
- Recognize and differentiate between **evidence** and **inference**
- "Evaluate and deconstruct news reports based on **quality of evidence** presented and the **reliability of sources**"
- Develop the ability to "apply these principles across all news media platforms"
- Differentiate between "**news media bias** and **audience bias**"

Hence, one of news literacy's core goals, is to create news users who are able to differentiate between good quality journalism and other content that appears to be journalism at the face of it, but in fact is only unreliable junk. According to Schneider, founding dean of the school of journalism at Stony Brook University, supporting the role of the press in a society begins by educating the audiences about it. This means that news literate individuals, who are able to judge whether the information is verified or simply asserted, whether sources are reliable and whether the news story is covering different dimensions will better support and understand professional journalism.

However, that said, clarification is necessary that this does not make news literacy a "propaganda" for journalism as raised as a concern and a critique to journalists led news literacy initiatives by Hobbs (2010a). But contrarily, it creates a more critical audience of news media who is able to judge information for credibility and reliability.

3. 15 Different Approaches/Paradigms of News Literacy

There are two vast paradigms to consider when addressing news literacy; the pedagogical paradigm of news literacy instruction/education and the non-classroom or pragmatic paradigm of news literacy for actively engaged and empowered citizens.

3. 16 Pedagogical Paradigm: News Literacy in Schoolrooms

3. 17 Contextualizing News Literacy Education

According to Powers (2014), there is not a widely agreed on approach to news literacy instruction, which stems from the fact that there is still no common foundational definition.

Attempting to describe news literacy specifically from a pedagogical perspective, Mihailidis (2012) defined it as: "an educational movement distinguished by the potential to re-energize a public increasingly distrustful of news media…and renew a demand for diverse, independent, credible and deep civic information". While, in this context, Chohan

et al. (2016) referred to news literacy as: "students' ability to critically examine news media [which] can help students develop important collaborative and analytical skills for the betterment of their education and career goals as well as their role as *active citizens*"

Since news literacy is considered a subfield of media literacy, it is worth reviewing the stages through which media literacy education has gone through.

When the idea of educating about the media was first introduced, it carried the **protectionist perspective** of safeguarding audiences from the negative impact of media. By time, different approaches were introduced with a focus on the positive role of media to foster civic engagement. Consequently, scholars started addressing media literacy from the angle of its significance in empowering citizens for active civic engagement, which is considered a more humanistic approach (Hobbs and Jensen, 2009 Cited in Press, 2011).

Press (2011) argues that different media literacy education models emerged. There have been debates about focusing on the ability to produce media content which has been criticized for focusing on "technical skills" at the expense of others. Another model outlines media literacy shedding light on the access, evaluation and communication.

The latest and most relevant to the core of news literacy is the **critical media literacy paradigm** which takes different aspects into consideration with a focus on the cognitive-relevant dimension of critical thinking skills. Under the latest paradigm, audiences are encouraged to question the ideal values of journalism and understand that real practices are different. For example, values of objectivity, transparency, independency and accountability do not always apply to news journalism because of many factors. Consequently, learning about news media industry, the conditions that shape the environment in which journalists work, the pressures on news media (political and economic) … etc are all core areas of knowledge. Here, the link between media literacy and news literacy is established; where these knowledge areas besides others are considered essential for news literacy as well. This falls under the umbrella of the protectionist approach by seeking to protect audiences from becoming misinformed or deceived by the disseminated news content.

Having mentioned the protectionist approach, many scholars have recently agreed on the **constructivist approach** as the most suitable specifically to news literacy (Press, 2011;

Powers, 2014; Fleming, 2010; Fleming, 2012; Reese, 2012). This approach mainly places students' role as core in the learning process through allowing students to reflect on their own personal experiences with the news media. Hence, this approach emphasizes on students' effective collaboration as well as receptiveness and consciousness of one's own interpretations and assumptions.

It is suggested by academics, that a Constructivist approach best applies to media literacy and consequently to news literacy as well. This approach integrates students' personal experiences with the media (such as their consumption habits) to the learning process. This has been emphasized as a successful approach through Fleming's (2010, 2012) studies. She found that students showed better levels of critical thinking and skills development when asked to deconstruct a news story from their choice, than when they were assigned stories prepared for the course. In other words, autobiographical analysis motivates students to better engage with and so benefit from the learning experience in news/media literacy interventions.

The constructivist approach has also been accentuated by interviewed journalists in Press' (2011) study in an implicit manner by stressing the important role of students in learning about the media and journalism. This view is backed by education related academic research stating that the more relevant the teaching material is to the student, the more interested they will become, and consequently the more fruitful the learning experience develops (Press, 2011; Hobbs, 2010b).

Further, Reese (2012) puts forward the pedagogical approach developed at Harvard University by Howard Gardner and other colleagues: **Teaching for Understanding Framework**. According to Reese (2012), this approach can be applied to news literacy instruction by designing the curriculum based on "Generative Topics (What is the subject? E.g., some news media issue), Generative Objects (What object(s) evoke images central to the focus of the unit?: e.g., a news story or image), Understanding Goals (Essential Questions and Critical Engagement Questions), and Performance of Understanding." The author believes that this approach helps students apply their learning by extending their knowledge beyond the classroom and by putting the information they receive in context. This is further enhanced by providing questions that guides the students through the teaching material. This approach was followed by the "Media and American Democracy

Project" jointly conducted by Harvard and the Kennedy School of Government to train high school teachers; as well as by the project that designed High School Journalism Institute.

"Teachers develop essential questions to which the material contains the answers: "What makes news?" "Is it possible or desirable to have 'unbiased' news?" "To what extent are journalists free to write what they please?" Such questions suggest investigation beyond the more rigid and directive term "objectives," which imply preset answers"

Another approach that can be integrated with the Teaching for Understanding Framework is the use of **case studies and critical thinking**. This approach is best applied by introducing cases or examples of issues that were addressed by the news media and allowing students to critically reflect on the journalistic aspects in each case; journalists' decisions reflected through reports, ethics related dimensions … etc. This approach "[allows] students to begin with specific concrete circumstances (generative objects) and build from there to broader understandings. In the case of news literacy subjects, they start from something accessible and build out from there". This reflects the **skill of induction** emphasizes initially by Potter (2013) as an essential media literacy skill and later adapted to news literacy by Fleming (2016). The integration of these approaches has been applied in Salzburg Global Academy in teaching global news literacy, in which local context and cultural differences were taken into consideration while guiding students to locate their local news literacy experiences within the global news literacy context.

3. 18 How and When Should News Literacy Be Integrated to Education?

There have always been proponents and opponents of integrating media literacy into school education, especially when it comes to the K-12 stage. Same applies to news literacy, being a recently emergent field there is hesitancy that surrounds its integration in school curricula.

First, there is the question of age. Some scholars and educators argue that news literacy education should begin as early as sixth grade such as Stony Brook University's educators of the news literacy course there. They regard this as the best age to introduce news literacy instruction when students' biases are not yet fully ingrained. They further believe it

is as essential as learning about math, science and health related subjects. While others believe it is best to integrate news literacy education in high schools curricula to target secondary education students for several reasons (Powers, 2010). These reasons include the fact that the volume of information has been extremely on the rise, teenagers are generally heavy consumers of online (especially social media platforms) information content, most of them do not see the relevance between news and their personal lives and consequently they are more likely to lack awareness of the necessity and the role of "free flow" of information in a society.

Second, there are the challenges that might hinder the inclusion of news literacy education in schools. One of these challenges is having well trained teachers. Before guiding them to take news inside the classrooms, teachers themselves need trainings to acquire the competencies necessary to educate using media/news materials critically in classrooms (Powers, 2014; Fastiggi, n.d.). Another challenge is the ability to introduce news pieces 'objectively' to students in classrooms without imposing specific agendas or ideologies behind them. This can occur through training teachers to focus on instruction that is based on building skills and competencies. This, according to Fastiggi (n.d.), is a popular "misconception" about news literacy and is actually the opposite of what news literacy seeks to provide. News literacy's core can be best explained as targeting developing students' critical thinking and questioning ability when it comes to news.

Further, there is the challenge of society's attitude toward news, as highlighted by Powers (2010), which can stand as a main reason behind the lack of news literacy education in schools. One reason is teachers' lack of awareness of the field and its significance. This comes as one of the "barriers to news literacy's inclusion in school curricula" according to Powers (2010). The author also illustrates other reasons such as lack of classroom time that can be dedicated to media related content, the indifference and "skepticism" of decision-makers in schools (principles and administrators) as well as parents to bring news content to class, which leads to another barrier which has to do with the "political sensitivities" that surrounds news and also the lack of well-prepared technology oriented classrooms. This goes a long with the fact that news has always been dealt with as a part of preparing journalists in journalism programs/schools; however rarely addressed from an analytical user oriented perspective. These challenges emerge in addition to the tension between academic and journalistic perspective on news literacy instruction.

3. 19 Journalistic and Academic Perspectives on News Literacy Education

As previously mentioned, there exists this argument on who should set the foundations of news literacy as a recently emerging subfield; with journalists presenting different angles than that of academics.

One example that illustrates this issue is that of Howard Schneider's Stony Brook approach to news literacy and Renee Hobbs criticism to it. One of the pioneering initiatives that embrace news literacy is the United States' Center for News Literacy of Stony Brook University. One of the core founders is Howard Schneider, who is a renowned journalist and academic who aided in setting the foundations of the US's first news literacy course for undergraduates. The approach of Schneider's news literacy intervention has been criticized by Hobbs who viewed it as "propaganda for journalists" and that it also lacks addressing ideology and ownership issues.

Fleming's (2014) study aimed at addressing the gap in research about how news literacy can or cannot be linked to media literacy especially with the different viewpoints existing. The author links the main principles of news literacy with key aspects of media literacy through a case study on Stony Brook's Center for News Literacy. Further, Fleming (2016) seeks to set theoretical underpinnings of the Stony Brook's approach to news literacy by adapting Potter's (2004) Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy and introducing the "Cognitive Model of the Stony Brook Approach to News Literacy" (Fleming, 2016).

According to Fleming (2014) there are three guiding principles at Stony Brook's News Literacy program which highlight the key competencies.

1- Access News

Traditionally access mainly referred to the ability to read, view or listen to the media content through having the tools to do so. However, accessing news, according to this program, refers to developing the ability to identify news and differentiate news content from other media content. In order to develop this competency Howard Schneider developed the News Neighborhood Framework. This framework, despite lacking some categories, presents the most common media content categories, the goal of each, the methods to produce it, its practitioners and outcomes. These content categories include news, entertainment, propaganda and raw information.

Figure 3: News Neighborhood Framework – Source: Fleming (2014)

Table 1. Taxonomy of Information Neighborhoods.

	News	Entertainment	Promotion	Propaganda	Raw Information
Goal	To inform	To amuse or to engage people during their leisure time in activities in which they are passive participants	To sell goods and services and talent personalities by increasing their appeal to consumers	To build mass support for an ideology by canonizing its leaders and demonizing its opposition	To bypass institutional filters and distribution costs to sell, publicize, advocate, entertain, and inform
Methods	Verification, independence, and accountability	Storytelling, performance, the visual arts and music	Paid advertising and public relations activities Press releases, public statements, staged events, sponsorship, product placement, websites, viral videos, and so on	One-sided accounts or outright lies, relying on emotional manipulation through images, appeals to majority values and fallacious reasoning	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, websites, chain email, text message forwarding, flyers, graffiti
Practitioners	Reporters Photographers/ videographers, editors, and producers	Actors, musicians, writers and producers	Ad agencies, publicists, public relations experts, government spokespersons	Political operatives and organizations	Anyone with a web connection, photocopier, or a can of paint
Outcomes	Empowers citizens by educating them	Distraction from or changed view of daily life. Reinforcement or critique of social norms	Increased sales of products and services or higher fees for talent being promoted	Helps a group seize or maintain power by influencing public opinion and motivating the public to take action consistent with its ideology	Outlet for self-expression, entertainment, promotion, advocacy, propaganda

Source. Stony Brook University. Center for News Literacy.

2- Evaluate and Analyze

In order to teach the skill of evaluating and analyzing news content, the program uses what it calls the Deconstruction Guide. This guide is composed of eight questions that news consumers should pose to be able to analyze and evaluate the news they are exposed to.

Figure 4: The Deconstruction Guide, Stony Brook University – Source: Fleming (2014)

1. Summarize the main points of the story.
2. Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story. Was it verified? What is asserted?
3. How close does the reporter come to opening the freezer?[58] Is the evidence direct or indirect?
4. Are the sources reliable?
5. Does the reporter make his or her work transparent?
6. Does the reporter place the story in context?
7. Are the key questions (who? what? when? where? why? how?) answered?
8. Is the story fair? Can you reach a conclusion, take an action, or make a judgment?

3- Appreciate the Watchdog Role/Genre

By this dimension, Schneider aims to engage students with one of the most essential roles of professional journalists that distinguish them from others by appreciating professional "press corps committed to watchdog reporting".

On the other hand, representing the more academic perspective on news literacy, Renee Hobbs is a pioneering media literacy scholar who believes news literacy is a subfield of media literacy that should not be dealt with independently from journalists' perspective. Consequently she criticized Schneider's approach in her critique published in Nieman Reports (2011). Hobbs believes that approaching news literacy merely through journalists' perspective is not enough, since students need a bigger set of critical skills in order to become news literate. She views Schneider's focus on appreciating journalism as exaggerated and acts as a propaganda for journalists who are trying to get audiences engaged with their work (Hobbs, 2011)

Accordingly Hobbs (2010a) presented suggestions of what not to do in news literacy as follows:

❖ Thinking of news literacy as journalism class for non-journalists
❖ Teaching about news and current events exclusively from a journalist's point of view;

for instance, journalists rend to have blind spots about how commercial bias affects the news making process; what the audience want versus what they need to know.

❖ Teaching about ideals of American journalism; this is regarded by Hobbs as a mere propaganda by journalists, implying about Schneider's emphasis on "appreciation" to journalism.

Despite agreeing that it is important to present the role of journalists as well as skills of investigating accuracy of reporting (as done in Stony Brook's course), Hobbs believes that critical skills of communication is lacking. These skills, according to Hobbs are essential for "news consumers" to analyze and evaluate news content.

"News Literacy programs must focus on building learners' critical thinking and creative communication skills" (Hobbs, 2011)

However, according to Fleming (2014), Hobbs' "seven news literacy principles" do not contradict with Schneider's approach. Hobbs' seven principles are:

1- Start from the learner's interest (investigation of motivations)
2- Connect comprehension and analysis through close reading of news text
3- Ask critical questions through dialogue and debate
4- Focus on how news stories are constructed
5- Link critical analysis and media consumption
6- Use a variety of media
7- Make connections between class and community

▪ **The Essentiality of Combining Both Perspectives**

Scholars accentuate the essentiality of having both the perspectives of journalists and academics in handling news literacy programs (Fleming, 2014; Fleming, 2016; Schwarz, 2012). As previously explained Fleming (2014) conducted a case study on Stony Brook's news literacy course in an attempt to examine the extent to which it is effective and reach a conclusion with regards to Hobbs' critique to the program. Fleming's studies (2014, 2016) can be regarded as attempts to accentuate the importance of combining journalistic insights with academic theories and main pillars.

Findings of the study rejects Hobbs' claim that the program is "propaganda" for journalists and at the same time highlights essential components that are missing in the course. The

program is believed to be essential by presenting tools such as news neighborhood and the deconstruction guide. Schneider's approach also emphasizes on concepts that are regarded as key for democracy, such as "verification, independence, accountability and investigation" (Fleming, 2014). Another strong point is introducing journalists' watchdog role. According to Toepfl (2014), youth in "non-democratic" regimes are not fully conscious of news media's watchdog role, which is deemed essential for the democratic process.

On the other hand, Schneider's approach does lack some crucial components, mentioned by Hobbs. These are addressing issues of ideology and ownership (Fleming, 2014). Maksl el al. (2015) emphasized on ownership influences on "constructing" news content and consequently on audiences' judgments and perceptions. Knowledge of media ownership has also been emphasized on in Potter's (2010) essential knowledge structures.

According to Fleming (2014), the case study revealed that students' reported benefiting from the course in three main areas: engagement - meaning establishing relevance and perception of importance of professional journalism; awareness of current events; and knowledge of "press principles and practices"

More generally addressing this issue, Schwarz (2012) mentions that educators usually refer to media content as including all genres without drawing differences clearly distinguishing between how the different types of media content vary in their impact on individuals. For example, in many instances "a critical attitude is confused with distrust in the media"; which works against the main goals of media literacy as well as news literacy. These goals should include informing about both the negative as well as the positive effects of media; which in case of news literacy is its essentiality for civically and politically empowered and engaged citizenry. Consequently with perspectives of both journalists as well as academic educators, a balance would occur in tackling many concepts essential specifically to news literacy.

3. 20 American VS Global News Literacy Education

Fleming (2016) refers to the categorization of news literacy paradigms by RobbGrieco and Hobbs (2013) as "global news literacy" and "American news literacy". Accordingly, American news literacy can be defined as "pedagogies that take a 'journalism school'

approach include lessons on freedom of the press and news values, and they offer tools designed to assess news texts" (Fleming, 2016). In that sense, the American news literacy education paradigm is led by Howard Schneider who planned and implemented a freshman news literacy course after discovering a need for it called by youth's lack of ability to identify or analyze news content. Another intervention is the News Literacy Project led by Alan Miller, and based on four mainstays:

- *Why does news matter?*
- *Why is the First Amendment protection of free speech so vital to American democracy?*
- *How can students know what to believe?*
- *What challenges and opportunities do the internet and digital media create?*

Delivering the material mainly depends on teachers' integration to their courses; however professional journalists have a major role as well. The role of journalists is to give students a hands-on experience through real life examples through which they introduce concepts such as the watchdog role of journalism and accountability. At the end of the course, students get to conduct a project which range from creating a newspaper to holding a press conference (Miller, 2010).

According to Beyerstein (2014), with the introduction of the Common Core standards to the United States K-12 educational stage, news literacy has a better chance of expanding to become further integrated in schools' curricula. One of the basic sets of skills the Common Core standards call for are critical thinking and "analytical skills" which resonates with news literacy's call for critically analyzing and evaluating news media content and messages.

Both Howard Schneider of Stony Brook's News Literacy course and Alan Miller founder of the News Literacy Project embrace the significance of having a well-established digital source of news literacy material. They also target, each through their initiative, creating a good base of schools who adopt news literacy effectively into their curriculum.

On the other hand, as stated by Fleming (2016), Global news literacy interventions: "encourage macro-level inquiry of news issues – issues such as ownership, ideologies, and institutions that may influence news production practices". Reese (2012) further sought to introduce how the concept of *global news literacy* can be comprehended by defining it as

the ability to "*understand, "decode," and create media with particular awareness of one's social location within an international context*" (Reese, 2012). Here the author seeks to emphasize on an individual's awareness of the national differences of news media contexts and where they stand in the "international context". In accordance with Reese (2012), Hornik and Kajimoto (2014) emphasize that language and cultural differences should be considered when addressing global news literacy. The authors stress that news literacy cannot be regarded as a "series of American concepts" that are taught/studied but rather should be adapted to the different nations depending on language, media and culture.

According to Hobbs (2010b) it is essential that students understand how different cultural contexts impact the construction of news content. This can occur by bringing different news media from different cultural contexts and compare how they cover the same issue. This gives students a critical perspective on how those involved in the news industry manipulate the audiences' perceptions of the different events many times using emotional appeals for instance.

According to Beyerstein (2014) Stony Brook's news literacy intervention showed American and global success with its materials and approach extended to schools around the U.S. and later, a news literacy summer course was organized for educators and extended beyond the borders of the country to China, Honk Kong, Australia, Vietnam and Bhutan.

Hence, adaptations of America's Stony Brook interventions are considered through studies in Canada (Press, 2015) which provided an evaluation – pros and cons- of the intervention and also highlighting that the American approach focuses on the "role of free speech in society" while the Canadian would better focus on the "mission of the press" (Fleming, 2016; Press, 2015). Also, there were studies in Hong Kong (Hornik & Kajimoto, 2014) which presented an adaptation of Stony Brook's news literacy course to a Hong Kong University. Hornik & Kajimoto (2014) highlighted that the adaptation process occurred taking into account: concepts adaptation and interpretation (not merely translated), local media ecology and a focus on local as well as important global news stories.

3. 21 Pragmatic Paradigm: News Literacy in "Everyday Life"

With the increase and multiplicity of news platforms and sources, questioning the extent to which news consumers recognize and understand news processes and "pressures" becomes valid. Most literature addressing news literacy treat the concept from a pedagogical perspective as illustrated; how it can be reflected in curricula with well-defined learning outcomes. However some authors focused on the importance of news literacy from a more practical pragmatic perspective.

In their study, Vraga & Tully (2016) discuss the importance of extending and examining media literacy outside the classroom; that is in "everyday life". Consequently, it is suggested that the pedagogical perspective of media literacy (including news literacy as a subfield) can be best complemented with a lifelong learning perspective which addresses the effectiveness and importance of media literacy in individual's real everyday life. The authors refer to media literacy and news literacy interchangeably throughout the article, intending to clarify that both fields cannot be dealt with as two separate fields. Rather, news literacy becomes a subfield of media literacy as most scholars agree. As stated: "This study provides insights for considering how classroom and non-classroom media literacy interventions can work together to improve media literacy"(Vraga & Tully, 2016). Hence, news literacy cannot be regarded as some material studied in college years but rather a pool of "practical tools anyone can, and should, apply"; such as fact-checking skills, with adaptations to the different languages, cultures, media background and systems (Hornik & Kajimoto, 2014).

One of the definitions that are less inclined toward the pedagogical paradigm and more representative of the pragmatic dimension is that of Mihailidis (2008) cited by Schwarz (2012):

"The ability to *critically evaluate*, *interpret* and ***process*** as well as ***participate in news*** media and journalistic content in order to ***participate as active citizens*** in democratic society". (Mihailidis, 2008)

This definition includes three essential, relatively novel, elements. These are **processing news**, **participating in news content** and **becoming active citizens.**

However, most scholars agree that while defining news literacy, "active citizenship" is an essential component to integrate. This stems from believing in the impactful role of news literacy in encouraging and fostering active citizenship. Here news literacy reflects on the

unique role played by the news content in a society daily; that is, informing citizens to gain knowledge about essential aspects they can use in the process of decision making in civic life. Consequently, news literacy is regarded as essential for fostering civic engagement by guiding citizens through their news use for the best, most efficient usage pattern.

For instance, Dean Miller, director of The Center for News Literacy, when interviewed by Powers (2010) said:

"News literacy is narrowly focused on the citizen's search for actionable information with which to make decisions, make judgments and take action in their civic life… quite narrowly focused on those skills required for a person to find and sort the material necessary for their civic life".

Further, Craft et al. (2013) sought setting the underpinnings of how individuals can be considered news literate emphasizing the approach of Mihailidis (2008) by stressing on significant aspects such as processing information besides agreeing that a news literate should have knowledge about specific media related areas:

"*we define news media literate individuals as those who engage in mindful thought processing, believe themselves to be in control of media's effects on them, and have some knowledge of the media system and how it operates*" (Craft et al., 2013)

Also some of the characteristics of news media literate include being well aware of the current events and having knowledge about them, besides maintaining an "intrinsic motivation" and skeptic attitude which both have a positive correlation with the level of news literacy; the more news literate a person is the more ability they have to differentiate between news information that can be trustworthy and those that are not. According to the study done by Craft et al. (2013), a variable that impacts a person's critical viewership or reading of the media is the parents' level of education; and in turn this impacts the potential of becoming news literate. Hence, news literacy in a pragmatic frame would depend on and would have relevance to social, cultural and other contextual factors that have direct or indirect impact on shaping a person's cognition and abilities.

3. 22 Knowledge Areas and Skills of News Literacy

As previously mentioned, news literacy being a multi-structural construct can be regarded as primarily being composed of motivations, knowledge areas and skills/competencies.

This section displays the main knowledge areas and skills agreed on by the majority of scholars in the field illustrating some of the tools used to deliver news literacy to news consumers or students. Knowledge areas refer to the information that should be obtained by individuals to become news literate which can act as indicators to their level of news literacy while skills/competencies refer to the skills news literate individuals should attain.

❖ **Knowledge Areas:**

In a chapter on news literacy, Potter (2010) stated that the most essential "areas of knowledge" in news literacy are:

- Working conditions and environment of journalists
- The impact of different ownerships
- Awareness of concepts of "framing, news bias, objectivity and balance"

Hence, knowledge areas are categorized and displayed based on the level of importance given to each through the state of the art reviewed. Many scholars agreed on the following as essential areas of knowledge news literate should acquire:

1- **Knowledge of media industries** which includes: **ownership** and centralization degree**, journalists' working conditions**/environment and the pressures they are exposed to, control, production process…etc. (Potter, 2010; Ashley et al., 2010; Powers, 2010, Malik et al., 2013; Fleming, 2014; Toepfl, 2014; Hornik & Kajimoto, 2014; Powers, 2014; Martens & Hobbs, 2015; Vraga & Tully, 2016; Press, 2015; Schneider Cited in Powers, 2010)

2- **Knowledge of the news making process and its aspects** which includes: **news selection criteria**/news values, news media content and ideologies and values behind it, the "social process that shapes news", sources identification, editors' roles, video editing, deconstructing news articles and knowledge of news stories elements besides knowledge of professional news media and quality journalism, the impact of economic and political agendas of news journalism and news media effects (Hobbs, 2010a; Hobbs, 2010b; Ashley et al., 2010; Schwarz, 2012; Malik et al., 2013; Fleming, 2014; Toepfl, 2014; Powers, 2014; Vraga & Tully, 2016; Martens & Hobbs, 2015; Press, 2015; Fleming, 2016)

3- **Knowledge of the "constructedness" of news media messages** which refers to awareness that news media do not mirror reality and accordingly this includes the

ability to differentiate between reality and representation, to be aware of the normative goals and core concepts of journalism (credibility, accountability, transparency, reliability…etc.) (Potter; 2010; Hobbs, 2010b; Ashley et al., 2010; Schwarz, 2012; Malik et al., 2013; Fleming, 2014; Toepfl, 2014; Powers, 2014; Schneiders Cited in Powers, 2010)

4- **Knowledge of the self** or as Potter (2013) names it "personal locus", which includes awareness of one's own motivations, biases, interpretations and news consumption habits (Hobbs, 2010b; Ashley et al., 2010; Potter, 2013; Vraga & Tully, 2016, Fleming, 2016)

5- **Knowledge of the main role of news** which includes awareness of the importance of news and its relevance to one's daily life, understanding "why news matters" and awareness of the connection between news and civic and political engagement (Hobbs, 2010b; Powers, 2010; Schneider cited in Powers, 2010; Powers, 2014; Toepfl, 2014)

6- **Knowledge of the news media landscape** which refers to awareness of the segmentation of news media and ecosystem besides the digital revolution and the fact that it imposed changes on the news media. Toepfl (2014) referred to this knowledge area in terms of the ability to establish "cognitive maps" of the news media landscape and put them in categories (Schneider cited in Powers, 2010; Toepfl, 2014; Press, 2015)

❖ **Skills:**

According to Hobbs (2010b) "When used well, *news media*, mass media and digital media texts can support the acquisition of **literacy competencies** including *comprehension, inference-making, analysis and prediction."*

Before delving into news literacy skills, it is essential to refer to Potter's (2004) differentiation between competencies and skills; where competencies refer to tools obtained "early in life then applied automatically" while skills refer to "tools people develop through practice". Regarding news literacy skills, despite being emphasized by media literacy scholars, most news literacy focused literature does not place high emphasis on the skill of creating news content except for some as will be clarified. A more considerable concern is given to competencies and skills of identifying, evaluating and

analyzing news; an emphasis on the cognitive dimension of critical thinking and information-processing skills.

The different sets of skills introduced by different scholars and educators suggest the essentiality of professional journalists or educators with field background and academics' working together to define the necessary skills of the news literate.

From an academic perspective, as mentioned, there is a focus on the necessity of critical thinking and information processing skills (Reese, 2012; Potter, 2013; Fleming, 2016; Hobbs et al., 2011; Hobbs, 2010a, Hobbs, 2010b, Press, 2011; Bugeja, 2014). Most prominently there were several attempts to adapt the skills in Potter's (2004) Cognitive Model of Media Literacy to news literacy (Maksl et al., 2014; Fleming, 2016). These skills include:

- **Analysis**; deconstructing news stories to check for veracity and reliability
- **Evaluation**; assessing the "values of verification, independence and accountability elements in a news story"
- **Grouping**; determining the differences and similarities between the different genres of news (ex. opinion journalism, cable news,…etc.)
- **Induction**; the ability to put small pieces of information together to see the big picture
- **Deduction**; using general principles and applying them to specifics
- **Synthesis**; "Assembling elements of news accounts into brief reports while applying literacy principles"

(Fleming, 2016)

Potter (2004) classified cognitive competencies and skills into three main tasks: **filtering**, which refers to the ability to consciously apply selective exposure by choosing what to attend to and what to ignore based on importance; **meaning matching** which refers to the ability to access previously learned information and match to current ones to be able to better define and judge; **meaning construction** which refers to the ability to make sense and make meaning based on interpretation from different perspectives.

With the digitization of news media and the rapid technology evolutions ,one of the emphasized areas to be taken into consideration when addressing news literacy skills is content and form. Accordingly, acquiring necessary **ICT skills** can be regarded as essential in terms of facilitating access and the use of different multimedia (Hobbs, 2010b). According to Reese (2012), presenting news literacy skills/tools taking into consideration both media content and media form, with a focus on online news:

"These tools include the ability to evaluate, critically analyze and **compare** media portrayals, as supported by a *variety of digital platforms*, blogs, bulletin-board systems (BBS), forums in traditional news sites, and social media"

Identifying news and distinguishing it from other genres of information is another skill that has been emphasized by scholars (Hobbs, 2010a; Hobbs, 2010b; Powers, 2010; Vraga & Tully, 2016) as well as news literacy interventions such as Stony Brook's course and News Literacy Project.

 As previously mentioned not all scholars emphasize on the skill of creating or communicating news, however still some accentuate its importance for news literacy (Hobbs et al, 2011; Hobbs, 2010b; Martens & Hobbs, 2015; Powers, 2010; Malik et al, 2013); while others do not focus on it (Maksl et al, 2015). One essential skill in news literacy is composing messages and collaborating with the social sphere by sharing them. As stated by Martens and Hobbs (2015), those who have the skills of composition and collaboration are more likely to engage in "participatory politics" and so manage to have an original personal voice on political matters that results from a crystallized attitude toward issues. In order to have a clear attitude or opinion it is essential to be news literate; in the sense of being aware of and resisting the impact of "traditional [gatekeepers]" and voices of the different parties that seek to manipulate one's opinion impacting their decisions.

One of the skills sets that emphasize on producing, communicating and further taking action which can be applied to news media is the expanded empowerment model of media literacy by Hobbs et al. (2011), in which the following skills were introduced as necessary for media literacy:

- **Engaging**

- **Locating**
- **Comprehending**
- **Analyzing**
- **Evaluating**
- **Communicating**
- **Taking action**

These skills are also emphasized and further broken down in Hobbs (2010b) emphasizing on the importance of considering elaboration with family and friends about news content, commenting on and reacting to news online, contributing to an "online community network" as well as "sharing ideas and deliberating" (Hobbs, 2010b)

Further Mihailidis (2012) introduces Salzburg Academy's 5 As of Media Literacy which can also apply to news content as follows:

- **Access** to information
- **Awareness** of the power of the media
- **Assessment** of the media coverage
- **Appreciation** of media's role in a society
- **Action** in demand for quality and engaging with the community

Mentioning appreciation, according to Hobbs (2010a), appreciating journalists' role through learning about news making process and journalistic skills is essential; however this alone does not result in individuals literate enough to analyze and think critically about news content which is a necessary component in order to have an impact on their intent to become active political and civic participants.

The skills introduced in these two examples combine the cognitive dimension of filtering and selecting, understanding and assessing news media as well as the practical/behavioral dimension of producing and disseminating news content. In addition it emphasizes on the importance of knowing how to take action by engaging with the community and/or demanding quality information, etc. which was accentuated as essential to news literacy by other scholars (Klibanoff, 2012; Mihailidis, 2012; Bugeja, 2014)

From a journalistic angle, the skills sets were detailed and could be practically implemented despite missing essential components that are complemented by academics. According to Howard Schneider cited in Powers (2010), founder of the Stony Brook News Literacy course who comes from a journalistic background, the following skills are essential for a news literate:

- **Identifying the difference** between:
    o Journalism and other genres of information - professional journalists and other sources
    o News versus opinion which was also emphasized by Bugeja (2014)
    o Assertion versus verification and evidence versus inference in news stories, also emphasized by Miller (2010) and Bugeja (2014)
- **Evaluate and deconstruct news reports** in terms of evidence provided and sources reliability
- **Differentiate between news media bias and audience bias** which was also emphasized by Miller (2010)

After analyzing and reviewing several news literacy interventions, Powers (2010) introduced a set of essential components of news literacy, from which the following skills were deducted:

- "**Identify types of information**"; previously mentioned as essential for audiences/students to understand the difference between news and other genres that masquerade as news. For example, Stony Brook's approach to this is reflected through a tool called the Information Neighborhood Taxonomy; through which students differentiate between news, advertising, propaganda and other genres. This is an essential part of news literacy especially with the native advertising or sponsored content/journalism phenomenon.

    The News Literacy Project seeks to deliver this as well through teaching students the differences between news and other genres, "assertion and verification", between "eyewitnesses", "independent and anonymous" sources.

    The Center for Media Literacy emphasizes this skill as well in its news focused instruction through having a kit to teach students about media ownership, agendas and how different viewpoints are represented in news (Powers, 2010).

News Trust on the other hand focuses on differentiating between news and opinion with illustration of the different types of content that fall under each. For instance, the different types of news are demonstrated as *news report, news analysis, special report, breaking news, investigative reporting* and *poll*; whereas, the types of opinion based content are presented as *opinion, editorial, interview, speech* and *comment* (Bugeja, 2014).

- **"Reading between the lines"**
According to Powers (2010), this skill refers to understanding and recognizing the "tone, audience and implied meaning" in news content. Powers (2010) gives examples to applying this through the experiences of Project Look Sharp, the media literacy initiative by Ithaca College and the Nuseum, the news museum in Washington DC. Both examples demonstrate that the best way to teach students this skill is to compare the coverage of the same topic by different news media institutes/outlets.

- **"Internet and Digital Media" Skills**
In the age of digital information, having the skill of identifying reliable versus unreliable news sources online is an essential skill for the news literate. This is usually conducted through making students aware of the different platforms that disseminate news online; for instance news aggregators like Google and also social media such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook through which a lot of "raw material" is circulated as news.
As Powers (2010) illustrates the Center for News Literacy, News Literacy Project, Nuseum as well as News Trust are keen on educating students about this area through raising awareness on the potentially "[deceiving]" nature of information online. For instance, the News Literacy Project does this through a lesson titled "The Power of Deception" in which students get to evaluate the internet as a source of news versus as tool for research.

- **"Being Critical of the Press"**
This skill is developed when students are able to tell which news stories reflect quality journalism and which ones are junk, whether the coverage is fair, accurate

and reliable and whether sources are well identified among other criticism that can be directed toward the press. Also, here explaining that ideal standards do not always apply realistically is essential as stressed by Hobbs (2010).

- "**Teaching Media Production**"

According to proponents of integrating this skill to media literacy as well as news literacy curricula, producing their own media content makes students realize the different stages of the news making process and how every choice made has an impact on the audience. For example when students produce their own news content they learn how a word choice can manipulate people's opinions as well as what type of pressures journalists are under when making news.

Not only is making media products included under this skill, but further learning to respond to news media in real life is also highlighted as a form of civic engagement. Reacting to inaccurate coverage for instance creates a more responsible citizen pushing for change to the better.

❖ **Merging Knowledge Areas and Skills:**

Having displayed knowledge areas and skills of news literacy, it becomes essential to accentuate that both constituents are not detached from each other. The merging of both on different levels and with other variables (such as motivations, interpretations,..etc.) can create **indicators** to news literacy.

According to Craft et al (2013), an individual's level of news media literacy highly depends on the following:

Automatic versus mindful thought-processing: "the degree to which one engages in mindful versus automatic thought-processing of news. Much psychological research has explored the extent to which individuals engage in mindful thought-processing, and scales have been developed to measure the concept "need for cognition." This is an individual difference — or personality characteristic — that assesses the degree to which an individual engages in activities that require deep and effortful thinking" (Craft et al, 2013).

- **Person in control versus media in control**; "the degree to which one perceives herself

as being in control versus the news media being in control of the influence of news media... According to Potter, a person can be aware or not of media message's controlling influence. Those who are more aware of the media's controlling nature are thought to be more personally in control of their own exposure and the influences media might have on them"

- **Knowledge about the news media system**; **"**the knowledge one has of the institutions that produce news, the way in which the content of the news is produced and the effects of that content on people" (Craft et al, 2013).

The news literacy indicators identified by Craft et al (2013) reveal the merging of knowledge areas as well as cognitive skills that were not treated in a discrete manner. Further, a study by Martens and Hobbs (2015) finds a strong correlation between knowledge about the media and having the skills of critical analysis of news. The authors report positive correlations between "civic engagement intention" and being motivated to seek information and having the "ability to analyze and evaluate a news article". Again, these correlations reveal the attachment and interaction between skills, knowledge areas and other constituents to define and delineate news literacy. This further highlights the importance of news analysis skills as well as engagement with the news in predicting active participation in real life.

The following table is an attempt to put together, categorize and summarize news literacy's knowledge areas and skills as analyzed based on literature:

Table 1: News Literacy's knowledge areas and skills

Knowledge Areas	**Skills**
Knowledge of media industries: ❖ Ownership ❖ Journalists' working environment ❖ Control and (de)centralization ❖ Production process	**Access related skills:** ❖ Access to information ❖ Identify news content ❖ Engage

	❖ ICT skills to access and use multimedia information and platforms ❖ Awareness of the media power
Knowledge of the news making process and its aspects: ❖ News selection criteria/news values ❖ News media content, ideologies and values behind it ❖ The social process that shapes news ❖ Awareness of professional/quality journalism ❖ News media effects ❖ Impact of political and economic agendas on news media ❖ Sources identification ❖ Editors' role ❖ Video editing	**Selection and Information Processing Skills:** ❖ Locate ❖ Filter ❖ Analyze ❖ Evaluate/Assess ❖ Comprehend ❖ Group ❖ Induct ❖ Deduct ❖ Synthesize
Knowledge of the "constructedness"of news media messages: ❖ Reality versus representation ❖ Normative goals and core concepts of journalism	**Critical thinking skills** ❖ Ability to recognize different frames and agendas ❖ Reading between the lines ❖ Being critical of the press ❖ Comparing between different forms and coverage ❖ Meaning matching and construction ❖ Identifying and Appreciating

	professional/quality journalism
Knowledge of the self: ❖ Motivations ❖ Biases ❖ Interpretations ❖ News consumption habits	**Proactivity/Behavioral Skills** ❖ Producing news content ❖ Communicating and sharing news content ❖ Discussing news content with family/friends ❖ Participating in/ reacting to online news content ❖ Taking Action
Knowledge of the main role of news: ❖ Importance of news ❖ Relevance to one's daily life ❖ Connection between news and civic and political engagement	
Knowledge of the news media landscape: ❖ Segmentation of news media and ecosystem ❖ Digital revolution and its impact on news media	

3. 23 Research Gap

Most studies on news literacy focus on correlations between the level of news literacy and other variables such as:

- News consumption (navigation)
- Media Skepticism
- News consumption rate
- Knowledge about current events
- Making sense of news content

As suggested by Maksl et al. (2015), there is still a research gap with regards to how news literacy is related to or anticipates political and civic engagement. This has been emphasized by Toepfl (2014) by stating that the prominence of media literacy in regimes that are regarded as "non-democratic", such as China, Russia and Singapore has increased over the past ten years. Despite this, noticeably, this increase hardly targets the correlation to "active citizenship and critical approaches to political messages". Most studies that tackle media literacy in these countries rather shed the light on the "technical skills and moral judgment" (Toepfl, 2014).

Further as cited by Fleming (2016), according to Miller (2011) there is lack of "published, peer reviewed research" to support "claims" that news literacy is correlated with knowledge about, interest and involvement in politics and civics. This resonates with Fleming's (2014) statement that "the connection between news literacy participation and political engagement is never fully developed". Also scholars (Fleming, 2016; Fleming, 2014; Potter, 2010) believe that more studies need to define or "spell out" critical thinking skills which is in many instances used as a general umbrella to different not well defined "mental processes" (Fleming, 2016; Potter, 2010) .

In addition, authors like Vraga & Tully (2016) state that further research is still required in the "types of news literacy interventions that are effective outside the classroom" and on the skills that can be taught in media literacy curricula and can be applied to "news consumption and information processing". Further, "individual and social characteristics that contribute to responses to media literacy messages" need to be further studied (Vraga & Tully, 2016).

This study focuses on the correlation between news literacy and political engagement through focusing on the role of news literacy in countering harmful content online. Accordingly, besides the elements of measurement of news literacy other variables included are: the ability to identify news versus harmful content (mainly fake news and hate speech), engagement with news and motivation.

Hence the next chapters demonstrate literature reviewed on harmful content online and political engagement.

Chapter 4

News Literacy against Harmful Messages:

Confronting Online Misinformation/Fake News and Hate Speech

4. 1 Introduction:

4. 2 Fake News and Hate Speech: Two sides of the same coin?

Nowadays we live in a world which witnesses evident power games among and within countries, where information became a weapon and a threat depending on how it is approached. When used responsibly and analytically, information becomes a weapon against the ignorance, gullibility and brainwash which leave individuals vulnerable to a massive amount of manipulating scenarios. However, when information, especially on social media platforms, becomes charged with fabricated content and material that incites hostility it becomes a threat to the wellbeing of individuals and democracies. According to scholars, social media platforms negatively affect democracies from several dimensions including motivating the spread of misinformation and disinformation as well as encouraging "polarization and hyper-partisanship" through the echo chambers created as a result of personalization algorithms (Ireton, 2018).

Exposure to harmful content online in general and on social media in specific is an issue that cannot be ignored when addressing youth's online news experience. Fake news and hate speech come at the top of the list when discussing harmful content youth are exposed to on social media. Accordingly, since this study is concerned with investigating how youth experience news online, it also seeks to understand the perception of youth about such material and their reaction (or lack of it) towards it. The researcher attempts to delve into the extent to which harmful messages – fake news and hate speech – affect youth's experience of exposure to news online, providing implications of how it affects their judgments, attitudes and decision making process. The study measures exposure to hate material, the type of hate discourse most encountered (based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, political views, …etc.) and the platforms on which youth are exposed to hate material with a focus on Facebook and Twitter. Awareness of fake news existence on social media is also assessed as well as the extent to which youth care about veracity of content before sharing it providing indicators for youth's participatory behaviour.

Through this study, news literacy is put forward as means to fight the spread and impact of harmful messages online through empowering citizens/users with the necessary tools (knowledge and skills) to become critical enough to take part of a responsible news experience. It is suggested that empowering citizens eventually lead to a healthier use of verified information and facts based on which motivations, attitudes and decisions are made to become politically involved based on a stable strong foundation that is not manipulated through harmful content.

It is essential to understand that fake news and hate speech are two sides of the same coin, but how is that? Both are driven by the intention to affect individuals' perceptions of and attitudes towards specific issues/persons which only calls for thinking beyond what one sees/reads. Being critical here is vital to understand in Walsham's (2005) words: "a critical stance is focused on what is wrong with the world rather than what is right" as noted by Stahl (2006). One of the main motives to intentionally spread fake information, according to Dornan (2017), is anger or hatred towards certain individuals which then generates a personal agenda to spread this hate or bitterness by fabricating content especially when it comes to political information:

"a*nger seems to be the motor force of so many of the sites spreading false news for political motives: anger at the political establishment, anger at elites, anger at globalization, anger at immigrants and refugees, anger at the mainstream media*"

In accordance, intending to ponder the current "information disorder", as they note, Wardle and Derekhshan (2018) demonstrate how harmful content can fall under: misinformation (incorrect content), dis-information (deliberately created false content) and Mal-information (content that can be true or false disseminated with the intention to harm). Where dis-information is basically the overlap between misinformation and mal-information; hate speech falls under mal-information. Accordingly, whether it is information intended to misguide or material that incites hatred, they could both fall under dis-information; material that intends to harm which is false in content or context (Wardle & Derekhshan, 2018).

Dornan (2017) further argues that the widespread of the false information usually goes back to being shared by different sources/sites confirming the same fake content, where "conspiracy" scenarios are promoted for different various issues. This means that the more

the user gets exposed to such content, the more confirmation they receive that this content is correct by reading/viewing relevant information from different websites. This goes in accordance with a study by Hawdon et al. (2015) on online exposure to hatred inciting content in Finland, US, Germany and UK, which emphasizes the extent to which such exposure is impactful. The empirical findings of the study support the fact that exposure to hate material is becoming more common than ever before, mainly directed by the type of websites visited by users. That is, "visiting sites that advocate dangerous behaviors increases the likelihood of being exposed to these materials" (Hawdon et al, 2015). This is accentuated by Grizzle and Pérez Tornero (2016) who bring attention to the extent to which users, especially youth, are exposed to hate material online. This sheds light on the essentiality of raising users´ awareness that every decision they make online impacts the type of content they are exposed to. Algorithms of content personalization play a major role in that sense, especially on social media platforms.

Hence, fake news and hate speech, despite appearing to be distinct types of harmful content, share the main characteristics and motives which make them two sides of the same coin. Both are motivated by personal agendas mainly triggered by hostility and anger toward the opposing side; and both are more prevalent depending on each individual's behavior online. The essentiality of raising awareness about conscious exposure to content and fighting against automaticity of information use online is accordingly accentuated; which happens to be at the core of news literacy as previously highlighted.

Having discussed how both types of content fall under the same umbrella, this chapter delves into understanding both phenomena separately and together through explicating each and demonstrating current facts. Impact on democracies is discussed through analyzing implications for political engagement. Afterwards, news literacy is indicated as a potential elucidation of means to face the problem.

4. 3 Online Misinformation and Disinformation: Junk and fake news

4. 4 The Status Quo:

In order to understand the problem of misleading citizens through inaccurate or false information it is essential to differentiate between terms that are in many instances used interchangeably. To begin with one must ask, what is information? What is the difference

between information and knowledge? And where does truth exist in that sense? Since the main core of the study addresses news, these questions are briefly approached in the context of news as a source of information.

According to Stahl (2006), rigidly defining information is a very complicated task thanks to the different philosophical notions that could be attributed (perception, interpretation, meaning making, truth, representation,…etc.). However, it is valid to say that information is the foundation on which knowledge is based; it is what prepares citizens to take actions based on informed decisions. Hence, it is assumed that such type of information is true; by true we mean "corresponds with the way the world is" (Stahl, 2006). But is there information that perfectly reflects the world as it is?

As mentioned above, since this study is concerned with news as a main source of information based on which action is taken, it is essential to once again refer to Gans's (1979) discussion of what is news. Through reviewing the different paradigms and approaches of defining news, one common conclusion among scholars is the fact that news delivered information are never a mirror to the world but rather construct how the world is like through criteria impacting this process, which include: journalists' perception, news selection, newsworthiness, social norms, audience's perception, interpretation and meaning making among others (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Van Dijk, 1988). Hence, the concept of truth in this context could be defined as verified information used by citizens who have the minimum level of awareness of how such information is created/constructed and circulated to be able to discern truth from fiction, but is it that simple?

Unfortunately it becomes far more complicated than this with the abundance of information we are witnessing today with which lines between truth and fiction, carelessness and responsibility blur. The internet in general and social media platforms in specific are loaded with content that mis/dis-informs the users. In 2016, the word 'post-truth' was announced the word of the year by Oxford English Dictionary; referring to the extent to which objective facts are becoming deprioritized in the sphere of politics and the media (Pérez Tornero et al., 2018). As defined by Oxford English Dictionary: post-truth is a description that relates to "circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Dictionaries).

This is especially valid on social media platforms as well as search engines with the algorithms personalizing content based on preferences hence creating echo chambers that only reaffirms personal biases making users more prone to content similar to that they usually access. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) empirically demonstrate that individuals are highly susceptible to trust news/stories that go in line with their beliefs; approve of their candidate for example. For fake information, this, as previously mentioned, means that the more fabricated unreliable content citizens use online, the more they get exposed to such material (Dornan, 2017; Hawdon et al., 2015). And this way mis/dis-informed citizens form a considerable part of the public sphere.

According to research, the majority of youth today count on social media for news and information (Pew Research Center, 2016; Buzzfeed News Analysis Report, 2016), which happen to represent an environment that is highly vulnerable to the spread of false information and fake news (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Confirming the aforementioned concern, a study by Reuters institute reveals that junk or fake news generate far more reactions on social media than news from professional news brands (Newman et al., 2018). While such findings are significantly alarming, New York Times conducted an investigation on the tools used by Russians to influence the 2016 US elections. Based on interviews with experts working on the case, it was found that two main tools were used to multiply the reach of the intended (fabricated) content: bots and trolls. Where bots refers to autonomous programs designed to interact online and massively on social media; they can retweet and share, while trolls are mainly humans or persons who intentionally mislead the publics on social media through posts, comments or stories they create and share (Parlapiano and Lee, 2018).

The demonstrated evidence of the aggravation of the problem calls for understanding what we are facing; in this case 'fake news'. It also becomes inevitable to realize the factors that come to play impacting such phenomenon.

4. 5 Explicating 'Fake News':

Before delving into understanding the term 'fake news', it is essential to differentiate between misinformation and disinformation. According to scholars (Stahl, 2006; Tudjman & Mikelic, 2003) despite using the two words interchangeably in many instances, *misinformation* refers to information that could be wrong, misleading or inaccurate, while

disinformation refers to wrong information deliberately intended to mislead, manipulate or harm the users. Accordingly, in this study fake news falls under the umbrella of disinformation; deliberately fabricated information (made up stories containing false information) encountered on social media.

In light of the aforementioned problem, it is indispensable to note that there are two sides to the issue of false information. One is wrong information that is spread on social media driven by various motives/agendas and mainly generated by trolls or driven by individual hatred. And the other is 'junk news' spread by professional news media with the aim of competing with the immediate content on social media for audience's attention and engagement. The second dimension or 'junk news' has historically existed through yellow journalism, tabloids and news media's use of propaganda and sensationalism. However, with the impact of technology's rapidness on professional journalism, it is now more serious than ever to consider; as professional journalism should have a fundamental role to counteract fake information rather than exacerbate the problem. 'Clickbait' – content created with the mere purpose of achieving more clicks – unfortunately in many instances now is pushed online, especially on social media, by professional news brands. Lotero-Echeverri et al. (2018) highlight some news media's practice to put sensational deceptive headlines to attract users' clicks. Further, Suiter (2016) attempts to highlight how journalism is competing with content shared on social media using emotional connection as a factor that promotes the audience engagement with the news produced. She explains how the BBC's coverage of Brexit, for instance, includes discourses of both sides of the argument, without evidence (Suiter, 2016)

Accordingly, fake or junk news could be related to post-truth politics (Kucharski, 2016; Suiter, 2016; Tsipursky, 2017). Some experts have viewed the year 2016 as one that is characterised by populism where citizens connect more with emotional discourses than arguable ones; examples include the election of Donald Trump and Brexit. Hence, Himma-Kadakas (2017) accentuates the need to understand the difference between fact and fake. From a journalistic perspective, fact is an evidence of truth, always proven and verified, "anything alternative to this cannot be treated as fact" (Himma-Kadakas, 2017, p. 26). Thus, fake news refers to content that contains false information that mimic journalistic facts in form and mainly spread through social media (Himma-Kadakas, 2017). On the other side, alternative facts are linked to the interpretation of the fact construction

and can be intentional or unintentional (Himma-Kadakas, 2017).

Despite using the term 'fake news' in this study, the researcher is fully aware that it is not an exhaustive term when discussing the current problem of misinformation and disinformation. Further, as could be witnessed and as confirmed by Wardle and Derakhshan (2018), the term 'fake news' has been repeatedly "politicized" when used by politicians to attack opposition media leading to spreading negative notions about professional journalists. Such attacks are weapons used by politicians and public figures to demean the image of professional news media and hence leading to public distrust exacerbating scepticism. According to Tandoc Jr. et al. (2018), after reviewing 34 academic studies using the term 'fake news' from 2003 till 2017, six categories under which fake news was operationalized emerged; news satire, news parody, news fabrication, photo manipulation, advertising and public relations, and propaganda. In that sense, it is essential to mention that fabricated content refers to text made up to create false stories as well as fabricated visual content, photos or videos, which is more difficult to decipher and "debunk" (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018).

With a focus on news fabrication, it is necessary to delineate parodies; fabricated news stories that intend to criticize both the news media and politics in many instances (Tandoc Jr. et al., 2018). As much as it is publicly announced fake content, readers can easily miss the "disclaimer" and share it as news (Tandoc Jr. et al, 2018). On the other hand, fabricated news, deliberately intends to misinform individuals by imitating news articles from professional media in form, however with false content. In their analysis Tandoc Jr. et al. (2018) shed light on how fake news in that sense easily spread with the existence of "social tension" and/or polarization where such content appeals to extreme opinions on different issues only to confirm biases and hence go viral; a stance supported by other scholars (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Creators of such content are usually driven by economic motives, with advertising revenues multiplying with clicks, and/or political agendas. The case of being driven by political agendas is what puts democracies at stake most as a result of swaying and manipulating the public opinion on false basis. As previously mentioned, with the utilization of bots and with the aid of social media platforms the spread of such content is amplified (Parlapiano and Lee, 2018; Ireton & Posetti, 2018; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

In order to further break down the problem, it is important to understand and become aware of the parties involved in the creation and dissemination of fake content. According to Wardle & Derakhshan (2018):

"*the motivations of the mastermind who 'creates' a state-sponsored disinformation campaign are very different from those of the low-paid 'trolls' tasked with turning the campaign's themes into specific posts*."

The scholars hence, explicate the process of "information disorder" through: *the agent*, or content creators who can be official or unofficial, with different motivations (economical, political, psychological…etc); *the message*, which is usually misguiding and manipulative in nature; and *the interpreter*, who reads with different perceptions ("hegemocic/oppositional/negotiated") and different possible actions ("ignored, shared in support/shared in opposition") (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018). Apart from the ill intentions which drive fake content creators, danger lies most in the process of dissemination. Some scholars argue that it is impossible to decisively determine the intention behind individuals' decisions to disseminate false information (whether or not they are aware it is false) (Karlova & Fisher, 2012). Intentions could vary from deliberate desire of harming, to gaining status or even responding to social pressure; but at the end it is left to "receivers" to decide whether or not the information they are exposed to is credible (Karlova & Fisher, 2012). However, when it comes to benefit and 'use', it becomes more obvious why some decide to diffuse misinformation/disinformation to the public. It could be to exercise influence by proving one's own stance correct, for governments to control public opinion, or for businesses to maintain reputation or gain profits (Karlova & Fisher, 2012). Meaning, individuals' perception of credibility, care about veracity and motives of sharing content are factors contributing to the matter – positively or, unfortunately, negatively in many instances.

Having explicated the phenomenon of fake news; contextually and characteristically, and discussed potentially causative factors, it is vital to similarly delve into the other side of the coin; hate speech.

4. 6 Online Hate: Resentment Inciting Material as a Part of the Information War

4. 7 Exposure to and the Reach of Online Hate Speech: The Problem

One of the most destructive weapons in the information war the world is currently witnessing is hate speech dragged under the category of mal-information (intended to harm) according to Wardle & Derakhshan (2018). Scholars shed light on the fact that the internet facilitated the process of spreading hostile content by enabling its creators to reach a vast population thanks to the low cost and the great reach (Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012).

Unfortunately, hate is embedded in many of the material youth are exposed to daily especially online. According to Grizzle and Pérez Tornero (2016), exposure to content "used to stereotype groups (…) centered on race and ethnicity" is on the rise and especially impact young people. This is emphasized by Hawdon et al. (2015) who found sexual orientation and ethnicity as the most common targets of hate speech followed by political views. But what are the factors that determine the degree of exposure to such content?

According to scholars, age as well as country, are variables that in instances determine the degree of exposure to hate speech online. With younger people being more susceptible, nations with more press freedom are more likely to get their youth exposed to "online risk" than those with less press freedom (Hawdon et.al., 2015). In their study on four nations, the United States, Finland, the United Kingdom and Germany, Hawdon et al. (2015), found that considerable percentages of youth in these countries were exposed to hate speech online during the "past three months". In all four countries, Facebook was rated first as a platform where exposure to hate speech is high followed by YouTube, with more than 20% reporting exposure on Twitter in the US and the UK (Hawdon et.al., 2015). In support, a study by Livingstone et al. (2011) found that more than a quarter of teens (15 to 16 year-olds) in Europe are exposed to online hate material.

Another factor that considerably determines exposure to hate speech is whether or not an individual creates similar material and/or accesses websites that produce hatred inciting content according to a study on youth's victimization (Räsänen et al., 2016). The study demonstrates that among Facebook users, those who create hatred inciting content are four times more likely to be exposed to hate speech (Räsänen et al., 2016).

According to Grizzle & Pérez Tornero (2016), "most governments and international stakeholders involved in countering hate, radicalization and extremism identify social media and online spaces as primary tools being used by radical and extremist groups". Not only is this supported by governments and scholars (Erjavec, 2014; Erjavec & Kovačič,

2012; Cammaerts, 2009; Hawdon, 2012) but simply any user can be a witness by taking a look at the comments on videos or articles, especially those tackling controversial issues (Ring, 2013). In a study by Humboldt State University in the US, the researchers found that over the time span of 11 months (June 2012-April 2013), 150,000 insults carrying hatred incitement could be spotted on Twitter; and this is applied only on 1% of Twitter users (Peckham, 2013). With the merits of technology in mind, when addressing issues of hateful content, the internet, especially social media, becomes a great amplifier by empowering the creation and grouping of discriminatory individuals advocating for racism, violence, xenophobia and the like (Hawdon, 2012). Despite the fact that online hate began in the 90s, in recent years the problem has been aggravated with the surge in social media users; with special attention to political and religious extremist groups (Hawdon, 2012).

According to Hawdon (2012) citing Cooper (2010): in 1996 the number of "hate sites" was roughly 150, while in 2009 they reached 11,500 varying among social media groups, blogs, websites and forums encouraging the public to join them and "commit violent acts". It is indeed alarming how these numbers must have multiplied by now and how they do not in fact accurately reveal the true magnitude of the problem thanks to the ramifications to exhaustively spot such groups online. Thanks to the segmentation of social media users, an environment which is vulnerable to polarization and hence recruitment to hate groups becomes easier. Hate speech producers with agendas would usually use extremist positions that depict those with opposing views as 'the other' or the enemy (Cammaerts, 2009). This raises the question: what role should social media platforms have as a main agent in the problem?

4. 8 Online News, Social Media and Hate Speech: The Paradox of Censorship versus Freedom of Expression

Despite not being strongly related to the focus of the study, it is deemed essential to briefly demonstrate how tackling hate speech is related to content management and hence to freedom of expression (Cammaerts, 2009). Studies support the statement that hate speech is found in comments on news stories besides organized groups on social media (Erjavec, 2014; Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012; Cammaerts, 2009). In her study, Ring (2013) argues that big social media companies like Google, Facebook and Twitter fail to provide the users with a transparent unified policy against hatred inciting material. It remains controversial how each of the platforms approaches the issue with Twitter being most permissive

(removing only direct threats) when it comes to material inciting hatred against certain groups than Facebook which removes such content (Ring, 2013).

What makes the issue more complicated is the opposing views regarding whether or not social media platforms should interfere with content regulation by censoring some and allowing other. The problem is aggravated by the fact that the very same companies have users from all around the globe with hugely different sets of values, country regulations and standings on democracy. This led many giant platforms to compromise; removing content from countries but not from others. This case has been witnessed recently with Netflix's reaction after Saudi frowning upon an episode of a stand-up comedy program hosted by Hassan Minhaj on grounds of attacking the crown prince; the episode was removed from Saudi Netflix while still available in other countries (Rutenberg, 2019). In a similar stance, Facebook and Youtube removed a video from Egypt and Libya after igniting riots in protest against a circulated anti-prophet film (Rosen, 2013). What about professional news organizations' reactions to hatred incited content?

As aforementioned, according to scholars (Erjavec, 2014; Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012; Cammaerts, 2009; Gagliardone et al., 2015) comments on news stories in many instances carry hate inciting content and can be regarded as one of its sources online. In their study analysing comments on three news sites, Erjavec & Kovačič (2012) found that hate speech could be spotted under articles covering "domestic and foreign politics, criminal, national, sexual, and racial conflicts, as well as issues relating to culture, sports, health, the economy, and entertainment" with special focus on political content. Hatred inciting content in comments under political news articles reveals the extreme positions of the creators and hence the arguments are loaded with hate speech towards the opposing side (Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012).

Hermida and Thurman (2007), demonstrate how different news media organizations manage users' comments through pre-moderation (filtering before publishing), post-moderation (reviewing after publishing) and reactive moderation (reviewing only in case of complaints). Other scholars show that news media in Slovenia take a different stance by abstaining from moderating users' comments for economic reasons; the more their users become the more advertising income they will enjoy (Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012). Gagliardone et al. (2015) emphasize that professional news media need to operationally

define and agree on what constituted hate speech to be able to effectively monitor and filter content carefully while taking freedom of expression into account.

In some instances, inaccuracy in reporting and the discourse used by professional journalists can further aggravate the problem through framing issues or even taking sides. In a murder case that involved race issues described by Cammaerts (2009), professional media appeared to have a role in polarizing the public opinion through attacking each other (extreme right versus extreme left) without shedding light on the consequences; generated hate rhetoric. Hence, Cammaerts (2009) recommends that the mainstream media should have a role in tackling this issue by shedding light on it and raising citizens' awareness about its implications. A case worth mentioning in that sense, as noted by Gagliardone et al. (2015) is the Kenyan violent elections of 2007 which resulted in deaths and unprecedented unrest in the country after witnessing rumours and hate speech in the traditional as well as the new media (social media leading). In the wake of these events UMATI research project was launched with the aim of monitoring "online instances of hate speech" (Gagliardone et al., 2015). In accordance with the previously mentioned findings of Hawdon et al.'s (2015) study, UMATI's findings revealed that 90% of the collected hate speech originated from Facebook with only 3% found on Twitter.

The debate around the most plausible manner to control hate speech while taking into account freedom of expression is a rather controversial one. Inevitably, there is a general agreement among scholars that social media companies as well as news media (as potential/actual environments of hatred inciting material) should play a role in restraining the existence and diffusion of such material. As inferred from the discussion so far, the most common technique utilized is the reactive monitoring where publishers of intermediaries react after users' complaints. The main obstacle towards reaching a universally agreed on policy emerges when thinking about the definition of hate speech and what constitutes such content.

4. 9 Explicating Hate Speech

According to scholars, there still does not exist a universally agreed on definition of hate speech, despite the fact that there are relevant aspects that arise in a lot of the literature on the subject (Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012; Hawdon et al, 2015; Ring, 2013; Gagliardone et al., 2015).

Correspondingly, Ring (2013) deconstructed the definition of hate speech into the two main parts "hate" and "speech". In that sense, she defined hate as "extreme negative feelings and beliefs held about a group of individuals or a specific representative of that group because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation". So, hate speech would be the coverage or featuring of content that demonstrates such feelings which leads to provoking resentment, hostility and discrimination against the targeted group of individuals (Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012; Hawdon et al, 2015; Ring, 2013). Benesch (2012) notes that commonly and based on how it is approached by law, hate speech is perceived as "mean speech that denigrates people on the basis of their membership of a group". The justification for such expression is usually the individuals´ "race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, physical condition, disability, sexual orientation, political conviction, and so forth" (Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012). Equally, using technology tools and platforms to create, collaborate in or spread such content falls under the umbrella of online hate speech (Hawdon et al, 2015).

In an attempt to understand how citizens perceive hate speech, the Kenyan UMATI project found that most participants perceive as hate speech: "personal insults, propaganda and negative commentary about politicians" (Gagliardone et al., 2015). Such findings, not only provided context to the researchers, but further brought to realization the importance of raising awareness to enable citizens to differentiate between criticism of politicians (or insults) and discourse that incites violence or can actually cause harm (Gagliardone et al., 2015). Scholars highlight that hate speech is regarded as an abstract term that is not necessarily 'speech', can come in different forms and hence it is complicated to unbendingly or precisely define it (Gagliardone et al., 2015; Benesch, 2012).

Benesch (2012) identifies two types of influence of hate speech; direct and indirect harm. The direct harm refers to the impact on the targeted individuals, be it physical, emotional or psychological, while the indirect harm refers to encouraging more people to "think and act" with resentment towards the victimized group (Benesch, 2012). The scholar demonstrates five main variables that together decide the extent to which hate speech can become swaying; the "speaker" (degree of authority, power, charisma), the "audience" (able to "commit violence", suffering economic insecurity, fearful, etc.), the "speech act" (whether it calls for violence, addresses the victimized using non-human references, etc.),

the "socio-historical context" (presence of conflict, risk of violence, etc.), and "mode of transmission" (medium, audience access, frequency, etc.) (Benesch, 2012).

Examining the creators/producers of hatred inciting content is regarded as an essential step toward understanding the root cause of the problem. According to Erjavec and Kovacic (2012), creators of such content focus on specific news sites where they consistently write comments reshaping the meanings in the articles. Producers of such content mainly intent to shift attention from the main issue covered by the news article and turn it into attacks against the targeted group/individuals. Hate speech producers could either be "organized…directed by political and/or other interest groups" (such as political parties or non-governmental organizations), or individually act "on their own initiative" (Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012). Scholars state that currently individuals are principal sources of hate speech; as groups are more easily detected online than individuals who can act anonymously (Hawdon et al, 2015). Usually hate speech producers have a different perception about such content; they believe that it is enlightening/informative rather than illegal or immoral since they are motivated to 'inform' about their ideologies and stances toward the attacked groups (Hawdon et al, 2015).

In their study Erjavec and Kovacic (2012) interviewed hate speech creators based on which they divided them into four categories: the soldiers, the believers, the players and the watchdogs. The soldiers mainly refer to those who are organized (under political parties or other interest groups) and act in a military oriented manner as if they are in a war in which they need to consistently attack the "enemy"; the believers are individuals also believe the best way to defend their ideologies is by attacking the "enemy" – in this case the victimized – however they are not part of organized groups; the players as suggested by the name create hate speech for entertainment and excitement purposes; while the watchdogs are driven by "social injustice", that is, they do not defend a specific ideology nor are they against a certain group of people but change their positions based on the argument (Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012).

Understanding hate speech as a widespread phenomenon involves realizing its meaning, characteristics, implications and impact. As demonstrated there is not a rigid line the can be drawn to strictly define what hate speech is, thanks to the fact that it involves different forms and formats, creators with various motives, and various target groups. The argument

around hate speech involves a role to be played by governments, platforms through which such content is disseminated, individuals exposed to it and their interpretations and reactions towards it.

Having explicated fake news and hate speech separately, similarities between both phenomena become clearer, especially in how they negatively impact the individuals' judgments and decisions. Accordingly, the next section focuses more on the users as main players in the issue of harmful content; victims and in many instances causes of the problem exacerbation. Could equipping citizens with the necessary tools be a solution for problem?

4. 10 News Literacy Facing Harmful Messages:

4. 11 Human Behavior Complicating the Problem?

As demonstrated, harmful messages in the form of fake news dis-informing citizens or hate speech fueling anger and polarization are highly prevalent in youth's online environment. Both types of harmful messages are driven by anger, extremism and personal/groups agenda. Factors that lead to their spread are numerous, including organized implemented agendas of interest groups, politicians or governments; besides algorithms and bots among others. As highlighted by scholars (Fletcher et al., 2018; Parlapiano and Lee, 2018) false material multiplies on social media much more than truthful content thanks to algorithms which makes individuals' exposure to content in line with their beliefs higher creating a filter bubble (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Dornan, 2017; Hawdon et al., 2015). But does this mean that robots represent the main factor that accelerates the spread of fake news/hate speech on social media?

According to studies human behavior is a key determinant. Vosoughi et al. (2018) found that despite the result that false news spread "farther, faster, deeper and more broadly" on Twitter than true news "in all categories of information", still robots do spread both false and true content at the same rate. Accordingly, humans' behavior towards content on social media is potentially one of the main elements that amplify the problem with the finding that false content was "70% more likely to be retweeted than truths" (Vosoughi et al., 2018). In accordance, a study done by Pew Research Center (2017) indicated that experts

believe that the information environment will not improve stating that "human behavior" is the main problem (Anderson & Rainie, 2017)

In support of such findings, according to Newman et al. (2017), in Reuters Institute Digital News Report, a survey of more than 70,000 online news users in 36 different countries, reveals that the majority of respondents are aware that social media are not doing enough to filter the information users receive differentiating between credible and false information. Nonetheless, still less than half of the respondents could remember the source of news they read on social media (that is, the news brand that put the article). Such findings are alarming in the sense that online news users display awareness about the dangers of exposure to harmful messages on social media and still do not do the conscious effort to double check the sources of their information or react responsibly. Such gap between individuals' perception and actual behavior is highlighted in a global scan by BBC (2017) which found that seventy-nine percent of the world's Internet users believe that they do care about the veracity of content. Contradictorily, Allcott & Gentzkow (2017) found that in 2016, 115 "pro-Trump fake stories…were shared on Facebook a total of 30 million times" while "41 pro-Clinton fake stories" were shared 7.6 million times. So, individuals believe they care about the truth but their actions say otherwise. A valid question here is: why is this case? What factors interfere and make humans act the way they do online?

Mantzarlis (2018) note the academic argument that citizens at the present time tend to resist facts as a result of the polarized nature of politics and the media. That is, the current atmosphere encourages citizens to remain opinionated rather than become open to the exposure to different scenarios or viewpoints. Hence, individuals believe and circulate content that goes in line with their beliefs/attitudes. It must be acknowledged that messages are perceived and interpreted in different manners by different individuals depending how each person's filters are shaped. That is, each individual has his/her own "mental obstacles" which guide their interpretation and perception of truth of falsehood (Mantzarlis, 2018). Accordingly, concepts which are deemed necessary to understand include: *confirmation bias*; inclination to search for and believe content in line with one's beliefs, *motivated reasoning*; unconsciously processing information in a manner that fits one's preferred end result, and *availability heuristic*; for instance, believing something because you can easily remember it or remember frequently being exposed to it (Mantzarlis, 2018).

On the other hand, studies conducted on 3446 respondents resulted in a finding that people's judgment of the accuracy of content is highly dependent on their ability to engage in "analytic thinking" (Pennycook & Rand, 2018). In that sense, individuals who think critically in an investigative manner were less likely to believe fake news and more importantly more likely to trust professional news sources. Such finding calls to attention the aforementioned argument about criticism versus cynicism towards news media. In their study, Pennycook and Rand (2018) found analytic respondents to be more trusting than skeptic towards "real news" circulated by professional media. Such a finding is promising and opens doors for further investigation in this area. It endorses the ability of media/news literacy's interventions to positively impact news users.

The aforementioned discussion supported by empirical findings confirms how human behavior and cognitive processes has a major impact on individuals' news/information experience. And hence, now more than ever it is significant to raise awareness about conscious critical use of information content on social media. This does not just impact persons on an individual level, but rather collectively affects democracies' wellbeing.

4. 12 Implications for Political Engagement; Political Scientists Perspective

Misinformation and dis-information interfere with citizens' deliberations in the public sphere through retarding their ability to make informed decisions that are founded on fact-based opinions. Kuklinski et al. (2000) highlight two prerequisites of a healthy democracy fueled by citizens' meaningful engagement. The first is dissemination of relevant facts and information by politicians and the media, and the second is citizens' use of such information in a manner that suits their preferences and at the same time "correct mistaken conceptions" (Kuklinski et al., 2000). Scholars in the field of political science confirm the essentiality of correct perceptions of political information to establish a healthy democracy and demonstrate how "misperception" can be more dangerous than lacking political information/knowledge (Flynn et al, 2017; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Wood & Porter, 2017; Kuklinski et al., 2000).

Scholars note that, contrary to numerous political science studies addressing the issue of *informed* versus *uniformed* public, a third category is existent and should be studied; the *misinformed* citizens (Kuklinski et al., 2000; Flynn et al, 2017). The danger of being misinformed outweighs that of being uninformed at all in the sense that misinformed

individuals are likely to hold on to their positions based on incorrect/misleading information and hence resist facts presented to them. Such resistance to facts that do not go in line with one's beliefs is individuals' mechanism to avoid discomfort of the probability that the information they are exposed to and that contradicts with their beliefs might be correct, leading to cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 2009). Kuklinski et al. (2000) describe how citizens with strong opinions (based on correct or incorrect perceptions/materials) pursue and process information:

> "*When they already hold salient attitudes relevant to the subject at hand, they will be inclined to make biased and reinforcing inferences rather than accurate ones. Often this can be accomplished easily, either through searching out consistent and ignoring inconsistent information or by interpreting new information to be consistent with existing beliefs and attitudes*"

This is supported by Taber & Lodge (2006) who discuss disconfirmation bias; where participants of their study "counterargue the contrary arguments and accept supporting arguments" as well as confirmation bias by pursuing supporting proofs for one's beliefs. The authors suggest that "both confirmation and disconfirmation biases lead to attitude polarization" (Taber & Lodge, 2006). When individuals seek information in the aforementioned manner, they become susceptible to misleading statements; be it in the form of fake news or hate speech. This is when misinterpretations and misinformed decisions and actions ensue. Hence, Flynn et al. (2017) demonstrate that in their definition of misperceptions as follows:

> "*factual beliefs that are false or contradict the best available evidence in the public domain. These beliefs may originate internally (e.g., as a result of cognitive biases or mistaken inferences) or with external sources (e.g., media coverage)…some misperceptions are demonstrably false… while others are unsubstantiated and unsupported by available evidence*"

In line of the aforementioned argument of how human behavior can play a role in the spread of dis/misinformation, it is deemed essential to understand how (political) misperceptions can "originate internally" (Flynn et al, 2017). Being aware of one's biases and preferences is vital for the pursuit of information. In order to make a decision, individuals seek information through "a two-step updating process" composed of gathering

information in line with one's preferences then assimilating such information to already existing knowledge to make "an updated judgment" as previously explained (Taber & Lodge, 2006).

Citizens' motivations while seeking and processing political information can be classified under two types: "accuracy goals"; drives them to pursue evidence attempting to "reach a correct or otherwise best conclusion", and "partisan goals"; drives them "to apply their reasoning powers in defense of a prior specific conclusion" (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Here, individuals' affection comes to play in forming one's biases toward one side of the argument or the other through "selective" information processing. The stronger the degree of biases, the more likely it is to result in polarized opinions and extreme positions (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Such extreme positions guided by affective processing of information lead to automatic acceptance of similar stances and counter arguing opposing ones without critically and consciously evaluating accuracy (Taber & Lodge, 2006). In other words, when citizens are exposed to fake news and/or hate speech which goes in line with their opinions/stances toward issues, in many instances, they are vulnerable to incorporate such material into their belief system without critically thinking about it. This especially applies to those who hold strong attitudes and opinions and are hence prone to believe politicians/individuals with interests to "misrepresent factual information" (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010).

More crucial, after conducting four experiments, Nyhan & Reifler (2010) found that respondents with strong ideological orientations were not able to adequately inform their views when introduced to "corrective information" that contradicts with their tendencies. Further, the scholars (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010) report that such corrections in more than a few cases "strengthened misperceptions" demonstrating what is known as "factual backfire effect" (Wood & Porter, 2017). Conversely, Wood & Porter's (2017) findings, after conducting five experiments, reveal weak support to "factual backfire"; on the contrary they note that citizens pay attention to and observe "factual information" even if it counters their tendencies.

On the other hand, it is essential to note that the external environment as well in many instances contributes to individuals' misperceptions; that is the media and politicians. Professional journalists are expected to present balanced arguments around the different

issues that concern the public instead of one voice seeking power. Hence, the availability of verified information is a prerequisite to address the problem of disinformation and misinformation. Verified quality content has always been regarded as a main trait of professional journalism. However with the challenges the industry currently faces (economic among others), there is always the question of immediacy of circulating facts versus quality of the content (waiting until checked and verified). Hence, in the wake of the spread of fake news and misinformation, the fact-checking as an industry as well started to boom mainly with the aim of holding politicians accountable for their statements.

Mantzarlis (2018) differentiates between verification and fact-checking in three main points: fact-checking occurs after claims/posts are public, verification is usually done on user generated content; fact-checking "relies on information from experts, academia,…", while verification "seeks primary evidence"; fact-checking results in a "conclusion on claim's veracity", while verification "results in a story being published or stopped". The scholar mentions "debunking" as an overlap between fact-checking and verification mainly applied on "fake news and viral hoaxes" (Mantzarlis, 2018). Such attempts by media organizations and independent fact-checkers all aim at enlightening the public and making them think beyond the obvious not taking the encountered content for granted. However, again, how such attempts are perceived and interpreted by individuals, whether with a considerate eye able to update beliefs or with a backfire effect is most important for healthy political engagement with a foundation based on truths and facts.

4. 13 Knowledge, Trust and Critical Evaluation

Despite the fact that the new media environment provides individuals with the power of content creation and dissemination, a high price is paid in return; that is, quality content that can be trusted. Professional journalists have always been regarded as the gatekeepers of information, with the expression in many instances carrying negative connotations of control and lack of transparency. However, one fact that is now obvious more than ever, is the chaotic information atmosphere encountered as a result of many factors among which is irresponsible individuals behaviour combined with lack of trust and uncritical scepticism towards professional news organizations. Pérez Tornero et al. (2018) highlight the current weakness of the media in the face of the new media challenges and how such feebleness

contributes to the spread of harmful messages such as fake news. Indeed, this means that endeavours to face harmful messages, be it fake news or hate speech, should include three players; academics setting theoretical tenets for the new emerging phenomena, journalists valuing quality journalism and thriving to regain the public's trust and citizens who are news media literate.

With a focus on the aforementioned discussion of how human behaviour impacts the spread of harmful content, Pennycook and Rand (2019) highlight the essentiality of "encouraging people to think more critically". Based on the findings of the same authors' study of 2018, they note that "interventions that are directed at making the public more thoughtful consumers of news media may have promise" (Pennycook & Rand, 2018). Scholars of media and news literacy (Hobbs, 2010b; Chohan et al., 2016; Maksl et al., 2015; Fleming 2014; Toepfl, 2014; Malik et al., 2013) accentuate the significant standing of media and news literacy skills for citizens for a democracy to strive. Hence, the essentiality of engagement with news content and current events on a daily basis is highlighted as a variable and a factor that is positively correlated to citizens' engagement to professional journalist fostering civic engagement.

In order for this to occur and as previously mentioned, critical trust in the media needs to replace cynicism. An interesting study by Craft et al. (2017) found a correlation between news literacy and the chances of believing conspiracy theories. The study, through a survey on 397 individuals, found that the more knowledge respondents have about how the news media work, the less likely it is for them to adopt and believe conspiracy theory including ones "aligned with their political ideology" (Craft et al., 2017). Such findings provide strong implications that support the statement that news literacy can face harmful messages, such as fake news and hate speech, which dis-informs and misinforms news users, through the emphasis on knowledge about the news industry. In an interview with Columbia Journalism Review, Craft highlights that knowledge about news media here is based on facts on its "structure, content and effects" rather than beliefs about it (Spinner, 2017). This comes as one of the main pillars on which engagement and trust in professional journalism can be fostered.

As aforementioned, this study defines news literacy as a construct with knowledge, skills and motivation as its constituents, knowledge acts as a base on which the rest is built. In

accordance, Pérez-Rodríguez and Delgado-Ponce (2012) emphasize the essentiality of knowledge putting it as the base in their media competence pyramid, followed by comprehension, then delivery/communication and self-expression coming at the top of the pyramid.

The emphasis on news literacy in that sense should not be the role of academics and educators only, journalists act as main actors. Hence, the role of journalists in the process is highlighted by Lotero-Echeverri et al. (2018) in their study analyzing a Colombian fact-checking site. According to the scholars, transparently sharing how the methodology of work with users, have a positive impact on users' ability to become more critical consumers, users and producers of content. Hence, this provides implications about the journalists' role in educating citizens about how they report news and how the steps of the whole process from the beginning till the end work. The scholars emphasize this approach as one of the most important in order to act against the spread of fake news and misinformation online (Lotero-Echeverri et al., 2018).

Scholars support the importance of critical analysis and evaluation of online material to face the impact of harmful content; fake news (Pérez Tornero et al., 2018; Lee, 2018; McGrew et al., 2017; Lotero-Echeverri et al., 2018; Rosenzweig, 2017) and/or hate speech (Gagliardone et al., 2015; Livingstone et al., 2011; Daniels, 2008). Accordingly, with the current news environment loaded with such content and in light of the argument demonstrated in this chapter, the study intends to understand how news literacy relates in this context. Are news literate individuals more responsible news users? Can news literacy become a weapon against harmful content online?

Chapter 5

Political Engagement

Since this study is concerned with youth's political engagement as an essential requirement in a healthy democracy, this chapter presents the literature reviewed on political engagement with the main aim of explicating it as relevant to the study.

5. 1 Conceptualizing Political Engagement:

In order for any democracy to flourish, active political engagement of all eligible citizens is inevitably a requirement. A citizenry that is aware and engaged enough to participate in the decision and policy making process as well as oversee the execution of such decisions is the best guarantee to a healthy democratic atmosphere. In contrast, lack of engagement to politics could result in decisions that contradict with the will of the individuals and hence leads to unrest and turbulence as could be witnessed in our world today.

The concept of civic engagement has been too broadly approached by most scholars to include political participation among other concepts. It has been repeatedly presented to contain aspects of social and community responsibility of citizens that are in some instances political and in others not political in nature (such as community service or neighborhoods communities) (Ekman and Amna, 2012). According to van Deth (2014), both terms, civic engagement and political participation, are used interchangeably due to their close dimensions. Van Deth (2014) states that according to scholars the line between both concepts blur in many instances, as both lines refer to "any organized action or social behavior or any activity aimed at change or at influencing collective life" (van Deth, 2014)

Whilst the term civic engagement has been referred to as a "buzzword" that is more general than specific, the term political engagement more specifically focuses on the political side of the realm or continuum as referred to by scholars (Ekman and Amna, 2012; Berger, 2009) of civic engagement. Political engagement as a term has been perceived to be more specific than civic engagement and more inclusive than political participation. Scholars defined political engagement as involving "different acts such as using the internet to search for political information, expressing views on the functioning of the government, or signing an (online) petition" emphasizing that citizens are able to get involved politically

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"on different levels using different social media channels" (Hameleers et al., 2018). Such a definition deems political engagement the most suitable in expressing the modern forms of youth's participation and involvement in politics taking into account the less formal means/channels (Bimber, 2001).

As political participation as a concept is mainly action/behavior oriented, the term political engagement is preferable for the sake of this study which is concerned with understanding the extent to which youth are involved in the political arena. For this reason, political engagement is dealt with as a construct that includes (but is definitely not limited to) political participation, perception of political knowledge and political interest as initial indicators of the general level of engagement versus apathy towards politics. Political participation is the main behavioral component and hence is essential to indicate the level of engagement; perception of political knowledge is measured to investigate the extent to which youth perceive themselves as knowledgeable comparing this to their news use habits. Scholars emphasize the essentiality of this component as it is fundamental for involvement and action (Dudley and Gitelson, 2002 Cited in Ashley et al., 2017). Political interest is included since it could generally affect the degree of political engagement as well as political efficacy.

Figure 5: Political Engagement
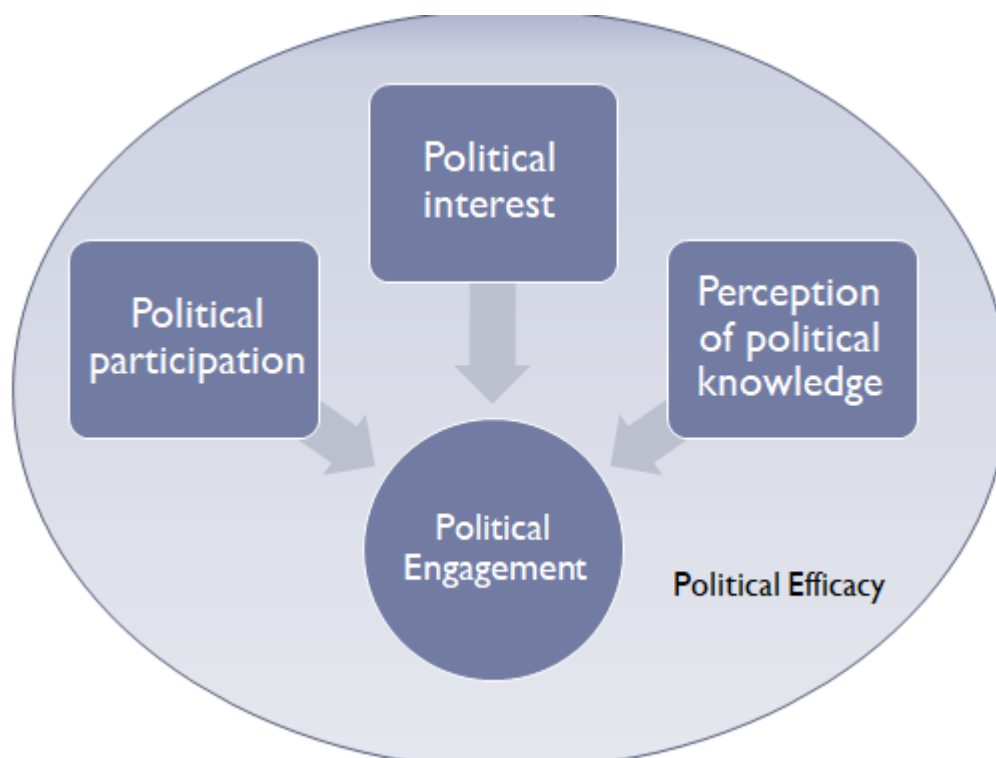
5. 2 Political Participation in the age of skepticism and declining political interest

The term political participation has been used by scholars to refer to voting behavior mostly and/or other actions that have impact on the governing bodies in a country. It is regarded as a modern concept initially circulated by political scientists in the seventies referring to citizens' right to speak their minds, communicate their needs and desires and practice influence over governments to respond in accordance (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978). According to Van Deth (2014), defining political participation is a very challenging task. Items that can be dragged under the concept of political participation are countless and depend on the context and approach. This task has become further thought-provoking especially over the past decades with new forms of participation emerging, thanks to a lot of factors including "social changes" and advancements in technological features (Van Deth, 2014).

"Many newer, 'creative', 'personalized', 'individualized' or 'conscious' modes of participation such as political consumption, street parties or guerrilla gardening are non-political activities used for political purposes."

The concept of political participation is deemed abstract and difficult to rigidly define through a concrete/limited set of activities. A simple definition would be "citizen's activities affecting politics" (Van Deth, 2014).

According to Maki (2006), political participation can be divided into two categories: "formal and informal modes of participation". Formal political participation can be operationally defined in terms of the free and independent activity done by citizens using "formal channels of participation" to have an impact on the political conduct and institutions (Maki, 2006). Hence, formal political participation can refer to voting behavior, discussing political matters, engaging in debates attempting to influence others to follow one's stance and generally giving thoughtfulness and attention to events that are political in nature.

On the other hand, informal political participation can be operationally defined in terms of "protests and demonstrative activity" among other activities that are conducted outside the formal channels (Maki, 2006). Informal political participation can further include online political participation; referring to following political content, expressing one's opinion on

political matters,…etc. In accordance, Jenkins et al. (2009) state that young people are part of participatory culture (which encompasses civic engagement and democratic acts) through "affiliations", "expressions", "collaborative problem solving" and "circulations" (Jenkins et al., 2009). Here, affiliations refer to becoming members in various online groups such as those on social media; expressions mainly refer to youth's ability to produce content not just consume/receive it; collaborative problem solving can best be explained through wikis or virtual reality games where cooperating in teams is the main feature; and circulations is best described as youth's ability to determine and influence "the flow of media" through blogging for instance (Jenkins et al., 2009). Such participatory environment in which today's youth are submerged redefines the long standing image of actions that can influence governments or political participation as elaborated later.

One important feature of political participation that has been highlighted by scholars (Eremenko, 2010; Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978) is the fact that it is a *voluntary* action/set of acts. Scholars suggest – based on empirical findings – that political participation is positively correlated with a general sense of happiness and satisfaction through a reinforced sense of "autonomy, competence and relatedness" (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2008). Such focus on the psychological effects of political participation puts forward its effect on the individual level which in turn reflects on the whole society. This is exactly where political interest comes as a crucial variable that indicates an individual's drive and motivation to become in any form involved in politics.

Scholars agree that in recent years a decline in political interest and political participation could be witnessed as a result of the citizens' lack of confidence in politicians, political institutes and governments (Chang, 2018; Bowler et. al, 2007).

Hereafter it becomes relevant to mention the difference between being skeptical and being critical. As applied in the chapter on theoretical framework on news, the discussion of being critical or cynical strongly applies to political (dis)engagement. Being skeptical toward news automatically leads to the phenomenon of "news resisters" which could apply to politics as well (Woodstock, 2014a). Accordingly, youth's lack of political trust and hence interest, is regarded as a natural result of being cynical rather than apathetic. As previously mentioned, cynicism refers to having a general - usually negative - judgment from an individual's point of view which in turn impacts decisions, attitudes and actions.

In this case political cynicism refers to youth's judgment that politics is irrelevant to them, it is "corrupt" and is merely decided and managed through "actions of politicians" (Buckingham, 2000). Based on this position, a perception of inability and ineffectuality drives youth's disengagement from politics (for more discussion on this kindly refer to the theoretical framework chapter). This is why investigation youth's political efficacy or perception of influence on the government is deemed necessary to get a fuller image of their level of political engagement.

If citizens lose their interest in politics they would become indifferent about becoming responsible citizens who fulfill their civic and political duties as should be. Studies found political impact to be correlated one way or another to different dimensions of political engagement (Stromback and Shehata, 2010). As Chang (2018) states: "sustaining or increasing citizens' political interest is considered as an essential prerequisite of a democratic institution".

5. 3 Youth and Political Engagement

Youth are regarded as a driving force in any nation. Hence, equipping and empowering them to become responsible citizens is inevitable for a democracy. Among the factors that lead to youth's political (dis)engagement is the process of political socialization, where youth could either be raised in homes where politics is often discussed or the contrary (Xenos et al., 2014). This translates into lack of motivation driven by a lack of understanding to their role as citizens or to how they can influence their governments. At the same time, youth are the 'digital natives' who are, consciously or unconsciously shaping new forms of political engagement being involved in the participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2009; Xenos et al., 2014).

Research on media use usually supports the statement that there are significant differences between different age groups when it comes to media use (Holt et al., 2013; Mihailidis and Thevenin, 2013; Dahlgren, 2012). A Pew study found that young users of social media, more than any other age group, tend to "post their own thoughts about issues, post links to political material, encourage others to take political action, belong to a political group on a social networking site, follow elected officials on social media ad like or promote political material others have posted" (Rainie et al., 2012). Another study supporting the role of social media in reinforcing political participation among youth demonstrated how age is an

essential variable and supported the political socialization impact on social media: "political social media use and attention to political news in traditional media increase political engagement over time" (Holt et al., 2013)

While traditional forms of political participation are still and will remain valid, younger generations are constantly finding faster, easier and cheaper ways to engage and be heard thanks to the continuously evolving technology. Mihailidis and Thevenin (2013) note Loader's (2007) argument of how younger citizens have their own means of maintaining civic engagement through behaviors like "flash mobbing, citizen reporter blogging, online petitions, online charities, and so on". Accordingly, scholars continue to emphasize on the essentiality of taking youth's rapidly changing digital environment into account allowing new forms of participation and engagement to evolve (Dahlgren, 2012; Mihailidis and Thevenin, 2013)

5. 4 Operational Definitions

As previously mentioned, for the sake of this study, the researcher focuses on three components of political engagement; political participation, political interest and perception of political knowledge.

In order to measure political participation, different forms were measured through considering two types of participation: offline referring to traditional formal channels of political participation, and online referring to informal channels. *Offline political participation* refers to attending a public hearing, town hall meeting or a council meeting; calling or sending a letter to an elected public official; speaking to a public official in person; posting a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker; attending a political rally; participating in any demonstrations, protests or marches; voting in elections; writing a letter to a news organization; participating in groups that took any local action for social or political reform; Being involved in public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees (Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). While *Online political participation* mainly refers to using the internet to: write to a politician; make a campaign contribution; sign up to volunteer to a campaign/issue; send a political message; write a letter to the editor of a newspaper (Holt, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Ljungberg, 2013).

Political interest is measured through self-reported evaluation by asking respondents about the extent to which they are interested in politics (Stromback & Shehata, 2010; Holt et al., 2013). Same applies to perception of current events knowledge where participants were asked how far they think they are well informed about current events.

In order to delve deeper into understanding citizens' perception of political efficacy, perception of influence on government decisions was measured as a control variable. Respondents were asked about the extent to which they think political participation influences the government decisions and policies (Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela, 2012). More details about the scales and measurements are explained in the methodology chapter.

5. 5 The role of News, Social Media and the Online Sphere in fostering Engagement

Scholars have historically argued about the different effects media exposure could have on the citizens, presenting media effects theories such as cultivation theory, agenda setting and spiral of silence. Two theories however focused on how the media, news in particular, affects the public specifically when it comes to political (dis)engagement; Media Malaise and the Virtuous Circle. They shed light on the relationship between the exposure to news media and reinforcing or alienating the political interest of citizens and hence implying impact on political engagement (Stromback and Shehata, 2010). The two theories present opposing arguments in that sense.

Among the different types of media content, news is considered unique when it comes to its role of maintaining an informed citizenry, empowered with information to take decisions and practice their political rights. Hence, news forms a fundamental constituent of the democracy equation. The Media Malaise theory asserts that exposure to news media content eventually leads to political alienation as a result of a generated feeling of distrust and discomfort toward politicians and political institutions. While on the other hand, the Virtuous Circle suggests that when individuals are exposed to political information through news media, they tend to become more interested in politics and hence this reinforces political engagement over time (Chang, 2018; Stromback and Shehata, 2010; Curran et al., 2014). A deeper interpretation of the two competing scenarios suggests that either news media could be regarded as a serious threat to the wellbeing of any democracy through discouraging and isolating citizens from political engagement (media malaise); or that it

can positively contribute to democracy through the creation of an informed public sphere where democratic values are emphasized through boosting the citizens' trust in the political entities and hence their engagement (virtuous circle) (Chang, 2018).

Both theories reflect on the difference between being cynical and critical towards the media in general and the news in specific. Also both shed light on the influence of news media mainly on the trust of the public in political institutions/politicians after which follows political interest and engagement. This is where individual cognitive processing comes to play, where one citizens' knowledge, competences and skills are able to a great extent to guide their news exposure experience.

Accordingly, it is deemed essential to consider external environment factors which influence citizens' news experience. With the advent of technology, social media platforms and accessibility to vast amounts of information, it is essential to differentiate between the different types of media when discussing how it impacts political engagement. Meaning, first, the role of individuals is completely different when dealing with the different news media platforms, be it television, radio, newspapers or social networking sites, online news brands and search engines. Professional journalists holding the gates to information are no longer the only content creators; citizens are now more participatory and actively involved that ever before. Such factors play a role in developing political interest, involvement and engagement. Second, how the political environment is depicted by the different media has its share of influence on citizens' attitude towards it.

Focusing on the online realm of news, according Boulianne (2009), "the Internet reduces the costs (time, effort) of accessing political information and offers more convenient ways of engaging in political life (e.g., online petitions)" which is supported by other scholars (Chang, 2018). In his research analyzing 38 studies on how the internet use affects political engagement, Boulianne (2009) concludes that generally speaking internet use affects engagement positively and that there is "little evidence" when it comes to claiming that using the internet eventually leads to "civic decline" (Boulianne, 2009). Interestingly, Boulianne (2009) found that using the internet specifically for online news was revealed as a stronger factor that enhances the positive impact on political engagement. This resonates with scholars' findings that political interest is positively impacted by citizen's exposure to news media (Chang, 2018, Stromback and Shehata, 2010). Empirical findings show that

there is a positive correlation between using political information through newspapers, radio and the internet and political interest (Chang, 2018). Other findings support that political engagement is strengthened overtime through "political social media use and attention to political news in traditional media" proposing that social media use does boost political engagement and motivates youth to become more politically active (Holt et al., 2018; Xenos et al., 2014).

In accordance, a Pew Research study on American adults found that out of the 60% of social media users (mainly Facebook and Twitter), 66% "have done at least one of eight civic or political activities with social media" (Rainie et al, 2012). Such findings underlines the statement that social media is now regarded as an integral component of political engagement. This is reinforced by other scholars who found a relationship between using social media (such as YouTube, MySpace and Facebook) and the extent of citizens' political engagement (Zhang et al, 2010; Tayie, 2015). In that sense, it is inevitable to mention that the real life political environment has a significant influence on that on social media. This has been strongly witnessed in the wave of revolts in 2011 dubbed by the media as the Arab spring revolutions. A study conducted on youth's social media use in Egypt found that social media use skyrocketed among youth after the revolution of January 25th, 2011 as a result of which a 30-year-old regime was toppled (Tayie, 2015).

Social media is regarded by youth as a podium through which they share their concerns and potentially turn them to "collective real-life actions" (Tayie, 2015). Focusing on individuals' sharing behavior on social media as a form of online participation, a Pew study found that more than a third of users of social media users share their "own thoughts or comments on political and social issues" (34%) and "repost" other people's posts of political or social nature (33%) (Rainie et al., 2012).

On the other hand, some scholars demonstrate that social media can lead to a decline in the public's political trust. A study demonstrates positive correlations between news consumptions of professional news media websites and political trust, versus negative correlations between information access on social media and political trust (Ceron, 2015). One of the factors leading to such a finding is the structure in which the news/information are found on each of the two venues; a "top-down structure" on news websites following professional media's style is more likely to promote trust, unlike the "bottom-up" structure

of the social media which is regarded as less professional and more chaotic with many unverified information (Ceron, 2015). This of course is also highlighted with the phenomenon of fake news spread on social media. Especially applicable to political news, false political news was found to spread "significantly farther, faster and deeper" than true news on Twitter (Vosoughi et al, 2018).

Nonetheless considering the issue from a different perspective, skills, experience, education level in addition to standard of living were found to be predictors or factors contributing to whether or not an individual engages in political participation (Borge and Cardenal, 2010; O'Neil, 2010). That is, individuals with higher level of education have a stronger potential to be more politically involved and engaged thanks to their knowledge and skills enabling them to use the internet and new media (Borge and Cardenal, 2010; O'Neil, 2010).

This brings to attention that individuals tend to avert from political information when they feel *malaise* of discomfort leading to mistrust and apathy. Does this mean that empowering them with knowledge and skills that enable them to see beyond the explicit messages and discern truth from falsehoods could impact their ability to trust political news? And hence, this will lead to less political alienation (media malaise) and more political engagement (virtuous circle) or will it be the other way around? In other words could there possibly be a correlation between the level of news literacy of citizens and their political engagement?

5. 6 News Literacy and Political Engagement:

5. 7 Significance: Informed Citizenry, Political Engagement and the Democratic Process

Information has indeed been the foundation on which knowledge, decisions and actions are based. Nowadays, unlike decades ago, information is at the fingertips of the majority of citizens to the extent of abundance that it calls for a change in this tenet. As excessively available as it has become, information without certain cognitive skills can do more harm than good. Accordingly, skillful citizenry, able to discern mediated content through the various platforms especially those online, could be easily deemed as the new foundation on which having a responsible informed democratic public sphere depends. Citizens who are

"monitorial" in Schudson's (1998) words are what today's democracies require (Mihailidis, 2008).

As put by Mihailidis (2008):

"An informed citizenry has always been a central, though not exclusive, prerequisite for civil society. From town meetings and community bulletin boards to the advent of radio, television and the internet, mediated information".

In his research, Mihailidis (2008) highlighted the essentiality of including skills that reinforces active citizenship in media literacy educational interventions. This comes as part of the findings of his study on 239 university undergraduates. Accordingly, it is suggested that media literacy be taught with a perspective on civic engagement enabling "healthy relationships between individuals and the media" (Mihailidis, 2008). Such findings put forward media literacy, news media literacy included, as a potentially significant predictor and/or enhancer of political engagement. Such ideas have historically been supported by media education scholars who call to attention the essentiality of media literacy in empowering citizens leading to "a truly participatory democracy" (Masterman, 1985).

Outcomes of media literacy and its impact on citizens has been highlighted by Mihailidis and Thevenin (2013) through underlining the main traits of media literate citizens as: *critical thinkers*, *creators and communicators* who form an active part of today's participatory democracy (supporting Jenkins et al.'s (2009) perspective) and *agents of social change* who are able to form a solid opinion based on well analyzed information and responsibly share it in the public sphere. Such outcomes result from the main sets of competencies media literacy provide individuals: *participatory competency*, *collaborative competency*, *expressive media literacy competency* and *critical competency* (Mihialidis and Thevenin, 2013). As noted all sets of competencies and outcomes shed light on an actively engaged citizen empowered to discern valid information, analyze it, make informed decisions and contribute to the public sphere through sharing perspectives. All such traits are indeed prerequisites to politically engaged citizens. In accordance, Ashley et al. (2017) note the definition of media literacy on website of the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE 2015):

"Being literate in a media age requires critical thinking skills that empower us as we make decisions, whether in the classroom, the living room, the workplace, the boardroom, or the voting booth"

As mentioned in the section on research gap, there hardly have been any studies directly correlating news literacy to political engagement until the study done by Ashley et al. (2017). The scholars seek to find the correlation between the level of news literacy and certain aspects of political engagement; political activity, political trust and political efficacy (Ashley et al, 2017).

The study was conducted on 537 undergraduate students to draw a general conclusion that supports the discussion of media literacy as essential for citizenship. More specifically specific news literacy components were found to be correlated positively to certain political engagement components more strongly than others. For instance, the *knowledge* component of news literacy was found to be positively correlated to knowledge about current events. Also a news literacy constituent was found to be positively correlated to internal political efficacy. Interestingly however, the scholars found that the more news literate an individual is the less political trust they have; meaning news literate citizens become more cynical towards politics and politicians (Ashley et al., 2017). This again raises the essentiality of drawing the line between being critical and skeptical since obviously one leads to another by time. Another interesting finding is the lack of correlation between news literacy and political activity. It is worth mentioning though that, as highlighted by Ashley et al. (2017), the reason could go back to some activities not being represented in the index through which political activity was measured resulting in lack of relevance to the respondents.

Despite the variations in the specific findings of studies and/or research on media literacy and citizenship, there appears to be a general agreement on the essentiality of media literacy for democracy. This could as well apply specifically to news literacy with its concern about one of democracy's main pillars, that is, the free flow of information. Accordingly, it becomes inevitable to intend to explore further how news literacy relates to political engagement.

Chapter 6

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

6. 1 Theoretical Framework

6. 2 Theories Guiding News Literacy according to Literature

News literacy can be attributed to media literacy theoretical concepts and models as well as long standing theories of communication. Attempts to set theoretical basis to news literacy are still underway. Powers (2014) lists the following theories as most relevant to news literacy: Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy, Two-Step Flow, Media Socializations theories, Active Audience theories and Critical thinking theories.

Below are some of the theoretical tenets regarded as most significant; some applied to news literacy and others are of pertinence.

❖ **Smoking Media Literacy Scale** (Primack et al., 2006)

This scale has been adapted to measuring news literacy twice (Ashley, Maksl, & Craft, 2013; Vraga, Tully, Kotcher, Smithson, & Broeckelman-Post, 2016). This comes as a result of having a well-tested theoretical basis that can apply to news content by introducing in its framework three important constituents that can shape news literacy: Author and Audience (AA), Message and Meaning (MM), and Reality and Representation (RR).

❖ **Cognitive Mediation Model**

The Cognitive Mediation Model of News Learning has been proposed by Eveland (2001) attempting to propose a theoretical path that utilizes three already existing theoretical bases in media studies. These are: Uses and Gratifications, Media Attention and News Information Processing; where the gratifications focused on for the purpose of this model are elaboration and learning.

❖ **Guerrero & Restrepo (2012) 21st Century Model of Relation "Production Factors-Information Content"**

Figure 6: 21st Century Model of Relation "Production factors – Information Content"- Source: Guerrero & Restrepo (2012)

21st Century Model of Relation "Production Factors-Information Content"

Elements that shape information production

Normative ideal-type of information content

Corporate level

Extramedia level

Media literate prodiences level

Ideological or system level

Favors → Moral accountability

Favors → Market accountability

Favors → Administrative accountability

Political accountability

6. 3 Theoretical Tenets: News, Political Engagement and Implications for News Literacy

With the study´s attempt to investigate the relationship between News Literacy, online news experience of youth providing implications for political engagement, it becomes essential to integrate a theoretical base that considers how youth´s news behavior and general experience impact their political participation status. This is especially significant since it is one of the main components that distinguish news, as media content, from other types of contents; its role in reinforcing democracy through political engagement.

The fact that younger generations have averted from news decades ago has been repeatedly highlighted by scholars discussing possible reasons (Boukes & Vliegenthart, 2017; Woodstock, 2014a, 2014b, 2016; Buckingham 2000). This could be also easily witnessed especially with the advent of the informational overload thanks to technology and social networking platforms.

According to Buckingham (2000) in his book The Making of Citizens, the "declining interest in news" has the clearly evident result of less "informed citizenship". This shows in studies done on the American youth where the percentage of youth aware of current political events or can identify political figures is declining from one year to the next. This in turn has an influence on youth's political participation; voting in elections is a demonstration that reflects this situation. This lack of awareness as well as the lack of interest in becoming a politically engaged citizen leads to diminishing the critical analysis and evaluation of information on political events or prominent political figures which in turn leads to misinformed/uninformed decision making process. Further, youth's high dependence on social networking sites for news and information has its consequences on having a well-informed citizenry. According to a study conducted by Müller, Schneiders, & Schäfer (2016) mere exposure to news on Facebook gives the feeling of being informed which might not necessarily be true. It is the "illusion of knowledge"; being exposed to an abundance of information that is not necessarily accurate or credible leading to an increased feeling of being informed. This is subjective knowledge that is based on the quantity of news encountered rather than the news items actually read (Hall, Ariss, & Todorov, 2007).

This is where news literacy´s role is especially prominent; enhancing the critical thinking skills of youth, encouraging them to engage and to truly understand the information they receive for what they really are and not for how the news media construct and present them nor for how technology puts it up for them.

But what does it really mean to be critical? And does being critical encourage or discourage engagement to news?

6. 4 Critical or Cynical News Users?

It is important to set a clear definition of what it entails and means to be critical. Being critical does not necessarily mean being shielded against influence, it might only come – as a superficial manner – to deny emotional responses to the information given. This argument has been highlighted by scholars addressing the issue; Buckingham (2000) as previously mentioned, Potter (2004) in his Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy and Arendt, Steindl, & Kümpel (2016) through their Media-Related Selection theoretical proposal (explained further below). The last two especially focus on the cognitive

automaticity of users during exposure to media/news content and accordingly shed light on lack of conscious decisions while filtering, selecting and evaluating information.

In order to better understand how being critical can be defined, it is essential to consider the different actors involved in what could be called the news experience. Historically, academic arguments around who has the most influence over news content has existed (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978; Van Dijk, 1988). The news experience entails a set of processes as well as actors who contribute to the final product. Journalists and reporters construct the representation of events from their perspective (many factors interfere of course) then **news users by turn bring meaning to the news text/content through their own *selection* and *interpretation***.

Concerning the process of audience **selection to content**, under the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, *Selective exposure* was introduced as one of the actions people would take in order to reduce any mental discomfort or "dissonance" resulting from "inconsistency" between one's beliefs and the information encountered (Festinger, 2009). Accordingly, selective exposure was defined by Festinger (2009) as "the tendency of people to avoid information that would create cognitive dissonance because it's incompatible with their current beliefs". This has been more accurately referred to by scholars as *confirmation bias* where audiences intentionally seek information that confirm their stances when making decisions (Jonas, Schultz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001). Scholars further found that with regards to critical evaluation, information seekers tend to evaluate information that confirms their positions *less* critically than information that contradicts with them (Ditto & Lopez, 1992 and Edwards & Smith, 1996 Cited in Jonas et al., 2001). Such results focused on intentional information seeking, with special attention to "sequential information seeking" which means that "each time a new piece of information comes to one's attention, a decision must be made whether to heed or ignore this information. Once the selected piece of information has been processed, the information search phase continues" as explained by Jonas et al. (2001). In that sense, being critical can be symptomized through awareness of one's own biases, prior knowledge and position and hence detecting bias (Buckingham, 2000).

But what about accidental exposure to news? Or constant bombardment with news content on search engines and especially on social media as witnessed today?

If we took a close look how the social networking sites work, we would find compliance with the bases of selective exposure through features of personalizing content; where users receive content that goes in line with their interests, opinions and beliefs based on algorithms that use clues to surface different content to each individual based on their perception of his/her interests, opinions, location, language..etc. Accordingly, users become in a *bubble* and are rarely exposed to opposing views that might potentially cause "dissonance". As highlighted by scholars, on the internet you see what you want to see rather than what you need to see through the created information bubbles potentially leading to inaccurate beliefs, opinions and decisions (Resnick, Garrett, Kriplean, Munson, & Stroud, 2013; Pariser, 2011). These facts all call for the essentiality of becoming aware and critical during exposure to online content to make conscious decisions about what to read rather than surrender to the decisions made for us by the technology.

Concerning **interpretation to media/news content**, Buckingham (2000) drew attention to two approaches to considering media text/content interpretation: objectivism (the meaning is inherent in the text) and subjectivism (the text means what the reader wants it to mean). Hence, Buckingham sheds light on three levels of "reading" media text. These three levels usually work together: decoding, interpretation and judgment. The first (decoding) refers to the fact that the text already carries factual meanings to it that are simply there and **this is where misunderstanding can occur** (taking into account the previously mentioned selection process). The second (interpretation) is what entails variables such as a person's socio-cultural background, **competencies** and level of **knowledge** to the meaning making process of the text or making sense of it. The third (judgment) is where **critical thinking** occurs; the "distant response to the text as a text" (Buckingham, 2000)

Henceforward, it is fundamental to differentiate between being critical and being cynical towards media/news content; where criticism and cynicism have completely different consequences on news and political engagement. Being cynical refers to having a general judgment, usually negative in case of cynicism towards the media, based on which an individual takes a decision of disengagement. For example, the judgment that news media lie or present negative content all the time and so I am not interested to follow news anymore. This leads to lack of awareness about how news and hence politics are relevant to a person's daily life and lack of interest to impact or change imminent realities. On the other hand, being critical entails awareness of the essentiality of news and media that is

based on knowledge of how the media works and hence a developed ability to think beyond the explicit content and awareness of a person's potential role to introduce changes to the displayed content (Buckingham, 2000; Mihailidis, 2008).

So, when youth are cynical towards news they seek to avoid it like the case of news resisters and accordingly they disengage. However, being critical encourages engagement with the news with an eye for analysis and evaluation of the information provided and this can actually lead into informed decision making and willingness to take action to impact reality.

6. 5 The News Experience and deductions for Political Engagement based on Buckingham's (2000) "The Making of Citizens":

According to Buckingham (2000), addressing the role of news media in engaging youth to politics, news journalism maintains its crucial status as a main port of access to "the public sphere of political debate and activity". Becoming active in the political life be it raising awareness for specific causes or engaging in conventional politics requires access to information. Consequently, in order to fulfill their educational/pedagogical responsibilities toward young citizens, news media should adopt forms that better appeals to younger audiences.

Buckingham (2000) lists the dimensions that impact youth's perception of news as follows: "tone of address (patronizing and talking at versus talking to them), representing ordinary people (rather than sophisticated "stuck up" figures/politicians), having room/space for youth to express their views on different matters, presenting news that matter to them/relevant to their everyday lives (selection criteria and news values)"

It could be witnessed nowadays that news media organizations started creating content specifically for social media, which usually is shorter, more visual and more interesting to youth with the aim of boosting engagement. With the different correlations between the type of medium used for news and the level of political knowledge, (for example that citizens who get their news merely from TV are regarded as less interested and in instances less informed than their counterparts who also read newspapers) it would be interesting to look at those who get their news online (from news sources) or from social media in specific.

From this stance, youth's disengagement with politics is discussed from a different angle rather than the popular one which accuses youth of apathy and ignorance. Buckingham (2000) highlights the fact that youth are not well represented by news media as political agents; "actual citizens" rather than "potential citizens" or "citizens in the making". Accordingly, this results in a perception that *political* news is irrelevant to young people's lives and hence engaging to news does not *empower* but on the contrary it *disempowers* resulting in a feeling of "powerlessness" to have an impact or a tangible influence in reality (Buckingham, 2000; Woodstock, 2014a).

Hence, youth political disengagement, is regarded as a natural result of being cynical rather than apathetic. As previously mentioned, cynicism refers to having a general - usually negative - judgment from an individual's point of view which in turn impacts their decisions, attitudes and actions. In this case political cynicism refers to youth's judgment that politics is irrelevant to them, it is "corrupt" and is merely decided and managed through "actions of politicians" (Buckingham, 2000). Based on this position, a perception of inability and ineffectuality drives youth's disengagement from politics.

6. 6 Implications for News Literacy:

The demonstrated theoretical concepts, especially focused on the audience's side in the news experience, call for equipment and proper preparation of individuals to become critical users of news. Historically being one of the main tenets of media literacy and hence of news literacy, critical thinking entails a knowledge base, indicators such as motivations and a set of developed skills/competences as a result.

A Pew Research Center study (2017) (Anderson & Rainie, 2017) revealed that experts blame human behavior for the lack of improvement in the information environment. Scholars (Arendt, Steindl, & Anna Kümpel, 2016) further stressed that human behavior and decision making during their exposure to news has a major impact of the whole experience."*Both news and democracy appear to seen as constants; what has changed in people's attitude toward them*" is a statement by Buckingham (2000) which emphasizes the necessity to work on citizens empowerment. The scholar stressed the fact that the reason behind the decline of a public sphere that is able to analyze, evaluate and make decisions is the fact that for so many years the media has treated citizens as a "mass" rather than a "public". It is highly essential that the citizens are aware of how the news/media industry

works in order to be develop the ability to analyze and evaluate the content based on which decisions are made. Such knowledge should range from identifying news and news value to selection criteria, the circumstances under which journalists work and production techniques. Such knowledge should drive interest, understanding and hence skills of empowerment to benefit from news content as citizens who trust their ability to have an impact, as a result of giving citizens the power to position themselves as critical users/viewers, "participants in the debate", who need to be convinced by what the news media has to present rather than "witnesses" or "receptors" (Buckingham, 2000).

Accordingly, the main theoretical base that drives the augmentation of this study comprise Potter's (2004) Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy and Arendt, Steindl, & Anna Kümpel's (2016) Media Related Selection as further explained in the next section, taking into account Buckingham's (2000) conclusions with regards to the role of news in youth's political engagement.

6. 7 Proposed Theoretical Framework

❖ **Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy (Potter, 2004) and Media-Related Selection (Arendt, Steindl, & Anna Kümpel, 2016):**

Having introduced different theoretical tenets that can be of relevance to news literacy, for the sake of this study, Potter´s (2004) Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy and its adaptation to News Literacy measurement by Maksl, Ashley, & Craft (2015) and Media-Related Selection (Arendt, Steindl, & Anna Kümpel, 2016) form the theoretical base of News Literacy measurement and of understanding users' news experience. The study addresses News Literacy as a multidimensional construct which consists of: Motivation, Knowledge and Skills. Accordingly, this theoretical framework allows for the measurement of the three mentioned constituents of news literacy and forms a sufficient theoretical base to build the study on.

Four basic ideas shape the Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy: the idea of automaticity (automatic processing of information which weakens meaning making and critical thinking); media shapes most of these "automatic routines" of thinking when consuming media (here filtering information becomes challenging); the personal locus of individuals (media consumption goals, the ability (or lack of ability) to control events and the motivation to think critically); and the "information processing tasks of filtering"

information (deciding which messages deserve one's attention and which ones do not) (Powers, 2014).

Media-related selection (MRS) on the other hand is an attempt by Arendt et al. (2016) to combine three theoretical tenets of selection taking into account the two main actors in the news experience; journalists and users. The three theoretical concepts addressed under MRS are gatekeeping (journalists' selection), selective exposure (users' selection where confirmation bias is taken into account) and news sharing on social networking sites (journalists and users sharing behavior is considered). MRS as a theoretical tenet complements the Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy in the sense that it tackles automaticity of selection from the audience's sides and unconscious reactions to news drived by audience's stored attitudes.

Potter's (2004) theory has been adapted more than once differently by scholars of news literacy. It has been adapted to two of the most significant news literacy studies (Craft, Maksl, & Ashley, 2013; Maksl et al., 2015) in attempts to measure news literacy. The main target of the authors was to test how knowledge structures and "personal locus" (e.g. motivation) interact to shape different levels of news literacy for individuals. For instance Maksl et al (2015) found that more news literate youth are more intrinsically motivated to seek news.

Another adaptation of Potter's (2004) theory to news literacy is in the study by Fleming (2016) attempting to set theoretical basis to Stony Brook's news literacy intervention through her "Cognitive Model of the Stony Brook Approach to News Literacy" (Fleming, 2016). Since, based on analysis, it was found that the cognitive dimension is the main focus of the intervention, Fleming (2016) attempts to present a model that reflects how the "intended information processing skills" interact with the "journalistic disciplinary knowledge". The main dimensions of Potter's theory are adapted to Stony Brook's approach to news literacy as follows:

- **Knowledge structures:**
    o Knowledge of News Media: "News Neighborhood" (separating journalism from other information sources / a focus on independence, verification and accountability)
    o Knowledge of News Selection Criteria: "News Drivers" (Criteria based on

which certain news stories are given time, space and attention in the media – for example, importance, relevance, prominence, proximity)

- o Knowledge of the news stories' elements: "The Deconstruction Guide" (integrates the majority of news literacy lessons into one analytical tool)
- o Personal locus: "The Self" (awareness of one's interpretation habits, biases and consumption patterns)
- **Skills** (Information Processing Skills):
  - o Analysis
  - o Evaluation
  - o Grouping
  - o Induction
  - o Deduction
  - o Synthesis

This study focuses primarily on the correlation between news literacy and political engagement while taking into account other variables besides the elements of measurement of news literacy such as: the ability to identify news versus harmful content (mainly fake news and hate speech) and variables include: engagement with news, motivation. Based on the analysis provided by Buckingham (2000) about the role of news journalism in shaping citizens, political engagement is an essential component in the study framework intending to provide implications for the impact of news literacy on a democratic conduct. Accordingly, for the sake of this study, based on literature, political engagement focuses on political participation (offline and online), political interest and perception of political knowledge.

Inspired by models from the studies by Primack et al. (2006) and Arendt et al. (2016), the model below represents that framework of the study.

Figure 7: Study Framework
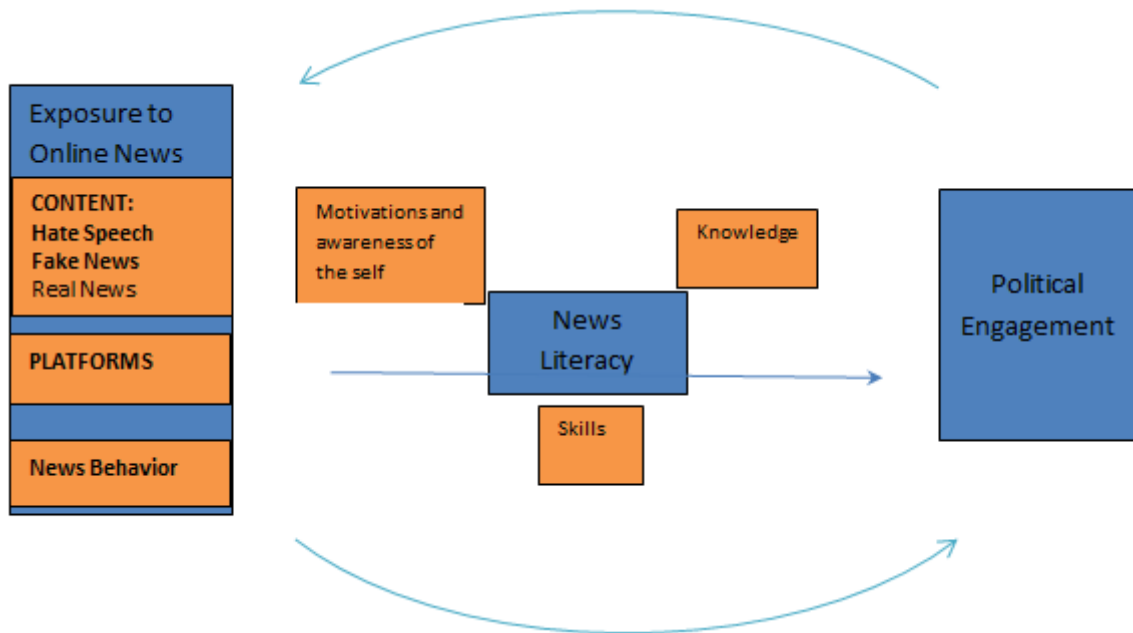
The study hypothesizes that more news literate youth are the better able they are to have a responsible online news experience and hence become more engaged politically. This means that they would have the motivation, knowledge and critical skills to be able to identify credible reliable news as well as harmful messages that are widely spread through social media; fake news and hate speech. Hence, they avoid misperceptions and building opinions and attitudes on falsehoods or inaccurate information. This leaves news literacy as a mediating factor in the process; enhancing youth's online news experience and fostering political engagement accordingly.

- **Exposure to Online News:**

This constituent includes three essential dimensions: **content**, **platforms** and users' **news behavior**. With regards to content, the study will focus on two essential categories - **hate speech/news inciting hatred** and **fake news**- and how they influence news literate and news illiterate youth. Concerning platforms, the focus will be on the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter having become essential sources of news to a considerable percentage of youth. Regarding users' news behavior; consumption, production of and reactions to news content online will be studied. Accordingly the study puts forward the following hypotheses and research question:

H1:

A: News Literate youth are better able to *identify* explicit hate speech and/or hatred inciting news coverage on social media (Facebook/Twitter)

> (Variables related: awareness of concepts such as agendas, bias and framing/news literacy, perception and attitudes toward a specific group of people, especially when it comes to political views)

B: News Literate youth are better able to *identify* fake news on social media

> (Echo Chamber, Confirmation bias, Caring about the veracity of news items)

H2: News Literate youth think or care about the *veracity* of news items before reacting to or sharing them on social media (Facebook/Twitter)

> (Variables related: awareness of concepts such as fake news, the ability to filter and evaluate information)

RQ1: What are the youth's patterns of *news use* like on social media (consumption, production, reactions to news content…etc.)?

- **News Literacy:**

As previously mentioned, news literacy in this study is defined as consisting of three main constituents; motivation, knowledge and skills. Accordingly, different variables under each will be measured to come up with an estimation of the level of news literacy.

In order to investigate how far the level of news literacy impact the value young people give to news and the extent to which they find its role of relevance and importance the following hypotheses are put forward:

H3:

A: News Literate youth are more motivated to seek news than their less news literate counterparts

(Variables to be measured: News literacy level, awareness of the self/motivation to seek news/information versus automaticity)

B: News literate youth are more *engaged to news* than their less news literate counterparts

(Variables to be measured: Frequency of "using" news content, Motivations of youth to seek news, Perceived relevance/importance of news, News Affinity and Skepticism)

- **<u>Political Engagement:</u>**

Political engagement is measured mainly through political participation and perception of political knowledge while taking political interest into account. Political participation is estimated based on the initial operational definition presented in the study addressing formal and informal channels of political participation (online and offline). Accordingly, youth will be assessed as active or inactive based on their previous incidents of voting, abstaining, joining political movements/parties, demonstrating, discussing politics online and/or offline with friends/family, their membership in online/offline political groups advocating causes…etc. Relevance to/correlation with the level of news literacy will be measured. Hence the following research question is proposed:

RQ2: What is the correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's *perception of current events knowledge*?

RQ3: What is the correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's political engagement?

(Formal and informal political participation, political interest)

6. 8 Methodology

The study relies on multi-approach (triangulation). It uses a combination of methods: the survey as a quantitative method and the focus group discussions as a qualitative technique. Results from the qualitative study directed the design of the quantitative tool; the questionnaire.

6. 9 Defining the Universe

Before selecting the study sample, it is essential to decide the universe from which the sample will be drawn. The study was carried out in Egypt and Spain. It was carried out on a sample of Egyptian and Spanish youth. So the universe can be defined as social media users whose study includes media and communication background.

6. 10 The Sample

Sampling with its recent concept, as we know it know today, emerged during the 18th century with the rise of the probability theories. Most studies rely on sampling rather than consensus; as it has many advantages including; saving time and costs as well as enabling the researcher to collect a great amount of variables and accurate data.

This study is carried out on a purposive sample, i.e. a non-probability sample. Subjects of the purposive sample are selected according to certain characteristics. Those who do not have these characteristics will be excluded from the sample (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). In the present study, for the survey and the focus group discussions the purposive sample includes Egyptian and Spanish youth from the age category 16 to 25.

Concerning the survey, being an exploratory study, the questionnaire was distributed on a sample of 110 students from Cairo University, Egypt and a sample of 74 students from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain.

Regarding the demographics of respondents from Egypt: Gender; 85% are females and 15% are males, Age; 98% of respondents are in the age group of more than 20 to 25, with 2% in the age group of 16 to 20. As for the demographics of respondents from Spain: Gender; 66% are females and 34% are males, Age; 57% are in the age group of more than 20 to 25, with 43% in the age group of 16 to 20.

Regarding the focus group discussions, two pilot focus group discussions were conducted with students from two public universities in Egypt and one more conducted with students from a private university; the Arab Academy for Sciences, Technology and Maritime Transport. One focus group discussion was conducted with students from a public university in Spain.

Respondents in the two pilot focus group discussions (public universities) of Egypt were ten in each; half males and half females, and the third focus group discussion (private university) was conducted with eight Egyptian females. The focus group discussion in Spain was conducted with four respondents; 1 male and three females.

6. 11 Method:

As indicated above, the study relies on the survey as a quantitative method and focus group discussions as a qualitative technique

6. 12 Survey

The survey is the most common used research method, not only in mass media studies but also in most of the social studies. It is the best research method that can be used to gather a big amount of data (Tayie, 2016). For the sake of this study, the questionnaire will be used to collect data from the sampled Egyptian and Spanish youth. With regards to data collection in Egypt, it was self-administered questionnaire within a classroom setting in Cairo University. Data collection in Spain will be done online, however within a classroom setting as well to control the environment while collecting responses.

Measuring the different constituents of news literacy as a multi-structural concept is one of the objectives of the survey. These include; motivations, skills and knowledge about news media.

In addition, the questionnaire intends to detect correlations between news literacy and:

- Awareness of motivation/goals of seeking news/information

- Level of engagement with the news

- Ability to detect harmful messages (fake news and hate speech)

- Political engagement/participation

6. 13 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are an important qualitative technique which is commonly used in the mass communication studies. In order to have an insightful view on youth's news experience on social media, how they perceive news and where they stand with regards to hate speech, fake news and political engagement, such discussions are necessary.

The main objectives of the focus groups are:

- Gaining information about *habits of news consumption*
- Understanding how Egyptian and Spanish youth *define and experience news*
- Investigating how youth view the *news media landscape in Egypt/Spain*
- Investigating how respondents *relate to news*, their *motivations and level of engagement* with it.
- Detecting the ability of youth to distinguish hate inciting speech in news coverage and fake news.

6. 14 Variables and Measurements

The main variables that were measured based on the hypotheses are: News Literacy, hate speech exposure and detection, fake news exposure and detection, news use on social media and political engagement. Each of these variables is multi-dimensional and is measured based on the assessment of its dimensions.

News Literacy regarded as a multi-dimensional construct was measured through measuring *motivation* and *knowledge areas* based on Maksl et al. (2015). News Literacy Scale which is based on Potter's (2004) Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy and measuring skills of credibility assessment and verification based on Flanagin & Metzger (2000).

- *Motivation* was measured by asking respondents about the degree they agree to four statements through a Likert 5-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The four statements are: I don't see what news does for me, I follow the news because I am supposed to, I follow the news for my own good, I follow the news because I like to (Maksl et al., 2015)

- *Knowledge* was measured based on the five areas of knowledge: knowledge of news content, knowledge of the news media industry, knowledge of the news media effects, knowledge of the real world (reality versus constructedness) and knowledge of the self.
  - *Knowledge of news content* was measured through 5 point Likert scale statements: News companies choose stories based on what will attract the biggest audience; People pay more attention to news that fits with their beliefs than news that doesn't
  - *Knowledge of the news media industry* was measured through a Likert scale statement: The owner of a media company influences the content that is produced. And two multiple choice questions to which there is one correct answer: Who has the most influence on what gets aired on the local TV news?; One common criticism of the news is that it is not objective. What do people who make that criticism typically mean by it?

  - *Knowledge about the news media effects* was measured through three 5 point Likert scale statements: Two people might see the same news story and get different information from it; People are influenced by news whether they realize it or not; News coverage of a political candidate will influence people's opinions. In addition, respondents were given two multiple choice questions with one correct answer to each: If a topic gets a lot of coverage in the news, people who pay attention to the news are (choices); Most news outlets depend on advertising to make money. What is a possible effect of this?
  - *Knowledge about the real world* was measured through 5 point Likert scale statements: News makes things more dramatic than they really are; A news story that has good pictures is more likely to show up in the news; A story about conflict is more likely to be featured prominently**;** A journalist's first obligation is to the truth
  - *Knowledge of the self* was measured through 5 point Likert scale statements in which the degree to which respondents perceive themselves as in control of their news experience is represented. The statements are: If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how

soon I will learn credible information; I am in control of the information I get from the news media; The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do; If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed; If I take the right actions, I can stay informed.

- *Skills*: The skills measured are mainly credibility assessment and the ability to verify news content. To measure credibility assessment respondents were asked about the extent to which they find professional news media information online to be believable, accurate, trustworthy, biased and complete with responses using a 5-point scale (1 being not at all and 5 being extremely. Concerning verification ability respondents were asked about the frequency of doing specific actions when they read news online, by giving them statements to which they have to respond using 5 point scale (1 being never and 5 being always). The actions specified are: checking to see who the author of the article is, checking whether contact information about that person or organization is provided, verifying the author's credentials, considering the author's goals for posting the information online, seeking out other sources to validate the information, looking for recommendation from someone they know, considering whether the presented information is opinion or fact, checking to see that the information is complete and comprehensive.

Political Engagement was assessed by measuring political interest, political participation and political efficacy besides measuring perception of political knowledge.

- *Political participation*: Based on Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela (2012)**,** *offline political participation* was measured by asking respondents to select activities they participated in over the past 12 months. These activities are: Attending a public hearing, town hall meeting, or a city council meeting; calling or sending a letter to an elected public official; speaking to a public official in person; Posting a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker; Attending a political rally; Participating in any demonstrations, protests or marches; Voting in elections; Writing a letter to a news organization; Participating in groups that took any local action for social or political reform; Being involved in public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees. On the other hand, *online political participation* was measured based on Holt, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Ljungberg

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(2013) by asking respondents about the frequency they use the internet to: Write to a politician; Make a campaign contribution; Sign up to volunteer to a campaign/issue; Send a political message; Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper.

- *Political efficacy or Perception of influence on government decisions* was also measured by asking respondents about the extent to which they think political participation influences the government decisions and policies giving them choices to select one from: strong influence, normal influence, low influence, no influence at all and do not know (Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela, 2012).

- *Political interest* was measured based on Stromback & Shehata (2010) and Holt et al. (2013) by asking respondents how interested they are in politics with responses ranging from 1 (not interested) at all to 5 (very interested)

- *Perception of current events knowledge* was measured by asking participants about the extent to which they think they are well-informed about current events with response alternatives ranging from not at all informed to extremely informed.

Hate Speech Exposure and Detection: According to scholars (Erjavec, 2014; Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012) comments on news stories in many instances carry hate inciting content and can be regarded as one of its sources online. Accordingly, it was essential to investigate the motivations of youth to read or write comments on and/or posts of news articles on social media. The motivations for each were adapted from a study by Diakopoulos & Naaman (2011) which used users uses and gratifications of comments reading and writing in general. Accordingly, the motivations are grouped into four categories; information, personal identity, entertainment and social interaction. Respondents were asked to check all the options that apply to them when asked why they read or write comments.

Regarding *motivations of reading comments*; information motivations include getting more information about the issue addressed in the article and getting updates about the story; personal identity was examined through the desire to compare their opinion to that of others in the community; entertainment motivations were reflected through whether or not they have fun reading people's humor about the issue; and social interaction as a motivation was measured through whether respondents read comments to see perspectives

and views of people to help them decide and to estimate political response and attitude of the community.

Regarding *motivations of writing comments*; information motivations include Educating others by giving more details about the issue addressed, asking or answering questions raised around the topic in the story, sharing their experience, and noting missing information and/or correcting inaccuracies or misinformation; personal identity motivations were examined through expressing their opinion and/or emotion; entertainment motivations were reflected through adding humor to the discussion; and social interaction as a motivation was measured through the desire to see others' reaction by engaging in debates and to persuade others with their opinion.

Based on Grizzle & Pérez Tornero (2016), to measure *exposure to hate speech*, respondents were asked whether during their daily social media browsing, they have seen hateful or degrading writings or speech online, which inappropriately attacked certain groups of people or individuals, with response alternatives yes, no and I'm not sure. They were also asked about what the hateful content they have seen attacked the individuals for, given response alternatives: Sexual orientation, Political views, Religious beliefs/Religion, Gender, Physical appearance, Physical disability and Other. Respondents were asked to determine where/how the hate speech they have seen online was displayed, given response alternatives: Comments on news articles, Posts by individuals on Facebook/Twitter while sharing news articles, Statuses and/or tweets, Shared news videos, Shared news articles, Articles by professional news media and Other.

To measure their *reactions to harmful content online*, respondents were asked how they respond when they encounter harmful content online; with reference to hate speech and fake news, adapted from Grizzle and Pérez Tornero (2016). Response alternatives include: Ignore it, Share it with my friends, Talk to someone about it and how it makes me feel, Post a negative comment attacking the person who is responsible for this hate material or false information, Post other positive material in response offering a different view from that in the hate speech or try to correct the false information, Report the material to be removed and Other.

Fake News Exposure and Detection: based on Pew Research Center study (2016) (Barthel, Mitchell, & Holcomb, 2016) on fake news causing confusion, *awareness of fake news existence* was measured by asking respondents whether they are aware the such content exists on social media. Then in order to measure the extent to which respondents *care about the veracity of news content before sharing* which could impact the spread of fake news, Likert scale statements with response alternatives ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were given to respondents: The spread of fake news on social media can cause confusion about basic facts of current events; I think I have the competencies to tell whether or not a news story is fake; It is important to check the credibility of the information in a news article before sharing it; If the headline of a story is interesting enough I share it without reading the content; I do not necessarily check the sources of information in a news story before I share it; I only share news stories from professional news organizations; I share news stories if I found it shared by my friends without necessarily reading it.

News Use on Social Media was measured based on Ipsos Poll Data (2016) collected for BuzzFeed News (Silverman & Singer-Vine, 2016), scales of engagement with news on social media.

- *Frequency of visiting social media platforms:* Respondents were asked about the frequency of visiting social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram with response alternatives on a 7 point scale, ranging from multiple times a day to less than once a month, including "I don't use this social media platform" option.

- *Sharing motivations*: Based on the study by Lee & Ma (2012), motivations behind youth´s sharing behavior on social media is investigated. The motivations were divided into four categories: information seeking, socializing, entertainment and status seeking (Lee & Ma, 2012) in addition to measuring how far respondents share news that confirm their own opinion to detect confirmation bias. Accordingly several measurements were put for each category. Information seeking motivations were reflected through statements like: sharing helps them store useful information, it becomes easy to retrieve information when needed, and keeping up to date on the latest news and events. Socializing motivations include: exchanging ideas with other people, keeping in touch with people and interacting with people.

Entertainment motivations include that sharing news helps them pass the time and that it helps them relax. While status seeking motivations include that sharing news helps them feel important and that it helps them gain status.

Engagement to News: In order to estimate youth's engagement to news, the following variables were measured, and then a total cumulative score was calculated to establish a general estimation.

- *News media use*: is measured based on Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela's (2012) by asking respondents about the frequency they use specified types of media to get information about events, public issues and politics. The mentioned media are: television; radio; traditional newspapers/magazines; websites of newspapers/magazines, professional news organizations on Facebook and/or Twitter; mobile applications of professional news organizations; sites with news reports generated by regular people (such as blogs); statuses, comments, tweets or posts of friends on Facebook and/or Twitter. Response alternatives on a 5 point scale ranged from always to never.

- *Accidental exposure to news*: was measured based on Tewksbury, Weaver, & Maddex (2001) by asking respondents when they go online, especially on social media, whether or not they encounter news/information on current events, public issues or politics when they might have been going online for a purpose other than to get news. Responses alternatives are yes, no and I'm not sure.

- *Social media and other media use for news:* In order to measure use for news respondents were asked to rank how different social media platforms and different professional news sources online are major or minor sources of news to them with response alternatives on a 5 point scale, ranging from "is a major source of news ro me" to "I am not familiar with this source". Professional news organizations and social media platforms were selected for the Egyptian sample based on a country report of Mapping digital media by Abdullah (2013); whereas sources selected for the Spanish sample was based on the Reuters Institute Digital News Report of Spain (2017) (Negredo, Vara, & Amoedo, 2017). Based on Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela's (2012) social media use for news measurement, respondents were asked about the extent to which each of Facebook and Twitter help them: to stay

informed about current events and public affairs, to get news about current events from mainstream news media, to get news about current events through friends. Response alternatives range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely)

Other variables that were measured as control variables or in order to get a better context about youth's news experience are:, trust in the media/news media skepticism and demographics.

News media skepticism is measured based on Maksl et al. (2015) through a 5 point Likert scale statements with response alternatives ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The statements included are: news media tell the whole story, news media are accurate, news media cannot be trusted, news media prioritize being first to report a news story, media report the news fairly, and I have confidence in the people running the institutions of the press.

Demographics: respondents were asked to specify their *gender* (male or female) and their *age* (16 to 20; more than 20 to 25; more than 25 to 30; and more than 30)

6. 15 Statistical Data Analysis :)*(

The widely used statistical program SPSS (version 23) was used for data analysis of the questionnaire responses. The following treatments were used:

- Simple repetitions & percentages.
- Weighted average for the items measured by five-level Likert scale; calculated by accounting Mean, multiplying the results by 100, and dividing on the maximum degree of the scale.
- Pearson Coefficient for studying the significance of the correlation between two variables of interval standard.
- Paired samples T- Tests to study statistical denotation of the deference between two arithmetic averages for two paired samples form the samples at any factors form distance and ratio types (interval or Ratio).

.* Statistical Data Analysis was executed by Mahmoud Zaky, Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University

- One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to study the statistical function of the differences between the arithmetic averages for more than two groups of samples at one of the factors

The statistical tests results have been accepted upon 95% confidence degree to more, upon 0.5 statistical denotation to less.

Chapter 7

Findings and Analysis:

Egypt

As previously mentioned, this study relies on triangulation approach using the survey questionnaire as a quantitative method and focus group discussions as a qualitative method. Deducted from the results of the questionnaire and focus group discussions, findings are demonstrated under categories that serve the objectives of each method.

7. 1 Qualitative Findings:

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussion is an important qualitative technique which is very useful in gathering pilot information to be used in quantitative studies. The main difference between both types of research is that qualitative research provides a comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon while highlighting potential reasons for its occurrence. This type of research further aims at investigating individual motivations, enabling the researcher to get a clearer picture of the respondents' individual behaviors and attitudes (Tayie, 2016). This serves the purpose of this study which seeks to investigate youth's attitudes and experiences with news as an essential context that serves and paves the way to measure and understand their levels of news literacy quantitatively.

Qualitative research is also important and useful in discovering new dimensions of the issue researched and so can be used as an initial step to conduct the quantitative research (Tayie, 2016).Hence, for this study it was important to rely initially on the qualitative research which resulted in relevant themes that were accordingly added to the study as further explained below.

Following the study by Craft et al. (2013) conducted on teenagers with the target of measuring news media literacy, the focus group questions were designed under three broad categories; news media use; news media content, industries and effects; and personal motivation to seek news. In addition a category of political engagement is added to serve the purpose of this study which is understanding how news literacy relates to political engagement. The category on hate speech and fake news emerged in the one of the focus group discussions and accordingly is added to the findings and discussion.

7. 2 News Media Use

7. 3 Media Use and Sources of News

When the interviewees were asked about their use of media in general, answers of respondents from **Cairo university** have shown that they are not heavy users of traditional media and they prefer new media using the internet and mobile phones. This goes in accordance with responses of students from the **Arab Academy;** when asked about their general media use, new media, television and radio were, respectively, the most mentioned, while newspapers and other types of print media were not mentioned at all. This resonates with the findings of a study by Tayie et al. (2012) which explores young Egyptians' use of the new media; print media audience is diminishing among this population.

However, the geographical area variable was an important variable in this respect. Respondents from the **Banha University** indicated that they use traditional media, i.e. print media, radio and television, more than those from Cairo. They also indicated that they trust traditional more than new media.

Almost all of the students from the Arab Academy indicated that they rely on new media basically for news with the majority mentioning that social media (especially Facebook and Twitter) are important in that sense. However, the most commonly mentioned example of a new media source of news is "Nabd" (an Arabic word which literally means pulse); a mobile news application which provides access to websites of popular news media (Egyptian, Arab and international). Respondents mentioned that this is the most important source of news to them; where most of them mentioned that they check it regularly when they receive notifications or when big events happen. This shows more preference to the idea of news aggregation on a single platform than searching different news websites. The students justified such preference by mentioning that it is faster and gives them access to a variety of content through a single application, which leaves ease as the main reason.

"I think we all have "Nabd"; it allows us to select our sources of news...we can download content from different countries all over the world through this application. Accordingly, if there is an event that is covered by more than one source, we know it´s true, it really happened"

This application was not mentioned in the discussions with Cairo and Banha university students who relied more on their social media accounts feed for information. Cairo university students reported using Facebook and Twitter respectively more heavily than those from Banha university. This shows how variables of social class, internet access and geographic area can potentially have an impact; students from Arab Academy come from higher social class than those from Cairo and Banha university. And, as previously mentioned Cairo university lies in an urban area while Banha university is in a rural area.

The **gender** variable also emerged as a decisive variable in the two FGDs of Cairo and Banha universities. Generally speaking, girls were using the traditional media more than boys, especially applies to respondents from Banha University. Girls mentioned that they mainly watch television more than reading newspapers in both sessions. While at the same time, there were some differences among girls from urban and rural areas; as girls from Banha university use traditional media more than those from Cairo. It was also found that boys from the rural area prefer reading newspapers and magazines than listening to radio or watching television. The variable of gender was irrelevant in the third FGD, as respondents were all girls.

Findings of the FGDs of Cairo and Banha university have shown that the most preferred television programs for girls were mainly soap opera, films and series, musical programs were also mentioned. Boys mainly watch television to follow sports programs and "sometimes" news in general. As mentioned by one respondent:

"*For me TV is for football matches mainly and sometimes if there is something major I can check the news*"

Partially in accordance, five students from the Arab Academy mentioned television as their main source of information about "big news" after they hear about it from social media or other online sources. While one student mentioned that even if she wants to check TV content, she does so online rather than through the TV itself. Though this student was left disagreeing with the rest mentioning that she believes that TV "manipulates" audiences based on "where they stand with regards to the issue covered", still the rest of the students acknowledge and realize this issue.

The same student sparked a discussion that shed light on the importance of opinion leaders to the students when it comes to news, by saying:

"Instead of following news media, I'd rather get the views of the people around me about events, my mom, my professor, my sister...etc. I would check with someone I trust that he/she check news sources properly to guide me with their opinion"

The majority of students acknowledge the importance of views and opinions as an essential part of their news exposure experience to the extent that one student from the Arab Academy mentioned that her father is her main source of news. Accordingly, most of them indicated that they like to follow "talk shows" on television to get more in depth information about the happenings through media figures that they trust. One student mentioned that:

"opinions of trusted sources are very important to us....talk shows in that sense are important to us more than news because we can listen to presenters we trust"

Another student commented saying:

"News makes me know what happened but if it's big I also like to know more and more details about it through talk shows...such coverage is essential to make us trust that something happened through videos and pictures followed by commentary and analysis"

All the interviewees mentioned that they use the new media (social media). However, the rate of use of social media varies from one geographical area to the other. Interviewees from Cairo mentioned using new media more than interviewees from the rural area. Discussion findings have shown that boys use the new media more than girls. The same judgment applies to the situation in the rural area.

7. 4 Discussing News with Others

The fact that opinions and views are essential as a part of youth´s news experience justifies their dependence in many instances on social media platforms. Such platforms give room for informing about, sharing, commenting on and discussing events. Hence, as perceived by the majority of students, it makes them gather as many opinions as possible about an issue helping them form an opinion about or an attitude towards it.

"for me social media is just perfect because it shows me what the news organizations I am following share and also what my peers on the platform have to say about it which exposes us to a variety of opinions about news events"

This has been acknowledged by all students participating in the discussion, with some mentioning that they discuss online news mainly with their parents to get their opinions. However, paradoxically, as further elaborated below, the majority of students mentioned that they do not share news online; on social media platforms.

7. 5 Knowledge about Current Events

With regards to knowledge about current events, the students from all three groups seemed to be updated by always mentioning examples about current events to support their discussion. They also mentioned repeatedly that staying up to date with what is happening is essential for their own good.

When directly asked about the most important events they have been following over the few weeks before the discussion session, students mentioned relevant home and foreign events. The events mentioned were mostly relevant to terrorist attacks, political and economic conditions, with boys from the 2016 FGDs mentioning sports news. With regards to global issues, Syrian refugees were on the top of the list in 2016 and Trump related issues and relations with Egypt mostly occupied students in the 2017 discussion.

7. 6 News Media Content, Industries and Effects

7. 7 News Making and Selection Process

Throughout the discussion, there was a general perception of the students' awareness that news media do not reflect events like a mirror. This could be noticed in the middle of their discussion of other issues. However, none of the students mentioned bluntly the criteria of selecting news. Generally speaking, respondents do not distinguish between foreign and home news during their exposure; they use the same sources for news "in general". This could be a critical issue with regards to comparing between *how* foreign and local news media cover the same stories depending on many criteria; such as language, audience, agendas...etc.

However, the students are aware, as further explained in the next part, that the media carries their own subjective perceptions, purposes and agendas in choosing *what* to cover depending on the timing and surrounding circumstances. They emphasized that this especially occurs with political news, which they sense, that the government does not want them to be heavily involved in:

"The media ...diverts us from serious current problems by giving more coverage to other trivial issues to divert our thoughts and attention: as soon as something major happens, that might cause controversy for instance, they [the media] start leading the discussion to something else and leave the important issue"

When discussing online news media, with a focus on the pages of news organizations on social media, all respondents agreed that news media online prioritize **immediacy** over quality.

One student said:

"I heard it many times on TV that news organizations [mentioning the name of a newspaper as an example] fabricate news to achieve a wide spread impact and then declare that it was not correct; they do so especially on social media"

Another student agreed stating that *"[News media] care much more about immediacy and widespread than quality and veracity...it doesn't matter if afterwards they delete [a news story] or declare it was incorrect, what matters to them is being the first to break the news"*

Respondents also commented on how news organizations use **sensationalism** in the headlines of news to get clicks of users (with most referring to examples on social media). They described the act as irresponsible and misleading. One student mentioned an example in which the headline declared the death of a famous actor, then when she clicked on it she found out they were talking about his death in a new role in a movie not in reality as the headline implies.

The idea of 'Clickbait' – content created with the mere purpose of achieving more clicks – unfortunately in many instances now is pushed online, especially on social media, by professional news brands as aforementioned. This is confirmed by Lotero-Echeverri et al. (2018) who shed light on some news media's practice to put sensational deceptive headlines to attract users' clicks

Knowledge about such issues reveals the extent to youth are aware about how the professional media is currently facing the challenge of quality versus immediacy, and audience's trust versus maintaining the economic model (Himma-Kadakas, 2017; Richardson, 2017). Himma-Kadakas (2017) underlines the essentiality to heed the cycle of information processing online and hence the pressures that journalists face and how they can overcome them while maintaining their professionalism. Further, Richardson (2017) notes how news media's lingering to their commercial interests in many instances comes

at the expense of credibility, leading to decreased audience trust in the media and consequently resorting to other sources. Richardson (2017) notes: "This determination to ensure information is trustworthy is more vital now with social media so firmly within the media's focus as sources for news (Richardson, 2017, p. 7).

7. 8 Objectivity, Agendas, Bias and Credibility

When students mentioned that they follow talk shows on television, they demonstrated awareness of objectivity, agendas and bias as concepts of pertinence. Respondents showed awareness of the impact of the TV channel´s **ownership** on its content and news coverage by differentiating between governmental and private media. In that sense, most students of Cairo and Banha universities (FGDs 2016) were highly critical of private media and mentioned that they are more inclined to trust state media. The most common justification provided is their impression that private media lack loyalty to the "homeland" as a result of seeking their own interests with a focus on advertisements rather than considering other essential criteria. Meaning, they perceive private media as profit oriented which comes at the expense of trusted quality journalism. On the other hand, students from the Arab Academy displayed similar perceptions of both private and state media, meaning, they are both inclined to serve their own different interests, be it boosting profits or state propaganda. Here, academic background plays a role, whereas some students from FGDs 2016 come from non-science background, all students from the Arab Academy come from either language or media majors with all having strong backgrounds about media studies.

Students from the different groups also mentioned that despite talk shows being "important to follow", they know they are "colored" based on the editorial line of the television channel, which reflects their awareness of the concept of **bias** to serve **agendas** of those in power. Again, students of the Arab Academy were more critical and displayed more awareness with regards to these concepts.

In that sense, the students gave examples of talk show presenters taking the side of the ruling regime by demonizing opposition to serve their agendas of surviving and maintaining admittance. This point is further elaborated on in the section of hate speech.

They agreed that January 25th revolution to them was like a moment of "awakening" that opened their eyes to such issues. They eyed complete shifts in the media rhetoric which was driven by authorities. One student explained it as follows:

"*In January 25th we have witnessed the lies news media were spreading, and it was all revealed. This raised our awareness about the importance to carefully select our sources of news and also to stay alert whether the news content is true or fabricated ...what happened made us more able to decide on these issue. It also made us less interested to get our news from TV, they lie and if not they try to manipulate us...this is why checking opinions around us became much more important than before*"

It is essential to mention that when the revolution first began, Egyptian news media (TV channels and newspapers) tried to squelch its voices by false portrayal of events; a scenario which completely shifted after the toppling of President Mubarak. Hence, witnessing this 180 degrees shift in coverage acted as an alarm to many Egyptians which led to many turning away from governmental media.

Subsequently, most students indicated that they always like to rely on "many sources" to check the credibility of a news story. As could be inferred from students' previous quotes and as emphasized throughout the discussion, the concept of **credibility** to them refers more to whether or not the event covered really occurred and less to the credibility of the details mentioned in its coverage. The majority stated that if the news story is covered by more than one source, then this means it really occurred and this is how they check for credibility. Another factor that determines credibility to them is how much the news was shared on social media; if it was shared by peers on social media "a lot", then it must be true. This shows the extent to which social media is regarded as a news source to the interviewees.

Perception of credibility is an essential issue to consider as a factor contributing to the quality of information online. According to scholars, individuals disseminate information online for different purposes, but whether or not they are aware and sure of its truthfulness is a matter of perception (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018; Karlova & Fisher, 2012). The fact that the interviewed youth perceive credibility as the occurrence of an event or lack of it reveals that an eye for further details is missing. In this study, in order to quantitatively

examine respondents' credibility assessment skill, they are asked to evaluate believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias and completeness. As per the interviewed youth, their perception of credibility is limited in the *believability* component. Further, scholars (Metzger et al., 2003) note how credibility and empowerment are two essential components in today's information environment, while shedding light on differentiating between source credibility, message credibility and media credibility. The interviewed youth appear to lack this differentiation ability by reducing the meaning of credibility to whether or not something happened. This, inevitably, not only affects their information processing but also their responsibility to share information to other users based on their reduced perception of credibility.

7. 9 News Relevance and Online News Exposure/Behavior

Based on self-reported responses, news came in first place as the most sought material online. It was indicated that after the revolution of January 25th, 2011, news became substantial to the respondents. As previously mentioned, January 2011 events were mentioned as a turning point for them with regards to their intentional search for news, especially on the new media. Ever since, they acquired the habit of checking many sources of news to check for credibility. Hence, students from the three groups displayed realization of the importance of following news, one student mentioned that they are aware that "*whatever happens around [them] can impact their personal lives one way or another, directly or indirectly*" especially highlighting that now more than ever before "*the world is becoming smaller by the day*". All students were clear about the difference between news and any other type of media content such as advertising; mainly in the sense that news/current affairs information are usually published for free whereas advertisements are paid for.

Contradictorily, with regards to their online news reading behavior, findings of the discussions show that the students only read the headlines in most instances and hardly the whole news stories. Only two students mentioned that it is important to read the article, with one of them saying:

"I read the article because I know that headlines can be completely misleading, it could say something that is very different from the content of the article, so I have to click on it to check myself"

One of the respondents on the other hand mentioned that she thinks she is able to differentiate between headlines that are misleading and incorrect and just seeking their "clicks" and those that are not fabricated and are real. When asked how she said:

"For example, if [sharing fabricated/misleading headlines was] repeated by a certain page or website, the moment I see them sharing something like that I can tell it's untrue as a result of my previous experience with similar instances"

It is paradoxical that despite being aware and clear that fabricated news and misleading headlines are common on social media, still the majority of students just read the headlines and rarely clicks on them for full stories. The reasons for that are to be further explored in the section on personal motivation to seek news below. Students realize the essentiality of news in their lives, yet they choose quick scanning of headlines rather than in depth reading. This raises a crucial question about students' perception of being informed.

When asked about their **reactions to news** on social media, all students, except one, mentioned that they do not share news with their friends on social media. When asked about the reason, they agreed that sharing the news will not make any difference mentioning other reasons such as; avoiding judgment by their families and friends about their political standing; not being sure about the accuracy of news and hence avoiding spreading "rumors"; and fear of getting detained by the police which was agreed on by the student who shares news, mentioning that she does not share opposition news or the like for that reason.

Hence, when asked about the types of news they are interested to react to or to get exposed to, most of the respondents showed confusion between the different types of news. However, they emphasized again that their interest in political news emerged after January 2011.

7. 10 Perception of News Media

As can be inferred from the previous findings and as demonstrated by respondents, there is a clear lack of trust in news media. The respondents showed awareness of the media's agendas, bias and sacrificing accuracy and credibility for the sake of immediacy and being

first to "break the news" especially online. Hence, they mentioned repeatedly that news media could go to the extent of lying to people to serve agendas.

One of the results of the discussions is disclosing the respondents' negative perception of the media as manipulators who they hesitate to trust most of the time. One student indicated that traditional media are "the worst" as sources of news and that she can never rely on them. As previously highlighted students from Cairo and Banha universities were more critical of private than state media, in the sense of reporting that they would trust state media more than private media. Whereas, students from the Arab Academy, as mentioned before, all with media-related academic background were more generally critical of all news media. In addition to academic background, another factor that should be considered is that from 2016 till 2017 many events occurred with regards to political affairs which might have impacted perception especially of state media.

When asked about the role news media should play from their viewpoint, respondents´ main emphasis was on providing the citizens with information based on facts rather than information charged with the presenters´ points of view. Here students appeared to have been referring to talk shows discussing current events rather than the regular news. This reveals that to them news media could be illustrated in famous presenters of talk shows which discuss news events while manipulating the audiences with their personal perspectives and opinions rather than present a balance between different viewpoints.

"The basics of the profession state that a presenter in the media shouldn't give their opinion….they moderate discussions between the two points of view without revealing their own….they try to tell us something and the reality is something else"

One student mentioned that news media jump to conclusions without doing proper investigations by for instance relating most problems to the Muslim Brotherhood without proof. In that sense, all respondents agreed that the news media does so to serve the state´s purpose of demonizing the Muslim Brotherhood political group.

7. 11 Fake News and Hate Speech

This sub theme emerged as an essential component in the students´ news experience and perception during the discussion session and accordingly is considered for qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Without being asked directly, students started accusing Egyptian mainstream news media (traditional and online) of spreading hate in the society. This accusation emerged from their perception of the news media rhetoric as inciting hatred towards groups of people or individuals mainly based on political views.

Accordingly, an example was given by a student relevant to inciting hatred towards the Muslim Brotherhood, who ruled the country for almost a year (June 2012-June 2013) before being toppled by the military as a result of protests. As mentioned by the students, ever since the toppling of their regime, the hate rhetoric could be easily spotted in news media having increased dramatically. This student mentioned that this occurred throwing the responsibility of the different problems faced by the country on the shoulders of the Muslim Brotherhood or opposition, which are portrayed as traitors, through implying or directly stating that without proof to such claims.

"Inciting hatred toward a specific segment in the society is massively existent in the news media mainly based on their opposing political views....it's like they're telling anyone who is against the ruling regime we will make those who are supportive to the regime hate you....so we [the media] **polarize** *the country into people who support the regime and others who are blacklisted , meaning, if anything bad or any accident or attack or problem happened the blame is automatically thrown on the shoulders of this specific group of people...So they use this to completely avoid blaming the regime for anything, even if it is illogical, such as the economic problems"*

All students agreed that all media function as "engines of hate speech" in the Egyptian society. One student further indicated that the same occurred during the revolution several times: when the revolutionaries were portrayed as trouble-makers to turn citizens against them, or when someone had a different opinion to the mainstream after the media acknowledged the revolution, they were dubbed as "remains of the ousted regime". Hence, the respondents emphasized that there is always the scenario of "us" and "them"; and always negative feelings are incited towards "them". Students also mentioned that such hate inciting scenarios is believed and acknowledged by a lot of people, especially the less educated. By Egyptian news media, students highlighted that they are referring to both governmental and private media.

"Anyone whose opinion is against the main regime either disappears from the media scene completely; no news about them, and/or gets portrayed negatively by the media"

Respondents also indicated that social media "which once unified young Egyptians during the January 2011 events" are now promoting fake news and hate speech.

When asked about how they check news for authentication and their abilities to distinguish "fake news" from "authenticated news", most students mentioned that they do so by checking the same story from as much sources as they can. Accordingly, findings of the discussion show that students perceive a story as factual or credible if it is covered/mentioned in many sources.

For most students new media was mentioned as the most credible source of news followed by television. As aforementioned, the interviewed youth mentioned resorting to television only in cases of "big news" to check whether something really happened or not. Accordingly, for the daily updates online sources are the main ones. This raises more questions about the type of content and sources youth resort to online to stay updated. With the power social media has over news diffusion, users should stay aware that such platforms are not content creators, they rather "host user-generated expression" as well as news media generated content (Braun & Gillespie, 2011). Hence, youth should be aware of the fact that social media are carriers to deliver news and not news sources.

The students mentioned that the process of distinguishing fake and authenticated content is not easy. Despite many of them trusting their ability to tell, they still are aware that they could be deceived.

"I can tell something is fake if it is written or shared by a source that I know is untrusted, but if not it would be difficult to tell"

None of the students, nonetheless, mentioned deconstruction of a news article as a means to check for credibility. This shows lack of awareness about how content is verified; the importance of documentation and sources in a news story. This has been repeatedly emphasized by news literacy scholars (such as Fleming, 2014, Maksl et al., 2015) as an essential knowledge area (knowledge about news content) and skill (ability to evaluate).

Obtaining them would empower youth by enabling them to discern content charged with harmful messages.

7. 12 Personal Motivation to Seek News

Despite stating that "it is important to follow news for [their] own future", it was essential to further explore how students get exposed to news: deliberately or accidentally.

Students were divided in this matter; while some mentioned that they intentionally search for news and select news content among other types, others stated that their exposure to news depends on what appears to them while doing other things. The latter indicated that there are many events happening and numerous sources of news, so instead of exerting effort and going through the fatigue of searching, they just go through whatever is available and accessible.

"*I log in to my [social media] account, not for a specific purpose just to check it, and while scrolling down I come across news items sometimes*"

This either reveals lack of awareness of essential concepts such as the filter bubble, algorithms and personalized content or further lack of interest in news content. In other words, if these students are not willing to deliberately search, filter, select and read news, they lack personal motivation to seek such type of content. Such lack of affinity for news could also indicate lack of awareness of its relevance to them and hence its role in a society. In that sense, accidental exposure to news can have its merits or downsides depending on the individual use and preferences. Kim et al. (2013) found the accidental news exposure is positively correlated to political participation suggesting that it fosters citizens' engagement to politics. Yet, the scholars highlight that this is only valid with users who "consume less entertainment online". This emphasizes how personal preferences play a role in the impact such exposure might have.

One reason behind youth's indifference to seek news actively could be lack of trust especially in political news, where students perceive them as biased; endorsing the ruling regime and focusing on news about the president as repeatedly highlighted by most during the discussions.

"the news mainly concerns glorifying the president and giving us updates about what he does...we are not sure whether the intention is to propagate or inform us"

Some students stated that they prefer to follow commentary on events, through talk shows, than news, mentioning that such content provides them with more information and details on the events. Again, this relates to lack of trust in the news and hence resorting to opinion, and also lack of ability to differentiate between the role news plays and how it is different from opinion.

7. 13 Political Engagement

When political engagement was being discussed, voting was mentioned by the majority as the most common political activity. The role of news in that sense was stated, in reference to elections news, as sources of information to help them decide on their vote.

However, two students demonstrated their lack of interest in voting, resulting from the belief that their vote will not matter much: "whether we vote or not, it doesn't make any difference".

This reveals a perception that they, as citizens, cannot affect major decisions in their country, not even by voting.

It is essential to mention though, that most students took part in the events of January 2011 revolution as well as the events of June 30th (revolting against the Muslim Brotherhood regime which led to their overthrow).

Such findings show clear fluctuations in the status of political engagement of youth. While during the 2011 revolution they were hopeful and saw their actions impact the reality of politics in the country, this perception started fading over the years with witnessing retrogression of such influence. This was reflected in the parliamentary elections, where most of the Cairo university interviewees from the discussions of 2016 did not participate and a higher number of those from Banha university took part.

When asked about the role of news in encouraging political participation, the students were divided among themselves. While some mentioned that "yes news provide us with the necessary political knowledge that boosts out interest to be involved", others stated that "news only provide [them] with political information, to raise our awareness about what is

happening around us not more". Such findings reveal that youth are aware about how news and politics are connected in terms of content, but certainty about how news relates to their political engagement is lacking.

7. 14 Quantitative Findings:

Survey Questionnaire

The questions in the questionnaire were constructed in light of the findings of the qualitative technique; in this case the focus group discussions, with the purpose of quantifying some findings and further exploring others. As aforementioned, measuring the different constituents of news literacy - as a multi-structural concept - is one of the objectives of the survey. These include; motivations, skills and knowledge about news media. In addition, the questionnaire intends to detect correlations between news literacy and the other variables of the study: ability to detect harmful messages (fake news and hate speech), political engagement, awareness of motivation/goals of seeking news/information, and level of engagement with the news.

Accordingly, the findings are demonstrated under themed categories through which hypotheses are tested and research questions are responded to.

7. 15 Youth's patterns of News Use on Social Media:

In order to reach the goals of the study, mainly concerned with youth's level of news literacy and its impact, it has been essential to investigate their patterns of news use on social media for context. Accordingly, areas investigated under this category includes: main sources of news, accidental exposure to news on social media, frequency of using social media platforms, and using social media specifically for news. Findings under this category, besides investigating engagement to news, respond to the research question:

RQ1: What are the youth's patterns of *news use* like on social media (consumption, production, reactions to news content…etc.)?

7. 16 News Use and accidental exposure to news

Youth´s news main sources is generally measured in the survey through one main question. The question asks about the frequency of using different media for information and news (television, radio, traditional newspapers, websites of newspapers, accounts of

professional news organizations on social media, mobile applications of news organizations, sites with news reports generated by regular people, content generated by friends on social media) on a five point scale (Always= 5 to Never=1).

According to the findings from the survey (shown in Chart 1 and Table 1), the majority of respondents get their news from the **accounts of professional news organizations on social media**, which could be ranked as the first source of information according to the percentages, with 43% reporting *always* using that source, 22% using it *very often* and 27% using it *sometimes*. This was followed by **statuses, comments, tweets or posts of friends on Facebook and/or Twitte**r as sources of information, where 43% reporting *always* using that as a source, 25% reporting using it *very often* and 19% using it *sometimes*. The third source of information to the sampled youth based on their responses is **websites of newspapers/magazines** with more than a third (35.5%) reporting *always* using this source, 25% using it *very often* and more than a third (34.5%) using it *sometimes*. **Television** is ranked as the fourth source of information in the presented options, with more than a third (37.2%) reporting *always* using it, 16.4% reported using it *very often* and more than a third (38.2%) reported using it *sometimes*. This was followed by **sites with news reports generated by regular individuals (such as blogs)**, with 40% reporting *sometimes* using such sites for information, 16.4% reporting *always* using this source and 13.6% reporting using it *very often*. Contrary to the findings of one of the focus group discussions, mobile applications of professional news organization were reported to be *always* used as a source of information by 24.5%, *very often* used by only 8.2% of respondents and *sometimes* used by 26.4%. Traditional newspapers and radio were the least used media as sources of information according to the sampled youth.

Chart 1: Main sources of information about events, public issues and politics -Egypt
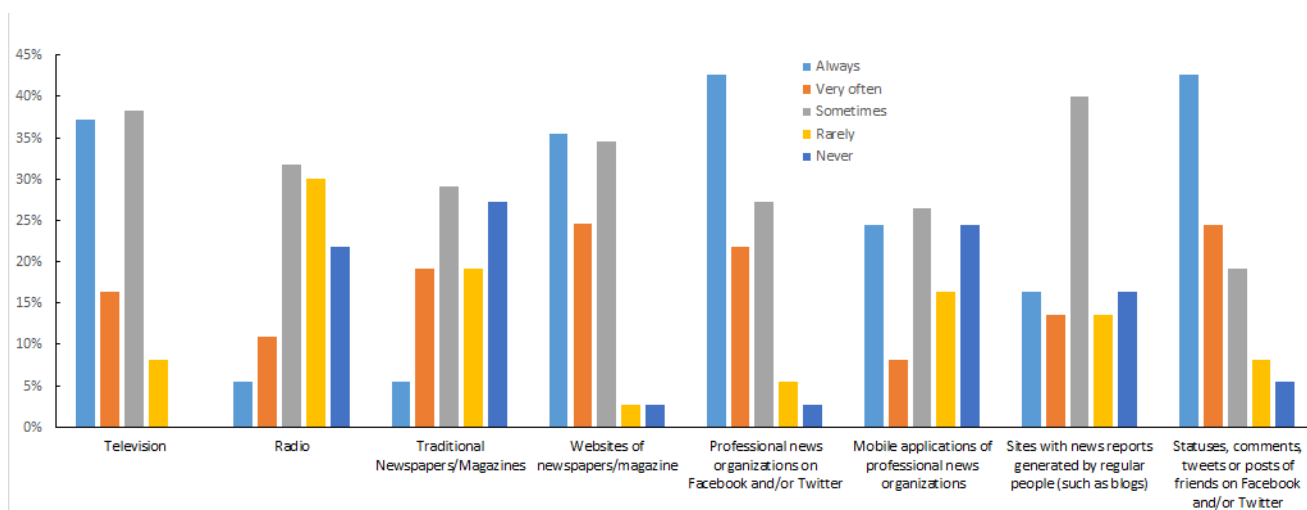
Table 2: Main sources of information about events, public issues and politics -Egypt

Media	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Television	37.20%	16.40%	38.20%	8.20%	0%
Radio	5.50%	10.90%	31.80%	30%	21.80%
Traditional Newspapers/Magazines	5.50%	19.10%	29.10%	19.10%	27.20%
Websites of newspapers/magazine	35.50%	24.60%	34.50%	3%	2.70%
Professional news organizations on Facebook and/or Twitter	42.70%	21.80%	27.30%	5.50%	2.70%
Mobile applications of professional news organizations	24.50%	8.20%	26.40%	16.40%	24.50%
Sites with news reports generated by regular people (such as blogs)	16.40%	13.60%	40%	13.60%	16.40%
Statuses, comments, tweets or posts of friends on Facebook and/or Twitter	42.70%	24.50%	19.10%	8.20%	5.50%

Whether or not youth were accidentally exposed to news online while doing other activities is measured in a question with responses: yes, no and I´m not sure. The majority of youth confirmed accidental exposure to news content, especially on social media with 91.8% responding with yes as shown in Chart 2 and Table 2 below.

Chart 2: Accidental exposure to news -Egypt

Yes · No · I'm not sure
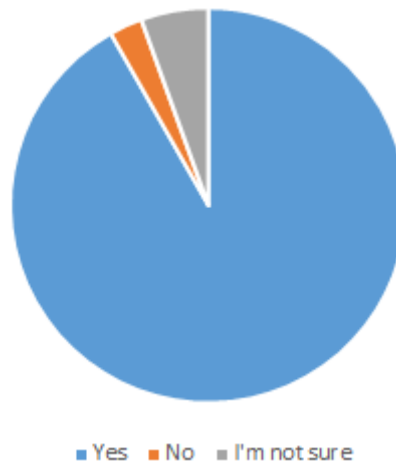
Table 3: Accidental exposure to news -Egypt

Answer	%
Yes	91.80%
No	2.70%
I'm not sure	5.50%

Such findings leave online sources as leading when it comes to news use amongst the investigated youth, and traditional media less sought by them. This has been further accentuated by the respondents' use of news on social media as displayed in the findings below.

7. 17 Social Media and News Engagement

In order to examine youth´s use of social media, respondents were asked about the frequency of using different social media platforms, the extent to which such platforms (and other media) are major, minor or not a news source to them, the extent to which using Facebook and Twitter specifically makes them feel informed. Also, their motives of sharing content on social media were investigated.

When asked about the frequency of using different social media platforms, **Facebook** came as the most visited social networking site with a majority of 90.1% reporting using it multiple times a day. The next most used platform according to the results is **Youtube** (46.3% using it multiple times a day), followed by **instagram** (43.6%), then **Twitter**

(12.7%). It is worth mentioning that more than a third of the respondents reported not using Twitter at all (38.3%).Results are displayed in Chart 3 and Table 3 below.

Chart 3: Frequency of using social media platforms -Egypt
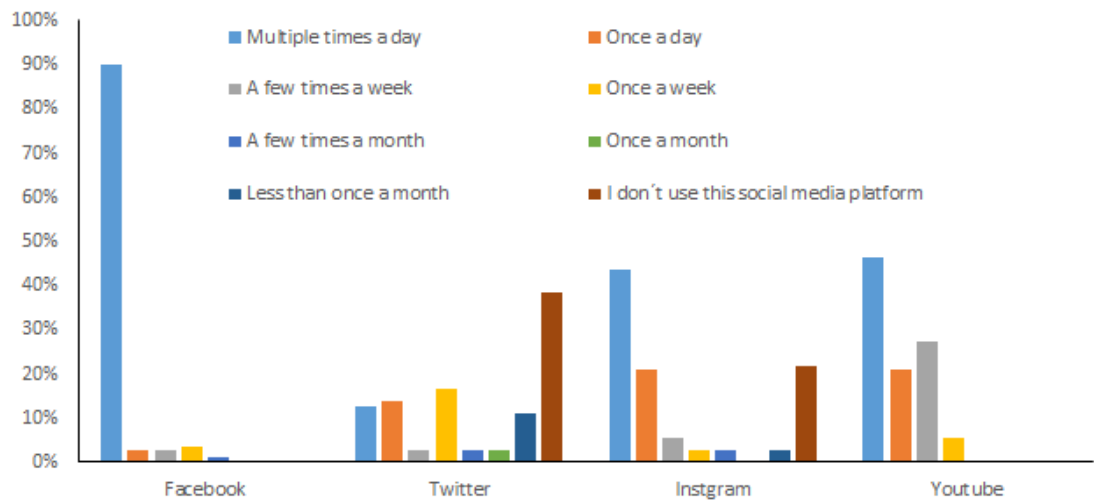
Table 4: Frequency of using social media platforms -Egypt

Social media	Multiple times a day	Once a day	A few times a week	Once a week	A few times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	I don´t use this social media platform
Facebook	90.10%	2.70%	2.70%	3.60%	0.90%			
Twitter	12.70%	13.60%	2.70%	16.40%	2.70%	2.70%	10.90%	38.30%
Instgram	43.70%	20.90%	5.50%	2.70%	2.70%		2.70%	21.80%
Youtube	46.30%	20.90%	27.30%	5.50%				

In order to have a vision about how using social media for news could be compared to using professional news organizations' online sources as a part measuring engagement to news, respondents were asked to rank the extent to which different platforms/sources are major, minor, rarely, never a source of news for them online. The options included Facebook, Twitter and Youtube as social media platforms, besides professional news organizations online that were selected based on statistics of news media most used by Egyptians (Abdullah, 2013) such as Youm7.com, Akhbarak.com, ElWatan.com among others. In accordance with the frequency of use (previous question) and with the the pew research center study (2016), **Facebook** came in the first place as a *major source of news* for a majority of 78.2% of the respondents and a *minor source* to 11%. The pew study conducted in 2016, found that more than two thirds of Facebook users, use the platform for news.

This is followed by **Google News** (*major source of news* for 43.6%, *minor source of news* for 21%), then **Youtube** (*major source of news* for 23.6%, *minor source of news* for 33%), together forming the top three *major sources of news* to the sampled youth. With regards to professional news media, **Youm7.com** (the online version of El Youm 7 (the seventh day) private newspaper) came in the fourth place as a *major source of news* for 34.6% and a *minor source of news* for 19.% of the respondents, followed by **AlMasryAlYoum Online** (translation: The Egyptian Today private newspaper) (a *major source of news* for 29.1% and a *minor source of news* for 24.5%), then **ElWatan Online** (translation: The Homeland private newspaper) (a *major source of news* for 21% and a *minor source of news* for 22%). It is worth mentioning that governmental newspapers online versions came in seventh (**Al Akhbar**) and eighth (**Al Ahram**) rank as sources of news to the respondents. Also, **Twitter** came last with one third (30%) mentioning that they are *not familiar with this source*, again in line with the Pew study (2016) statistics reporting Twitter as the social media platform with the "smallest user base". Further, one third (30%) of the respondents mentioned that the Qatari pan-Arab news TV channel is **Al Jazeera** is *never a source of news* for them. Findings are demonstrated in Chart 4 and Table 4 below.

Chart 4: Main sources of news -Egypt
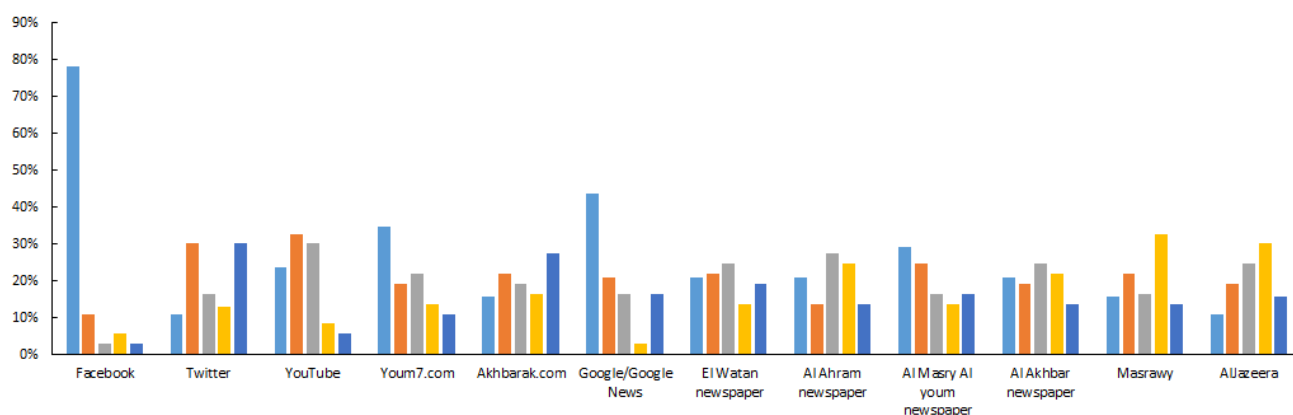
Table 5: Main sources of news -Egypt

Online sources	Is a major source of news for me	Is a minor source of news for me	Is rarely a source of news for me	Is never a source of news for me	I´m not familiar with this news
Facebook	78.20%	10.90%	2.70%	5.50%	2.70%
Twitter	10.90%	30%	16.40%	12.70%	30%
YouTube	23.60%	32.70%	30%	8.20%	5.50%
Youm7.com	34.60%	19.10%	21.80%	13.60%	10.90%
Akhbarak.com	15.50%	21.80%	19.10%	16.40%	27.20%
Google/Google News	43.60%	20.90%	16.40%	2.70%	16.40%
El Watan newspaper	20.90%	21.80%	24.60%	13.60%	19.10%
Al Ahram newspaper	20.90%	13.60%	27.40%	24.50%	13.60%
Al Masry Al youm newspaper	29.10%	24.50%	16.40%	13.60%	16.40%
Al Akhbar newspaper	20.90%	19.10%	24.60%	21.80%	13.60%
Masrawy	15.50%	21.80%	16.40%	32.70%	13.60%
AlJazeera	10.90%	19.10%	24.50%	30%	15.50%

In order to delve deeper into the extent to which youth **use social media for news** or for informational purposes (with a focus on Facebook and Twitter), respondents were asked about the extent to which Facebook and Twitter help them stay informed, get news about current events from professional news media and stay informed about current events from friends. Respondents stated that **Facebook** does help them to **get news about current events from mainstream media**, with 43% ranking it as *extremely* helpful in that sense, 22 % ranking it as *moderately* helpful and 22% ranking it as *somewhat* helpful. More than half of the respondents mentioned that Facebook *extremely* helps them to **stay informed about current events and public affairs** (54% with 11% reporting that it *moderately* helps and 11% *somewhat*) and to **get news about current affairs through friends** (51% with 17% reporting that it *moderately* helps and 17% *somewhat*). This leaves **getting news about current events from mainstream media** as the primary informational use of Facebook as demonstrated in Chart 5 and Table 5 below.

Chart 5: Facebook´s Informational and news use -Egypt
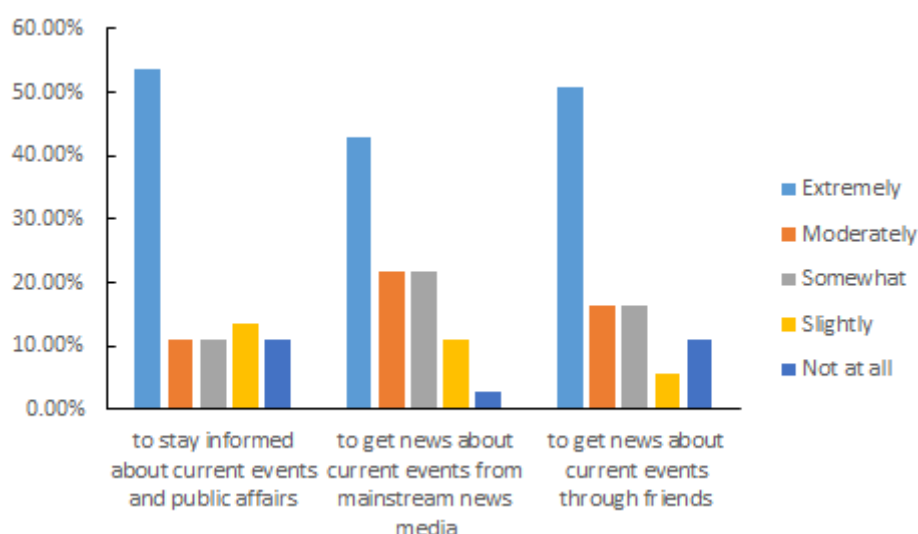
Table 6: Facebook´s Informational and news use -Egypt

Informational use	Extremely	Moderately	Somewhat	Slightly	Not at all
to stay informed about current events and public affairs	53.70%	10.90%	10.90%	13.60%	10.90%
to get news about current events from mainstream news media	42.80%	21.80%	21.80%	10.90%	2.70%
to get news about current events through friends	50.80%	16.40%	16.40%	5.50%	10.90%

With regards to **Twitter**, respondents who use the platform stated that it **helps them get news about current events from friends** with 45.4% ranking it as *extremely* helpful in that sense, 16.4% ranking it as *moderately* helpful and 27.4% ranking it as *somewhat* helpful. More than half of the respondents stated that Twitter *extremely* helps them to **stay informed about current events and public affairs** (62%; with 6% reporting that it *moderately* helps and 19% *somewhat*) and 48.2% stated that the platform *extremely* helps them to **get news about current events from mainstream media** (22% reporting that it *moderately* helps and 27.3% *somewhat*). This leaves **getting news about current events from friends** as the primary informational use of Twitter as demonstrated in Chart 6 and Table 6 below.

Chart 6: Twitter´s Informational and news use -Egypt
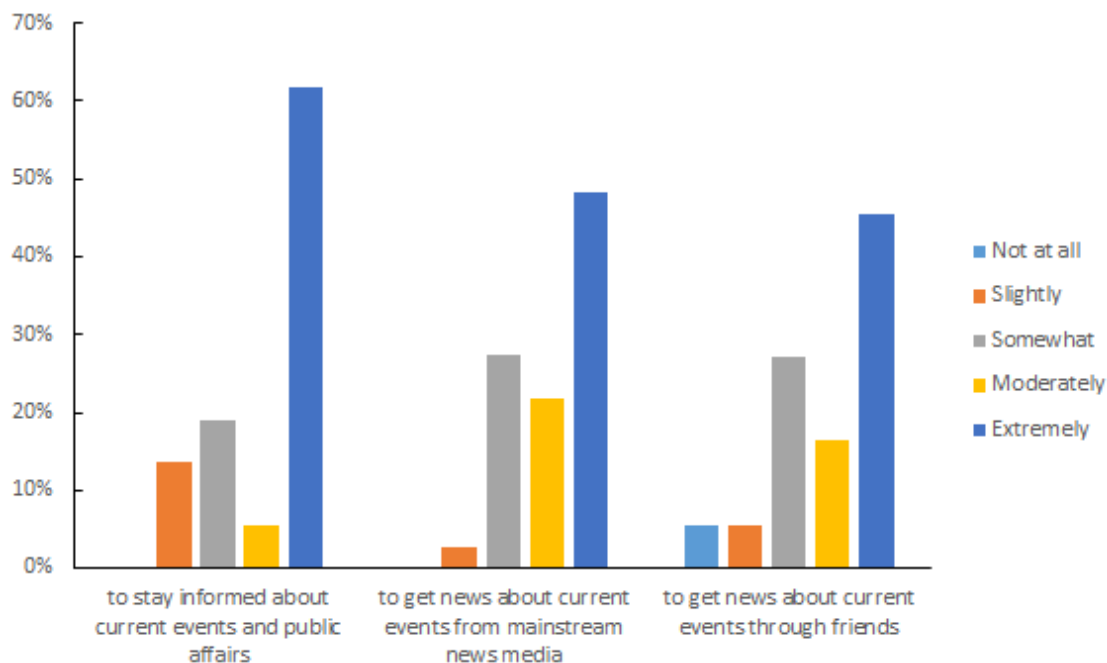
Table 7: Twitter´s Informational and news use -Egypt

Informational use	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
to get news about current events from mainstream news media		2.70%	27.30%	21.80%	48.20%
to get news about current events through friends	5.50%	5.50%	27.20%	16.40%	45.40%

Based on the displayed findings it is inferred that respondents' engagement to news is conditioned by their social media use. This is emphasized through their sources as well as the fact that the majority of them report accidental exposure to news. Social media as a filter of information and a platform through which professional journalists can reach the different audience segments has repeatedly been highlighted by scholars (Mihailidis, 2012; Press, 2011; Hermida et al., 2012). Such findings only emphasize that Facebook, as the most frequently used social media platform amongst Egyptian youth, is one way for journalists to reach users. From one side journalists are required to consider quality over immediacy and profits and from the other audiences should be aware that the medium affects what stories are selected by news media to be disseminated as suggested by Gans (1979). The fact that respondents seek professional media for news on Facebook calls

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attention to the mentioned statement. While the findings that leave Twitter's friends as main sources of information about current events, draws attention to the fact that journalists are no longer the mere information gatekeepers. Users are active content creators and disseminators, but what motivates youth to share content on social media?

Based on the study by Lee and Ma (2012), motivations behind youth´s sharing behavior on social media is investigated. The motivations were divided into four categories: information seeking, socializing, entertainment and status seeking (Lee & Ma, 2012) in addition to measuring how far respondents share news that confirms their own opinion. Accordingly several measurements were put for each category. According to the results (demonstrated in Chart 7 and Table 7 below), information seeking is the leading drive for respondents to share information on social media. A majority of 64.5% stated that sharing news on social media **helps them store useful information**, with 41% stating that it becomes **easy to retrieve information when needed** when they share it and more than a third (32%) stating that sharing news helps them **keep up to date on the latest news and events**. Socializing is also regarded as an essential motive for respondents to share information on social media; the sampled youth stated that it is **effective to exchange ideas with other people** (44%), it makes them **keep in touch with people** (40%) and it helps them **interact with people when sharing news** (30%).

Entertainment and status seeking were less important as motivations to share news. With regards to entertainment, 29.1% of the respondents stated that sharing news help them **pass time**, and 23.6% mentioned that it **helps them relax**. For status seeking, 19.1% mentioned that it **helps them feel important** when they share news with 10.9% mentioning that it **helps them gain status**. With regards to opinion confirmation, 19.1% of the respondents stated that they share news to **prove to people that their opinion is the correct one,** which makes it a less significant motive in accordance with the minor significance of status seeking as a motive. It is worth mentioning that only 8.2% of the respondents mentioned that they never share news on social media, which contradicts with the findings from the focus group discussions where the majority of respondents displayed strong hesitancy with regards to sharing news. Such findings partially go in line with Lee and Ma's (2012) study; information seeking and socializing are strong motives to share news on social media. However, Lee and Ma (2012) found that status seeking is an important drive. Hence our findings contradict in this matter, while agreeing on entertainment as a weaker motive to

share news.

Chart 7: Motivations to share news on social media -Egypt
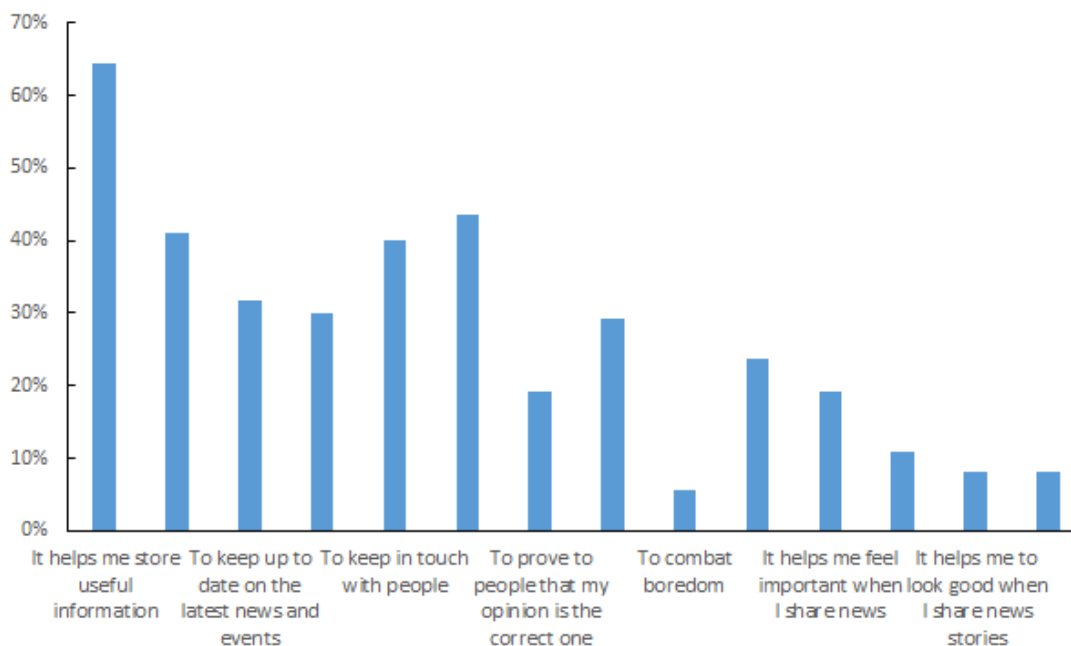
Table 8: Motivations to share news on social media -Egypt

Motivation	%
It is easy to retrieve information when I need	40.90%
To keep up to date on the latest news and events	31.80%
I can interact with people when sharing news	0.3
It is effective to exchange ideas with other people	43.60%
To prove to people that my opinion is the correct one	19.10%
It helps me pass time	0.291
It helps me to relax	23.60%
It helps me feel important when I share news	19.10%
It helps me to gain status when I share news stories	0.109
I never share news on social media	8.20%

Having demonstrated such findings, a response to the research question RQ1 emerges.

RQ1: What are the youth's patterns of *news use* like on social media (consumption, production, reactions to news content…etc.)?

Based on the results shown, and in line with recent research, online sources are Egyptian youth's main resort for news showing a clear decline in traditional media use. Accounts of professional news media on social media was ranked as the first source of news amongst youth, in line with the results leaving Facebook as a major source of news by the majority of respondents, while on the other hand Twitter was ranked towards the end of the list. In order to cross check results, respondents were asked about the main informational use for each of Twitter and Facebook. Getting news about current events from mainstream media is the first informational use of Facebook according to the sampled youth going in accordance with their response about professional media's accounts as their first source of news. Same applies to Twitter, with getting news about current events from friends ranked as the primary use.

The findings on Facebook's primary informational use go in accordance with the academic premise that regards social media as delivery platforms rather than news sources on their own (Press, 2011). In contrary, Twitter, with its small percentage of users in this study, is regarded as a source of news in the sense that its users count on their peers' generated content for information.

The fact that youth ranked professional news media's websites third as a source of news leaves social media as the main news carriers. This implicates the ramifications that could result from relevant issues such as personalization algorithms based on which such platforms work. In other words, are social media/online news users aware of how content appears to them? According to the empirical findings of a study done on university students in the US, youth "are largely unaware of whether and how news sources track user data and apply editorial judgments to deliver personalized results" (Powers, 2014). From a different angle, this makes social media the main gatekeepers of information which is something both users and professional news media should consider.

Such conclusions about youth's news use on social media raises the question about whether or not youth trust the media in the first place.

7. 18 Trust in the Media/News Media Skepticism

In order to test news media skepticism, based on a scale adapted from Ashley et al. (2015), trust in the media was measured through a likert scale asking respondents about the degree to which they agree to various statements. Respondents stated that they believe that **news media prioritize being first to report a story**; with 40% *agreeing*, 5.5% *strongly agreeing* and more than a third (38.2%) being *neutral*. Also, 40.9% of the respondents *agree* that **news media cannot be trusted**, with more than a third (32%) being *neutral*. With regards to **news media being accurate**, almost half (48%) of the respondents reported being *neutral* about it, with more than a third (32.7%) *disagreeing*. A percentage of 45.5% *disagree* that **media report the news fairly** with more than a third (35.5%) reporting a *neutral* standing. Respondents (43.6%) *disagree* that **news media tell the whole story** with 27.3% being *neutral*. A majority of 62% reported a *neutral* position with regards to their **trust in the people running the press institutions** (Findings are demonstrated in Chart 8 and Table 8 below). According to the demonstrated percentages, it could be inferred that respondents do not hold extreme positions with regards to their general trust in the media; a minority gave *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree* responses, while in many cases at least a third of the respondents displayed *neutral* positions. However, still the results reflect doubts and skepticism with regards to the extent to which youth should trust the media. As could be noticed, there is a general negative perception about news media with big percentages of the respondents being inclined to agree to negative statements (such as *news media cannot be trusted*) and disagree with positive ones (such as *news media are accurate*). As Banaji and Cammaerts (2014) highlight youth tend to have distrustful stances towards the news media and the main reasons in many instances are "media's lack of objectivity and balance in reporting on young people and on democracy". With these results combined with the majority of youth reporting accidental exposure to news online, a correlation between the level of trust and exposure could be implicated in line with Maksl et al.'s (2015) suggestion. Youth's attitude towards news media is cross checked later in the credibility assessment skill evaluation.

Chart 8: Trust in the media -Egypt
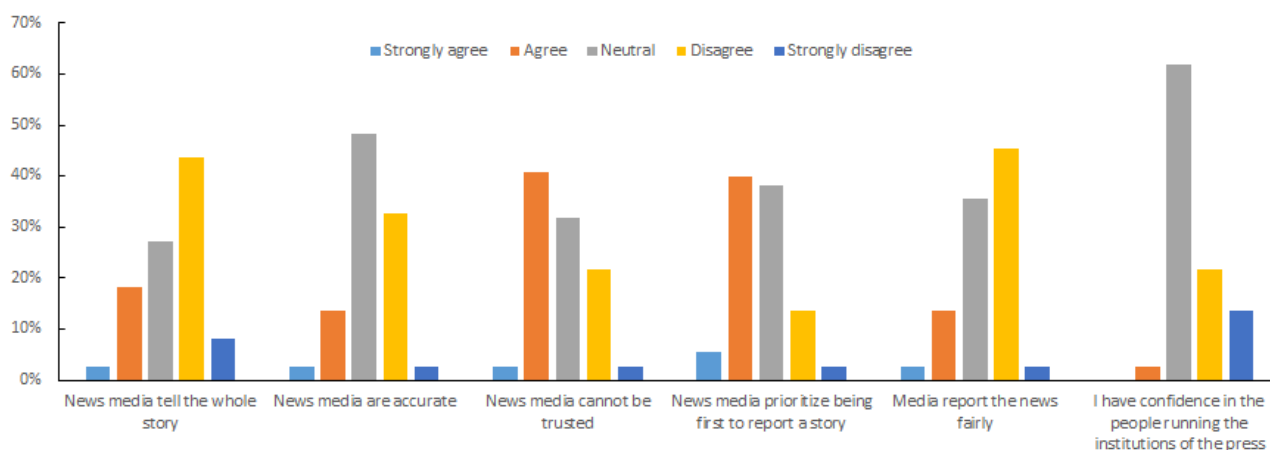
Table 9: Trust in the media -Egypt

Media trust statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News media tell the whole story	2.70%	18.20%	27.30%	43.60%	8.20%
News media are accurate	2.70%	13.60%	48.30%	32.70%	2.70%
News media cannot be trusted	2.70%	40.90%	31.90%	21.80%	2.70%
News media prioritize being first to report a story	5.50%	40%	38.20%	13.60%	2.70%
Media report the news fairly	2.70%	13.60%	35.50%	45.50%	2.70%
I have confidence in the people running the institutions of the press		2.70%	61.90%	21.80%	13.60%

7. 19 News Literacy

7. 20 Motivation and Locus of Control:

In order to examine the extent to which youth are intrinsically motivated to seek news content, students were asked about the extent to which they agree to four likert scale statements. More than half of the respondents (50.9%) *agreed* that they follow the news *because they like to*, with 16.4% *strongly agreeing* to the statement. Almost half of the respondents (49.1%) *agreed* to the statement that they *follow the news for their own good* with 19.1% *strongly agreeing*. When asked whether they *follow the news because they are supposed to*, 43.7% *agreed* to the statement and more than a third (31.8%) were *neutral*. More than one third (32.7%) of the respondents *disagreed* to the statement *I don´t see what news does for me* with more than a third (34.5%) reporting a *neutral* stance and 16.4% *strongly disagreeing*. The findings displayed reveals that youth are motivated to follow the news to a good extent, with a majority acknowledging the reasons that they follow the news because they like to or for their own good. Also, as displayed, almost half of the respondents are not in favor of the statement that marginalizes the important role of news (I don´t see what news does for me).

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Chart 9: Motivations to seek news – Egypt
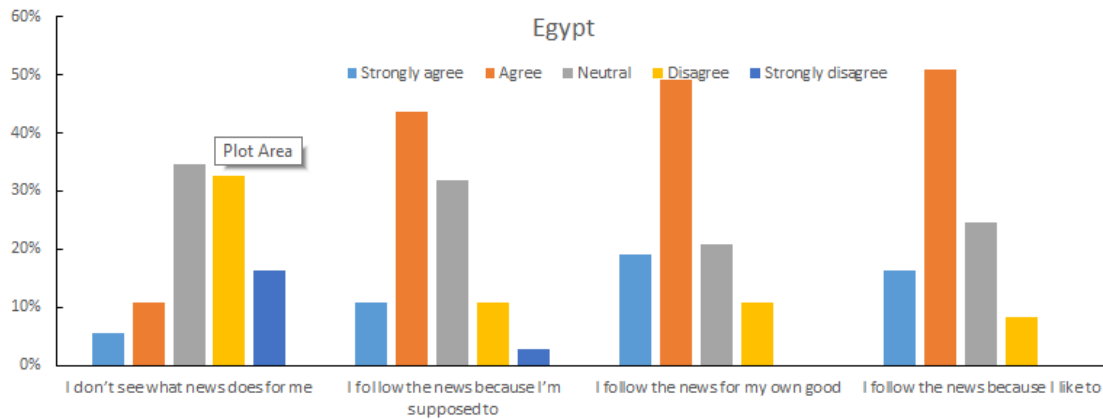
Table 10: Motivations to seek news - Egypt

Motivation measuring statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I don't see what news does for me	5.50%	10.90%	34.50%	32.70%	16.40%
I follow the news because I'm supposed to	10.90%	43.70%	31.80%	10.90%	2.70%
I follow the news for my own good	19.10%	49.10%	20.90%	10.90%	
I follow the news because I like to	16.40%	50.90%	24.50%	8.20%	

In order to estimate how far youth "believe they control the media influences" as suggested by Maksl et al. (2015), respondents were provided with likert scale statement to which they report the extent to which they agree or disagree (5 point scale). More than half (56.4%) of the respondents *agreed* that if they pay attention to different news sources they can avoid being misinformed, with 21 % *strongly agreeing* to the statement. Almost half of the respondents (49.1%) *agreed* that if they take the right actions they can stay informed with 13.6% *strongly agreeing*. Almost half of the respondents support the statement that the main thing that affects their knowledge about the world is what they themselves do, with 45.5% *agreeing* and 2.7% *strongly agreeing*. Responses with regards to the extent to which respondents agree they are in control of the information they get from news media was more dispersed; 35.5% *agree*, 27.2% are *neutral* and 26.4% *disagree*. The same applies to the statement that says if I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information; 37.2% are *neutral*, 30% *agree* and 16.4% *disagree*.

Chart 10: Locus of control – Egypt
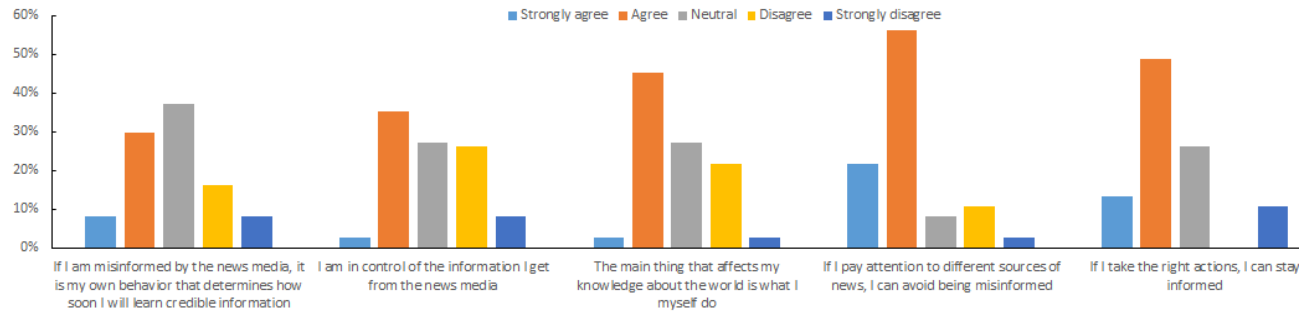
Table 11: Locus of control – Egypt

Locus of control measuring statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information	8.20%	30%	37.20%	16.40%	8.20%
I am in control of the information I get from the news media	2.70%	35.50%	27.20%	26.40%	8.20%
The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do	2.70%	45.50%	27.30%	21.80%	2.70%
If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed	21.80%	56.40%	8.20%	10.90%	2.70%
If I take the right actions, I can stay informed	13.60%	49.10%	26.40%		10.90%

The results show that youth believe that they control media influences but not entirely; they still perceive some influences as not fully under their control. Respondents believe they are in control of how far they are informed and knowledgeable about the world, and how they can possibly avoid being misinformed. However, when it comes to controlling the information they get from news media or learning about credible information in case of being misinformed, there is less consensus with regards to how far they control that.

7. 21 Knowledge Areas:

This is measured based on the five areas of knowledge: knowledge of news content, knowledge of the news media industry, knowledge of the news media effects, knowledge of the real world (reality versus constructedness) and knowledge of the self.

- *Knowledge of news content* was measured through 5 point likert scale statements. Accordingly, more than a third of respondents (37.3%) *strongly agreed* that news companies choose stories based on what will attract the biggest audience, with more than a third (32.7%) *agreeing* to the statement. Also, 40.9% of the

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respondents *agreed* to the statement that people pay more attention to news that fits with their beliefs than news that doesn't, with 27.3% *strongly agreeing*. Such results reveal that the majority of respondents are aware about news content selection from both sides, the journalists´ and the audience´s. The journalists´ selection of news content is reflected through the first statement that which refers to the selection criterion which comes as a priority to news organizations; attracting the biggest audience. The majority of respondents clearly supported that statement reflecting their awareness. On the other hand, audience´s selection of news content is reflected through the second statement which reflects the concept of confirmation bias and was also supported by the majority of respondents. Such findings support Arendt et al.'s (2016) Media-related selection which highlights journalists' gatekeeping function and audience's selective exposure and sharing behavior. Gatekeeping is a long standing theory in mass communication and with the current rapidly changing media environment is no longer merely a journalists' function. Hence, combining it with audience's selective exposure and sharing behavior highly supports the mentioned findings. The fact that youth report agreement to a statement that reflects confirmation bias is alarming in the implicated consequences for being well informed. Meaning, exposure to "opposing arguments" is inevitable for healthy political engagement that fosters democracies (Arendt et al., 2016).

- *Knowledge of the news media industry* was measured through a Likert scale statement and two multiple choice questions. Almost half of the respondents (46.4%) *agreed* to the statement that the owner of a media company influences the content that is produced, with almost a third (27.3%) *strongly agreeing*. More than a third of the respondents selected the wrong answer to the question "Who has the most influence on what gets aired on the local TV news?"; 38.2% mentioned it is the *individual reporters*, while the correct answer *the producer/editor*, was selected by 21.8%. Contrarily, more than a third of respondents selected the correct answer to the question "One common criticism of the news is that it is not objective. What do people who make that criticism typically mean by it?"; 35.5% selected the meaning that *the reporter puts his/her opinion in the story*, with 26.4% stating that they *don´t know*. Such findings reveal respondents' awareness of some concepts about the news media industry but not others. The majority are aware of the

ownership influence on content, however confusion between the roles definition and impact of the different persons involved in the industry (reporters, producers, cameraman, anchors,..etc.) could be concluded. Regarding the concept of objectivity, responses were more dispersed, however the fact that more than a third selected the correct definition indicates a satisfactory level of knowledge about the concept. Such findings raise concern in the sense that scholars (Craft et al., 2017; Pérez-Rodríguez and Delgado-Ponce, 2012) emphasize the essentiality of knowledge about media industry for trust and engagement with news through established correlations between these variables. The more news users understand and obtain sufficient knowledge about how the news media industry works, the more chance there is that they will trust and engage with the news.

- *Knowledge about the news media effects* was measured through three 5 point Likert scale statements and two multiple choice questions. The majority of respondents support the statement that two people might see the same news stories and get different information from it, with 42.7% *agreeing* and 35.5% *strongly agreeing*. This indicates awareness of respondents that a considerable part of the meaning making process depends on audience´s interpretation and not just on the meaning intended by the reporter/journalist. Here, subjectivism approach of content interpretation is essential to refer to; the text means what the reader wants it to mean (Buckingham, 200). It is in the interpretation level that variables such as skills and knowledge level affect the meaning making process as highlighted by Buckingham (2000).

Responses were more dispersed with regards to the statement that people are influenced by news whether they realize it or not, with more than a third (35.5%) *agreeing* and more than a third (31.8%) reporting a *neutral* stance. The majority of respondents supported the statement that news coverage of a political candidate will influence people's opinions, with more than half (51.8%) *agreeing* to the statement, with 20.9% reporting a *neutral* stance. The majority of respondents selected the correct answer to the question about the effect of news coverage of a specific topic on people's perception of importance, 61. 8% stated that a lot of coverage will make people more likely to think the topic is important. This

indicates awareness about the agenda setting effect of the media; where coverage influences importance perception about an issue. More than a third of respondents (38.2%) selected the correct answer about the effect of news outlets dependence on advertising to make money which refers to two possible effects: News could encourage people to buy things they don't need; and News could emphasize things that aren't really important, with 29.1% selecting only the first effect and 24.5% believing there are not effects. Findings reveal a good level of awareness about the impact of news dependence on advertising on both audience consumption behavior and on news content, in which awareness about the first is more emphasized than awareness about the second effect.

Generally, respondents demonstrate a satisfactory level of knowledge about news media's effects through showing awareness of the meaning making process, the agenda setting function of news media and the economic pressure's impact.

- *Knowledge about the real world* was measured through 5 point Likert scale statements. The majority of respondents support the statement that news makes things more dramatic than they really are, with 59% *agreeing* and 16.4% *strongly disagreeing*. Same applies to the statement that a news story that has good pictures is more likely to show up in the news; 40.9% *agree*, 31.8% reported being *neutral* and 21.8% *strongly agree*. Opinions were less extreme with regards to the statement that a story about conflict is more likely to be featured prominently; with 43.5% *agreeing* to the statement and 40% reporting a *neutral* stance. Almost half of the respondents (45.5%) reported a *neutral* position with regards to the statement that a journalist's first obligation is to the truth, with 21.8% *agreeing* and equally 21.8% *disagreeing*. Findings here indicate that respondents are knowledgeable to a satisfactory extent about the fact that news content is not a mere reflection of the world and that some criteria interfere with the *construction* of such content. On the other hand, still when it comes to some selection criteria, a considerable percentage of respondents seem to be in doubt selecting *neutral.* Such findings show that some youth are partially aware of a long standing theoretical premise addressed by scholars such as Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979), Galtung and Ruge (1965), and Van Dijk (1988); the idea of news not merely mirroring society's occurrences. In his study, Toepfl (2014) states that some of the respondents were "fully aware that all media messages are constructed, others were not". This knowledge area is

especially an essential part of news literacy having been a base for media literacy as stated by scholars (Kellner & Share, 2005).

- *Knowledge of the self* was measured through 5 point Likert scale statements in which the degree to which respondents perceive themselves as in control of their news experience is represented. The statements are: If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information; I am in control of the information I get from the news media; The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do; If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed; If I take the right actions, I can stay informed. The findings of this knowledge area have been displayed since it refers to the aforementioned youth's locus of control.

Chart 11: Knowledge Areas - Egypt
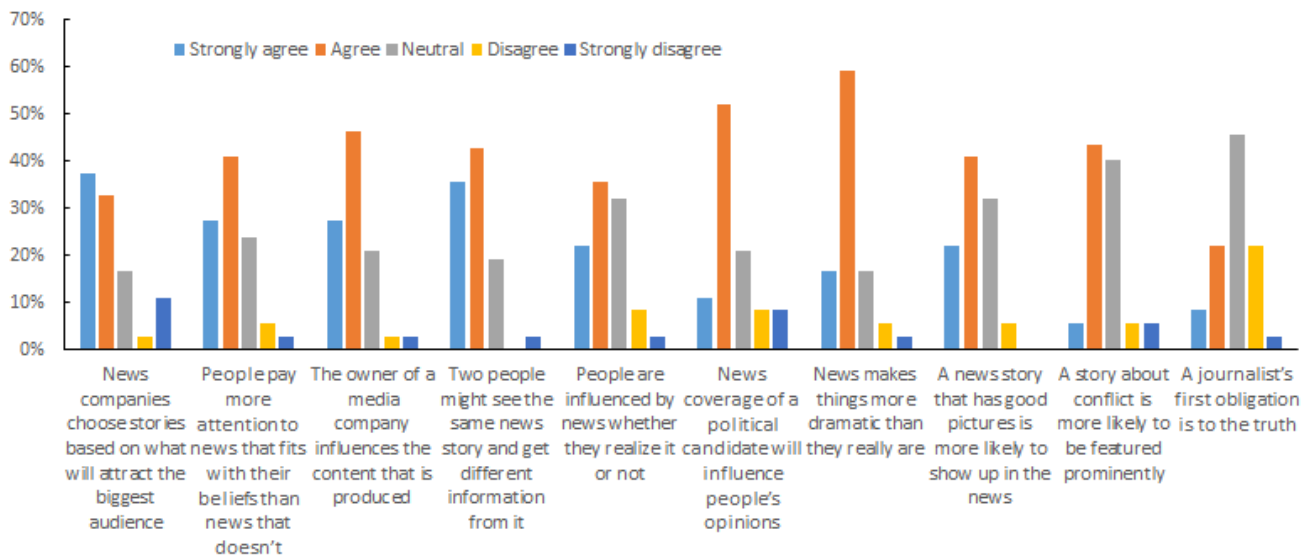
Table 12: Knowledge Areas - Egypt

Knowledge Areas: Likert Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News companies choose stories based on what will attract the biggest audience	37.30%	32.70%	16.40%	2.70%	10.90%
People pay more attention to news that fits with their beliefs than news that doesn't	27.30%	40.90%	23.60%	5.50%	2.70%
The owner of a media company influences the content that is produced	27.30%	46.40%	20.90%	2.70%	2.70%
Two people might see the same news story and get different information from it	35.50%	42.70%	19.10%		2.70%
People are influenced by news whether they realize it or not	21.80%	35.50%	31.80%	8.20%	2.70%
News coverage of a political candidate will influence people's opinions	10.90%	51.80%	20.90%	8.20%	8.20%
News makes things more dramatic than they really are	16.40%	59%	16.40%	5.50%	2.70%
A news story that has good pictures is more likely to show up in the news	21.80%	40.90%	31.80%	5.50%	
A story about conflict is more likely to be featured prominently	5.50%	43.50%	40%	5.50%	5.50%
A journalist's first obligation is to the truth	8.20%	21.80%	45.50%	21.80%	2.70%

Chart 12: Knowledge of the news media industry -Egypt

- Individual reporters
- The anchor, the person reading the news
- The cameraman
- The producer/editor
- Don't know
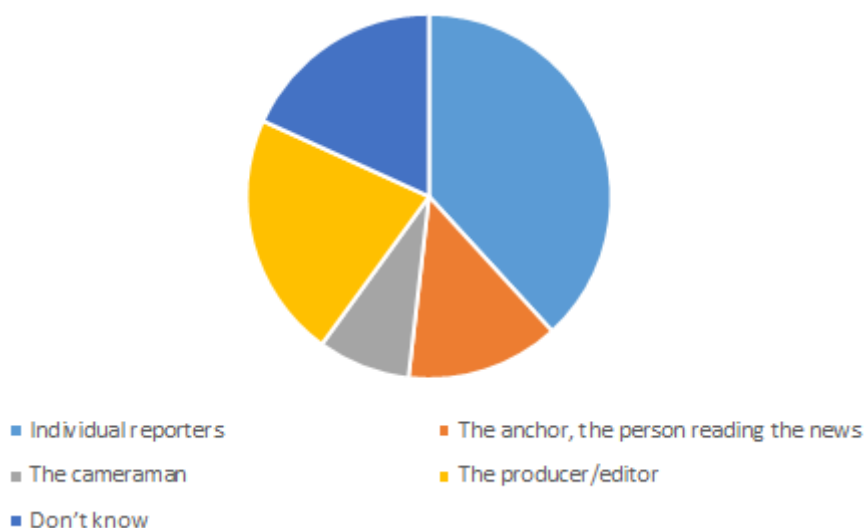
Table 13: Knowledge of the news media industry -Egypt

Who has most influence on content	%
Individual reporters	38.20%
The anchor, the person reading the news	13.60%
The cameraman	8.20%
The producer/editor	21.80%
Don't know	18.20%

Chart 13: Knowledge about objectivity -Egypt

- The reporter gives only the facts about the story
- The reporter puts his or her opinion in the story
- The reporter's story relies too much on the opinions of people who are neutral
- The reporter doesn't make the purpose of the story clear
- Don't know
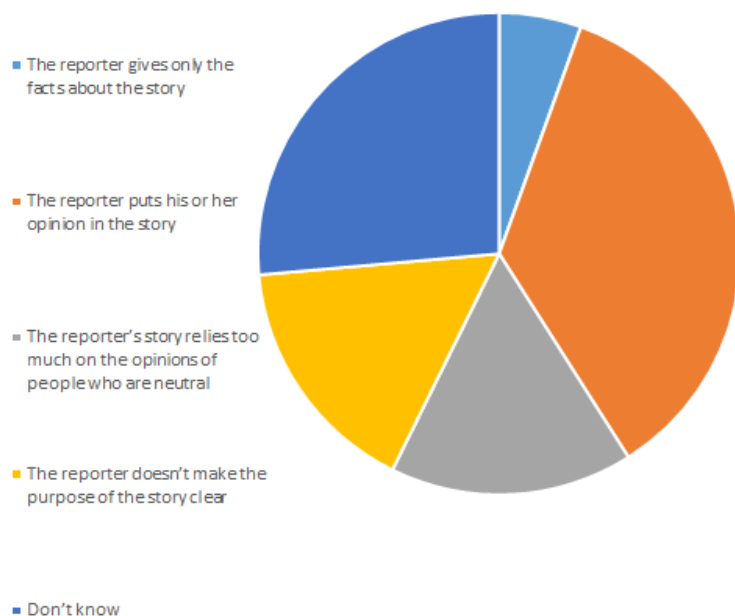
Table 14: Knowledge about objectivity -Egypt

Objectivity meaning	%
The reporter gives only the facts about the story	5.50%
The reporter puts his or her opinion in the story	35.50%
The reporter's story relies too much on the opinions of people who are neutral	16.30%
The reporter doesn't make the purpose of the story clear	16.30%
Don't know	26.40%

7. 22 Skills: Credibility assessment and verification ability

In order to contrast the findings on news media skepticism respondents were asked to assess the extent to which they find online news media credible by asking them to evaluate believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias and completeness. Common among all is the fact that the evaluations have almost all been average with the biggest percentages of respondents selecting the response *somewhat* in the scale provided (with alternatives ranging from extremely to not at all). Respondents believe that online news media are *somewhat* accurate (49%), believable (45.4%), trustworthy (42.6%), biased (37.2%) and complete (37.2%). As a skill this means that credibility assessment is not a strength area for the surveyed respondents. However, such findings confirm the doubtful stance youth hold against news media previously displayed in the findings of media trust.

Chart 14: Credibility assessment -Egypt
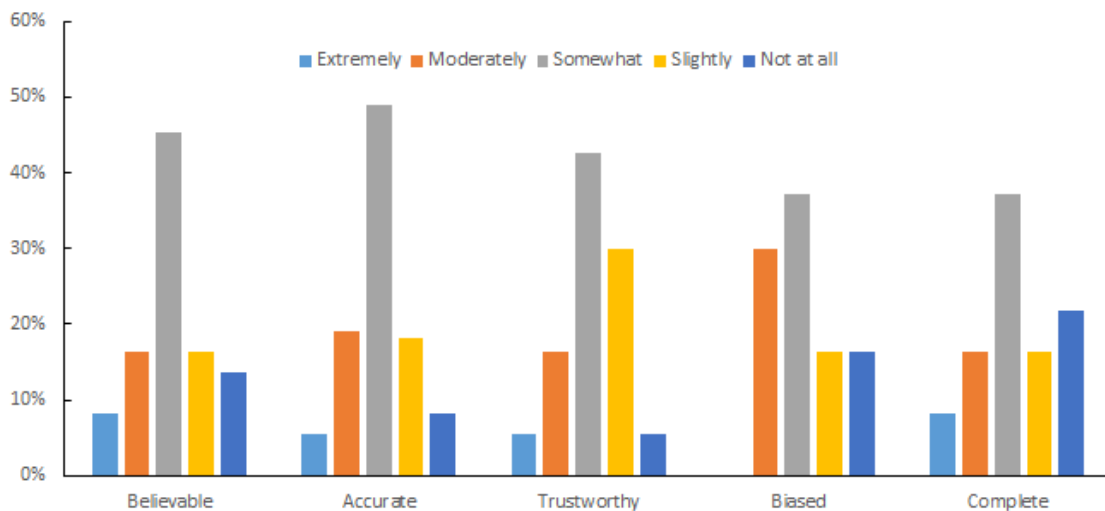
Table 15: Credibility assessment –Egypt

	Extremely	Moderately	Somewhat	Slightly	Not at all
Believable	8.20%	16.40%	45.40%	16.40%	13.60%
Accurate	5.50%	19.10%	49%	18.20%	8.20%
Trustworthy	5.50%	16.40%	42.60%	30%	5.50%
Biased		30%	37.20%	16.40%	16.40%
Complete	8.20%	16.40%	37.20%	16.40%	21.80%

In order to measure verification ability respondents were asked about the frequency of doing specific actions when they read news online, by giving them statements to which

they have to respond using 5 point scale ranging from *always* to *never*. It is worth noting that like the credibility assessment skill, the majority of respondents gave mostly a *sometimes* response to most statements. Hence the results are demonstrated according to the ranking of the statements; activities respondents are inclined to do with greater frequency. More than half of the respondents (59.1%) stated that they *sometimes* consider whether the information represented is opinion or fact. More than one third of the respondents (31.8%) stated that they *sometimes* check to see whether the information is complete and comprehensive, with one third (30%) stating that they *often* do so. Close to half of the surveyed youth (43.6%) stated that they *sometimes* seek out other sources to validate information they find online, with close to one third (27.3%) stating that they *often* do so. More than one third of the respondents (31.8%) *sometimes* check to see who the author is, with close to a third (24.6%) *rarely* doing so.   Almost half of the respondents (48.2%) sometimes look for an official "stamp of approval" or recommendation from someone they know. Close to half (46.3%) *sometimes* consider the author's goals/objectives for posting information online, with 21.8% *often* doing so. More than a third (35.4%) *sometimes* check to see whether contact information for that person or organization is provided, with exactly one third (30%) *rarely* doing so. More than one third (31.8%) *sometimes* verify the author's qualifications or credentials, with also more than a third (32.8%) *rarely* doing so. In line with Flanagin & Metzger's (2000) study, these finding reveal that the majority of youth verify information online mostly *sometimes* or *rarely*.

Chart 15: Verification ability -Egypt
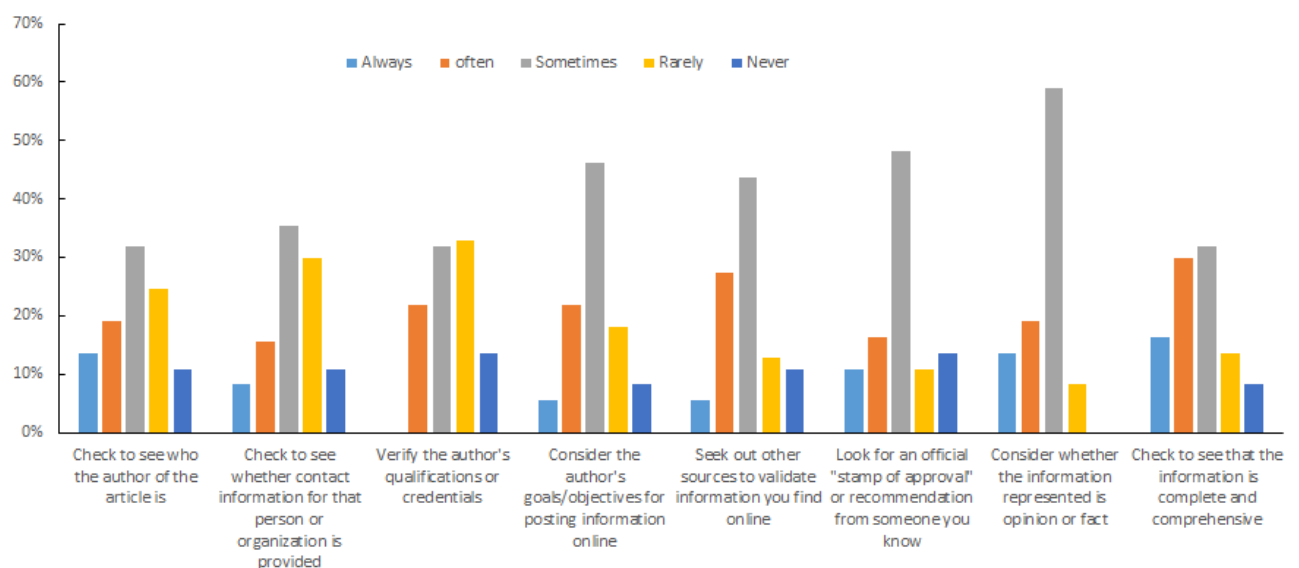
Table 16: Verification ability -Egypt

Verification actions	Always	often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Check to see who the author of the article is	13.60%	19.10%	31.80%	24.60%	10.90%
Check to see whether contact information for that person or organization is provided	8.20%	15.50%	35.40%	30%	10.90%
Verify the author's qualifications or credentials		21.80%	31.80%	32.80%	13.60%
Consider the author's goals/objectives for posting information online	5.50%	21.80%	46.30%	18.20%	8.20%
Seek out other sources to validate information you find online	5.50%	27.30%	43.60%	12.70%	10.90%
Look for an official "stamp of approval" or recommendation from someone you know	10.90%	16.40%	48.20%	10.90%	13.60%
Consider whether the information represented is opinion or fact	13.60%	19.10%	59.10%	8.20%	
Check to see that the information is complete and comprehensive	16.40%	30%	31.80%	13.60%	8.20%

Having demonstrated findings of the different constructs of news literacy; motivation, knowledge and skills, it is essential to mention that the majority of youth are found to be with high level of news literacy. Based on a cumulative scale for the responses of questions measuring the different constituents of news literacy, 65% of the respondents have a high level of news literacy, while 35% have a low level of news literacy. Most respondents displayed motivation to seek news by agreeing to statements that imply their understanding of the importance of news to them. With regards to the knowledge areas, it could be noticed that some are stronger than the others as demonstrated; for instance knowledge about the news industry is one of the weakest areas of knowledge and is regarded as highly essential to engage with news and trust the media as highlighted. While on the other hand, knowledge of the news media effects and the real world were shown to be stronger. With regards to skills of credibility assessment and verification ability, findings for both confirm the need to work on youth's awareness about the essentiality to carry on certain inspections when reading news online to be able to evaluate credibility and verify the used information.

In light of these findings, H3A is supported; there is a correlation between news literacy level and motivation to seek news, Pearson r 0.136 at significance level 0.029. Also, H3B is supported; there is a correlation between news literacy level and engagement to news, Pearson r 0.165 at significance level 0.033. It is essential to refer to the findings of engagement to news aforementioned.

7. 23 News Literacy and Harmful Messages

7. 24 Fake News Perception and Detection

When asked whether or not they are aware that some news stories shared on social media are fake news, a massive majority of respondents (97.3%) reported that they are aware about it.

Chart 16: Awareness about Fake News - Egypt
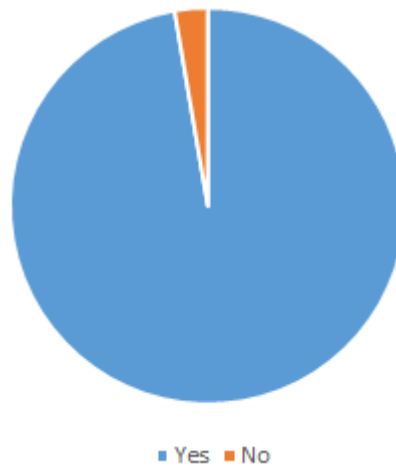
Table 17: Awareness about Fake News - Egypt

Answer	%
Yes	97.30%
No	2.70%

Respondents were then asked to report the extent to which they agree or disagree with some statements with the aim of investigating how they perceive fake news, their perception of the ability to detect it and how they could potentially act around it. A majority of respondents showed supportive stance to the statement that the spread of f**ake news on social media can cause confusion** about basic facts of current events, with more than a third (35.5%) *strongly agreeing*, more than a third (34.5) *agreeing*, and 16.3% reporting being *neutral*. In accordance, almost half of the respondents (49.1%) *strongly agree* that it is **important to check the credibility of the information in a news article before sharing it**, with 27.2% reporting that they *agree* and 15.5% being *neutral*. Almost a third of respondents (29.1%) *agree* that they **only share news stories from professional**

news organizations with 16.4% *strongly agreeing* and more than one third (35.4%) reporting being *neural*. The percentages displayed so far reveals awareness from the side of the sampled youth about the potential impact of fake news and their reported existent perception that the source which delivers the news is important to consider, which was barely reflected in the previously mentioned findings on verification ability. However, there is also a high percentage who reported neutral positions, in that sense, indicating confusion, indifference or lack of enough awareness (like the case with sharing news stories only from professional sources, where more than a third stated being neutral about it).

In conformity, most respondents reported rejection with the statement that they would **share a story without reading the content if the headline is interesting**; with 43.6% *strongly disagreeing* and 31.8% *disagreeing*. When asked whether they would **share news stories shared by friends without necessarily reading them**, most respondents displayed rejection with more than one third (35.5%) *strongly disagreeing* and more than a third 31.8% *disagreeing*. Such results contradict with the findings of the study reporting that false content was "70% more likely to be retweeted than truths" (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

Hence, when an attempt was made to double check the accuracy of such responses some contradictory findings emerged. Despite believing that they care about the sources of news they share, still 26.3% of the respondents *agreed* and 10.9% *strongly agreed* that they **do not necessarily check the sources of information in a news story before they share it**, which goes in line with their verification ability results. However, more than a third 35.5% *strongly disagreed* with the same statement indicating that it is essential for them to check the sources of information in news stories before sharing. Here it is essential to refer to Newman et al.'s (2017) Reuters Institute Digital News Report; a survey of more than 70,000 online news users in 36 different countries, reveals that the majority of respondents are aware that social media are not doing enough to filter the information users receive differentiating between credible and false information. Nonetheless, still less than half of the respondents could remember the source of news they read on social media (that is, the news brand that put the article). Such gap is clearly reflected throughout the findings of this study (qualitative and quantitative). Also, despite the fact that a majority disagreed with sharing articles without reading the content if the headline is interesting, still 16.4% reported a *neutral* position revealing doubt or confusion. The same applies to sharing

news stories shared by friends without reading the content, with 19.1% stating being *neutral* about it.

Concerning their perception about their ability to detect fake news, respondents were asked about the extent they agree with the statement "**I think I have the competencies to tell whether or not a news story is fake**". Accordingly, the biggest percentage of respondents reported a *neutral* position (42.8%), where 27.3% *agreed* that they do have the competencies to detect if a story is fake and a close percentage of 24.5% *disagreed* on the same statement. From such percentages, doubts about their ability to detect fake news could be noted. Unlike, the results from the focus group discussion where respondents are under the perception that they are able to detect fake content on social media.

Chart 17: Fake news and sharing behavior -Egypt
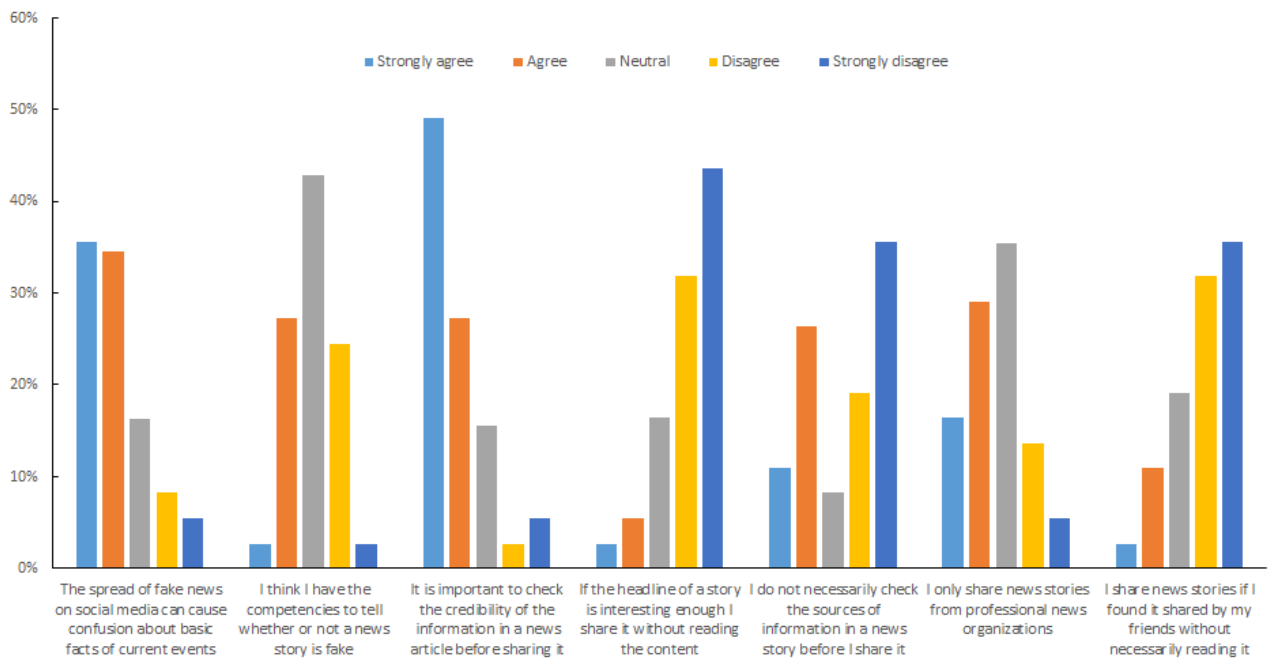
Table 18: Fake news and sharing behavior -Egypt

Fake news and sharing behavior	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The spread of fake news on social media can cause confusion about basic facts of current events	35.50%	34.50%	16.30%	8.20%	5.50%
I think I have the competencies to tell whether or not a news story is fake	2.70%	27.30%	42.80%	24.50%	2.70%
It is important to check the credibility of the information in a news article before sharing it	49.10%	27.20%	15.50%	2.70%	5.50%
If the headline of a story is interesting enough I share it without reading the content	2.70%	5.50%	16.40%	31.80%	43.60%
I do not necessarily check the sources of information in a news story before I share it	10.90%	26.30%	8.20%	19.10%	35.50%
I only share news stories from professional news organizations	16.40%	29.10%	35.40%	13.60%	5.50%
I share news stories if I found it shared by my friends without necessarily reading it	2.70%	10.90%	19.10%	31.80%	35.50%

In light of these findings, a cumulative scale was used to calculate scores of respondents that implies their ability to identify fake news on social media. Based on this, the following correlations are tested:

H1B: News Literate youth are better able to *identify* fake news on social media

H2: News Literate youth think or care about the *veracity* of news items before reacting to or sharing them on social media (Facebook/Twitter)

H1B is supported with a significant correlation, Pearson r 0.425 at significance level 0.01, between news literacy and the ability to identify fake news. Likewise H2 is supported with a significant correlation, Pearson r 0.329 at significance level 0.01, between news literacy and youth's care to check veracity of news items before sharing them

7. 25 Hate Speech Exposure

According to scholars (Erjavek, 2014; Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012) comments on news stories in many instances carry hate inciting content and can be regarded as one of its sources. Accordingly, it was essential to investigate the motivations of youth to read or

write comments on and/or posts of news articles on social media. The motivations for each were adapted from a study by Diakopoulos and Naaman (2011) which used users' uses and gratifications of comments reading and writing in general. Accordingly, the motivations could be grouped into four categories; information, personal identity, entertainment and social interaction. Not only do the displayed findings indicate hate speech exposure, they further indicate motivation to share one's opinion by writing comments and to know others' by reading them.

With regards to motivations of **reading** comments; *information motivations* include getting more information about the issue addressed in the article and getting updates about the story; *personal identity motivation* was examined through the desire to compare their opinion to that of others in the community; *entertainment motivations* were reflected through whether or not they have fun reading people's humor about the issue; and *social interaction* as a motivation was measured through whether respondents read comments to see perspectives and views of people to help them decide and to estimate political response and attitude of the community.

Accordingly, based on the results the motivations to read comments or posts on news articles could be ranked in the following order: information, entertainment, social interaction then personal identity motivations. Only 8.2% of the respondents stated that they never read comments on news articles on social media.

- **Information motivation to read comments**: A majority of 61.8% of the respondents stated that they read comments on news articles on social media to get more information about the issue addressed in the article and more than half (54.5%) stated that it helps them get updates on the story.
- **Entertainment motivation to read comments**: 40% of respondents stated that they read comments to have some fun reading people's humor about the issue
- **Social interaction motivation to read comments**: one third (30%) of respondents stated that they read comments to see perspectives and views of people which helps them decide, while 16.4% stated that estimating political response and attitude of the community is what drives them to read comments.

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- **Personal identity motivation to read comments**: Less than a third of the respondents (26.4%) stated that they read comments to compare their opinion to the opinion of others in the community

Chart 18: Motivations to read comments – Egypt
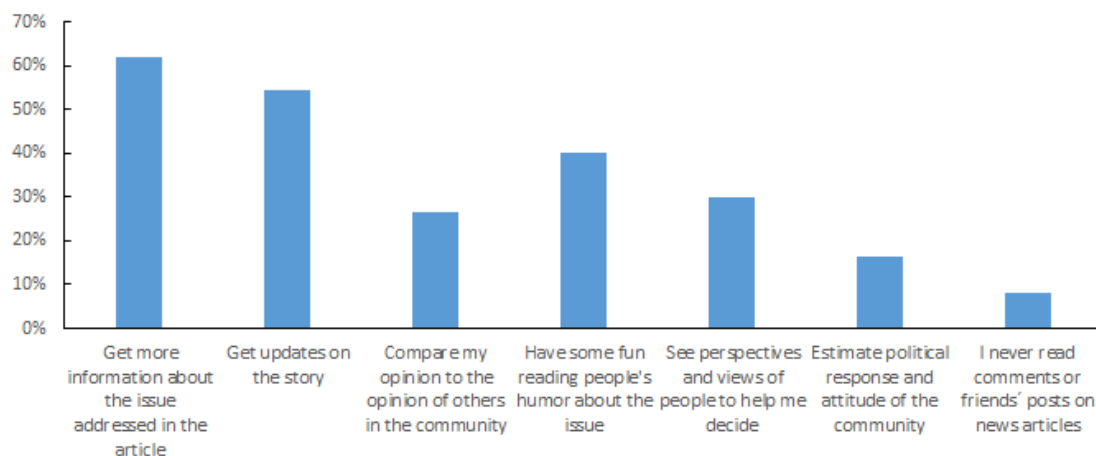
Table 19: Motivations to read comments – Egypt

Motivation to read comments	%
Get more information about the issue addressed in the article	61.80%
Get updates on the story	54.50%
Compare my opinion to the opinion of others in the community	26.40%
Have some fun reading people's humor about the issue	40.00%
See perspectives and views of people to help me decide	30.00%
Estimate political response and attitude of the community	16.40%
I never read comments or friends´ posts on news articles	8.20%

The results displayed reveals that the majority of respondents do read the comments of news articles on social media; as previously stated that a very minor percentage stated they never read comments. With seeking information being the primary motive for the respondents, it becomes clear how important the role of peer citizens in creating content has become, and especially how it is regarded by a majority as complementary to the information provided by journalists through the news article itself. This should be taken into account bearing in mind how studies (Erjavek, 2014; Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012) revealed that hate speech exists in many instances in comments on news as previously highlighted. And further, the problem aggravates with scholars emphasizing hate speech producers' techniques of rewriting and reshaping the meanings in the news articles consistently to serve their purposes (Erjavec and Kovacic, 2012)

On the other hand, concerning motivations of **writing** comments; *information motivations* include educating others by giving more details about the issue addressed, asking or answering questions raised around the topic in the story, sharing their experience, and noting missing information and/or correcting inaccuracies or misinformation; *personal identity motivation* was examined through expressing their opinion and/or emotion; *entertainment motivations* were reflected through adding humor to the discussion; and *social interaction* as a motivation was measured through the desire to see others' reaction by engaging in debates and to persuade others with their opinion.

Based on the findings motivations to write comments and/or posts about news articles on social media could be ranked in the following order: information motivations, personal identity, entertainment and finally social interaction. It is worth mentioning that 27.3% of respondents stated that they never write comments or posts about news articles indicating that more people read than write comments.

- **Information motivation to write comments/posts:** close to half of the respondents (45.5%) stated that they write comments/ posts on news articles to share their experience, with almost a third (29.1%) stating that they seek educating others by giving more details about the issue addressed. This is followed by 21.8% of the respondents who stated asking or answering questions around the topic addressed as a reason to write comments and 13.6% selecting noting missing

information and correcting inaccuracies or misinformation as a motive to write comments.

- **Personal Identity motivation to write comments/posts:** almost a third (29.1%) of the respondents stated they write comments to express their opinion and/or emotion.

- **Entertainment motivation to write comments/posts:** 19.1% of respondents stated adding humor to the discussion as a motive to write comments.

- **Social interaction motivation to write comments/posts:** Only 10.9% of the respondents stated seeing others' reaction by engaging in debates as a motive to write comments, with 5.5% mentioning persuading others with their opinion.

As highlighted in the findings, peer citizens content on social media is regarded by the majority as a source of information based on which they build their judgments and attitudes toward issues. In both cases of reading and writing comments, information motivation was selected by the majority of the respondents as the main drive behind their online actions in that sense.

Chart 19: Motivation to write comments – Egypt
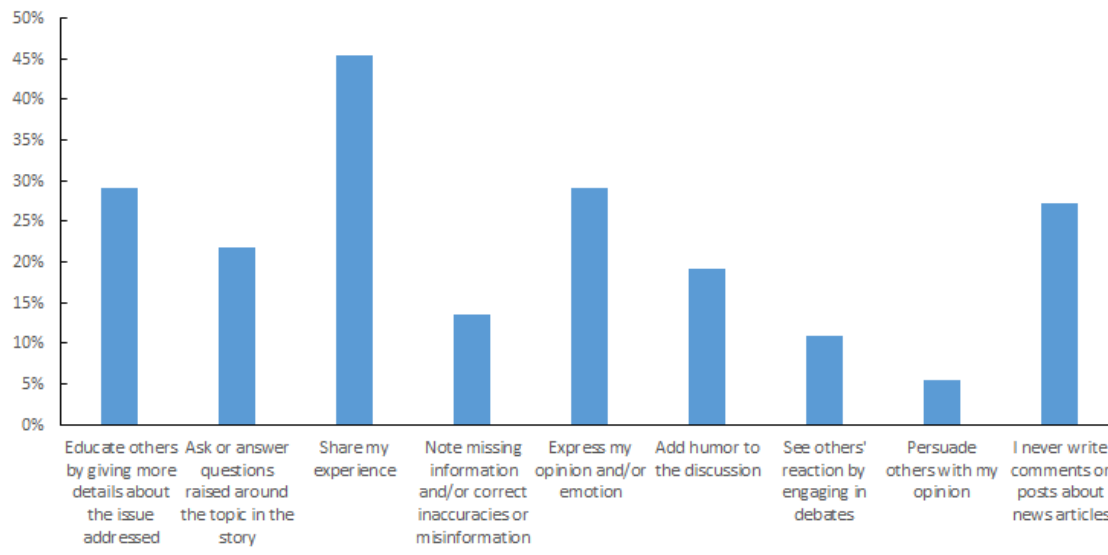
Table 20: Motivation to write comments – Egypt

Motivation to write comments	%
Educate others by giving more details about the issue addressed	29.10%
Ask or answer questions raised around the topic in the story	21.80%
Share my experience	45.50%
Note missing information and/or correct inaccuracies or misinformation	13.60%
Express my opinion and/or emotion	29.10%
Add humor to the discussion	19.10%
See others' reaction by engaging in debates	10.90%
Persuade others with my opinion	5.50%
I never write comments or posts about news articles	27.30%

When asked whether they have seen hateful or degrading writings/speech on social media which inappropriately attacks certain groups/individuals, the majority of respondents (67.3%) confirmed that they have been exposed to such content, with 19.1 % stating that they have not seen degrading content and 13.6% stating that they are not sure. Taking into account the findings concerning the motivation to read and write comments on news articles on social media, with information motivation being selected by the majority, such findings (when combined with the majority which confirmed exposure to hate speech) could imply that user generated content could be one of the main sources of hate incitement on social media.

Chart 20: Exposure to hate speech on social media –Egypt

Yes ■ No ■ I'm not sure
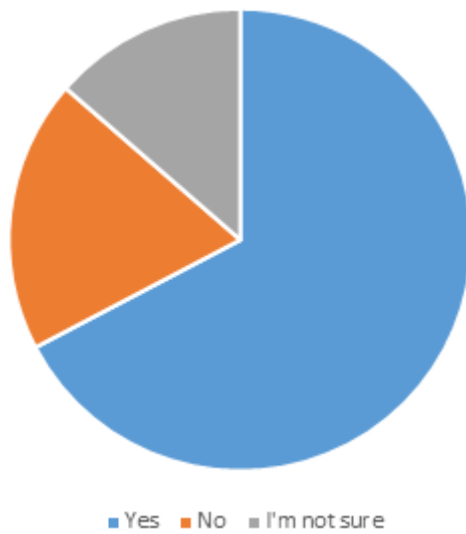
Table 21: Exposure to hate speech on social media -Egypt

Answer	%
Yes	67.30%
No	19.10%
I'm not sure	13.60%

This is confirmed with the majority of respondents stating that they have encountered hate speech on social media displayed in: comments on news articles (59.5%) and posts by individuals on Facebook/Twitter while sharing news articles (55.5%). Confirming how user generated content on social media could potentially include hate speech, 40.5% of respondents mentioned that they encounter such content in statuses and/or tweets, with 40.5% mentioning they find it in shared news videos and almost a third (28.4%) stating they find it in shared news articles. Among the respondents, 20.3% mentioned that they encounter hate speech on social media in articles by professional news media.

Chart 21: Sources of hate speech on social media – Egypt
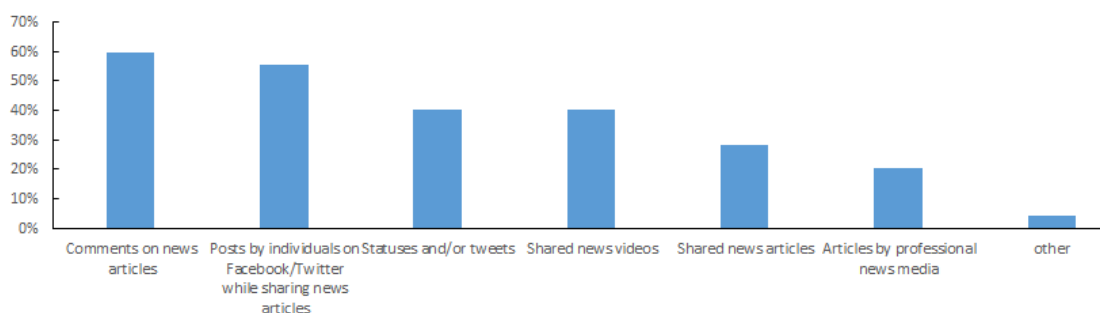
Table 22: Sources of hate speech on social media – Egypt

Sources of hate speech	%
Comments on news articles	59.50%
Posts by individuals on Facebook/Twitter while sharing news articles	55.40%
Statuses and/or tweets	40.50%
Shared news videos	40.50%
Shared news articles	28.40%
Articles by professional news media	20.30%
other	4.10%

A majority of 77% stated that the hateful writings they encounter attack certain groups of individuals for their *political views*, with more than half (52.7%) mentioning attacks based on *religious beliefs/religion*. More than a third of respondents stated that some of the attacks encountered are for individuals' *gender* (32.4%) and *sexual orientation* (31.1%). Such findings are a reflection of the political conditions in Egypt where polarization and judgments are existent massively especially on social media platforms. This goes in accordance with findings from the focus group discussions, where youth displayed as a main reason for not commenting on or sharing political news content, their fear of others' judgment. Such findings also support Hawdon et al.'s (2015) results demonstrating political views as "common targets of hate" mostly in the US followed by Germany then Finland and the UK.

Chart 22: Reasons for hate speech on social media - Egypt
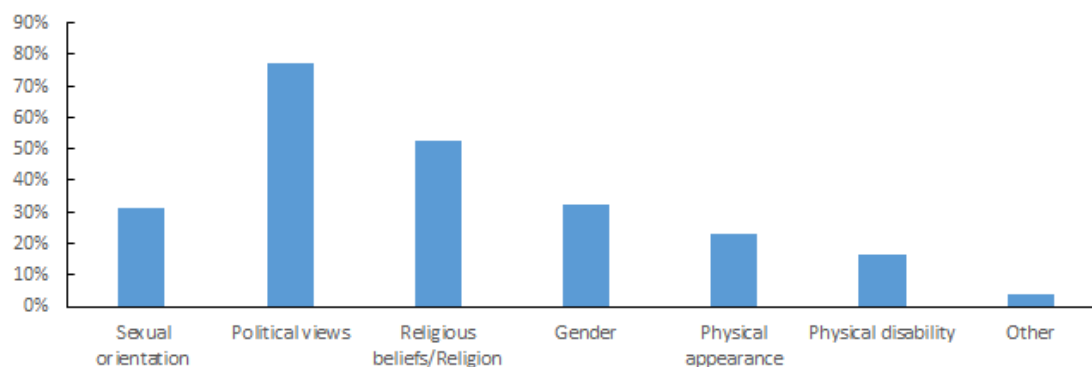
Table 23: Reasons for hate speech on social media - Egypt

Reason for hate speech	%
Sexual orientation	31.10%
Political views	77%
Religious beliefs/Religion	52.70%
Gender	32.40%
Physical appearance	23%
Physical disability	16.20%
Other	4.10%

7. 26 Reacting to Harmful Content

When asked about how they would react to harmful content - with reference to hate speech or fake news - on social media, more than half of the respondents (50.9%) stated that they would ignore it, with 27.3% stating that they would be more proactive by posting other positive material in response offering a different view from that in the hate speech or try to correct false information, and 27.3% mentioning they would report the material to be removed. The difference between the percentage of youth who displayed an indifferent/passive stance in reaction to harmful material, and those who displayed a more assertive/active attitude as displayed in the findings, calls attention to the necessity of raising youth's awareness about the potential damaging consequences of such content. Farkas & Neumayer (2017) emphasize on the merits of proactive reaction against hate speech by shedding light on "crowdsourced reporting" of such content; or in other words collective reaction. The authors give examples of Facebook pages created with the mere purpose of gathering people to collectively report pages with hate rhetoric.

Youth civic engagement and sense of responsibility needs to be boosted and fostered in the

sense of taking actions to encourage what is best for their community rather than yielding to such harmful phenomena - fake news and hate speech. This could be potentially boosted through news literacy which enhances the sense of appreciation to quality information and raises awareness about how relevant such information is to youth's daily lives as one of its main pillars.

Not only do such initiatives result in the removal of harmful pages but further educate users and raise their awareness about the problem.

Chart 23: Reactions to harmful content on social media - Egypt
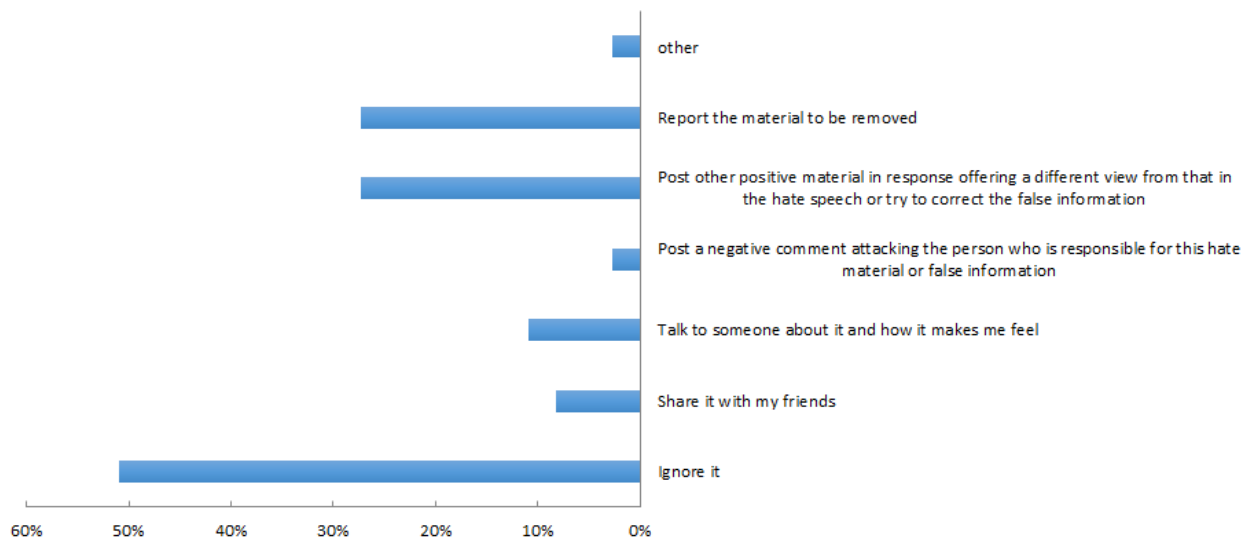
Table 24: Reactions to harmful content on social media - Egypt

Reaction to harmful content	%
Ignore it	50.90%
Share it with my friends	8.20%
Talk to someone about it and how it makes me feel	10.90%
Post a negative comment attacking the person who is responsible for this hate material or false information	2.70%
Post other positive material in response offering a different view from that in the hate speech or try to correct the false information	27.30%
Report the material to be removed	27.30%
other	2.70%

In light of the demonstrated findings a cumulative scale was used to calculate scores of respondents that implies their ability to identify hate speech on social media. Based on this, the following correlation is tested:

H1A: News Literate youth are better able to *identify* explicit hate speech and/or hatred inciting news coverage on social media (Facebook/Twitter)

H1A is supported with Pearson r of 0.129, at significance level 0.05, for the correlation between the level of news literacy and the ability to identify hate speech.

7. 27 Political Engagement

7. 28 Political participation

As previously mentioned, political engagement was estimated through political participation and perception of political knowledge. When asked about their offline political participation over the past 12 months, more than one third (35.5%) of the respondents reported attending a public hearing, town hall meeting or a city council

meeting. This was followed by an equal percentage of respondents (19.1%) reporting having spoken to a public official in person; posted a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker; and voted in elections. Among the respondents, 16.4% reported participating in demonstrations, protests or marches. Essential to mention is that almost quarter of the respondents (20.9%) reported not participating in any of the mentioned activities. The displayed percentages show that youth demonstrate active participation in some but not other offline political activities.

Chart 24: Offline political participation –Egypt

- Attended a public hearing, town hall meeting, or a city council meeting
- Called or sent a letter to an elected public official
- Spoken to a public official in person
- Posted a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker
- Attended a political rally
- Participated in any demonstrations, protests or marches
- Voted in elections
- written a letter to a news organization
- Participated in groups that took any local action for social or political reform
- Been involved in public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees
- None of the above

Table 25: Offline political participation –Egypt

Offline political particiaption	%
Attended a public hearing, town hall meeting, or a city council meeting	35.50%
Called or sent a letter to an elected public official	5.50%
Spoken to a public official in person	19.10%
Posted a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker	19.10%
Attended a political rally	10.90%
Participated in any demonstrations, protests or marches	16.40%
Voted in elections	19.10%
written a letter to a news organization	8.20%
Participated in groups that took any local action for social or political reform	13.60%
Been involved in public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees	5.50%
None of the above	20.90%

When asked about their online political activities, the frequency of the activities are demonstrated in order of ranking from most to least frequent. More than one third (35.5%) of the respondents reported writing to a politician frequently. Almost one third (27.3%) reported making a campaign contribution. Almost a quarter (21.8%) signed up to volunteer to a campaign/issue, with 19.1% sending a political message and 10.9% writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper. These findings reveal relative political engagement when specifically addressing the political participation component.

Chart 25: Online political participation -Egypt
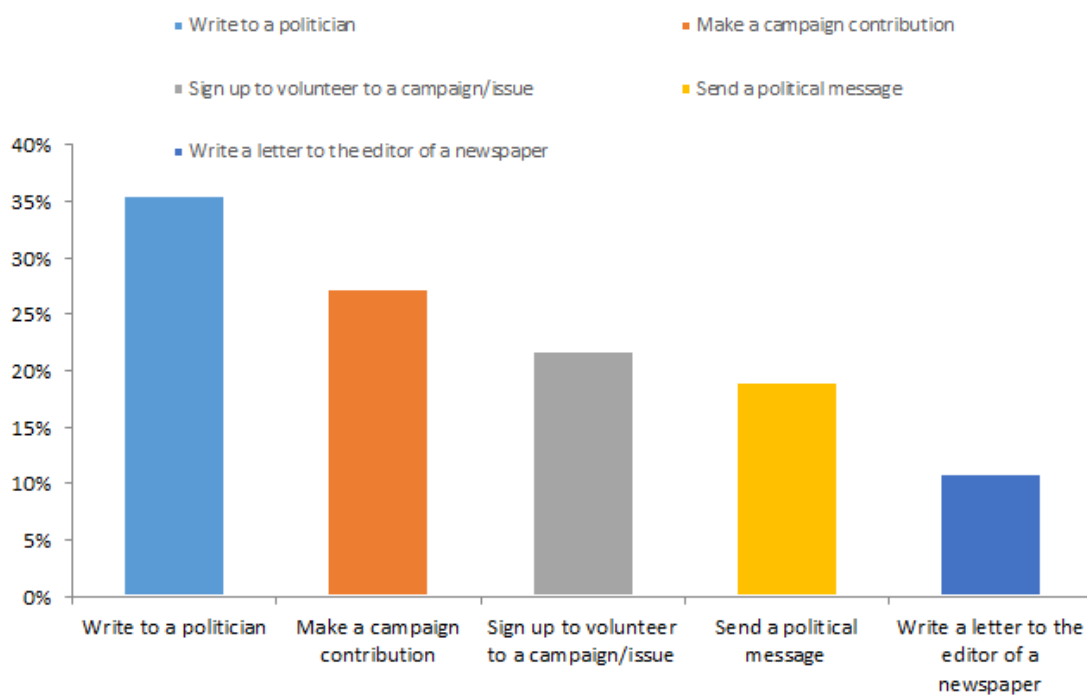
Table 26: Online political participation -Egypt

Online political particiaption	%
Write to a politician	35.50%
Make a campaign contribution	27.30%
Sign up to volunteer to a campaign/issue	21.80%
Send a political message	19.10%
Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper	10.90%

When asked about the extent to which they believe that political participation can influence government policies and decisions, most respondents reported normal influence (37.2%) and low influence (21.8%), with 19.1% reporting strong influence.

Chart 26: Political Efficacy - Egypt

Strong influence · Normal influence · Low influence · No influence at all · Do not know
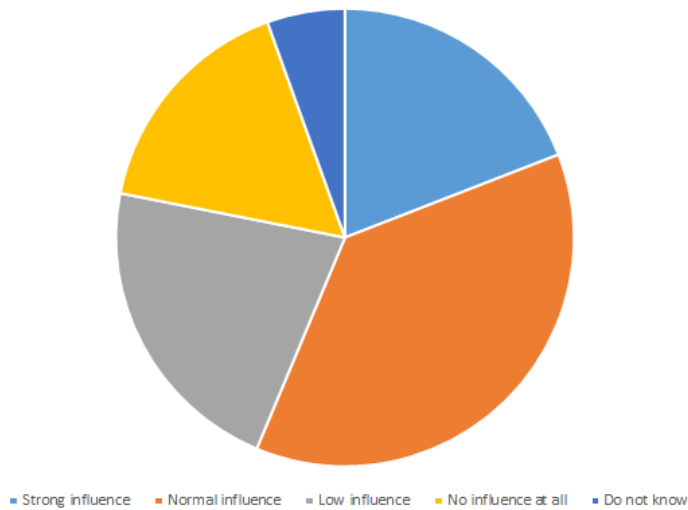
Table 27: Political Efficacy - Egypt

Influence on government	%
Strong influence	19.10%
Normal influence	37.20%
Low influence	21.80%
No influence at all	16.40%
Do not know	5.50%

7. 29 Perception of Current Events Knowledge and Political Interest

When asked about the extent to which they consider themselves knowledgeable and well-informed about current events, the majority (40.9%) reported being *somewhat knowledgeable*, followed by 19.1% reporting being *moderately knowledgeable*.

Chart 27: Perception of current events knowledge – Egypt

- Extremely knowledgeable
- Moderately knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Slightly knowledgeable
- Not at all knowledgeable
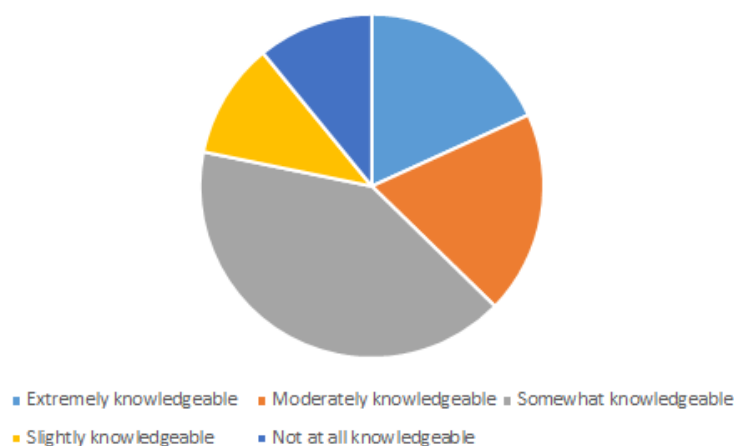
Table 28: Perception of current events knowledge – Egypt

Perception of knowledge	%
Extremely knowledgeable	18.20%
Moderately knowledgeable	19.10%
Somewhat knowledgeable	40.90%
Slightly knowledgeable	10.90%
Not at all knowledgeable	10.90%

In order to control for the accuracy of the results, political interest is assessed as a control variable. The majority of respondents showed minimal interest in politics. More than one third of the respondents reported being *somewhat interested* (34.5%), with more than a third (32.7%) reporting being *slightly interested* in politics. This, when contrasted, to the fact that the majority of youth are accidentally exposed to news while doing other activities online, justifies the dispersed responses regarding political participation. According to scholars (Holt, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Ljungberg, 2013), political interest acts as a motivator to intentional exposure to news. This is further supported by the fact that the primary source of news for respondents is news from social media accounts, meaning active new seeking cannot be implied.

Chart 28: Political Interest - Egypt

■ Extremely interested ■ Moderately interested ■ Somewhat interested ■ Slightly interested ■ Not at all interested
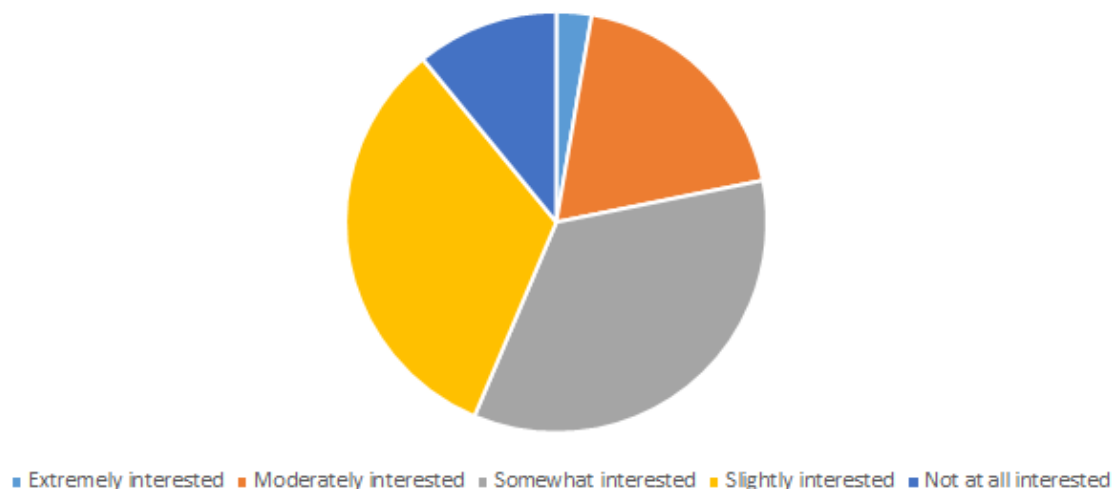
Table 29: Political Interest – Egypt

Political interest	%
Extremely interested	2.70%
Moderately interested	19.10%
Somewhat interested	34.50%
Slightly interested	32.70%
Not at all interested	10.90%

In light of the demonstrated findings, two research questions on correlations between news literacy and political engagement are addressed:

RQ2: What is the correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's *perception of current events knowledge*?

RQ3: What is the correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's political engagement?

Findings reveal a correlation between news literacy level and perception of current events knowledge; Pearson r 0.297 at significance level 0.001. Hence responding to RQ2, there is a positive correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's perception of knowledge. A weak correlation is established between the level of news literacy and political engagement in general, Pearson r 0.087 at significance level 0.364.

The results displayed indicate that despite the fact that political participation findings suggest a good level of participation, when contrasted with their political interest some

contradictory implications could arise. The majority of youth show moderate to slight interest in politics, yet report participating in activities that reflect political participation (though close to a quarter report not participating in any of the suggested activities). When matching the quantitative and qualitative findings; the picture gets clearer. Youth in Egypt go through fluctuations in the level of their political engagement. That is, when there is a major event (such as the revolution), their level of engagement is higher, while in the day to day politics they show less engagement. This is confirmed when matching these findings with their perception of influence on the government; despite more than a third believing their actions have *normal influence* on the government, there is a general inclination towards *low* (21.8%) or *no influence* (16.4%) at all as displayed in the results.

These findings suggest that as scholars (Holt, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Ljungberg, 2013; Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012) note, there is an inferred correlation between habits of news use (online and offline), political interest and political engagement in general. However, when it comes to news literacy, despite the existence of a correlation, however the effect could be less directly correlated. That is, news literacy's impact could show more directly on youth's news behavior which in turn impacts political engagement. Hence news literacy, as suggested in the study's proposed model could act as a mediating variable through reshaping/enhancing youth's news behaviors which in turn reflects on political engagement. This analysis is supported by the significant positive correlation the correlation between motivation to seek news (a constituent of news literacy) and engagement to news (Pearson r = 0.201). It is also supported by the positive correlation between news literacy and engagement to news (r = 0.165).

Such findings support Ashley et al.'s (2017) results; the scholars found that news literacy and political activity are not directly related; however some news literacy constituents can indirectly affect the process. The correlation established here can go back to cumulative scale used to calculate the level of political engagement based on the scores of the measurements of political participation (online and offline), political efficacy and political interest.

7. 30 Discussion and Conclusion

The conducted empirical work on youth from Egypt intends to investigate how the different constituents of news literacy come to play with other variables forming youth's news experience. In this context, the following could be concluded from both the qualitative and quantitative results.

7. 31 Knowledge and Trust

Addressing the problem from the roots, trust in the news media has been an essential area to delve into. Accordingly, based on the qualitative and quantitative findings, lack of trust and skepticism (or cynicism in this case) toward news media has been displayed. During the focus group discussions youth demonstrated that the opinions of others is important to them in order to form their own. This is confirmed in the quantitative findings with *statuses, comments, tweets or posts of friends on Facebook/Twitter* coming in the second place before *websites of newspapers/magazines* as sources of news online. Despite the fact that *accounts of professional news organizations on social media* came first as a source of news, still youth report seeking such sources from social media platform which reflects how the social context appeals to them. By social context here we refer to the dynamics of social media versus those of professional media's websites; where in the former there is more diversity of voices than the latter. This demonstrates the desire to check peer citizens' views besides checking the factual information provided by news.

In accordance, a general negative perception about media was confirmed in quantitative findings supporting responses from the focus group discussions. When presented with statements to assess trust in the media, the majority of youth were inclined to agree to negative statements and disagree with positive ones as highlighted. Further, findings from the credibility assessment confirm the doubtful stance youth hold against news media previously displayed in the findings of media trust. Contrasting these findings, with the revelation that the majority of youth are confused when it comes to *knowledge of the news media industry* (specifically roles definition and impact of the different persons involved in the industry), a link could be established. Supporting scholars' stances (Craft et al., 2017; Pérez-Rodríguez and Delgado-Ponce, 2012), knowledge of the media industry is correlated with users' trust and engagement with the media as displayed in the results. The more news users understand and obtain sufficient knowledge about how the news media industry

works, the more chance there is that they will trust and engage with the news. Hence, here with the confusion there is in this knowledge area, it is potentially one explanation to the lack of trust.

7. 32 News Perception and Social Media News Experience

Throughout the discussions with students, the importance of talk shows and content that features views was emphasized. This goes in accordance with the aforementioned issue of lack of trust; the less they trust the media, the more likely they are to seek others' opinions. The majority of respondents expressed their complete awareness about how content in the news media is impacted by political and commercial motives, as highlighted in the results of *knowledge about news media effects.* Respondents are fully aware about the fact that news stories are *constructed* as reflected in the discussions referring to how stories are selected and pushed to the surface to serve the news organizations' agendas (be it commercial or political). Same result emerged in the qualitative analysis (*knowledge about the real world*). Besides, awareness of the news users' role in the process, that is, content selection emerged in the results. In both, the discussions and questionnaire (*knowledge of news content*), respondents acknowledged confirmation bias in their selection of news content. Such findings support Arendt et al.'s (2016) Media-related selection which highlights journalists' gatekeeping function as filters of content and audience's selective exposure and sharing behavior as further discussed below. Having mentioned motives that drive the construction of news stories, respondents shed light on how professional news organizations on social media use sensationalism in their headlines clickbaiting the readers.

So where do professional news media stand as sources of news? Regarding this matter, the role of social media platforms as filters of content and their power over news organizations emerge. As a matter of fact, findings of this study reveal the extent to which youth can engage with news on social media; accounts of professional news organizations on social media ranked as the first source of news by respondents. Contrasted with the informational use of Facebook (being the main social media platform used), *getting news about current events from mainstream media* is the primary informational use according to the respondents. Analyzing youth's preference to get their news on social media, Hermida et al. (2012) state that: "the traditional gatekeeping function of the media is weakened as a significant proportion of news consumers turn to family, friends and acquaintances to alert

them to items of interest". This statement is supported by the qualitative findings of this study, where youth emphasized the importance of the opinions/views of trusted individuals.

7. 33 Online News Behavior and Harmful Content:

The discussion around how news is perceived by youth on social media calls for another on how youth are behaving around it. As highlighted in the quantitative findings the majority of respondents share content on social media. Interesting when contrasted with the previously mentioned findings, information is seeking was found to be the main motive behind youth's sharing behavior, with more than a third stating it helps them stay updated about latest news and events. Socializing came second as a drive for youth's decision to share attempting to exchange ideas, keep in touch and interact. These findings conform to the fact that youth relate better to news on social media than through traditional channels/platforms. This supports Hermida et al.'s (2012) statement that "a person's social circle takes on the role of news editor, deciding whether a story, video or other piece of content is important, interesting or entertaining enough to recommend". Here personalization algorithms play their role.

In that sense, what is youth's online news behavior like? Does it reflect enough responsibility? In fact, contradictory findings emerged in the responses cross checking process. Despite respondents believing that they react critically towards online news, responses to critical questions regarding the matter say otherwise. In the focus group discussions respondents confirm that they are able to discern fake from real news, yet they show otherwise through their decision to only read headlines of news stories. It is paradoxical that despite being aware and clear that fabricated news and misleading headlines are common on social media, still the majority of students just read the headlines and rarely clicks on them for full stories. Same emerged in the quantitative findings with respondents displaying care about the veracity of content shared, yet not necessarily checking sources of information in a news story before sharing it. It is also essential to mention that *neutral* positions were significant with more than a third choosing neutral when asked whether they only share news from professional news organizations.

When it comes to hate speech, the majority of youth in both the qualitative and quantitative studies reported exposure to such content.

Findings reveal hate speech for political views to be the most encountered type, followed by religious beliefs/religion, gender and sexual orientation. As aforementioned, taking into account the findings concerning the motivation to read and write comments on news articles on social media, with information motivation being selected by the majority, such findings (when combined with the majority which confirmed exposure to hate speech) implies that user generated content is one of the main sources of hate incitement on social media.

This is confirmed with the majority of youth reporting encountering hate speech displayed in comments on news articles, posts by individuals on social media and statuses/tweets.

In the focus group discussion, respondents blamed the professional media for polarizing the society through acting as "engines of hate speech" as put in their own words. Respondents, without being asked, stated that professional news media consistently incites hatred against those with opposing political views. Quantifying these findings, a significant percentage of respondents reported finding hate speech in shared news videos and close to a quarter mentioned they encounter hate speech in articles by professional news media.

More than half of the respondents stated that they normally ignore harmful content (fake news/hate speech), with close to a third mentioning they post positive material in response.

So where does professional media stand in this process? According to Mitchell & Jukowitz (2014), users who directly go to the website of the news organizations by typing/bookmarking the link "spend much more time on that news site, view many more pages of content and come back far more often" than users who use Facebook or search engines to get there. Despite the chances of dissemination social media provide, still such results does not reflect strong engagement with professional news sites. This is supported by the findings of this study with websites of professional newspapers/magazines coming third as a source of news to respondents. Having mentioned that, combined with respondents' perception of news media, the role of professionals in the industry is accentuated to become active players in news literacy initiatives with the intention to regain users' trust.

7. 34 Conclusion

Having demonstrated the findings from the qualitative and quantitative studies conducted on Egyptian young people from different universities, the results show a good level of news literacy. The results also confirm the essentiality of news literacy to face harmful content and mediate political engagement.

The next chapter demonstrates findings of the same study applied on a sample of Spanish young people from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB).

Chapter 8

Findings and Analysis:

Spain

As previously mentioned, this study relies on triangulation approach using the survey questionnaire as a quantitative method and focus group discussions as a qualitative method. Findings are demonstrated under the same categories used in the findings analysis of Egypt in order to maintain a comparative approach.

8. 1 Qualitative Findings:

Focus Group Discussions

Following the study by Craft et al. (2013) conducted on teenagers with the target of measuring news media literacy, the focus group questions were designed under three broad categories; news media use; news media content, industries and effects; and personal motivation to seek news. In addition a category of political engagement is added to serve the purpose of this study which is understanding how news literacy relates to involvement in political issues and behaviors. Further, a category on hate speech and fake news emerged in one of Egypt's focus group discussions and accordingly is added to the findings and discussion with the respondents from Spain.

8. 2 News Media Use

8. 3 Media Use and Sources of News

From the overall discussion with the interviewed youth, it is inferred that they regularly check the news. The issue of Catalonia's independence was the most prevalent throughout the discussion based on which such inference could be made. It is clear that they no longer use traditional media, such as TV, radio or newspapers, they are more inclined to get their news online. Regarding social media platforms, Twitter followed by Instagram were highlighted as the main platforms used by the interviewees who also mentioned that they stopped using Facebook long ago and that it is for older generations.

The main justification provided for preferring to follow news online was the fact that they have easier and faster access to a variety of sources, while traditional media is more restricting in that sense.

"*I never read hard copy newspapers; I follow news on the internet because they are faster to read and because you can see more news at the same time*"

Youth show awareness about the fact that different news sources are inclined to report news in a manner that goes in accordance with the side they take (anti or pro-independence), which guides their news use habits. All respondents agreed that, being aware of such issue, they follow different sources of news to get a better idea about the events. This means that the follow local news sources from Catalonia (such as La Vanguardia) as well as national news sources (such as El Pais).

A general discontent with the manner in which the media is handling the issue has been revealed. The interviewees mentioned that living in Catalonia, they are able to witness some events personally and hence are able to judge the media coverage of the same events. In their words the term Spanish media was used to refer to the national media (anti-independence). Accordingly, one respondent said:

"*I am ... in the middle; I am neither for independence nor do I like what the Spanish government is doing ...I don't ... believe the Spanish media; there are many things [in their coverage] that annoy me because I have personally lived and witnessed them [the covered events] so I know that it didn't happen the way they are telling it*"

In that sense, respondents agreed that each person is more inclined to follow the news sources which go in line with their stance. Here, concepts such as confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance emerge, as mental barriers that guide youth's news use (Jonas, Schultz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001; Festinger, 2009).

"*this is a very delicate issue; but if you are personally for independence then you will tend to believe information given by pro-independence media that anti-independence media*"

One respondent compared how they follow current events news to following sports news. The respondent highlights that such comparison emerges from the fact that news media

dedicate their content to please their readers. That is, every news organization have their target readers based on which the content is tailored to fit their views.

"*I think this is why it is like sports media, if I am for Barca I would follow the news media speaking to me well about Messi and bad about Cristiano....same for the issue of independence, if I am pro-independence I will seek the media that keeps telling me we are winning and so on*"

Despite so, showing awareness about these issues, respondents all agree that to get healthily informed, it is essential to remain critical and "leave aside your personal ideology" to judge the content. However, they still emphasize that in most cases this fails as a result of news users getting comfortable with information and news media that confirm their ideologies (cognitive dissonance) making them feel they are on the right side.

"*if a person who lives here in Catalonia doesn´t want to personally engage with what´s happening and only get their information from what the media tells them without getting out to see what´s happening then [this news user] feeds only on what the media tells [them] about it living with their ideologies confirmed ...it´s like living in a closed circle*"

8. 4 Discussing News with Others

As previously mentioned, the issue of independence has been the most dominant throughout the discussion with the interviewed youth. Hence, the majority displayed reluctance in discussing news with others; due to the sensitivity of the topic. Such responses reveal the extent to which news media contributes to the polarization of citizens to the extent that they fear discussions could potentially turn into fights. One respondent mentioned that the information provided by the news media "divides families" between pro and against.

"*this leaves me asking, is this really the information [source]?...it is a shame...Yes it is a political situation but the media are creating agitation and an upsetting environment...the media pass values to the people ...so the fact that one news[organization] encourage you to hate others who disagree with you is shameful*"

However, on the other hand, while discussing their general motivation to seek news (as elaborated in the section dedicated to this area below), respondents mentioned the ability to

discuss news/current topics with their peers and friends as a motive to seek news. Accordingly, deliberations with peer citizens is important to them in the psychological sense of making them feel that they form part of the public opinion.

8. 5 Knowledge about Current Events

Respondents displayed general awareness of current updates regarding the issue of Catalonia's independence. This has been the main topic addressed by the news media at the time of conduction the discussion. The interviewees also mentioned that they are aware that the media chooses one topic and makes it center of attention for a while depending on their motives and agenda. Hence they were aware that the media's prioritizing to the topic is what is making it occupy their thoughts besides the direct impact the issue has on them.

8. 6 News Media Content, Industries and Effects

8. 7 News Making and Selection Process

In order to have grounds based on which the discussion could be built, respondents were asked about their perception of news; how they define news. Accordingly, there is a general agreement among the interviewees that news ideally is about facts. They show a general understanding that news *represent* reality in the form of factual information selected based on the impact it potentially has on people's daily lives. However, despite this acknowledgement, interviewees displayed awareness about how some occurrences in the 'reality' make it to news while others do not, depending on what is of interest to news users most. They also displayed an inclination to perceive news as content created based on the decisions made by "news workers".

So, despite acknowledging the Tuchman's (1978) traditional approach of defining the news, still the interviewees were more inclined to believe the interpretive approach. The first accentuates the power of the society in shaping the news, while the latter acknowledges the decisions of journalists and those involved in the news making process as the main factors behind constructing the news (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978).. Hence awareness about how news is constructed and the fact that there are criteria an occurrence should meet to become a news event is was demonstrated among the interviewees.

"*we should be aware that we only receive part of the occurrences that are happening as a result of what the journalists select ... I think that news contributes to the image that we have about the world; which gives us an image/a vision that doesn´t perfectly reflect reality or the society*"

Despite the general agreement that news should present facts with the main aim of informing the public, interviewees showed skepticism when it comes to this matter. One of the respondents confirmed that the most important criteria in news selection nowadays relates to engaging the audience with the news organization and hence making profits. One respondent stated that:

"*what they [news media] look for the most is to 'sell' some facts...the more repercussion it has on you the more they are going to sell it...there might be a fact that is as important [as the one they sell] or that includes more essential details but since it doesn´t have an echo with you [the news user] they are not going to include it.*"

Another interviewee agreed saying that:

"*it is more about selling a product than about informing people about what´s happening*"

8. 8 Objectivity, Agendas, Bias and Credibility

Generally speaking, respondents show awareness of the different concepts of objectivities, agendas, bias and credibility by demonstrating their views on each. All the interviewees agreed that absolute **objectivity** does not exist. Galtung and Ruge's (1965) media perception concept emerged during the discussions when respondents showed awareness about how the subjectivity of journalists and media organizations can interfere with the creation of news content; starting from the selection process to how it is represented.

"*I think everyone knows that total objectivity does not exist…. behind all facts, there are persons who are covering news and are writing it and telling it from their point of view while doing so…. then it is difficult to maintain objectivity*"

In that sense, the discussion shed light on the degree of news users' awareness of lack of objectivity and further on the readers' own objectivity depending on the degree of involvement in the events covered. Hence, the concept of confirmation bias emerges in this

area of discussion again by highlighting how readers see information that goes in line with their stances more than other facts. Addressing the issue of awareness about the lack of objectivity, one respondent said:

"*if you have this awareness then you can better reach the bottom of the story by extracting specific data from what you´re reading ...the problem is a lot of people are not aware that what they are reading is not objective...as a result the problem of lack of information appears when you´re not aware that what you´re reading is transmitted through the point of view of the media organization or the journalist*"

Another theme that has been repeatedly highlighted emerging from the responses in the session is **direct involvement in the event**. Meaning, the degree to which news users are involved in the occurrences covered by the media, affects how they perceive it as objective or credible. Hence, one of the respondents stated that:

"*objectivity is easier to achieve in local news more than nationwide or international news*"

By that reference is made again to the issue of independence, where reading local news about it after being directly involved makes readers judge the news objectivity better. However, if someone lives outside of the region, depending on which news outlet they are exposed to, they form an opinion that can be affected by the **bias** in the media.

Declaring lack of trust in the news coverage, it has been emphasized that direct access to events is most critical to youth. Respondents believe that completely depending on the media to become sufficiently informed about what is happening is not enough. Hence, awareness of the **agenda** and **credibility** concept emerges from the fact that the interviewees fully understand that each news media organization have their own political tendencies and follows their agenda regardless of how far this can go. They are further aware about the agenda setting influence of the media, having shed light on how the media dictates citizens' interest through prioritizing certain events and giving them extensive coverage. This in turn affects their credibility in the eyes of news users. One respondent stated that it is almost impossible to be able to tell whether the media is reporting truthfully:

"I think the information could be very much speculated... if you're living out of Catalonia you will not know what is really happening... I live here and I am pro-independence and I still don't know if there are things they [the media] are lying about or not"

8. 9 News Relevance and Online News Exposure/Behavior

When asked about reading news online, all respondents agreed that the meaning of *reading* news has changed. All four respondents stated that they often only read headlines of news stories online (or on social media). Through the discussion, it is inferred that there is a gap between the extent to which students are aware that reading the headline is never sufficient, and their behavior. Despite that, there is an acknowledgment that this should not be the case and that headlines do not give them full information, yet they do feel informed reading only headlines. This goes in line with Müller, Schneiders & Schäfer's (2016) concept of the "illusion of knowledge"; referring the idea that mere exposure to news gives the feeling of being informed which might not necessarily be true.

"Yes I am conscious that I only read the headline... but psychologically, [I] still feel that [I am] informed about the subject and it serves [my] purpose and [I] settle for that ...and this is how reading has changed"

On the other hand, seeing the bright side, respondents mentioned that at least being aware and "conscious" about their "ignorance" is important. Paradoxically, despite mentioning that they feel somewhat informed when they only read headlines, the interviewees acknowledge the fact that they lack detailed information.

"despite saying we feel informed, but I know if you asked me questions about the topic I will not have enough answers "

When asked about the reason why they do not read full articles instead of only headlines, besides mentioning interest and relevance as factors, some agreed that it is due to "lack of time" and/or "lack of involvement". One respondent attributed the reason to the fact that on the "screen" the first and most things that grab attention are the picture and the headline.

However, this does not mean that the respondents never read a full news story. It has been reported by them that they do click on the headline and read if they find the story interesting or important to them.. This means that instead of reading every single headline

that comes across their way on the internet, the select what they believe is important to them to read, which can be regarded as *smart reading* of news online. In that sense, the students showed awareness about the clickbait content online and that they as "journalism students" try their best to avoid articles of pertinence. This goes in line with scholars' stance regarding how professional media currently pushes clickbait news stories to maintain their commercial model (Lotero-Echeverri et al., 2018). More details about respondents' selection manner is discussed below in the section on personal motivation to seek news.

The interviewees were asked about their sharing behavior to contrast their responses on this with their responses regarding their reading behavior. Respondents gave four different responses in this regard; not sharing, sharing in line with own ideology, aware about the impact of algorithms so very careful with sharing decisions, and deciding to share or not depending on the platform used:

- Not sharing:

One respondent stated that she normally does not share anything making special emphasis on political topics. The main reason behind deciding not to share is her sense of responsibility and fear to unintentionally mislead or misinform her community. A general feeling that no matter how much she reads on a topic, she will still be missing the details which will hinder her ability to "contribute" to the discussion by sharing. This respondent however stated that she rarely shares only when she is sure she knows the issue very well.

"*I can have my opinion, I can know but only when I know a topic very well I will share ....for example the topic of Catalonia independence is a so big and strong one that I do not dare to share anything if I don't have something to say ...I don't to share anything if I don't have something to say. ...because I think I cannot contribute*"

The fact that this respondent does not share for the mentioned reason reveals awareness about the dangerous repercussions of online sharing. Hence, she would rather not share than mislead or misinform.

- In line with own ideology:

Two respondents reported that they share when they find "interesting" content, mainly in line with their ideologies. One respondent stated that when she comes across content that she prefers, she feels the urge to share it and let more people know about it.

"*so it's when you find something new or something surprising in your favor or that supports your side, you want people to know*"

The other respondent demonstrated a strong attitude when it comes to accounts/individuals she follows on Twitter. She emphasized that she only follows news media and politicians in line with her political opinion and position, highlighting that she has always been a partisan when it comes to political issues. She clarified the reason for that to be that when she logs into her account she does not want to see content that makes her "angry". Accordingly, she demonstrates efforts to avoid cognitive dissonance by limiting her content to one side of the argument while admitting being aware about it.

"*my twitter doesn't reflect me as a student of journalism, it reflects me as a person with my ideology ...so if you see my tweets they are all reflecting my ideologies and interest in culture, feminism,politics ...etc. So I will not follow someone who would piss me off when I see their tweets or a media source that as well would piss me off if I read their content ...I know that this is what I should do but...I still try to stay informed about other sides from other sources...but not on Twitter, it hurts to do so and part of me says no these are not my values*"

Hence, she is aware about the "filter bubble" and selected content based on personalization algorithms, yet still chooses to focus on ideas or values that *confirm her bias* rather than make her uncomfortable (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017).

- Awareness about algorithms guiding the decision:

Unlike the previous respondent, another respondent stated that being fully aware about algorithms and how online actions translate into content limited to one's interest, this affects his decisions to share or not. This respondent demonstrated his willingness not to let his confirmation bias control the content that reaches him. Accordingly, he stated that he follows and likes accounts on social media that support and are against his views to get the closest to a full picture. Bearing this in mind, such ideas guide him and make him think twice before sharing, knowing that such action would be recorded and will have an impact on the content he receives.

"every time you like something or you share it they[social media platforms] form an idea about you and have provisions according to which they select for you the information they want then this is what appears to you first... it's likely that people who share do it when they see something that is in accordance with their ideology then they quickly share to reinforce even more their ideas ..and I think that's a problem"

- The social media platform guiding the decision:

The same respondent who reported that she usually does not share stated that she uses Twitter for information seeking instead. Through her responses it is inferred that the social media platform interferes with her decision to share content or not depending on how she perceives and uses it. In that sense, she highlighted that her Twitter account does not "represent" her as a person, that is, since she does not share much. She uses it mainly to catch up and get information. In support, the respondent stated:

"I think what can represent me more is Instagram for example but Twitter doesn't represent me...Twitter informs me"

All four themes that emerged in relevance to the youth's sharing behavior reveal that they are fully aware about the impact their online behavior has. Despite some of them taking decisions that leave them less informed than others, they still display consciousness about their decisions and the implications they might have.

8. 10 Perception of News Media and Critical Questioning of News Content

As aforementioned, the interviewees have a general negative perception about news media's coverage. They view it as not trustworthy, biased and carrying agendas and that the media care more about "selling" content to people rather than informing them. It is essential to mention though that the responses emerge with the issue of Catalonia's independence occupying and dominating the discussion. In view of that, respondents were asked about what exactly is the role that should be played by the news media and specifically regarding the issue of providing what the individuals *need* versus *want* to know. All respondents agreed on some ideas including:

- The news media shapes our beliefs about what we as citizens *need* to know

- They are not fulfilling their main role of informing citizens about important matters

- Political reasons and commercial interests are driving news content selection

- The news media are the main channel through which citizens can get information about political institutes and governments

With these ideas in mind, the respondents prefer to know about events that would matter in their decision-making process. One respondent mentioned corruption cases as an example, especially ones affiliated with politicians.

"*in reality it is about what they [the news media] decide that you [citizen] need and they make you think that this is what you need....it is something fatal really ....the boundaries between what you need to know, what you want to know and what they want you to know are very blurry*"

In response to that, respondents shed light on the fact that most citizens "idealize the media"; or in other words, take whatever the media tells them for granted without questioning. According to them, two reasons are behind automaticity in uncritically accepting the media's content; the desire to "stick to [one's] ideologies" and to avoid the effort of having think critically about the news read. This supports the long standing concept of "taking for grantedness" referring to how the audience *naturally* accepts whatever the media has to say; here it applies when it is in line with their stances (Tuchman, 1978).

Respondents were divided in that sense; some saying than lack of objectivity sometimes serves their purpose of hearing content in line with their beliefs, while others emphasizing that it is always better to get balanced coverage. In that sense one of the respondents expressed discontent towards the idea of citizen's being critical, highlighting that it is the journalists' to provide us with fair and balanced information:

"*the media today all carry ideologies and don't merely inform us about facts... theoretically they should inform us about facts; yes people should be critical but it should not be the assignment of people to contrast information...I shouldn't feel that it is inevitably necessary that I check the information all the time, there should be media that do their job and be trustworthy*"

When asked about the meaning of being critical from their perspectives, respondents agreed that it mainly refers to asking why. Meaning, questioning the reasons behind the

media's decision to bring this specific news story to the audience and why they are sharing what's available and why they are hiding what's not. Another thing they agreed on is the fact that the essentiality of being critical nowadays goes back to individuals' lack of trust in the media and their desire to be adequately informed.

Despite realizing its necessity, the interviewees stated that it is not an easy task; it requires effort, time and knowledge about the context of a news story.

"*it's about having knowledge, you can't have knowledge about everything....but at least you should have enough knowledge about a topic to be able to put it in context...for example I try to stay informed about the war in Syria, but I can't be critical because at the end I don't have enough knowledge to fully understand a conflict with such complexity*"

8. 11 Fake News and Hate Speech

Respondents all agreed that they encountered harmful messages; fake news and hate speech on social media. Having mentioned that the media can encourage hatred towards those with opposing views, respondents blame the sharing behavior of social media users (in line with Vosoughi et al. (2018), Anderson & Rainie, (2017)) most for the spread of harmful content. Respondents highlighted that with social media giving the power of commenting and sharing to anyone, emerges the downside of high exposure to such material. Light was shed most on Twitter, being the social media platform they use most. Accordingly users' comments were also regarded as one of the main sources of hate speech/fake news on social media. A special focus was given to audiovisual content, believing that it has the strongest impact.

Another factor that respondents mentioned as highly important is the context. Taken out of context, the meanings in one piece of information can absolutely change.

"*You share without knowing anything about the context that surrounds [the message]....it happened for example with me personally when in UAB we decided to strike for a day...so a peer sent us a link on whatsapp explaining the objectives of the strike ...so since I know the university well, I knew and understood exacly what's happening......this message has reached my uncle who is completely not related to the university and it reached him with a completely different meaning because it reached him without context ...So this is what*

happens with content shared on Twitter or Facebook and not just those also this is includes Whatsapp"

Discussing harmful messages, respondents were directly asked about their experience(s), if any, with hate speech. Throughout the discussion reference was mostly made to hate speech based on political views and religion, and gender was slightly referred to. Regarding hate based on political views, the focus of the argument was on Catalonia's independence issue. Respondents agreed that they would not categorize it under hate speech, as much as it is dividing and separating content that polarizes citizens. However one respondent referred to a case when one of the journalists against independence said that "the government can bomb Barcelona if they want", referring to the incident as a clear example of how the media can possibly disseminate hate speech. Respondents agreed that hate speech disseminated through professional media is usually more "subtle" than crystal clear. However, one respondent mentioned that it is even more subtle when it comes to religion than political views. She mentioned that regarding politics media become the speakers of politicians and "accentuate" whatever they say in the process. On the other hand, it is impossible to be as blunt when it comes to religion; the news media disseminates messages and let the reader connect the dots. As aforementioned, the respondents said that what the media does most is separate the people by establishing barriers, stereotypes about the other for instance, more than hate speech.

"hate on basis of religion [has been] the most prevalent in the media especially over the last years ...this is more subtle and more difficult to understand...they will never bluntly put you against a religion...however...you go on and read one piece of news, and another, and another and end up with a general idea which wakes up hate or rejection...that is, it separates the people; us who are 'normal' or numerous and the others"

Having said that, the interviewees hence agreed that in order to detect hate speech one must dedicate focus on a specific topic to track how it is covered. In that sense, reference was made to the juxtaposition of news stories to deliver hate message undetectably. One respondent commented on that saying:

"you see the media talking about the guards forcing a Muslim woman to take off the burkini [modest swimming suit worn by Muslim women] on the beach, and under this news story another talking about a terrorist attack on the beach!!...Or talking about Muslim

women who don't want to wear the veil, and under it mentioning the Islamic terrorism...you normally read quickly and don't really realize unless you focus....so as far as detecting hate speech, I think it is difficult"

There was a general agreement on how easy it has become to generate and disseminate hate speech and how challenging and difficult it is to stop it. This goes in accordance with scholars' (Tandoc Jr. et al., 2018; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017) statement that harmful content spread easily when extreme/polarized stances exist; which is the case from the respondents' perspective as highlighted through their focus on Catalonia's independence issue. Further, the respondents were fully aware about the negative consequences of such content on any society; separating people by building "frontiers" between them. One respondent said:

"We saw a documentary in class about two ethnic groups fighting and the impact of hate speech was horrible! It scares me"

Regarding fake news, respondents were asked about their ability to identify fake news and also their ability to verify content. Respondents are aware that fake news usually imitates professional news in form in order to appear real (Tandoc Jr. et al., 2018) and that such content usually seeks attention and is like a "spectacle". This has been demonstrated by Pérez Tornero et al.'s (2018) spectacular mediatisation paradigm describing the current reality of the news environment. As the scholars state, the news environment nowadays is about political mediatisation, "content commercialization", "consumption culture", as well as shifting rhetoric from "factual and rational" to "emotional and theatrical". This is further reflected in the themes of fake news perception discussed below.

Thanks to being journalism students as they stated it, the interviewees trust their ability to detect fake news. One respondent said:

"last year they [the faculty professors] taught us how to write a headline, what words to use, what verbs ...so as we have studied such nuances, we can see/identify them"

It is essential to highlight that three different perceptions of fake news emerged during the discussion:

- Content fabricated for political motives

Respondents agree that influencing public opinion by misleading citizens is one of the most prominent motives for the creation of fake news. This goes in line with their perception about news as biased and caring more about appealing to its readers than informing in a balanced manner. Hence, this provides a more suitable environment for fake news' disguise as real news.

- Content fabricated for commercial motives

Under this category, the interviewees mainly referred to clickbait articles by professional news media disseminated for commercial purposes more than information providing. They are aware about how professional news media use sensationalism in their headlines to attract the readers to click and boost traffic on their websites.

- Incomplete/half-true news stories

Respondents all agree that when the news media hides some information in a news story, it is equivalent to 'lying' to them. Consequently, they categorize such instances as one form of fake news. In that sense, respondents referred to this type as a more "subtle" version of fake news being more difficult to detect. One respondent gave an example saying:

"*If now they [the media] tell you that someone in the PP is corrupt which was not mentioned before, you don't really ask yourself if it's true or not ...while it could be that someone wants to defame PP ...but it's very much within the dynamic that you don't ask whether it's true or not*"

This supports the concepts of confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance (Jones, Schultz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001; Festinger, 2009), acknowledging that citizens, in times of polarized opinions, fail to question information that support their side of the argument.

When discussing their ability to verify content, respondents failed to differentiate between assessing credibility and verification as two different skills (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Accordingly, credibility/verification to them is about whether or not the event really took place. Hence one respondent highlights, in that sense, how easy it is for her to verify content:

"*to verify you can simply google and if you see El Periodico, La Vanguardia and El Pais, the three of them covering the incident then you know it's true that something has happened*"

Despite consulting multiple sources being essential, still respondents have not mentioned anything regarding breaking down the news story, checking the journalists' credentials or other tasks that can be done to verify content (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000).

Analyzing the discussion around harmful content (hate speech and/or fake news), it is revealed that the interviewees have a good level of awareness about the problem. In both cases, fake news and hate speech, it appeared that they have the basic knowledge and abilities to detect harmful content. Displaying awareness that, in many instances, such content is "subtle" shows consciousness about the limits of their knowledge and abilities regarding this area.

8. 12 Personal Motivation to Seek News

As abovementioned, the discussion about news was dominated by the issue of Catalonia's independence being the biggest matter at the time of conducting the focus group discussion. Hence, all respondents seemed highly motivated to seek news in order to stay informed and updated about how the issue is evolving. Not only were they motivated to seek news, they were further driven to contrast the information they get from the media with reality by trying to become as much as possible personally involved.

To the interviewees, there are some factors that guide their decision to seek information, with all agreeing that seeking news "empowers" them. The factors that could be deducted from the discussion are:

- Interest: the degree to which the issue covered triggers the user's interest is a determinant to whether or not he/she is going to seek more information about it
- Prior knowledge: the extent to which the news user is informed about the issue is a variable; the more knowledge they have about the issue, the more likely they would want to stay updated about it
- Proximity and impact: the location is an essential factor to them; if something is happening in their direct environment or close then it has a clear impact on them. Hence, this makes them seek news about it
- Forming part of the public opinion: the interviewees highlighted that following the news makes them an active part of the discussions with their peers and helps them

avoid being "excluded". They also stated that it is important to form an active part in the public opinion and hence this motivates them to seek news.

"it´s either you´re really interested or you also want to share interests of those around you not to feel separated ...then in that case there is this pressure that you have to know!"

8. 13 Political Engagement

When asked about whether or not they were active citizens when it comes to political participation, all interviewees affirmed that they are highly involved. The most referred to forms of political participation were voting and demonstrations. Respondents all understand the importance of supporting the politicians they agree with and parties in line with their ideologies. One respondent mentioned that the word "*my* party" is very common to hear emphasizing on the strong sense of ownership and belonging citizens have towards the political parties they support. Accordingly, such support has recently been reflected in the form of voting (since they became eligible voters recently because of their age) and through demonstrations.

In light of this, respondents stated that the role of news is not fulfilled as should be. In line with the aforementioned discussion, they view the news media as biased and all the time trying to push agendas and ideas towards the citizens. One of the techniques used by the media as one respondent highlighted is labeling; using stereotypes and expressions such as "radical leftists". In that sense, there was a general agreement that the news is not that important to them in the decision making process since each individual who supports an ideology/a party is not going to change that, but will search for information to confirm it.

"we already have a general idea...we know the parties, or at least the ideologies we want to vote for ...even if i find the news telling me something else, I will stick to my ideas looking for media which agree with me Confirmation bias/ Cognitive dissonance ...at the end news are not going to change my voting decision, unless it is something super strong, like the attacks of March 11th"

Respondents agreed that the news media can influence voting decisions only in case the voter is undecided. In this case, the most probable scenario is that this voter will seek news information to decide on the party/politician he/she wants to follow. Such impact is as well

decided by the degree of involvement of citizens in the political issues addressed by the media as previously highlighted.

8. 14 Quantitative Findings:

Survey Questionnaire

As demonstrated in the findings analysis of Egypt, the findings in this chapter are demonstrated under themed categories through which hypotheses are tested and research questions are responded to. The same survey was conducted to students in Spain with the exception of one question in which the responses were altered to fit; the question on the news media used.

8. 15 Youth's patterns of News Use on Social Media:

In order to reach the goals of the study, mainly concerned with youth's level of news literacy and its impact, it has been essential to investigate their patterns of news use on social media for context. Accordingly, areas investigated under this category includes: main sources of news, accidental exposure to news on social media, frequency of using social media platforms, and using social media specifically for news. Findings this category, besides assessing engagement to news, responds to the research question:

RQ1: What are the youth's patterns of *news use* like on social media (consumption, production, reactions to news content…etc.)?

8. 16 News Use and accidental exposure to news

Youth´s news main sources is generally measured in the survey through one main question. The question asks about the frequency of using different media for information and news (television, radio, traditional newspapers, websites of newspapers, accounts of professional news organizations on social media, mobile applications of news organizations, sites with news reports generated by regular people, content generated by friends on social media) on a five point scale (Always= 5 to Never=1).

According to the findings from the survey, the majority of respondents get their news from **websites of newspapers/magazines** which could be ranked as the primary source based on the percentages; 40.5% reporting *very often* using that source, more than a third (32.4%)

use it *always* and close to a quarter (20.3%) use it *sometimes*. **Accounts of professional news organizations on social media** come in the second place as a source of news, with more than a third (36.5%) *very often* using this source and more than a third (33.8%) *always* using it. The third most frequently used source of news is **television**, with a majority of 43.2% reporting *very often* using it and close to a third (28.4%) *sometimes* using it. **Statuses, comments, tweets or posts of friends on Facebook and/or Twitte**r came fourth, with close to a third (27%) reporting using that source *very often*, and 21.6% using it *sometimes*. **Mobile applications of professional news organizations** were found to be *rarely* used by 24.3% of the respondents. Radio (37% *rarely* use it), traditional newspapers (39.2% *rarely* use it) and sites with news reports generated by regular people (35.1% *rarely* use it) came last in the mentioned order. These findings go in line with other studies' results. According to Casero-Ripollés (2012), more than half of Spanish young people use websites of professional news media with a majority also using Television for news and information. Like the case in Egypt, there is a decline in newspaper readership among youth in Spain.

Chart 29: Main sources of information about events, public issues and politics – Spain
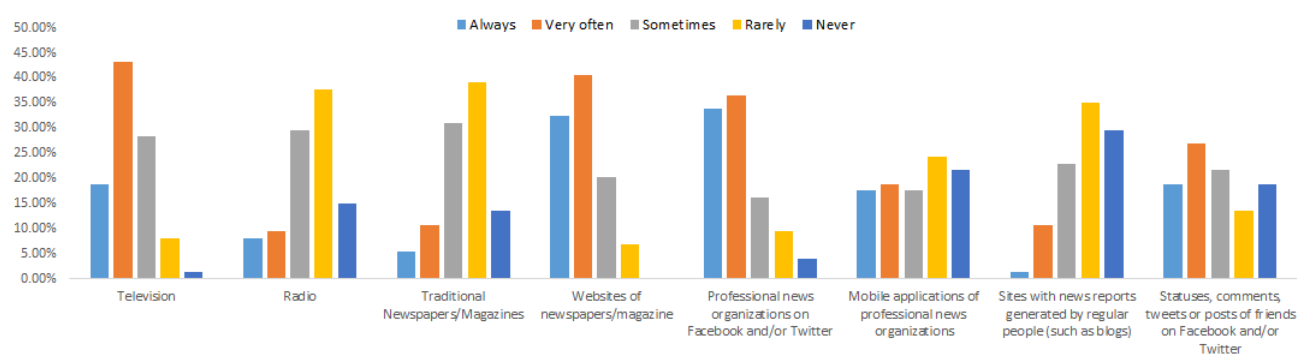
Table 30: Main sources of information about events, public issues and politics – Spain

Media	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Television	18.90%	43.20%	28.40%	8.10%	1.40%
Radio	8.10%	9.50%	29.70%	37.80%	14.90%
Traditional Newspapers/M	5.40%	10.80%	31.10%	39.20%	13.50%
Websites of newspapers/magazine	32.40%	40.50%	20.30%	6.80%	0.00%
Professional news organiza	33.80%	36.50%	16.20%	9.50%	4.10%
Mobile applications of professional news organizations	17.60%	18.90%	17.60%	24.30%	21.60%
Sites with news reports ger	1.40%	10.80%	23.00%	35.10%	29.70%
Statuses, comments, tweet	18.90%	27.00%	21.60%	13.50%	18.90%

Whether or not youth were accidentally exposed to news online while doing other activities is measured in a question with responses: yes, no and I´m not sure. The majority of youth (85.1%) confirmed accidental exposure to news.

Chart 30: Accidental exposure to news - Spain
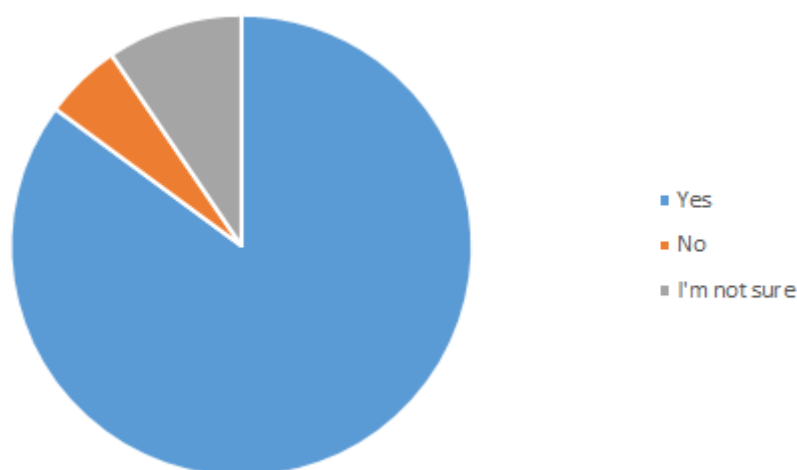
Table 31: Accidental exposure to news - Spain

Answer	%
Yes	85.10%
No	5.40%
I'm not sure	9.50%

Such findings leave online professional news sources as leading when it comes to news use amongst the investigated youth, and traditional media less sought by them with the exception of television. This has been further accentuated by the respondents' use of news on social media as displayed in the findings below.

8. 17 Social Media and News Engagement

In order to examine youth´s use of social media, respondents were asked about the frequency of using different social media platforms, the extent to which such platforms (and other media) are major, minor or not a news source to them, the extent to which using Facebook and Twitter specifically makes them feel informed. Also, their motives of sharing content on social media were investigated.

When asked about the frequency of using different social media platforms, **Instagram** came as the most used social networking site with a majority of 86.5% reporting using it multiple times a day. The next most used platform according to the results is **Twitter** (55.4% using it multiple times a day), followed by **YouTube** (43.2% use it multiple times a day), then **Facebook** (the highest percentage across the scale 18.9% don't use it). It is worth mentioning that these findings go in line with the qualitative findings of the focus group discussion with youth confirming that Facebook "is for older generations" and that they do not use it anymore. This contradicts with Casero-Ripollés's (2012) and Negredo et al.'s (2017) findings that the majority of youth use Facebook as the top social media platform.

Chart 31: Frequency of using social media platforms –Spain
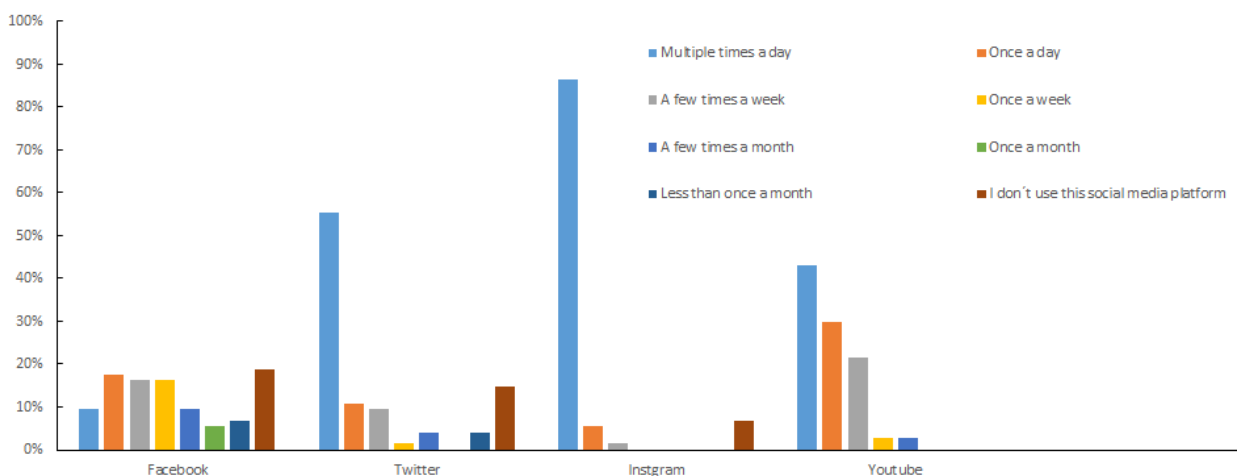
Table 32: Frequency of using social media platforms –Spain

Social media	Multiple times a day	Once a day	A few times a week	Once a week	A few times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	I don´t use this social media platform
Facebook	9.50%	17.60%	16.20%	16.20%	9.50%	5.40%	6.80%	18.90%
Twitter	55.40%	10.80%	9.50%	1.40%	4.10%	0.00%	4.10%	14.90%
Instgram	86.50%	5.40%	1.40%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	6.80%
Youtube	43.20%	29.70%	21.60%	2.70%	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

In order to have a vision about how using social media for news could be compared to using professional news organizations' online sources, respondents were asked to rank the extent to which different platforms/sources are major, minor, rarely, never a source of news for them online. The options (16 sources) include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and Youtube as social media platforms, besides professional news organizations online that were selected based on statistics of news media most used by the Spanish (Negredo et al., 2017) such as El Pais Online, El Mundo Online, El Diario, La Sexta among others. Contradicting the findings on youth's primary news source (websites of professional news organizations first), **Twitter** came in the first place as a *major source of news* for more than half (51.4%) of the respondents. In conformity though, **El Pais Online** came in the second place with more than a third (37.8%) regarding it as a *major source of news*. **El Diario**, third in ranking, is regarded by more than a third (33.8%) as a *major source of news*. More than a quarter (25.7%) regard **websites of local or regional newspapers** as a *major source of news*. Whatsapp (16.2% *major source of news*; 29.7% *rarely a source of news*), El Mundo Online (23% *major source of news*; 29.7% *rarely a source of news*), La Sexta (33.8% *rarely a source of news*), then Youtube (29.7% *rarely a source of news*; 25.7% *never a source of news*) are ranked after respectively. Facebook came in the 11th place (out of total 16 sources) with 28.4% mentioning it as *rarely a source of news* and 25.7% stating that it *is never a source of news*.

Chart 32: Main sources of news –Spain
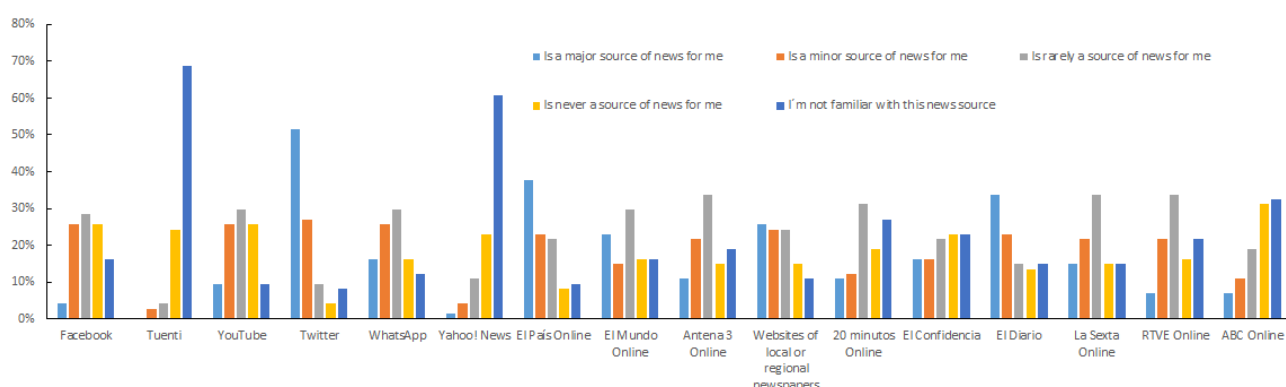
Table 33: Main sources of news –Spain

Online news sources	Is a major source of news for me	Is a minor source of news for me	Is rarely a source of news for me	Is never a source of news for me	I´m not familiar with this news source
Facebook	4.10%	25.70%	28.40%	25.70%	16.20%
Tuenti	0.00%	2.70%	4.10%	24.30%	68.90%
YouTube	9.50%	25.70%	29.70%	25.70%	9.50%
Twitter	51.40%	27.00%	9.50%	4.10%	8.10%
WhatsApp	16.20%	25.70%	29.70%	16.20%	12.20%
Yahoo! News	1.40%	4.10%	10.80%	23.00%	60.80%
El País Online	37.80%	23.00%	21.60%	8.10%	9.50%
El Mundo Online	23.00%	14.90%	29.70%	16.20%	16.20%
Antena 3 Online	10.80%	21.60%	33.80%	14.90%	18.90%
Websites of local or regional newspapers	25.70%	24.30%	24.30%	14.90%	10.80%
20 minutos Online	10.80%	12.20%	31.10%	18.90%	27.00%
El Confidencia	16.20%	16.20%	21.60%	23.00%	23.00%
El Diario	33.80%	23.00%	14.90%	13.50%	14.90%
La Sexta Online	14.90%	21.60%	33.80%	14.90%	14.90%
RTVE Online	6.80%	21.60%	33.80%	16.20%	21.60%
ABC Online	6.80%	10.80%	18.90%	31.10%	32.40%

In order to delve deeper into the extent to which youth **use social media for news** or for informational purposes (with a focus on Facebook and Twitter), respondents were asked about the extent to which Facebook and Twitter help them stay informed, get news about

current events from professional news media and stay informed about current events from friends. In accordance with their stance regarding Facebook, the results of this question reflect that Facebook barely has an informational use to respondents. Respondents stated that **Facebook** *does not at all help* them to **stay informed about current events and public affairs** (37.8%), **get news about current events from mainstream media** (39.2%), or get **news about current affairs through friends** (32.4%). It is worth mentioning though that taking the average responses across scales into account, the informational use of Facebook can be ordered as written.

Chart 33: Facebook´s Informational and news use –Spain
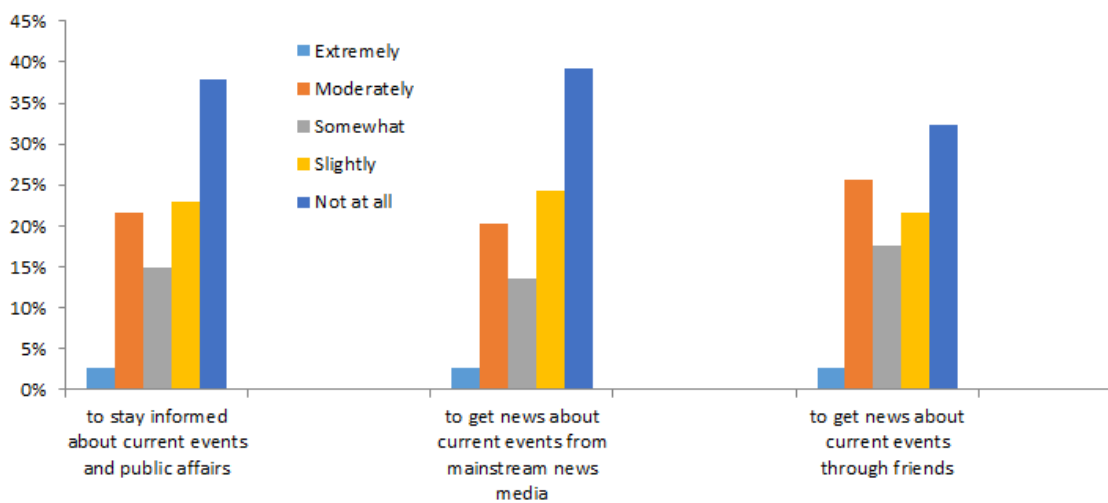
Table 34: Facebook´s Informational and news use –Spain

Facebook's informational use	Extremely	Moderately	Somewhat	Slightly	Not at all
to stay informed about current events and public affairs	2.70%	21.60%	14.90%	23.00%	37.80%
to get news about current events from mainstream news media	2.70%	20.30%	13.50%	24.30%	39.20%
to get news about current events through friends	2.70%	25.70%	17.60%	21.60%	32.40%

With regards to **Twitter**, almost half (47.3%) of the respondents stated that it *extremely* helps them to **stay informed about current events and public affairs**, with almost a quarter (23%) stating that it *moderately* does so. Almost half (47.3%) of the respondents stated that Twitter *extremely* helps them to **get news about current events from mainstream media**, with 20.3% stating it *moderately* does so. More than a quarter (25.7%) reported that the platform *extremely* **helps them get news about current events**

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from friends, with 24.3% stating it *moderately* does so. After calculating the average for each, **getting news about current events from friends** becomes the primary informational use of Twitter in accordance with the findings from Egypt.

The findings displayed show that respondents have a good level of engagement to professional news as sources of information. As demonstrated, the sampled youth appear to be conscious and clear about the use of social media platforms. They show awareness that despite using it for information and updates about events, and despite using it to follow professional media, still its informational use is dominated by their social network's input. That is, exposing themselves to the views of their friends/peers on the different issues. These findings conform to the theme that emerged from the focus group discussions; keenness of becoming part of the public opinion by remaining updated. On the other hand, based on their preferences, Spanish youth prefer to directly visit websites of news media when seeking news, even though a majority report accidental exposure to news. This calls to attention Mitchell & Jukowitz's (2014) findings about users who directly go to the website of the news organizations by typing/bookmarking the link being more engaged news users.

Chart 34: Twitter´s Informational and news use –Spain
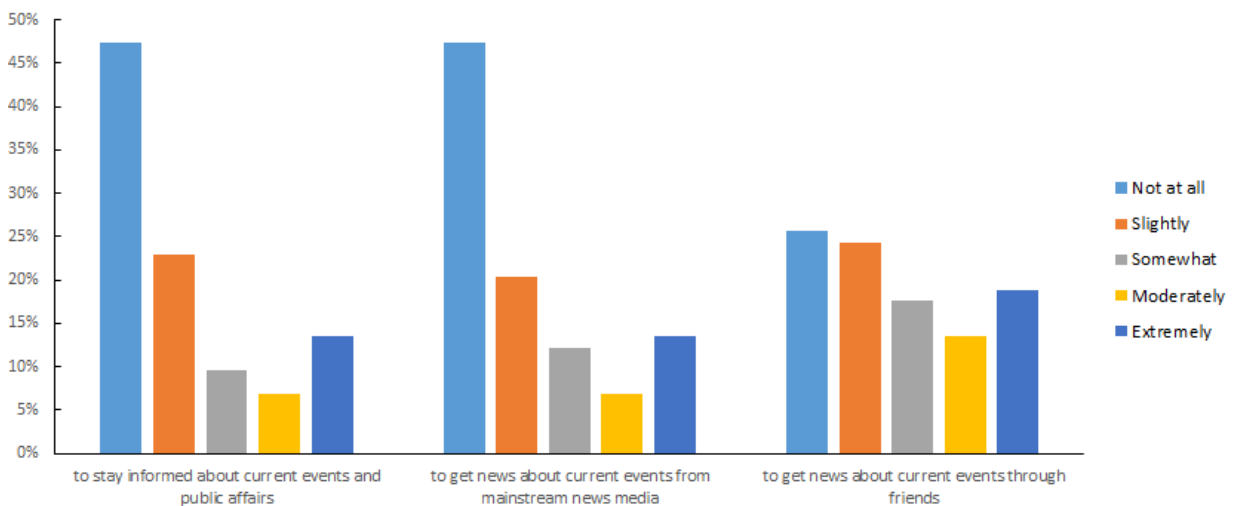
Table 35: Twitter´s Informational and news use –Spain

Twitter's informational use	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
to stay informed about current events and public affairs	47.30%	23.00%	9.50%	6.80%	13.50%
to get news about current events from mainstream news media	47.30%	20.30%	12.20%	6.80%	13.50%
to get news about current events through friends	25.70%	24.30%	17.60%	13.50%	18.90%

Based on the study by Lee and Ma (2012), motivations behind youth´s sharing behavior on social media is investigated. The motivations were divided into four categories: information seeking, socializing, entertainment and status seeking (Lee & Ma, 2012) in addition to measuring how far respondents share news that confirms their own opinion. Accordingly, several measurements were put for each category. According to the results information seeking is the leading drive for respondents to share information on social media. Half of the respondents (50%) stated that sharing news on social media helps them **keep up to date on the latest news and events**, with more than a third (33.8%) stating it **helps them store useful information**, and more than a third (33.8%) reporting it becomes **easy to retrieve information when needed** when they share it.

Socializing is also regarded as an essential motive for respondents to share information on social media. A considerable percentages of the sampled youth stated that sharing helps them **interact with people when sharing news** (47.3%), they share because it is **effective to exchange ideas with other people** (39.2%), and because it makes them **keep in touch with people** (13.5%).

Entertainment and status seeking were less important as motivations to share news. With regards to entertainment, 16.2% of the respondents stated that sharing news help them **pass time**, and 14.9% share to **combat boredom**. For status seeking, 6.8% mentioned that sharing **helps them gain status**, and 5.4% mentioned that it **helps them feel important**. With regards to opinion confirmation, only 9.5% of the respondents stated that they share news to **prove to people that their opinion is the correct one,** which makes it a less significant motive in accordance with the minor significance of status seeking as a motive.

It is worth mentioning that, almost quarter (21.6%) reported that they **never share news on social media**.

Chart 35: Motivations to share - Spain
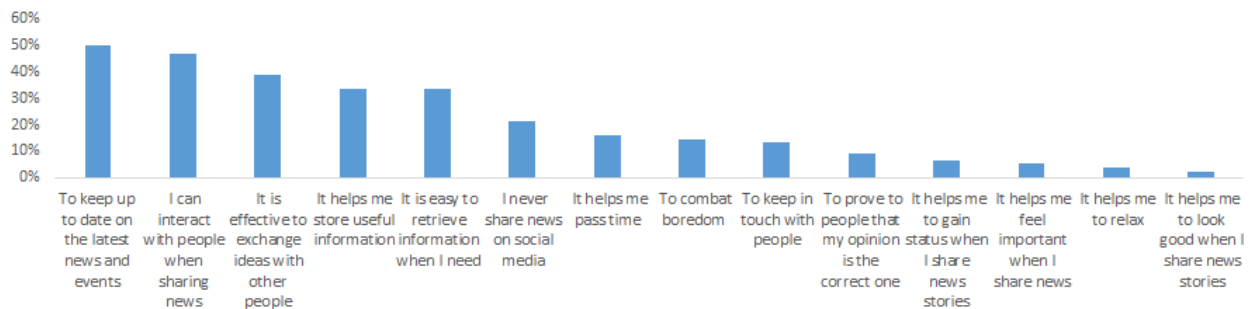
Table 36: Motivations to share - Spain

Motivations to share	%
To keep up to date on the latest news and events	50%
I can interact with people when sharing news	47.30%
It is effective to exchange ideas with other people	39.20%
It helps me store useful information	33.80%
It is easy to retrieve information when I need	33.80%
I never share news on social media	21.60%
It helps me pass time	16.20%
To combat boredom	14.90%
To keep in touch with people	13.50%
To prove to people that my opinion is the correct one	9.50%
It helps me to gain status when I share news stories	6.80%
It helps me feel important when I share news	5.40%
It helps me to relax	4.10%
It helps me to look good when I share news stories	2.70%

Having demonstrated such findings, a response to the research question RQ1 emerges.

RQ1: What are the youth's patterns of *news use* like on social media (consumption, production, reactions to news content…etc.)?

Based on the demonstrated findings, online news sources are regarded as the most sought amongst youth, reflecting a decline in the traditional media use with the exception of television (ranked third news source). However, in contrast with the findings from the Egyptian case, social media use for news does not come at the expense of professional news media's websites. This is reflected through the fact that such websites were ranked as the primary source of news for the sampled Spanish young people. This choice was followed by accounts of professional news organizations on social media, with peers generated content pushed fourth as a source of news. These findings reveal the extent to

which Spanish youth are able to differentiate between social media as carriers of news content rather than sources, and professional sources to get their information. This supports Braun & Gillespie's (2011) statement about the importance that users realize such difference. Professional news media websites were given priority in that sense, which reveals youth's engagement with news according to Mitchell & Jukowitz (2014).

Interestingly and in complete contrast with the case in Egypt, to Spanish youth Facebook is almost disappearing from their online environment. As demonstrated it comes 11th in ranking out of 16 news sources. This is confirmed by the respondents when asked about Facebook's informational uses; the bigger percentage inclined towards reporting that the platform does not help them stay informed as demonstrated. On the other hand, Twitter has been highlighted as more important and more used. The primary informational use of Twitter, as emerged in the findings, still confirms that the sampled youth are able to differentiate between the role of social media as news diffusors and that of professional news websites. These findings are supported by the qualitative findings based on the focus group discussions.

Deemed essential to understand, youth's motivations to share content on social media go in accordance with their stances. With information seeking as the leading motive, this reflects that youth seek context and elaboration to the information they seek. This makes it more justifiable to have socialization as the second most predominant motive, realizing and recognizing the online public sphere.

Such findings call for further understanding the extent to which youth trust professional media in that sense.

8. 18 Trust in the Media/News Media Skepticism

In order to test news media skepticism, based on a scale adapted from Ashley et al. (2015), trust in the media was measured through a likert scale asking respondents about the degree to which they agree to various statements. Respondents stated that they believe that **news media prioritize being first to report a story**, with 41.9% *strongly agreeing*, and 33.8% *agreeing*. Stances were mostly *neutral* (41.9%) regarding the statement that **news media cannot be trusted,** with more than a third (37.8%) *disagreeing*. Same applies to the statement that **news media are accurate** with 44.6% expressing *neutral* stance and more than a third (36.5%) *disagreeing.* The majority of respondents expressed negative stances

regarding the statement that **media report the news fairly**, with 43.2% being *neutral* and 41.9% *disagreeing*. Same applies to the statement saying **I have confidence in the people running the institutions of the press**, with more than a third (35.1%) reporting a *neutral* position, more than a third (33.8%) *disagreeing* and almost a quarter *strongly disagreeing*. This also applies to the statement that **news media tell the whole story**, with more than half (52.7%) of the respondents *disagreeing* and almost a quarter (24.3%) *strongly disagreeing*. Based on the findings it could be inferred that despite having their concerns and skepticism towards news media, respondents choose to give them some trust. Respondents are aware about how the news making environment in reality work; prioritizing being first, and not necessarily reporting completely, fairly or accurately. Hence, clear lack of confidence in parties involved in the news making process is reflected. However, still a considerable percentage does not prefer agreeing to the blunt statement that news media cannot be trusted in conclusion. So, resorting to neutral stances to a significant percentage was regarded as the manner to reflect doubts. Such responses are absolutely in line with the fact that youth mostly count on professional online news sources for information. Also, they are in accordance with the qualitative findings from the focus group revealing skepticism however not to the extent of avoidance or losing trust completely. Youth's attitude towards news media is cross checked later in the credibility assessment skill evaluation.

Chart 36: Trust in the media –Spain
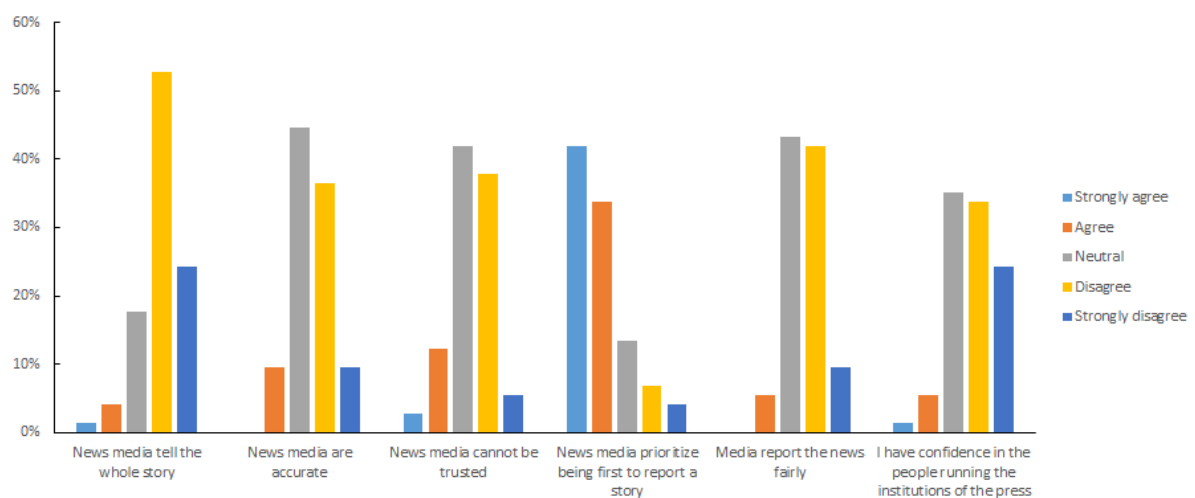
Table 37: Trust in the media -Spain

Media trust statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News media tell the whole story	1.40%	4.10%	17.60%	52.70%	24.30%
News media are accurate	0.00%	9.50%	44.60%	36.50%	9.50%
News media cannot be trusted	2.70%	12.20%	41.90%	37.80%	5.40%
News media prioritize being first to report a story	41.90%	33.80%	13.50%	6.80%	4.10%
Media report the news fairly	0.00%	5.40%	43.20%	41.90%	9.50%
I have confidence in the people running the institutions of the press	1.40%	5.40%	35.10%	33.80%	24.30%

8. 19 News Literacy

8. 20 Motivation and Locus of Control:

In order to examine the extent to which youth are intrinsically motivated to seek news content, students were asked about the extent to which they agree to four likert scale statements. Half of the respondents (50%) *agreed* that they follow the news **because they like to**¸ with more than a third (33.8%) *strongly agreeing* to the statement. More than half of the respondents (52.7%) *agree* to the statement that they **follow the news for their own good**, with almost a third (28.4%) *strongly agreeing* to the statement. A significant percentage (45.9%) *disagreed* to the statement **I don't see what news does for me**, with 13.5% *strongly disagreeing* to the statement. More than half (55.4%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement that they **follow the news because they're supposed to**, with 16.2% *strongly disagreeing* to the statement.

The findings displayed reveals that youth are highly motivated to follow the news, with a majority acknowledging the reasons that they follow the news because they like to or for their own good. This has been confirmed with the majority disagreeing that they seek news because they are supposed or expected to. Also, as displayed, almost half of the respondents are not in favor of the statement that marginalizes the important role of news (I don´t see what news does for me). Such findings are in absolute accordance with the qualitative findings; with youth demonstrating high motivation to follow the news to stay updated, especially with the heated political environment as previously discussed.

Chart 37: Motivations to seek news – Spain
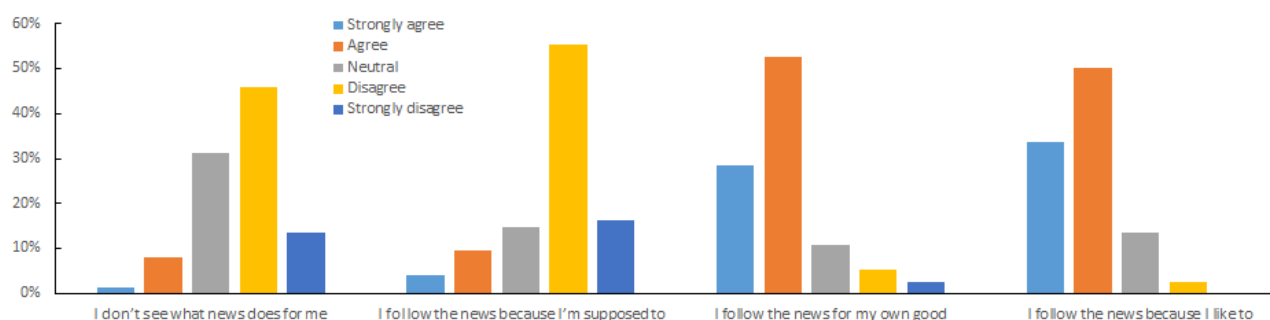
Table 38: Motivations to seek news – Spain

Motivation measuring statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I don't see what news does for me	1.40%	8.10%	31.10%	45.90%	13.50%
I follow the news because I'm supposed to	4.10%	9.50%	14.90%	55.40%	16.20%
I follow the news for my own good	28.40%	52.70%	10.80%	5.40%	2.70%
I follow the news because I like to	33.80%	50.00%	13.50%	2.70%	0.00%

In order to estimate how far youth "believe they control the media influences" as suggested by Maksl et al. (2015), respondents were provided with likert scale statement to which they report the extent to which they agree or disagree (5 point scale). A significant percentage of 43.2% *agreed* to the statement **if I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed**, with more than a third (31.1%) *strongly agreeing*. Half (50%) of the respondents *agreed* that if they **take the right actions they can stay informed**, with almost a quarter (23%) *strongly agreeing*. More than one third (37.8%) of the respondents *agree* that **the main thing that affects their knowledge about the world is what they themselves do**, with more than a third (31.1%) reporting a *neutral* stance. More dispersion emerged around the statement **if I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information**, with more than a third (39.2%) reporting a *neutral* position, more than a quarter (28.4%) *agreeing* and 21.6% *disagreeing*. Same applies to the statement **I am in control of the information I**

get from the news media¸ with more than a third (39.2%) *disagreeing*, almost a quarter (24.3%) reporting being *neutral* and the same percentage (24.3%) *agreeing*.

The results show that youth believe that they control media influences but not entirely; they still perceive some influences as not fully under their control. Respondents believe they are in control of how far they are informed and knowledgeable about the world, and how they can possibly avoid being misinformed taking responsibility for these aspects. However, when it comes to controlling the information they get from news media or learning about credible information in case of being misinformed, there is less consensus with regards to how far they control that.

Chart 38: Locus of control – Spain
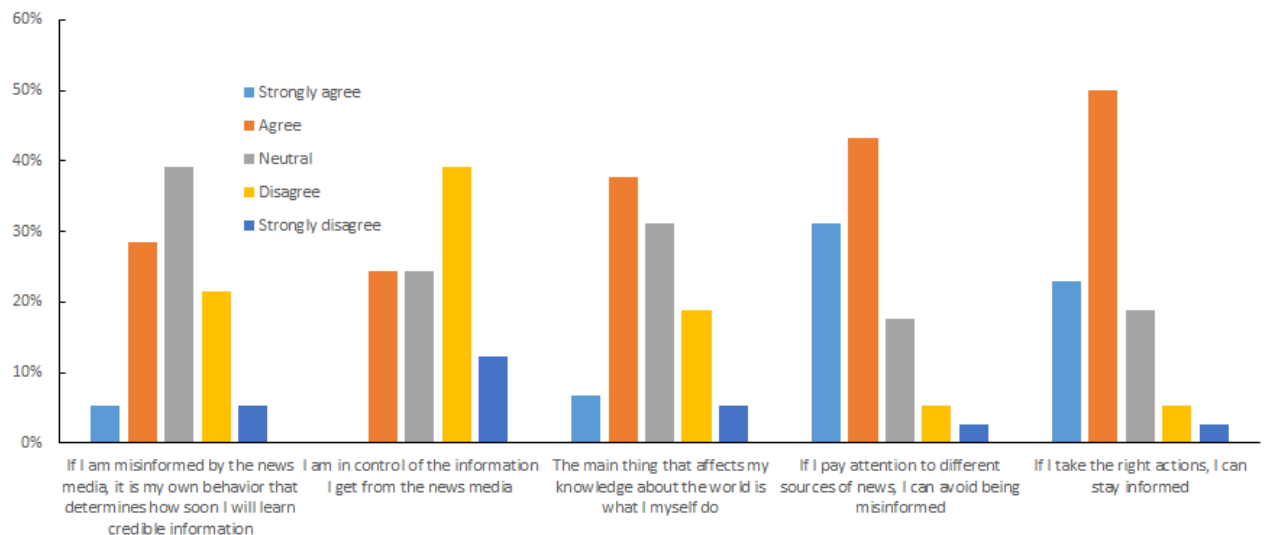
Table 39: Locus of control - Spain

Locus of control measuring statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information	5.40%	28.40%	39.20%	21.60%	5.40%
I am in control of the information I get from the news media	0.00%	24.30%	24.30%	39.20%	12.20%
The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do	6.80%	37.80%	31.10%	18.90%	5.40%
If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed	31.10%	43.20%	17.60%	5.40%	2.70%
If I take the right actions, I can stay informed	23.00%	50.00%	18.90%	5.40%	2.70%

8. 21 Knowledge Areas:

This is measured based on the five areas of knowledge: knowledge of news content, knowledge of the news media industry, knowledge of the news media effects, knowledge of the real world (reality versus constructedness) and knowledge of the self.

- *Knowledge of news content* was measured through 5 point likert scale statements. Accordingly, almost half (47.3%) of the respondents *agree* that news companies choose stories based on what will attract the biggest audience, with 40.5% *strongly agreeing*. Further, almost half (48.6%) of the respondents *strongly agree* that people pay more attention to news that fits with their beliefs than news that doesn't, with more than a third (39.2%) *agreeing*. Similar to the case of Egypt, the results displayed show that the majority of respondents are aware about news content selection from both sides, the journalists´ and the audience´s. The journalists´ selection of news content is reflected through the first statement that which refers to the selection criterion which comes as a priority to news organizations; attracting the biggest audience. The majority of respondents clearly supported that statement reflecting their awareness. On the other hand, audience´s selection of news content is reflected through the second statement, which reflects the concept of confirmation bias and was also supported by the majority of respondents. Such findings support Arendt et al.'s (2016) Media-related selection which highlights journalists' gatekeeping function and audience's selective exposure and sharing behavior.

- *Knowledge of the news media industry* was measured through a Likert scale statement and two multiple choice questions. More than half (54.1%) of the respondents *strongly agreed* that the owner of a media company influences the content that is produced, with more than a third (33.8%) *agreeing*. The majority (64.9%) of respondents selected the correct answer to the question "Who has the most influence on what gets aired on the local TV news?"; *the producer/editor*, with 16.2% selection *individual reporters*. Further, more than half (58.1%) of the respondents selected the correct answer to the question "One common criticism of the news is that it is not objective. What do people who make that criticism

typically mean by it?"; *the reporter puts his/her opinion in the story*, with 16.2% stating they *don't know*.

Such findings reveal respondents' high level of knowledge of the news media industry. This occurs through the demonstration of awareness of ownership's influence on content, the meaning of being objective and of the role played by producers/editors in the news selection decisions. As previously mentioned, scholars (Craft et al., 2017; Pérez-Rodríguez and Delgado-Ponce, 2012) emphasize the essentiality of knowledge about media industry for trust and engagement with news through established correlations between these variables. When contrasting these findings with the results from the trust in the media scales, this correlation is supported. Along, with demonstrating strong knowledge in this area, respondents have good levels of trust and engagement with the news media as previously shown.

- *Knowledge about the news media effects* was measured through three 5 point Likert scale statements and two multiple choice questions. The majority of respondents support the statement that two people might see the same news stories and get different information from it, with 52.7% *agreeing* and 32.4% *strongly agreeing*. Like the case of Egypt, this indicates awareness of respondents that a considerable part of the meaning making process depends on audience´s interpretation and not just on the meaning intended by the reporter/journalist. Here, subjectivism approach of content interpretation is essential to refer to; the text means what the reader wants it to mean (Buckingham, 200). It is in the interpretation level that variables such as skills and knowledge level affect the meaning making process as highlighted by Buckingham (2000).

Also, the majority supported the statement that people are influenced by news whether they realize it or not, with 45.9% *agreeing* and 43.2% *strongly agreeing*. Further, the majority of respondents supported the statement that news coverage of a political candidate will influence people's opinions, with 41.9% *agreeing* to the statement, and 40.5% *strongly agreeing*.

The majority of respondents selected the correct answer to the question about the effect of news coverage of a specific topic on people's perception of importance, 79. 7% stated that a lot of coverage will make people more likely to think the topic

is important. This indicates awareness about the agenda setting effect of the media; where coverage influences importance perception about an issue. Almost half of respondents (48.6%) selected the correct answer about the effect of news outlets dependence on advertising to make money which refers to two possible effects: News could encourage people to buy things they don't need; and News could emphasize things that aren't really important, with 29.7% selecting only the second effect. Findings reveal a good level of awareness about the impact of news dependence on advertising on both audience consumption behavior and on news content, in which awareness about the second is more emphasized than awareness about the first effect.

Generally, respondents demonstrate a good level of knowledge about news media's effects through showing awareness of the meaning making process, the agenda setting function of news media and the economic pressure's impact.

- *Knowledge about the real world* was measured through 5 point Likert scale statements. Dispersed responses (more inclined to support) emerged to the statement that news makes things more dramatic than they really are, with more than a third (39.2%) *agreeing*, 35.1% reporting *neutral* stances and 18.9% *strongly agreeing*. More support was shown to the statement that a story about conflict is more likely to be featured prominently; 43.2% *strongly agreed*, 43.2% *agreed*. More than half (58.1%) of the respondents *strongly agreed* that a journalist's first obligation is to truth, with more than a quarter (27%) *agreeing*. Findings here indicate that respondents are knowledgeable to a good extent about the fact that news content is not a mere reflection of the world and that some criteria interfere with the *construction* of such content. This also applies when it comes to some selection criteria, a considerable percentage of respondents understand that conflict stories are more likely make it to the news. Such findings show that some youth are aware of a long standing theoretical premise addressed by scholars such as Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979), Galtung and Ruge (1965), and Van Dijk (1988); the idea of news not merely mirroring society's occurrences. This knowledge area is especially an essential part of news literacy having been a base for media literacy as stated by scholars (Kellner & Share, 2005).

- *Knowledge of the self* was measured through 5-point Likert scale statements in which the degree to which respondents perceive themselves as in control of their news experience is represented. The statements are: If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information; I am in control of the information I get from the news media; The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do; If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed; If I take the right actions, I can stay informed. The findings of this knowledge area have been displayed since it refers to the aforementioned youth's locus of control.

Chart 39: Knowledge areas –Spain
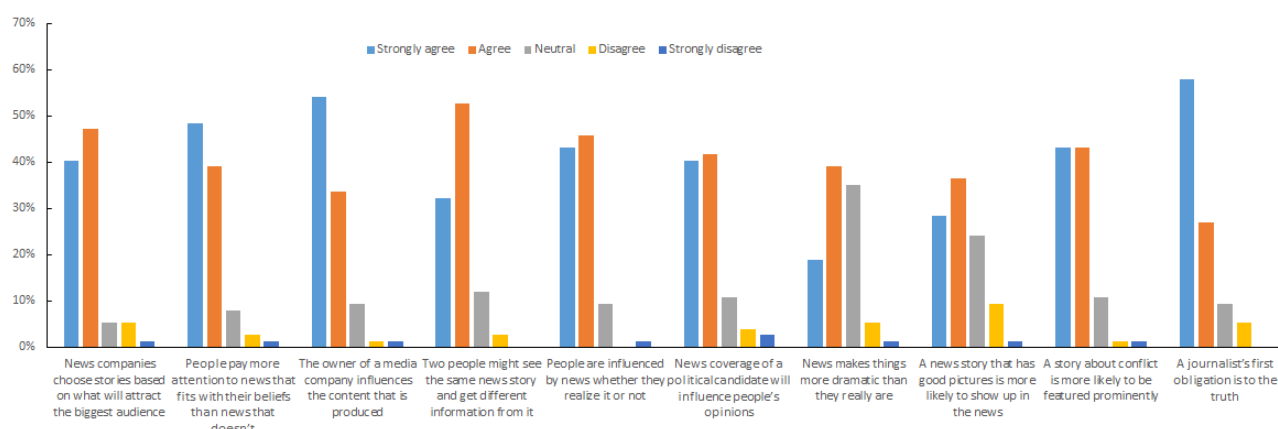
Table 40: Knowledge areas –Spain

Knowledge areas measuring statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News companies choose stories based on what will attract the biggest audience	40.50%	47.30%	5.40%	5.40%	1.40%
People pay more attention to news that fits with their beliefs than news that doesn't	48.60%	39.20%	8.10%	2.70%	1.40%
The owner of a media company influences the content that is produced	54.10%	33.80%	9.50%	1.40%	1.40%
Two people might see the same news story and get different information from it	32.40%	52.70%	12.20%	2.70%	0.00%
People are influenced by news whether they realize it or not	43.20%	45.90%	9.50%	0.00%	1.40%
News coverage of a political candidate will influence people's opinions	40.50%	41.90%	10.80%	4.10%	2.70%
News makes things more dramatic than they really are	18.90%	39.20%	35.10%	5.40%	1.40%
A news story that has good pictures is more likely to show up in the news	28.40%	36.50%	24.30%	9.50%	1.40%
A story about conflict is more likely to be featured prominently	43.20%	43.20%	10.80%	1.40%	1.40%
A journalist's first obligation is to the truth	58.10%	27.00%	9.50%	5.40%	0.00%

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Chart 40: Knowledge of the news media industry -Spain

- Individual reporters
- The anchor, the person reading the news
- The cameraman
- The producer/editor
- Don't know
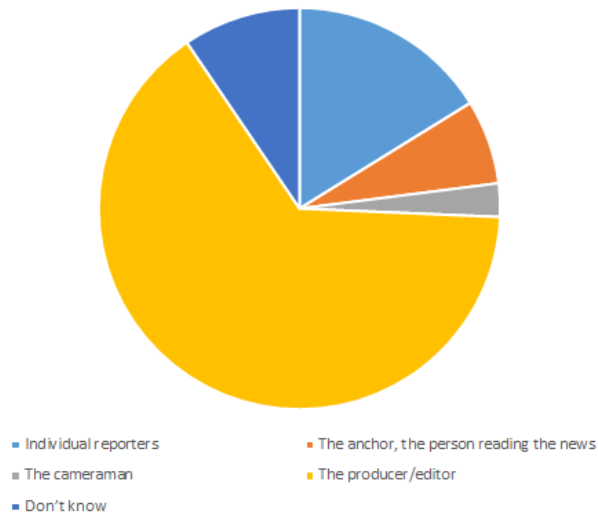
Table 41: Knowledge of the news media industry -Spain

Who has more influence over content	%
Individual reporters	16.20%
The anchor, the person reading the news	6.80%
The cameraman	2.70%
The producer/editor	64.90%
Don't know	9.50%

Chart 41: Knowledge about objectivity -Spain

- The reporter gives only the facts about the story
- The reporter puts his or her opinion in the story
- The reporter's story relies too much on the opinions of people who are neutral
- The reporter doesn't make the purpose of the story clear
- Don't know
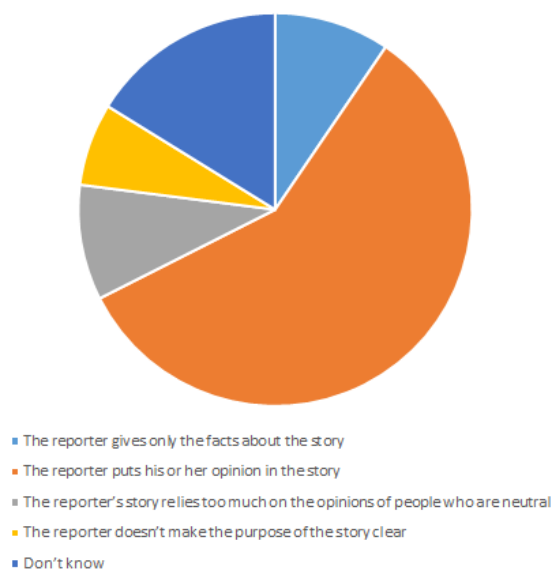
Table 42: Knowledge about objectivity -Spain

Objectivity meaning	%
The reporter gives only the facts about the story	9.50%
The reporter puts his or her opinion in the story	58.10%
The reporter's story relies too much on the opinions of people who are neutral	9.50%
The reporter doesn't make the purpose of the story clear	6.80%
Don't know	16.20%

8. 22 Skills: Credibility assessment and verification ability

In order to contrast the findings on news media skepticism respondents were asked to assess the extent to which they find online news media credible by asking them to evaluate believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias and completeness. The majority of responses are dispersed among moderately, somewhat and slightly, except for believability where a more significant percentage of respondents choosing moderately believable as demonstrated. Close to half (47.3%) of respondents find online news media *moderately* **believable**, with more than a quarter (25.7%) finding it *somewhat* believable, and close to a quarter (21.6%) finding it *slightly* believable. When asked about **accuracy**, more than a third (37.8%) of the respondents reported that online news media information is *moderately* accurate, with more than a third (36.5%) finding it *somewhat* accurate and close to a quarter (21.6%) finding it *slightly* accurate. Regarding **trustworthiness**, responses are as follows: news media information online is *somewhat* (37.8%), *slightly* (29.7%) and *moderately* (28.4%) trustworthy. More than one third find online news media information *somewhat* (33.8%) **biased**, *slightly* (32.4%) biased, with 20.3% finding it *moderately* biased. Regarding **completeness**, responses are as follows: news media information online is *somewhat* (33.8%), *moderately* (27%) and *slightly* (27%) complete.

These findings go in line with those of media skepticism. As displayed, the majority of respondents give responses more inclined towards higher credibility assessment to the information provided by news media online. This especially applies when it comes to

believability. Taking into account that news media's websites are important sources for the sampled youth, the results are compatible.

Chart 42: Credibility assessment –Spain
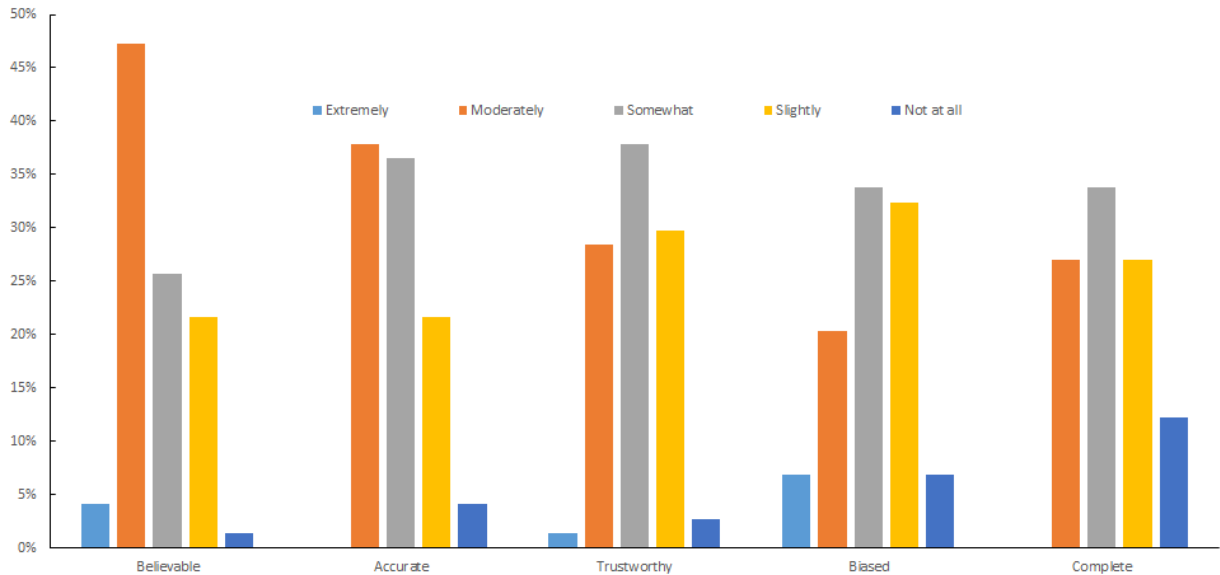
Table 43: Credibility assessment -Spain

Credibility assessment	Extremely	Moderately	Somewhat	Slightly	Not at all
Believable	4.10%	47.30%	25.70%	21.60%	1.40%
Accurate	0.00%	37.80%	36.50%	21.60%	4.10%
Trustworthy	1.40%	28.40%	37.80%	29.70%	2.70%
Biased	6.80%	20.30%	33.80%	32.40%	6.80%
Complete	0.00%	27.00%	33.80%	27.00%	12.20%

In order to measure verification ability respondents were asked about the frequency of doing specific actions when they read news online, by giving them statements to which they have to respond using 5-point scale ranging from always to never. Responses were dispersed between often, sometimes and rarely with different verification activities given different weights, with more inclination towards *often* than *rarely*. Hence, they are demonstrated in order of frequency (more frequent to less frequent) based on the responses. Respondents stated that they *often* (44.6%) **consider whether the information represented is opinion or fact**, with close to a quarter (23%) *sometimes* doing so. More than one third of the respondents, *often* (35.1%) and *sometimes* (35.1%) **check to see that the information is complete and comprehensive.** In accordance, more than a third (37.8%) of respondents *often* **seek out other sources to validate information you find**

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online, with more than a quarter (27%) *sometimes* doing so. More than a quarter of respondents reported **looking for an official "stamp of approval" or recommendation from someone you know** in the following frequency: *often* (29.7%), *rarely* (28.4%), and *sometimes* (27%). More than a third (39.2%) *sometimes* **considers the author's goals/objectives for posting information online**, with 27% *rarely* doing so. Regarding **checking to see who the author of the article is**, respondents stated doing so *rarely* (33.8%), *sometimes* (27%) and *often* (24%). In accordance 36.5% *sometimes* **verify the author's qualifications or credentials**¸ with 27% *rarely* doing so. Well-matched with the previous two activities, more than a third (36.5%) *rarely* **check to see whether contact information for that person or organization is provided**, with 25.7% *sometimes* doing so. Based on the displayed findings of youth's verification ability, the activities could be divided into content-related verification activities and author-related ones. Flanagin & Metzger's (2000) found that the majority of youth verify information online mostly *sometimes* or *rarely*. As demonstrated, this applies to author-related verification activities, where responses of the majority of youth range from sometimes to rarely (such as checking author's goals, verifying qualifications ...etc). On the other hand, when it comes to content-related verification activities the majority of responses range from often to sometimes (such as seeking other sources, checking for completeness, verifying if the information is opinion or fact...etc).

Chart 43: Verification ability – Spain
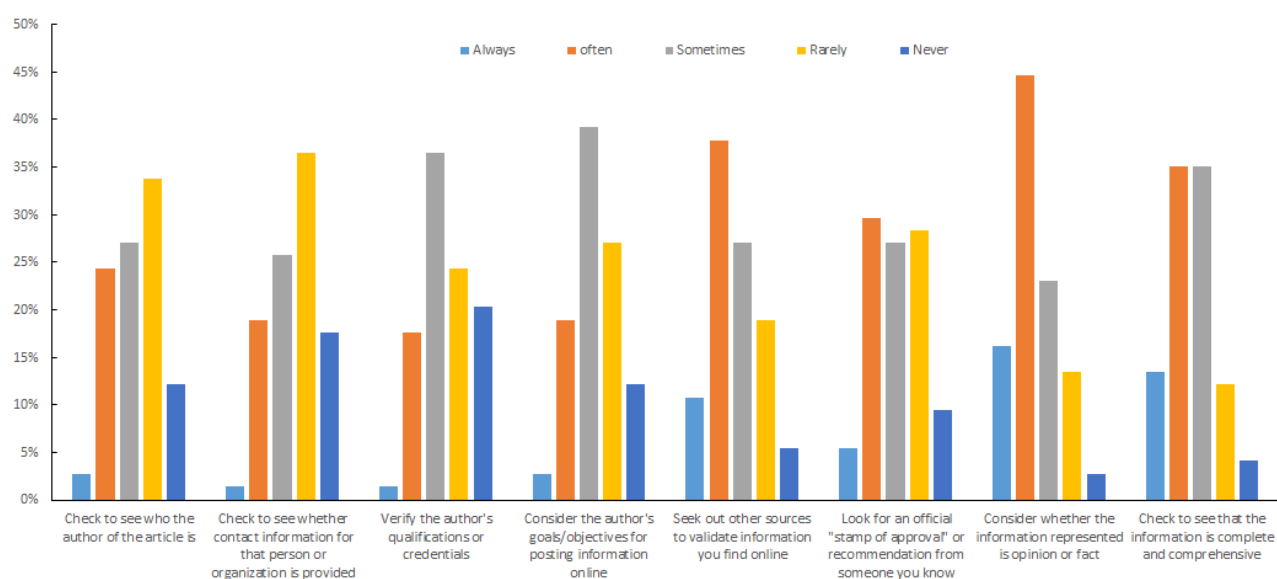
Table 44: Verification ability - Spain

Verification activities	Always	often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Check to see who the author of the article is	2.70%	24.30%	27.00%	33.80%	12.20%
Check to see whether contact information for that person or organization is provided	1.40%	18.90%	25.70%	36.50%	17.60%
Verify the author's qualifications or credentials	1.40%	17.60%	36.50%	24.30%	20.30%
Consider the author's goals/objectives for posting information online	2.70%	18.90%	39.20%	27.00%	12.20%
Seek out other sources to validate information you find online	10.80%	37.80%	27.00%	18.90%	5.40%
Look for an official "stamp of approval" or recommendation from someone you know	5.40%	29.70%	27.00%	28.40%	9.50%
Consider whether the information represented is opinion or fact	16.20%	44.60%	23.00%	13.50%	2.70%
Check to see that the information is complete and comprehensive	13.50%	35.10%	35.10%	12.20%	4.10%

Having demonstrated findings of the different constructs of news literacy; motivation, knowledge and skills, it is essential to mention that the majority of youth are found to be with high level of news literacy. Based on a cumulative scale for the responses of questions measuring the different constituents of news literacy, 66% of the respondents have a high level of news literacy, while 34% have a low level of news literacy. Most respondents displayed motivation to seek news by supporting the statements that imply their understanding of the importance of news to them. With regards to the knowledge areas, it could be noticed that youth display positive results when it comes to the different areas being aware about the concepts addressed. This applies to all with the exception of knowledge about the self; where youth believe they can control some but not other concepts when dealing with the media as explained in the findings of locus of control. Knowledge about the news industry emerges as one of the strongest knowledge areas which match well the results on media trust as previously explained. With regards to skills of credibility assessment and verification ability, the respondents appear to have a good level in both skills with the exception of author-related verification as highlighted.

In light of these findings, **H3A** is supported; there is a correlation between news literacy level and motivation to seek news, Pearson r 0.136 at significance level 0.029. Also, **H3B**

is supported; there is a correlation between news literacy level and engagement to news, Pearson r 0.165 at significance level 0.033.

8. 23 News Literacy and Harmful Messages

8. 24 Fake News Perception and Detection

When asked whether or not they are aware that some news stories shared on social media are fake news, like the case in Egypt, a massive majority of respondents (97.3%) reported that they are aware about it.

Chart 44: Awareness about Fake News – Spain

Yes No
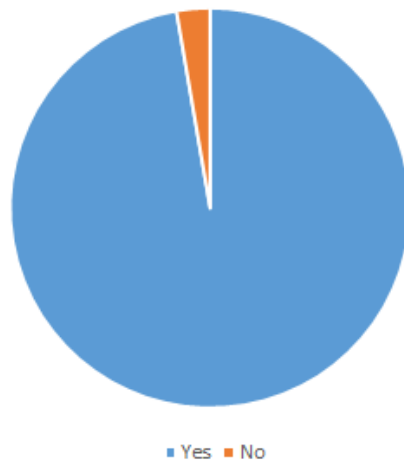
Table 45: Awareness about Fake News – Spain

Answer	%
Yes	97.30%
No	2.70%

Respondents were then asked to report the extent to which they agree or disagree with some statements with the aim of investigating how they perceive fake news, their perception of the ability to detect it and how they could potentially act around it. The majority of respondents positively support the statement that it is **important to check the credibility of the information in a news article before sharing it**; with 62.2% *strongly agreeing* and 33.8% *agreeing*.   A majority of respondents showed supportive stance to the statement that the spread of f**ake news on social media can cause confusion** about basic facts of current events, with more than a half (56.8%) *strongly agreeing*, more than a third (35.1%) *agreeing*. Perceiving themselves as competent, the majority (59.5%) of respondents *agreed* to the statement **I think I have the competencies to tell whether or**

not a news story is fake. In contrast, responses to the statement **I only share news stories from professional news organizations** were inclined towards disagreeing with more than a third (31.1%) reporting a *neutral* stance, and close to a third (29.7%) *disagreeing*. Taking motivations to share into account, one justification could be that the content shared by the respondents is not necessarily constricted to news stories. In other words, such response raises concerns that are refuted in their response to the next statement: **I share news stories if I found it shared by my friends without necessarily reading it**. A significant percentage of 43.2% *strongly disagreed* that they would do so, with more than a third (32.4%) *disagreeing*. This is confirmed with more than a third (31.1%) *strongly disagreeing* to the statement **I do not necessarily check the sources of information in a news story before I share it**, with almost a quarter (24.3%) reporting *neutral* and 21.6% *disagreeing*. Further, half of the respondents (50%) *strongly disagreed* that **if the headline of a story is interesting enough they share it without reading the content**, with more than a third (32.4%) *disagreeing*.

Chart 45: Fake news and sharing behavior – Spain
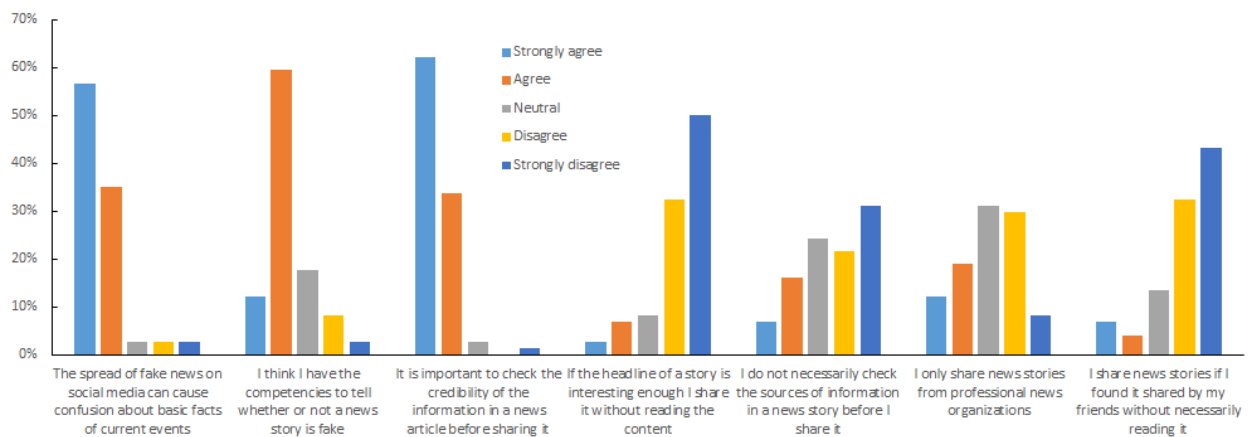
Table 46: Fake news and sharing behavior – Spain

Fake news and sharing	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The spread of fake news on social media can cause confusion about basic facts of current events	56.80%	35.10%	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%
I think I have the competencies to tell whether or not a news story is fake	12.20%	59.50%	17.60%	8.10%	2.70%
It is important to check the credibility of the information in a news article before sharing it	62.20%	33.80%	2.70%	0.00%	1.40%
If the headline of a story is interesting enough I share it without reading the content	2.70%	6.80%	8.10%	32.40%	50.00%
I do not necessarily check the sources of information in a news story before I share it	6.80%	16.20%	24.30%	21.60%	31.10%
I only share news stories from professional news organizations	12.20%	18.90%	31.10%	29.70%	8.10%
I share news stories if I found it shared by my friends without necessarily reading it	6.80%	4.10%	13.50%	32.40%	43.20%

In line with the findings on verification ability, the percentages displayed reveal that youth are more aware about the essentiality of double checking content than sources. This has been reflected through their more dispersed responses to the statement about checking sources of information in a news story before sharing. In line with the qualitative findings, respondents show that they care about the credibility of information and understand their responsibility when sharing content.

In light of these findings, a cumulative scale was used to calculate scores of respondents that implies their ability to identify fake news on social media. Based on this, the following correlations are tested:

H1B: News Literate youth are better able to *identify* fake news on social media

H2: News Literate youth think or care about the *veracity* of news items before reacting to or sharing them on social media (Facebook/Twitter)

H1B is supported with a significant correlation, Pearson r 0.236 at significance level 0.01, between news literacy and the ability to identify fake news. Likewise H2 is supported with a significant correlation, Pearson r 0.329 at significance level 0.00, between news literacy and youth's care to check veracity of news items before sharing them.

8. 25 Hate Speech Exposure

As previously highlighted, comments on news stories are potential sources of hate speech as noted by scholars (Erjavek, 2014; Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012). Accordingly, it was essential to investigate the motivations of youth to read or write comments on and/or posts of news articles on social media. The motivations for each were adapted from a study by Diakopoulos and Naaman (2011) which used users' uses and gratifications of comments reading and writing in general. Accordingly, the motivations could be grouped into four categories; information, personal identity, entertainment and social interaction. Not only do the displayed findings indicate hate speech exposure, they further indicate motivation to share one's opinion by writing comments and to know others' by reading them.

With regards to motivations of **reading** comments; *information motivations* include getting more information about the issue addressed in the article and getting updates about the story; *personal identity motivation* was examined through the desire to compare their opinion to that of others in the community; *entertainment motivations* were reflected through whether or not they have fun reading people's humor about the issue; and *social interaction* as a motivation was measured through whether respondents read comments to see perspectives and views of people to help them decide and to estimate political response and attitude of the community.

Accordingly, based on the results the motivations to read comments or posts on news articles could be ranked in the following order: social interaction, information, entertainment, then personal identity motivations. Only 9.2% of the respondents stated that they never read comments on news articles on social media.

- **Social interaction motivation to read comments**: A significant percentage (45.9%) of respondents stated that they read comments to see perspectives and views of people which helps them decide, while more than a third (39.2%) stated that estimating political response and attitude of the community is what drives them to read comments

- **Information motivation to read comments**: More than half (52.7%) of the respondents stated that they read comments on news articles on social media to get more information about the issue addressed in the article and more than quarter (25.7%) stated that it helps them get updates on the story.

- **Personal identity motivation to read comments**: More than half of the respondents (54.1%) stated that they read comments to compare their opinion to the opinion of others in the community
- **Entertainment motivation to read comments**: More than a third (33.8%) of respondents stated that they read comments to have some fun reading people's humor about the issue.

Chart 46: Motivations to read comments – Spain
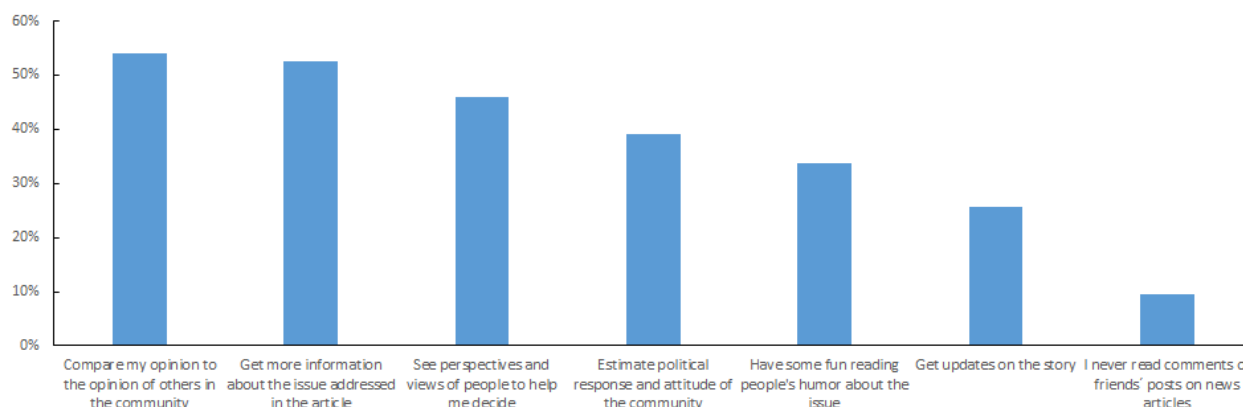
Table 47: Motivations to read comments - Spain

Motivation to read comments	%
Compare my opinion to the opinion of others in the community	54.10%
Get more information about the issue addressed in the article	52.70%
See perspectives and views of people to help me decide	45.90%
Estimate political response and attitude of the community	39.20%
Have some fun reading people's humor about the issue	33.80%
Get updates on the story	25.70%
I never read comments or friends´ posts on news articles	9.50%

The results displayed reveals that the majority of respondents do read the comments of news articles on social media; as previously stated that a very minor percentage stated they never read comments. With social interaction being the primary motive for respondents to

read comments, it becomes clear how peer citizens can impact each other's opinions through creating an online public sphere for deliberations. Long ago Habermas (1989) promoted the concept as empowering to citizens, which was believed to be enhanced with the advent of the online interactive world. However, Gerhards and Schäfer (2009), note that the internet is not as inclusive and control free as some expect; content is still controlled. This means, in the context of this study, that being conscious about the creators of content is necessary not to be misled.

With seeking information being the second motive for the respondents, it becomes clear how important the role of peer citizens in creating content has become, and especially how it is regarded by a majority as complementary to the information provided by journalists through the news article itself.

On the other hand, concerning motivations of **writing** comments; *information motivations* include educating others by giving more details about the issue addressed, asking or answering questions raised around the topic in the story, sharing their experience, and noting missing information and/or correcting inaccuracies or misinformation; *personal identity motivation* was examined through expressing their opinion and/or emotion; *entertainment motivations* were reflected through adding humor to the discussion; and *social interaction* as a motivation was measured through the desire to see others' reaction by engaging in debates and to persuade others with their opinion.

Based on the findings motivations to write comments and/or posts about news articles on social media could be ranked in the following order: information motivations, personal identity, social interaction and finally entertainment. It is worth mentioning that more than a third (33.8%) of respondents stated that they never write comments or posts about news articles indicating that more people read than write comments.

- **Information motivation to write comments/posts:** More than a third (39.2%) of the respondents stated that they write comments/ posts on news articles to share their experience, with 27% of the respondents who stated asking or answering questions around the topic addressed as a reason to write comments. Close to quarter (21.6%) selected noting missing information and correcting inaccuracies or misinformation as a motive to write comments, with 12.2% stating that they seek educating others by giving more details about the issue addressed

- **Personal Identity motivation to write comments/posts:** More than half (52.7%) of the respondents stated they write comments to express their opinion and/or emotion.

- **Social interaction motivation to write comments/posts:** Only 10.8% of the respondents stated seeing others' reaction by engaging in debates as a motive to write comments, with 9.5% mentioning persuading others with their opinion.

- **Entertainment motivation to write comments/posts:** 13.5% of respondents stated adding humor to the discussion as a motive to write comments.

Chart 47: Motivations to write comments – Spain
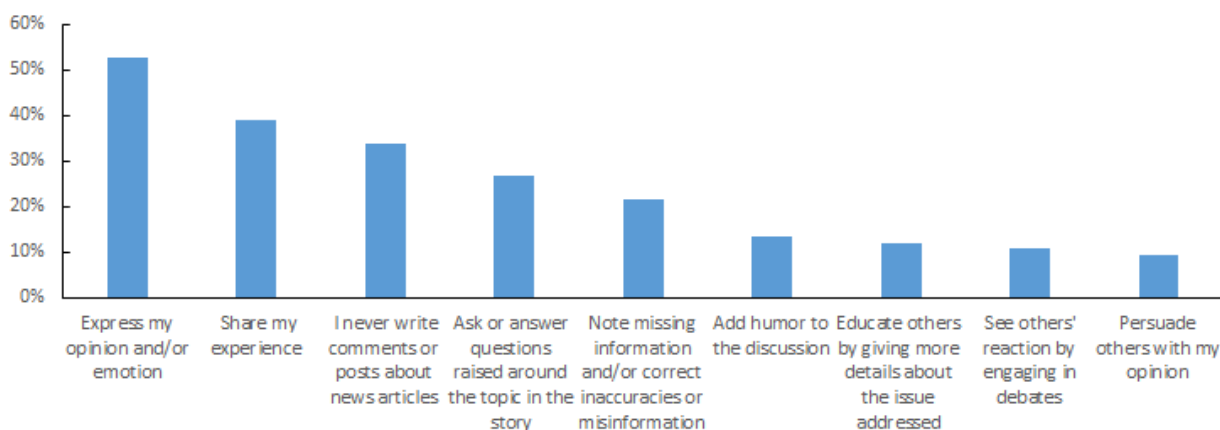
Table 48: Motivations to write comments - Spain

Motivations to write comments	%
Express my opinion and/or emotion	52.70%
Share my experience	39.20%
I never write comments or posts about news articles	33.80%
Ask or answer questions raised around the topic in the story	27%
Note missing information and/or correct inaccuracies or misinformation	21.60%
Add humor to the discussion	13.50%
Educate others by giving more details about the issue addressed	12.20%
See others' reaction by engaging in debates	10.80%
Persuade others with my opinion	9.50%

As highlighted in the findings, respondents' motivations to read are different than the ones to write. As demonstrated respondents' primary motive for writing comments is information motivation; sharing their experiences, contributing by answering or raising

questions, correcting false or inaccurate information and educating others. This goes in line with the qualitative findings in which youth expressed that one of the reasons they share content is to educate and inform people while also supporting their positions/opinions. This justifies personal identity motivation coming second; the drive to express their opinions/emotions.

When asked whether they have seen hateful or degrading writings/speech on social media which inappropriately attacks certain groups/individuals, the majority of respondents (87.8%) confirmed that they have been exposed to such content. Taking into account the findings concerning the motivation to read and write comments on news articles on social media, with social interaction and information motivation (respectively) being selected by the majority, such findings could imply that user generated content could be one of the main sources of hate incitement on social media.

Chart 48: Exposure to hate speech – Spain

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ I'm not sure
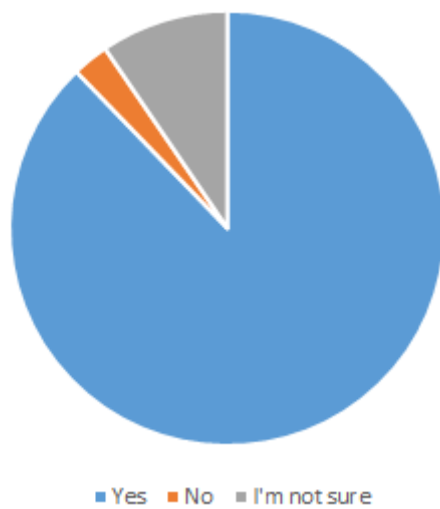
Table 49: Exposure to hate speech – Spain

Answer	%
Yes	87.80%
No	2.70%
I'm not sure	9.50%

This is confirmed with the majority of respondents stating that they have encountered hate speech on social media displayed in: statuses and/or tweets (78.4%), posts by individuals on Facebook/Twitter while sharing news articles (63.8%) and comments on news articles (48.6%). Further, 44.6% find hate speech in shared news videos, with 37.8% finding it in

shared news articles and 25.7% reporting they find it in articles by professional news media.

Chart 49: Sources of hate speech – Spain
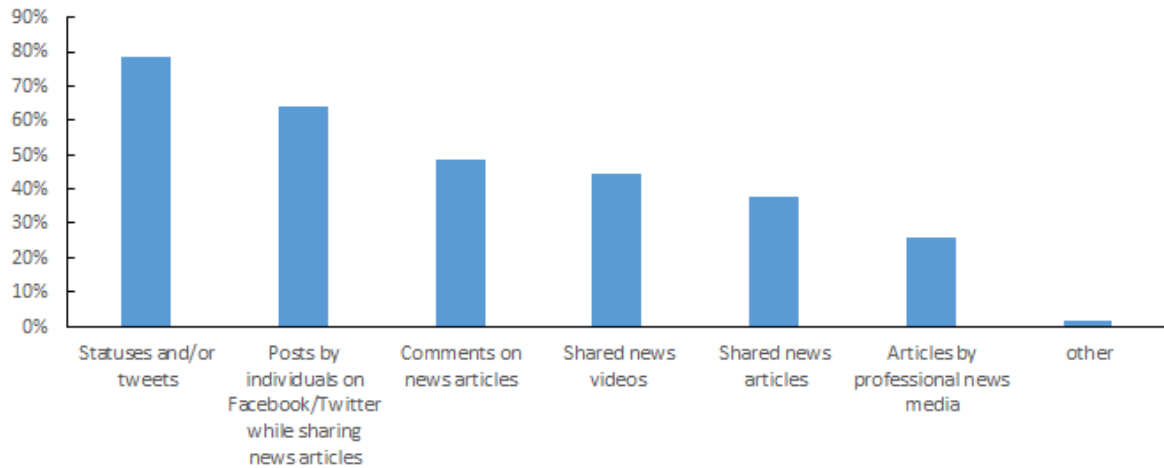
Table 50: Sources of hate speech - Spain

Sources of hate speech	%
Statuses and/or tweets	78.40%
Posts by individuals on Facebook/Twitter while sharing news articles	63.80%
Comments on news articles	48.60%
Shared news videos	44.60%
Shared news articles	37.80%
Articles by professional news media	25.70%
other	1.40%

A majority of stated that the hateful writings they encounter attack certain groups of individuals for their *political views* (86.5%), *gender* (74.3%), *sexual orientation* (70.3%), *physical appearance* (60.8%), *religious beliefs/religion* (56.8%) and *physical disability* (41.9%). Such findings are a reflection of the political conditions in Spain, specifically Catalonia, where polarization and judgments are existent massively especially on social media platforms. This goes in accordance with findings from the focus group discussions findings, where the predominant topic guiding youth's online news experience being Catalonia's independence. Such findings also support Hawdon et al.'s (2015) results demonstrating political views as "common targets of hate" mostly in the US followed by Germany then Finland and the UK.

Chart 50: Reasons for hate speech on social media – Spain
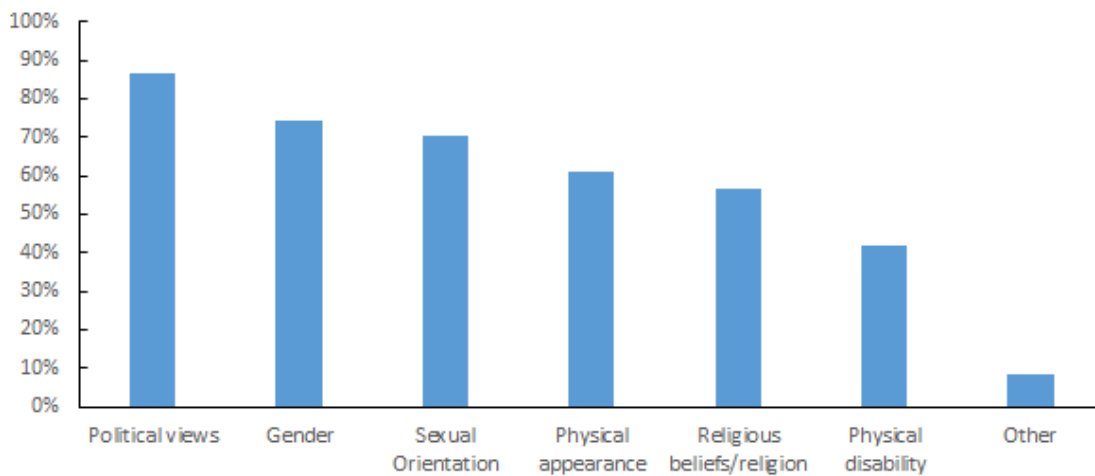
Table 51: Reasons for hate speech on social media - Spain

Reason for hate speech	%
Political views	86.50%
Gender	74.30%
Sexual Orientation	70.30%
Physical appearance	60.80%
Religious beliefs/religion	56.80%
Physical disability	41.90%
Other	8.40%

8. 26 Reacting to Harmful Content

When asked about how they would react to harmful content - with reference to hate speech or fake news - on social media, almost half of the respondents (47.3%) stated that they would ignore it. Some respondents selected more proactive options of reporting the material to be removed (37.8%), talking to someone about how it makes them feel (29.7%), and posting other positive material in response offering a different view from that in the hate speech or try to correct false information (23%). Despite the difference in percentages between those who choose to ingnore such content and those who chose to react, still some are keen on reacting positively. Farkas & Neumayer (2017) emphasize on the merits of proactive reaction against hate speech by shedding light on "crowdsourced reporting" of such content; or in other words collective reaction. The authors give examples of Facebook pages created with the mere purpose of gathering people to collectively report pages with hate rhetoric.

Chart 51: Reactions to harmful content – Spain
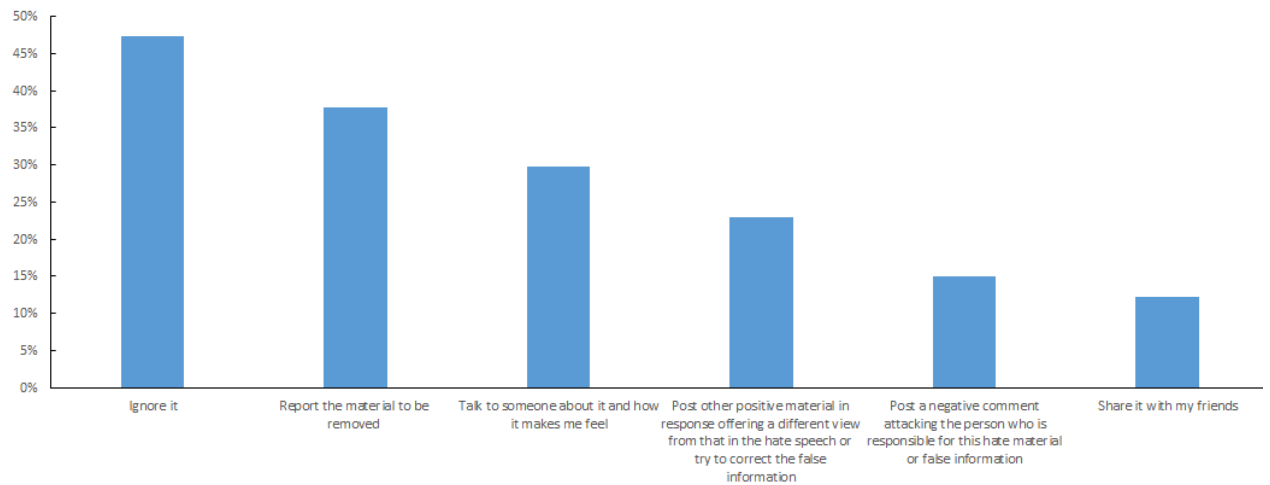
Table 52: Reactions to harmful content - Spain

Reaction to harmful content	%
Ignore it	47.30%
Report the material to be removed	37.80%
Talk to someone about it and how it makes me feel	29.70%
Post other positive material in response offering a different view from that in the hate speech or try to correct the false information	23%
Post a negative comment attacking the person who is responsible for this hate material or false information	14.90%
Share it with my friends	12.20%

In light of the demonstrated findings, the following correlations are tested:

H1A: News Literate youth are better able to *identify* explicit hate speech and/or hatred inciting news coverage on social media (Facebook/Twitter)

H1A is supported with Pearson r of 0.137, at significance level 0.026 describing the correlation between news literacy and hate speech identification and exposure.

8. 27 Political Engagement

8. 28 Political participation

As previously mentioned, political engagement was estimated through political participation and perception of political knowledge. When asked about their offline political participation over the past 12 months, more than half of the respondents reported participating in demonstrations, protests or marches (59.5%), and voting in elections (54.1%). More than one third (32.4%) stated that they have spoken to a public official in person, and more than a quarter (25.7%) reported attending a public hearing, town hall meeting or a city council meeting. It is worth mentioning that 16.2% reporting not doing any of the stated activities. The displayed percentages show that youth demonstrate active participation in most offline political activities.

Chart 52: Offline political participation – Spain
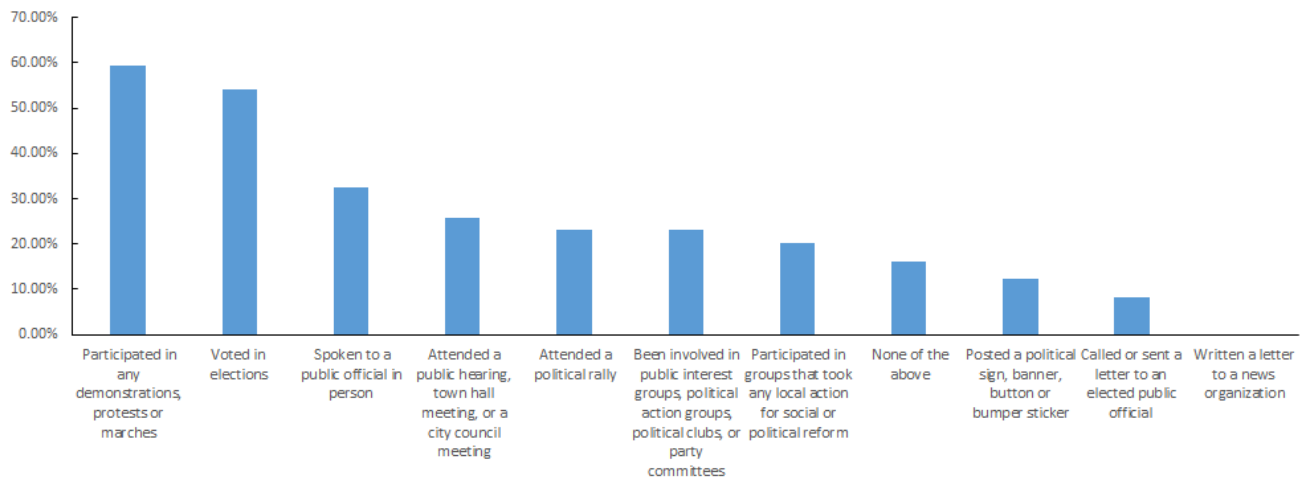
Table 53: Offline political participation – Spain

Offline political activities	%
Participated in any demonstrations, protests or marches	59.50%
Voted in elections	54.10%
Spoken to a public official in person	32.40%
Attended a public hearing, town hall meeting, or a city council meeting	25.70%
Attended a political rally	23%
Been involved in public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees	23%
Participated in groups that took any local action for social or political reform	20.30%
None of the above	16.20%
Posted a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker	12.20%
Called or sent a letter to an elected public official	8.10%
Written a letter to a news organization	

When asked about their online political activities, the frequency of the activities are demonstrated in order of ranking from most to least frequent. The majority of respondents were inclined towards *never* doing the stated activities. However the order of most to least done activities come as follows: write a political message (24.7%), signup to volunteer in a campaign/issue (24.1%), make a campaign contribution (18.6%), write to a politician (16.8%), and finally write a letter to the editor of a newspaper (14.7%).

Chart 53: Online political participation – Spain
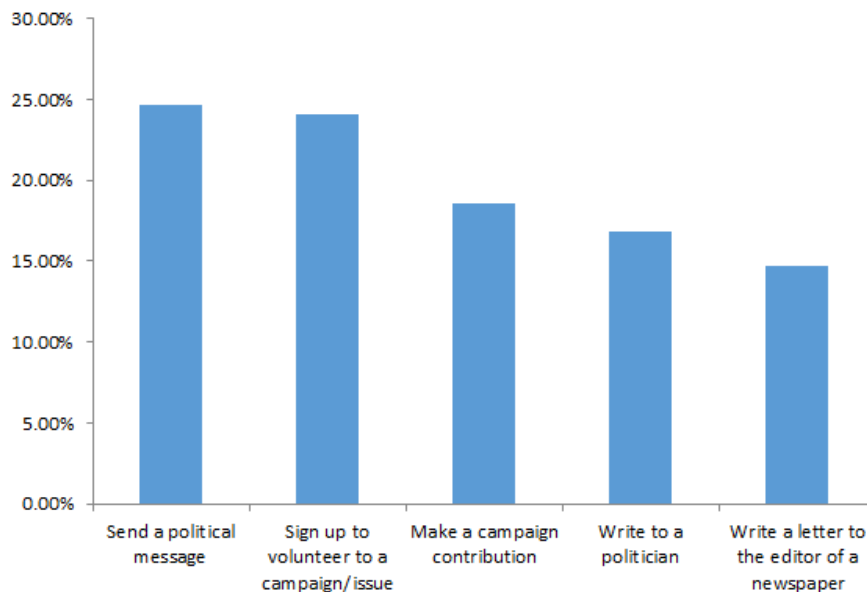
Table 54: Online political participation - Spain

Online political participation activities	%
Send a political message	24.70%
Sign up to volunteer to a campaign/issue	24.10%
Make a campaign contribution	18.60%
Write to a politician	16.80%
Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper	14.70%

When asked about the extent to which they believe that political participation can influence government policies and decisions, responses are as follows: *normal influence* (32.4%), *strong influence* (28.4%), *low influence* (25.7%).

Chart 54: Political efficacy – Spain

■ Strong influence   ■ Normal influence   ■ Low influence   ■ No influence at all   ■ Do not know
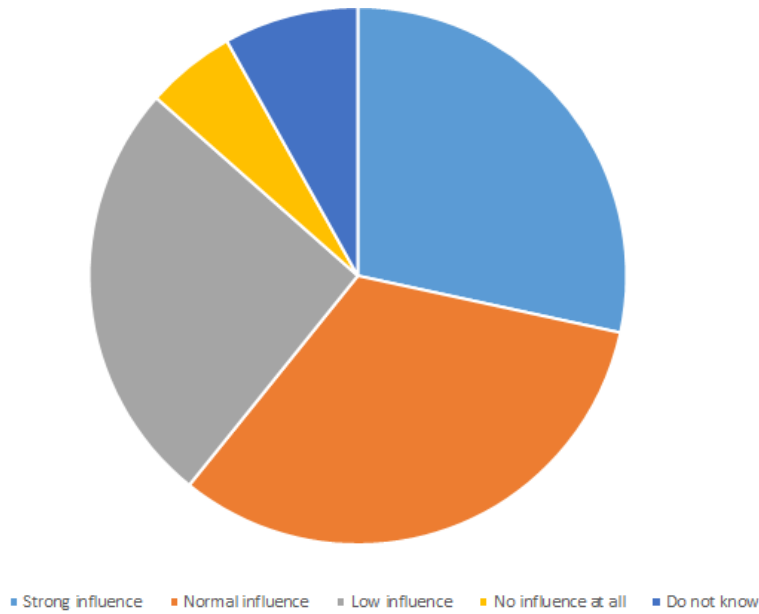
Table 55: Political efficacy – Spain

Influence on government	%
Strong influence	28.40%
Normal influence	32.40%
Low influence	25.70%
No influence at all	5.40%
Do not know	8.10%

8. 29 Perception of Current Events Knowledge and Political Interest

When asked about the extent to which they consider themselves knowledgeable and well-informed about current events, the majority reported being *moderately knowledgeable* (60.8%), with 21.6% reporting being *somewhat knowledgeable*

Chart 55: Perception of knowledge – Spain

- Not at all knowledgeable
- Slightly knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Moderately knowledgeable
- Extremely knowledgeable
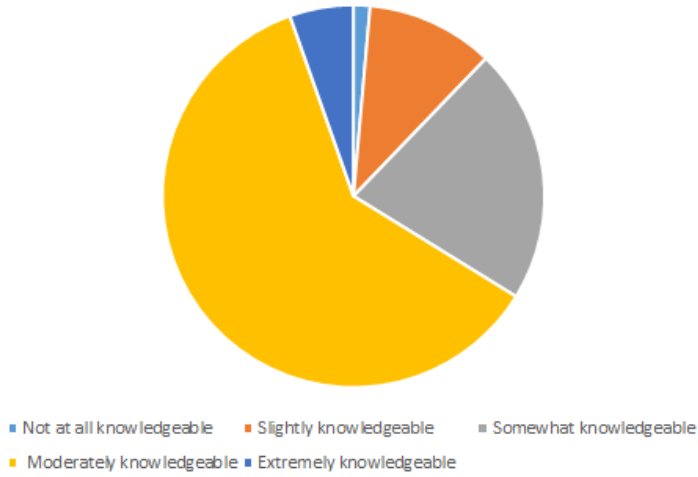
Table 56: Perception of knowledge - Spain

Perception of knowledge	%
Not at all knowledgeable	1.40%
Slightly knowledgeable	10.80%
Somewhat knowledgeable	21.60%
Moderately knowledgeable	60.80%
Extremely knowledgeable	5.40%

Regarding political interest, the majority of respondents shows that they are *moderately interested* (51.4%), with 17.6% reporting being *somewhat interested*

Chart 56: Political interest – Spain

Legend: Not at all interested · Slightly interested · Somewhat interested · Moderately interested · Extremely interested
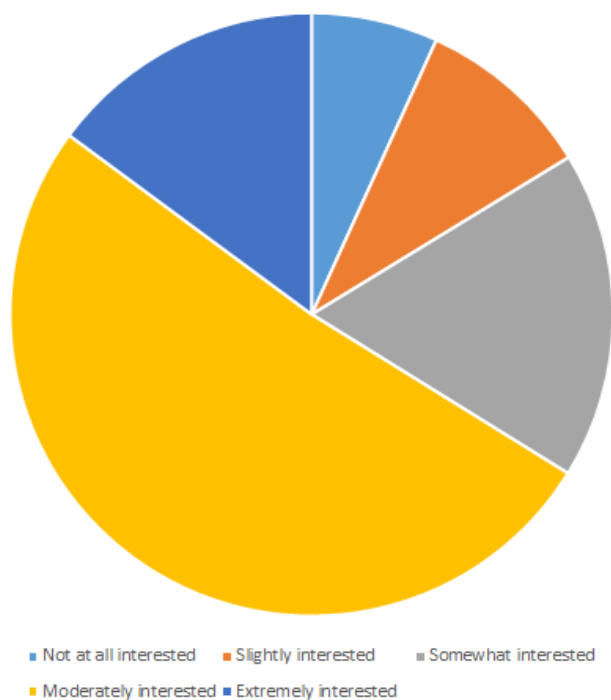
Table 57: Political interest - Spain

Political interest	%
Not at all interested	6.80%
Slightly interested	9.50%
Somewhat interested	17.60%
Moderately interested	51.40%
Extremely interested	14.90%

In light of the demonstrated findings, two research questions on correlations between news literacy and political engagement are addressed:

RQ2: What is the correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's *perception of current events knowledge*?

RQ3: What is the correlation between the level of news literacy and youth's political engagement?

Findings reveal a positive correlation between news literacy and perception of current events knowledge, with Pearson r 0.147. The correlation with political engagement is less significance with Pearson r 0.046.

The results displayed indicate that respondents are more involved in offline than online political participation. Most respondents display average level of political interest. Seeking further explanation the qualitative findings justify the fact that youth are more involved in offline political participation. Throughout the discussion it has been demonstrated that respondents care about real life involvement in events, especially political ones. As mentioned before, the main reference was made to Catalonia's independence based on which they expressed their keenness to witness events to be able to make decisions. This justifies the findings about higher involvement in offline political activities, with voting and taking part in demonstrations most reported in qualitative and quantitative results. As shown responses were dispersed when asked about the influence they possibly could have on the government; with normal, high and low influence reported respectively.

Similar to the case of Egypt, with the weak correlation between news literacy and political engagement, it could be suggested that, in line with scholars (Holt, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Ljungberg, 2013; Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012), there is an inferred correlation between habits of news use (online and offline), political interest and political engagement in general. In that sense, the effect of news literacy could be less directly correlated. That is, news literacy's impact could show more directly on youth's news behavior which in turn impacts political engagement. Hence news literacy, as suggested in the study's proposed model could act as a mediating variable through reshaping/enhancing youth's news behaviors which in turn reflects on political engagement. This analysis is supported by the significant positive correlation the correlation between motivation to seek news (a constituent of news literacy) and engagement to news (Pearson r = 0.173). Such findings support Ashley et al.'s (2017) results; the scholars found that news literacy and political activity are not directly related; however some news literacy constituents can indirectly affect the process. The correlation established here can go back to cumulative scale used to calculate the level of political engagement based on the scores of the measurements of political participation (online and offline), political efficacy and political interest.

<center>**8. 30 Discussion and Conclusion**</center>

The conducted empirical work on youth from Spain intends to investigate how the different constituents of news literacy come to play with other variables forming youth's news experience in comparison with Egypt. In this context, the following could be concluded from both the qualitative and quantitative results.

8. 31 Knowledge and Trust

In order to understand the roots of the problem, it is essential to understand the extent to which Spanish youth trust the media. Despite being aware about media's bias, lack of objectivity and working based on an agenda, youth have shown a better level of trust than expected. According to the qualitative findings, respondents find news media difficult to absolutely trust however inevitable to follow. This is reflected through them realizing that news media nowadays care more about commercial/political purposes than about informing the citizenry. However, they also highlighted that it is essential to seek professional news *critically*, that is to do their homework by contrasting and checking facts presented by the media. These findings are well-matched with the quantitative findings; youth's primary source of news being *websites of newspapers/magazines*. Meaning, professional news organizations are the first resort to youth seeking to stay informed especially with the heated political situation respondents are witnessing in Catalonia.

Accordingly, assessing their trust in the media respondents displayed awareness about how journalism *really* (not *ideally)* works. Based on that, they expressed lack of trust in content creators but still choose to trust the media critically as explained before. Crosschecking these findings through credibility assessment the majority of respondents give responses more inclined towards higher credibility assessment to the information provided by news media online. Contrasting these finding with the respondents' level of *knowledge of the news media industry*, the same correlation mentioned in the previous chapter on Egypt's findings is supported. That is, there is a relationship between the level of knowledge in this area and the degree of trust in the media. Respondents displayed a high level of knowledge of the news industry by understanding the roles, concepts such as objectivity and ownership effects. This goes in line with having *critical* trust in the media as displayed rather than being *cynical* towards it. Supporting scholars' stances (Craft et al., 2017; Pérez-

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Rodríguez and Delgado-Ponce, 2012), knowledge of the media industry is correlated with users' trust and engagement with the media as displayed in the results. The more news users understand and obtain sufficient knowledge about how the news media industry works, the more chance there is that they will trust and engage with the news.

8. 32 News Perception, Social Media News Experience

Throughout the focus group discussion session, respondents displayed negative stances when it comes to their perception of news media. However, matched with the quantitative findings, it is inferred that youth in this study are perfectly able to differentiate and balance between they skepticism towards news media's real ecosystem and the essential role of news played; its relevance and importance to them. So what exactly do they know about news media and how does such knowledge impact their perception and engagement to news?

As aforementioned, there is a general understanding that news *represent* reality in the form of factual information selected based on the impact it potentially has on people's daily lives (*knowledge about the real world*). However, despite this acknowledgement, interviewees displayed awareness about how some occurrences in the 'reality' make it to news while others do not, depending on what is of interest to news users most. Despite the general agreement that news should present facts with the main aim of informing the public, interviewees showed skepticism when it comes to this matter. One of the respondents confirmed that the most important criteria in news selection nowadays relates to engaging the audience with the news organization and hence making profits. Besides, awareness of the news users' role in the process, that is, content selection emerged in the results. In both, the discussions and questionnaire (*knowledge of news content*), respondents acknowledged confirmation bias in their selection of news content. Such findings support Arendt et al.'s (2016) Media-related selection which highlights journalists' gatekeeping function as filters of content and audience's selective exposure and sharing behavior as further discussed below. Having mentioned motives that drive the construction of news stories, respondents shed light on how professional news organizations on social media use sensationalism in their headlines clickbaiting the readers. In that sense, respondents agreed that news media: shape citizens' beliefs about what they *need* to know (whether or not it is true); are not fulfilling their main role of informing as should be; are driven by own interests; yet are still

the main channel through which citizens can get information about political institutes and governments.

So where do professional news media stand as sources of news? The study findings reveal that Spanish respondents are engaged to news which was demonstrated through several measures. The fact that *websites of newspapers/magazines* are primary sources on news for youth online reveals a good level of engagement as previously highlighted. However, this does not mean that social media is not used for news. Seeking information through *accounts of professional news organizations on social media* is the second source of news for respondents. When asked about social media versus professional news media online as major or minor sources of news Twitter came first as a major source of news followed by newspapers websites such as El Pais as previously demonstrated. Matched with their responses regarding the primary information use of Twitter (getting news about current events from friends), contradiction is revealed with the previous findings. However, when analyzed this still confirms that the sampled youth are able to differentiate between the role of social media as news diffusors and that of professional news websites by showing understanding of the different content and context of each.

8. 33 Online News Behavior and Harmful Content:

In light of the previous discussion of how youth perceive news and news media and their relation to that on social media, youth's online news behavior was investigated. As highlighted through the quantitative findings the majority of respondents share content on social media, despite close to quarter reporting not sharing. Before delving into details about the sharing behavior, it is essential to understand why some do not share. This is one of the themes that emerged during the focus group discussions. Accordingly the reason for not sharing was justified by stating that a sense of responsibility and fear to unintentionally mislead or misinform their network is the reason why they do not share especially when it comes to political news. Here perception of knowledge is deemed relevant where the majority of respondents perceive themselves as moderately to somewhat knowledgeable.

On the other hand, information seeking was found to be the primary motive behind sharing content on social media reflecting the desire of youth to seek context and elaboration to the information they get exposed to. This in turn justifies the fact that socialization is the second motive guiding sharing showing the involvement of respondents in the online

public sphere. These findings are compatible with Twitter's first informational use being getting news about current events from friends. This supports Hermida et al.'s (2012) statement that "a person's social circle takes on the role of news editor, deciding whether a story, video or other piece of content is important, interesting or entertaining enough to recommend". Here personalization algorithms play their role. Having mentioned that, according to the qualitative findings, awareness about such algorithms influences the decision to share as well as the content selected to share. Respondents have also emphasized how confirmation bias plays a role in the content shared, as well as the nature and use of the social media platform as explained in the qualitative findings.

In that sense, what is youth's online news behavior like? Does it reflect enough responsibility?

In the focus group discussions respondents confirm that they are able to discern fake from real news, yet they show otherwise through their decision to only read headlines of news stories. It is paradoxical that despite being aware and clear that fabricated news and misleading headlines are common on social media, still the majority of students just read the headlines and rarely clicks on them for full stories. Same emerged in the quantitative findings with respondents displaying care about the veracity of content shared, hence **checking sources of information in a news story before sharing it**. The majority of respondents positively support the statement that it is **important to check the credibility of the information in a news article before sharing it**. However, in the verification ability assessment respondents showed the awareness of the importance of verifying content (eg. whether something happened or not) while failing to recognize the importance of author related verification as previously explained.

Despite showing engagement to professional news sources, responses to the statement **I only share news stories from professional news organizations** were inclined towards disagreeing with more than a third reporting a *neutral* stance, and close to a third *disagreeing*.

When it comes to hate speech, the majority of youth in both the qualitative and quantitative studies reported exposure to such content. Findings reveal hate speech for political views to be the most encountered type, followed by gender, sexual orientation and religion (highlighted more in the qualitative findings than the quantitative). As aforementioned,

taking into account the findings concerning the motivation to read and write comments on news articles on social media, with social interaction and information motivation (respectively) being selected by the majority, such findings imply that user generated content is one of the main sources of hate incitement on social media. This is confirmed with the majority of youth reporting encountering hate speech displayed in statuses and/or tweets, peers posts while sharing news articles and comments on news articles.

In the focus group discussion, respondents blamed the professional media for separating/dividing people through implanting stereotypes and using the 'us and them' rhetoric. Some find news to be bluntly spreading hatred while others believe hatred is a strong word to use in this context. Quantifying these findings, a significant percentage of respondents reported finding hate speech in shared news videos, with more than a third finding it in shared news articles and more than a quarter in articles by professional news media.

Almost half of the respondents stated that they normally ignore harmful content (fake news/hate speech), with more than a third mentioning they report it. Despite the significant percentage of participants deciding to be passive toward such content, still Spanish respondents show better proactivity than the Egyptian.

So where does professional media stand in this process? As previously mentioned, Spanish respondents show engagement to news through seeking information from professional media's websites (Mitchell & Jukowitz, 2014). However, findings raise concern regarding youth's perception of news and the role of news media to regain users' trust.

8. 34 Conclusion

Having demonstrated the findings from the qualitative and quantitative studies conducted on Spanish young people from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)., the results show a good level of news literacy. The results also confirm the essentiality of news literacy to face harmful content and mediate political engagement.

The next chapter demonstrates the comparative analysis between findings from Egypt and findings from Spain.

Chapter 9

Comparative Analysis:

Egypt and Spain

9. 1 Introduction

According to Hobbs (2010b), understanding how different cultural contexts impact the construction of news content is essential for media literacy's interventions. Hence, the global news literacy paradigm, as highlighted in the literature, can be comprehended by defining it as the ability to "*understand, "decode," and create media with particular awareness of one's social location within an international context*" (Reese, 2012). Hornik and Kajimoto (2014) emphasize that language and cultural differences should be considered when addressing global news literacy. The authors stress that news literacy cannot be regarded as a "series of American concepts" that are taught/studied but rather should be adapted to the different nations depending on language, media and culture. Stemming from these ideas, the researcher became interested in conducting the study on samples from two completely different countries, with different cultures, languages and democratic status; Egypt and Spain. This comparison can be regarded as an initial exploratory step to understand youth's online news experiences in different contexts and where news literacy stands providing implications for political engagement.

In the previous two chapters, findings of qualitative and quantitative tools used in the study have been demonstrated for each of the two countries; Egypt and Spain. Surprisingly, there are more similarities than differences between the two countries' findings indicating the current information chaos and changing news media ecosystem as a global issue. The correlations tested came out with similar results for both countries as displayed with positive correlations between news literacy and the other tested variables. Differences lie in the details of youth's online news experience, their engagement to news, critical/cynical attitudes towards news media and decisiveness regarding the responses on different issues.

Accordingly in order to better understand the similarities and differences, this chapter is divided into sections of pertinence to the main hypotheses and research questions put forward by the study.

9. 2 High Levels of News Literacy

Based on the findings demonstrated, the majority of respondents in both countries demonstrate high levels of news literacy. Based on the likert scale statements used to assess respondents' **motivation**, youth from both countries demonstrate high levels of motivation to seek news. More than half of the Egyptian respondents (50.9%) *agreed* that they follow the news *because they like to*, with 16.4% *strongly agreeing* to the statement. Also, almost half of the Egyptian respondents (49.1%) *agreed* to the statement that they *follow the news for their own good* with 19.1% *strongly agreeing*. Half of the Spanish respondents (50%) *agreed* that they follow the news *because they like to*¸ with more than a third (33.8%) *strongly agreeing* to the statement. More than half of the respondents (52.7%) *agree* to the statement that they *follow the news for their own good*, with almost a third (28.4%) *strongly agreeing* to the statement. Hence, youth from both countries are motivated to follow the news to a good extent, with a majority acknowledging the reasons that they follow the news because they like to or for their own good.

Further, respondents from both countries gave negative responses to the statement that marginalizes the important role of news (I don´t see what news does for me): more than one third (32.7%) of the Egyptian respondents *disagreed* to the statement *I don´t see what news does for me*; a significant percentage of Spanish respondents (45.9%) *disagreed*.

Chart 57: Motivation to follow the news – Comparative
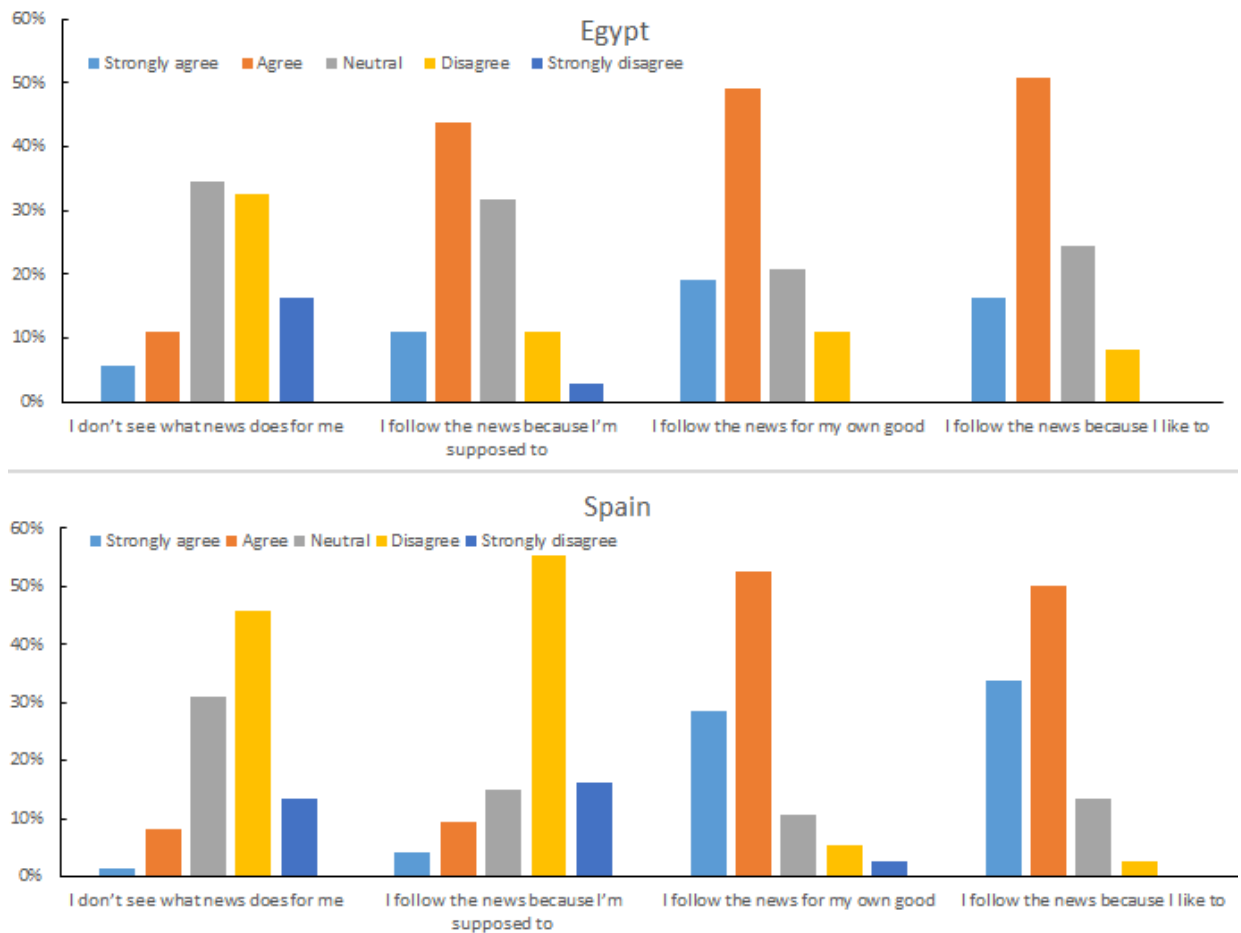
Regarding, **knowledge**, despite the general level being similar differences could be noted when it comes to different knowledge areas.

- *Knowledge of news content:* more than a third of Egyptian respondents (37.3%) *strongly agreed* that news companies choose stories based on what will attract the biggest audience, with more than a third (32.7%) *agreeing* to the statement. Almost half (47.3%) of the Spanish respondents *agree* that news companies choose stories based on what will attract the biggest audience, with 40.5% *strongly agreeing*. Also, 40.9% of the Egyptian respondents *agreed* to the statement that people pay more attention to news that fits with their beliefs than news that doesn't, with 27.3% *strongly agreeing*. Almost half (48.6%) of the Spanish respondents *strongly agree* that people pay more attention to news that fits with their beliefs than news that doesn't, with more than a third (39.2%) *agreeing*. Similar for samples from both countries, as previously mentioned, the results displayed show

that the majority of respondents are aware about news content selection from both sides, the journalists´ and the audience´s. The fact that youth report agreement to a statement that reflects confirmation bias is alarming in the implicated consequences for being well informed. Meaning, exposure to "opposing arguments" is inevitable for healthy political engagement that fosters democracies (Arendt et al., 2016).

- *Knowledge of the news media industry*: In this area of knowledge similarities and differences could be found. Respondents from both countries show awareness of ownership's influence. Almost half of the Egyptian respondents (46.4%) *agreed* to the statement that the owner of a media company influences the content that is produced, with almost a third (27.3%) *strongly agreeing*. More than half (54.1%) of the Spanish respondents *strongly agreed* that the owner of a media company influences the content that is produced, with more than a third (33.8%) *agreeing*. However, when asked "Who has the most influence on what gets aired on the local TV news?", more than a third of the Egyptian respondents selected the wrong answer to the question; 38.2% mentioned it is the *individual reporters*, while the correct answer *the producer/editor*, was selected by 21.8%. On the other hand, the majority (64.9%) of Spanish respondents selected the correct answer to the question; *the producer/editor*, with 16.2% selection *individual reporters*. Hence, Egyptian respondents demonstrate confusion between the roles definition and impact of the different persons involved in the industry (reporters, producers, cameraman, anchors,..etc.), unlike Spanish respondents who demonstrate awareness about the same area.

Testing awareness about the concept of objectivity, more than a third of Egyptian respondents selected the correct answer to the question "One common criticism of the news is that it is not objective. What do people who make that criticism typically mean by it?"; 35.5% selected the meaning that *the reporter puts his/her opinion in the story*, with 26.4% stating that they *don´t know*. More than half (58.1%) of the Spanish respondents selected the correct answer to the same question, with 16.2% stating they *don't know*. Here another difference is spotted, with Spanish respondents demonstrating stronger awareness about the meaning of objectivity and its impact on content. The implications of these differences are

discussed as correlating with the level of trust in the media in the specified section below.

- *Knowledge about the news media effects*: Findings from Egypt and Spain indicate awareness of respondents that a considerable part of the meaning making process depends on audience´s interpretation and not just on the meaning intended by the reporter/journalist. Further respondents from both countries are aware of the agenda setting effect of the media; where coverage influences importance perception about an issue. Difference is noted when it comes to stating that people are influenced by news whether they realize it or not. Respondents from Egypt provided dispersed responses; with more than a third (35.5%) *agreeing* and more than a third (31.8%) reporting a *neutral* stance. While respondents from Spain show more awareness; with 45.9% *agreeing* and 43.2% *strongly agreeing*. When it comes to the statement regarding how the news media can influence people's opinion about political candidates; respondents from Egypt and Spain support the statement, showing awareness about the impact of news on shaping political opinions.

- *Knowledge about the real world*: Respondents from both countries demonstrated awareness about the *constructed* nature of news, and that there are factors that interfere with the selection and display of events in the news. However, when it comes specifically to some selection criteria, a considerable percentage of Egyptian respondents (40%) seem to be in doubt selecting *neutral*; while Spanish respondents show more certainty in their response to this part. On the other hand, despite supporting the statement that news makes things more dramatic than they really are, more than a third (35.1%) of Spanish respondents report *neutral* stances, while Egyptian respondents show more certainty in their responses to this point.

- *Knowledge of the self*: The results from both countries show that youth believe that they control media influences but not entirely; they still perceive some influences as not fully under their control. Respondents believe they are in control of how far they are informed and knowledgeable about the world, and how they can possibly avoid being misinformed. However, when it comes to controlling the information they get from news media or learning about credible information in case of being misinformed, there is less consensus with regards to how far they control that.

Regarding **skills** of credibility assessment and verification ability, there were differences between both countries. For credibility assessment, respondents were asked to assess the extent to which they find online news media credible by asking them to evaluate believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias and completeness. Common among Egyptian respondents is the fact that the evaluations have almost all been average with the biggest percentages of respondents selecting the response *somewhat* in the scale provided (with alternatives ranging from extremely to not at all). The majority of responses in the case of Spain are dispersed among moderately, somewhat and slightly, except for believability where a more significant percentage of respondents choosing moderately believable as demonstrated.

These findings go in line with those of media skepticism. As displayed, the majority of Spanish respondents give responses more inclined towards higher credibility assessment to the information provided by news media online. This especially applies when it comes to believability. Taking into account that news media's websites are important sources for the sampled Spanish youth, the results are compatible.

Regarding Egyptian respondents, doubtful stances were most prevalent going in accordance with their media trust findings.

Chart 58: Credibility Assessment –Comparative
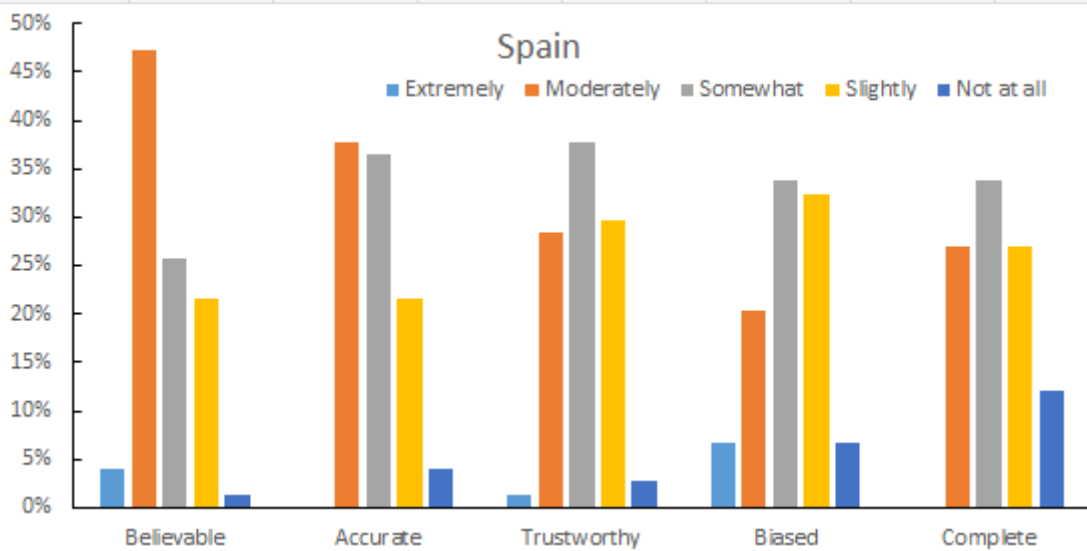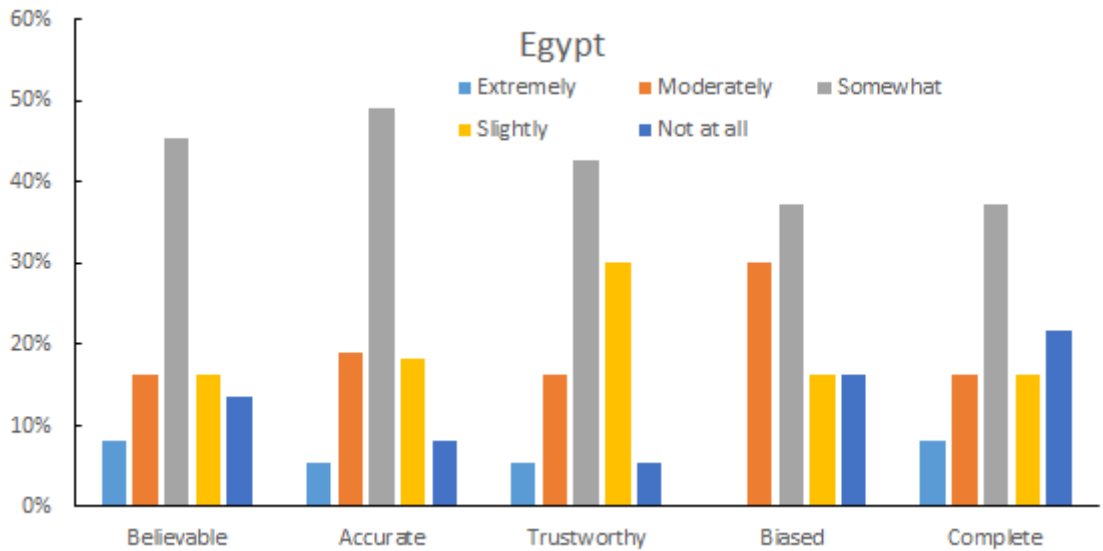
Egypt

Spain

In order to measure verification ability respondents were asked about the frequency of doing specific actions when they read news online, by giving them statements to which they have to respond using 5 point scale ranging from always to never. Findings in the case of Egypt go in line with Flanagin & Metzger's (2000), with the majority of Egyptian respondents verifying information online mostly *sometimes* or *rarely*. However, in the case of Spain, based on the findings, the verification activities need to be divided into content-related verification activities and author-related ones. When it comes to author related activities (such as checking author's goals, verifying qualifications..etc), Spanish respondents verify *sometimes* or *rarely*. On the other hand, when it comes to content-related verification activities the majority of Spanish respondents responses range from often to sometimes (such as seeking other sources, checking for completeness, verifying if the information is opinion or fact..etc).

Chart 59: Verification Ability – Comparative
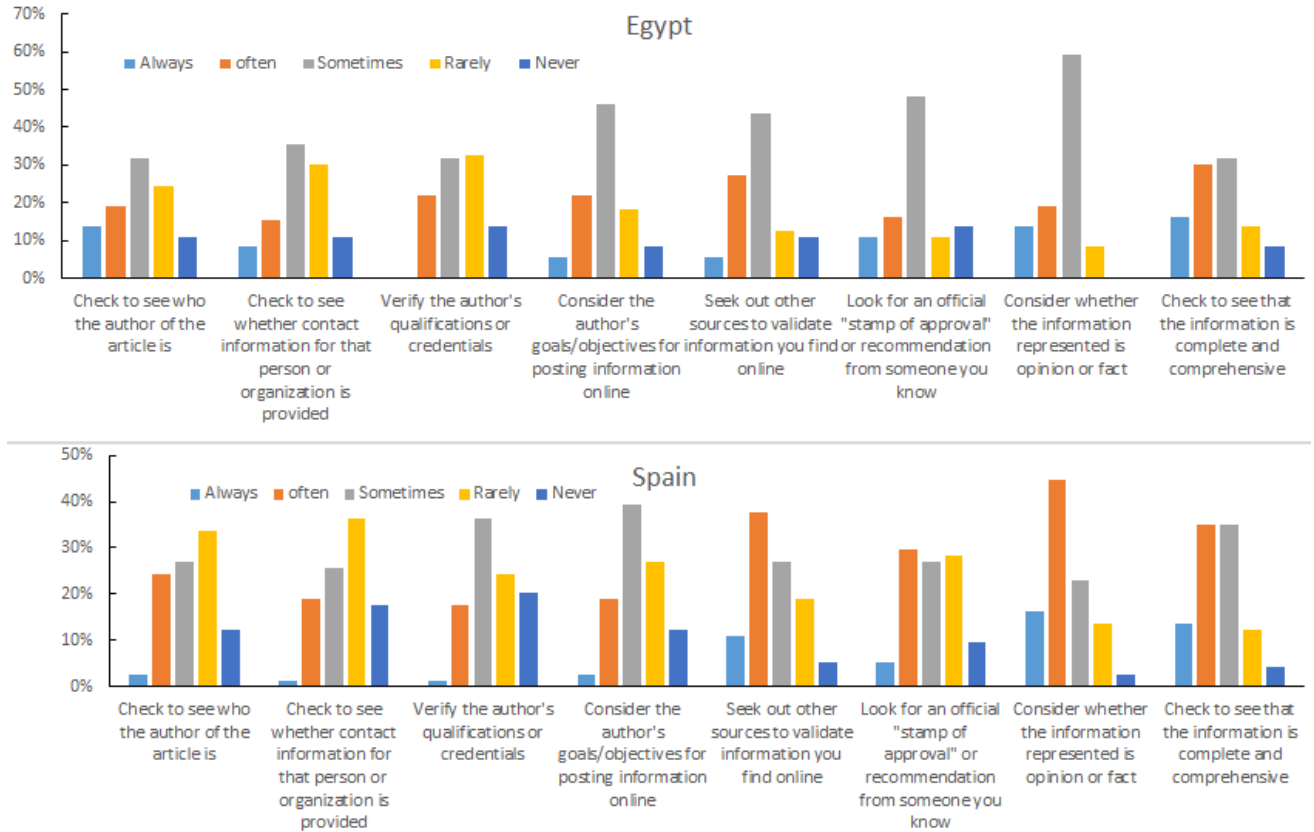
Based on the findings demonstrated, in both cases of Egypt and Spain, the majority of respondents demonstrate high level of news literacy (65% Egypt, 66% Spain). Most respondents in both cases displayed motivation to seek news by supporting the statements that imply their understanding of the importance of news to them and rejecting statements that marginalize this role. Regarding knowledge areas, respondents from both countries demonstrate a good level of awareness about the concepts covered under each knowledge area. This applies to all except for *knowledge about the news industry*; Egyptian youth demonstrated a weaker level that their Spanish counterparts in this area, specifically regarding the roles played by the different individuals involved in the news making process. Differences between both countries exist when it comes to the tested skills. In the case of Egypt, findings for both (credibility assessment and verification ability) confirm the need to work on youth's awareness about the essentiality to carry on certain inspections when reading news online to be able to evaluate credibility and verify the used information In the case of Spain, the respondents appear to have a good level in both skills with the exception of author-related verification as highlighted.

Despite the close results between respondents from both countries, it is essential to note that *neutral* responses are more prevalent among Egyptian respondents than their Spanish counterparts. Scholars suggest that there are two possible scenarios behind reporting neutral stances; "true neutral"/"indifferent" or "don't know"/"undecided" (Raaijmakers et al., 2000). Accordingly, based on the nature of statements, it is suggested that neutral stances reported by Egyptian respondents can be analyzed as lack of knowledge in support of Sturgis et al. 's (2012) findings; most respondents giving neutral answers were found to be either with no opinion or do not know. This has been demonstrated most in *knowledge about news media effects* results (check Egypt's findings and analysis chapter). On the other hand, Spanish respondents demonstrate better results when it comes to decisiveness by mostly reporting positive or negative stances.

9. 3 Patterns of Online News Use and News Engagement

Respondents from both countries displayed preference to online sources of news than traditional media; there is a decline especially in newspapers readership. However, Spanish respondents news use reveal higher level of engagement to news than their Egyptian counterparts.

Egypt's findings show that the primary source(s) of news for respondents are accounts of professional news organizations on social media, followed by content generated by their peers on social media (statuses, tweets, comments…etc) and websites of newspapers/magazines coming third. On the other hand, for Spanish respondents, websites of newspapers/magazines come in the first place as a source of news, followed by accounts of professional news organizations on social media, then television coming third.

The fact that Egyptian respondents ranked professional news media's websites third as a source of news leaves social media as the main news carriers. This implicates the ramifications that could result from relevant issues such as personalization algorithms based on which such platforms work. In other words, are social media/online news users aware of how content appears to them? According to empirical findings of a study done on university students in the US, youth "are largely unaware of whether and how news sources track user data and apply editorial judgments to deliver personalized results" (Powers, 2014). From a different angle, this makes social media the main gatekeepers of information which is something both users and professional news media should consider.

In contrast with the findings from the Egyptian case, social media use for news does not come at the expense of professional news media's websites for Spanish respondents. This is reflected through the fact that such websites were ranked as the primary source of news for the sampled Spanish young people. This choice was followed by accounts of professional news organizations on social media, with peers generated content pushed fourth as a source of news. These findings reveal the extent to which Spanish youth are able to differentiate between social media as carriers of news content rather than sources, and professional sources to get their information. This supports Braun & Gillespie's (2011) statement about the importance that users realize such difference.

According to Mitchell & Jukowitz (2014), users who directly go to the website of the news organizations by typing/bookmarking the link "spend much more time on that news site, view many more pages of content and come back far more often" than users who use Facebook or search engines to get there. Despite the chances of dissemination social media provide, still such results does not reflect strong engagement with professional news sites. In light of this, inference is made that Egyptian youth are less engaged to news than Spanish youth in the study.

Chart 60: Main sources of information about events, public issues and politics - Comparative
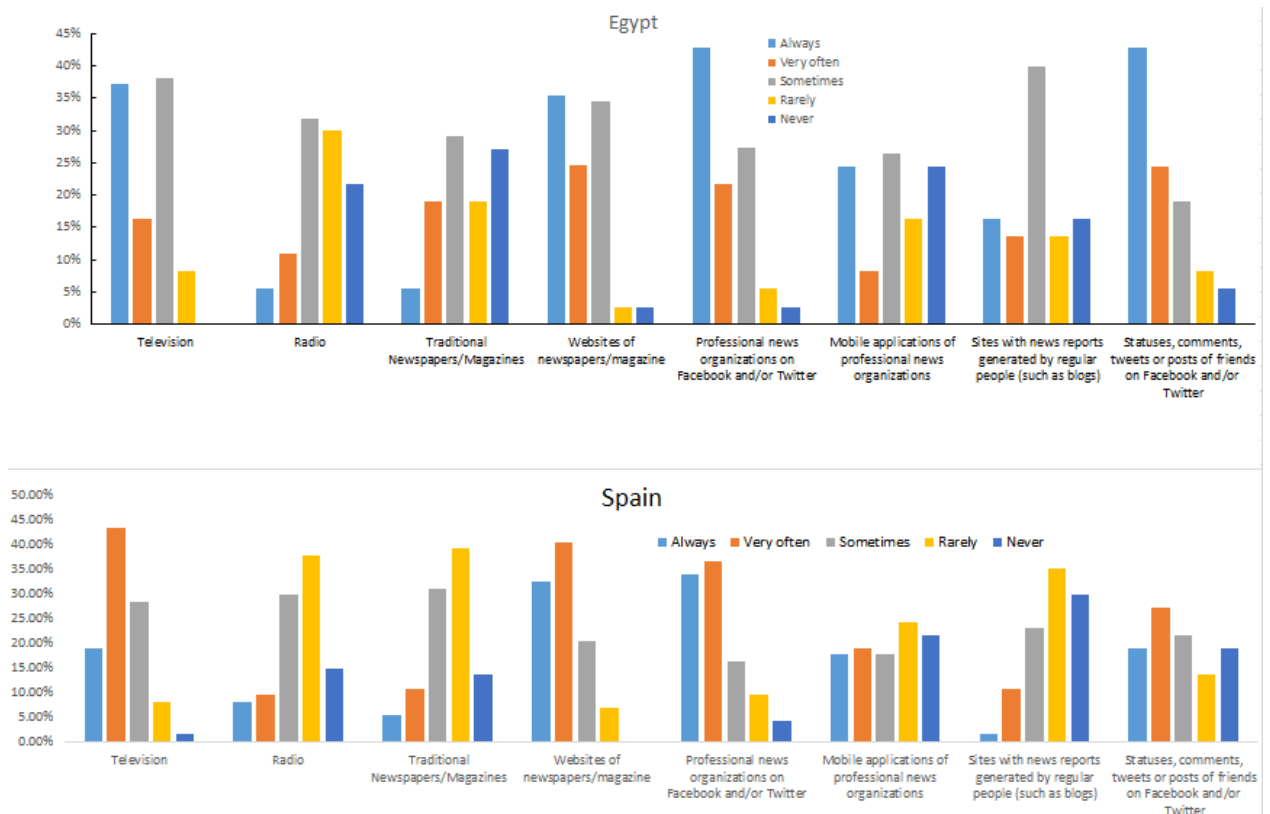
Egypt

Spain

Analyzing youth's preference to get their news on social media, Hermida et al. (2012) state that: "the traditional gatekeeping function of the media is weakened as a significant proportion of news consumers turn to family, friends and acquaintances to alert them to items of interest". This statement is supported by the qualitative findings of the study in case of Egypt, where Egyptian respondents emphasized the importance of the opinions/views of trusted individuals. It further applies – in a weaker sense - in the case of Spain, with Spanish respondents

When it comes to Social media platforms, priorities are completely different in both countries. With Facebook and YouTube being the most frequently used among Egyptian respondents, Instagram and Twitter are most used by Spanish respondents. Since the study focuses on Facebook and Twitter, it is then essential to note that Facebook is massively declining among Spanish youth, and Twitter is minimally used among their Egyptian counterparts based on the qualitative and quantitative findings for both countries. This is confirmed when asked about different news sources. Egyptian respondents reported Facebook as a major source of news, followed by Google News then YouTube; while Spanish respondents reported Twitter as a major source of news, followed by El Pais Online (newspaper), then El Diario (newspaper).

Scholars suggest that the decision to use one platform and not the other is related to major personality traits (Hughes et al., 2012). Accordingly, with a focus on information seeking, Facebook's users are believed to get their information while/through "socializing", while Twitter's users are believed to intentionally seek information for its utility and "value" (Hughes et al., 2012). Contradictorily, Egyptian respondents report Facebook's primary information use is to get news about current events from mainstream media; Spanish respondents barely agree. And, Spanish respondents report Twitter's primary information use is getting news about current events from friends, similar to findings from Egypt. These findings contradict with Hughes et al.'s (2012) aforementioned findings. However, it is important to note that in the focus group discussions, Egyptian respondents emphasized the importance of the views of others which justifies their dependence on social media (especially Facebook) for news. Spanish respondents as well mentioned during the discussions that they check what their peers have to say about the different issues raised, which is well-matched with their first informational use of Twitter.

Accordingly, Egyptian and Spanish youth in the study demonstrated different levels of engagement with professional news media as shown. Despite the existence of social media commonly used, findings from both countries reveal different uses and different priorities. This calls to understanding how youth's perception of news media and the extent to which they trust them compare.

9. 4 Perception of News Media, Knowledge and Trust

Negative perceptions about professional news media's performance have been expressed by respondents from both countries, with the main justification being that news media are not fulfilling their role as should be. Respondents from both countries are well aware that news media's main role is to inform the citizenry. However, it was noted that unfortunately what happens in reality is different with the media driven by economic and political agendas. So what exactly do they know about news media and how does such knowledge impact their media perception and trust?

As previously discussed in the News Literacy section, youth from both countries generally show good level of knowledge in the five knowledge areas investigated. Findings from both countries support Arendt et al.'s (2016) Media-related selection which highlights journalists' gatekeeping function as filters of content and audience's selective exposure and

sharing behavior. As previously explained Media-related selection (MRS) is an attempt by Arendt et al. (2016) to combine three theoretical tenets of selection taking into account the two main actors in the news experience; journalists and users. The three theoretical concepts addressed under MRS are gatekeeping (journalists' selection), selective exposure (users' selection where confirmation bias is taken into account) and news sharing on social networking sites (journalists and users sharing behavior is considered). As previously demonstrated, three knowledge areas reflect MRS; knowledge of content, knowledge about media effects and knowledge about the world. Hence, in the three areas respondents from both countries demonstrate close results being aware of how journalists and audience's selection affects the product (the news story). Respondents showed awareness about factors that impact audience selection, such as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 2009) and confirmation bias (Jonas, Schultz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001) in qualitative and quantitative findings. They also demonstrated of awareness about factors that impact journalists' selection; selection criteria, economic/political motives as well as other pressures to compete for audience engagement.

On the other hand, when it comes to *knowledge of the news media industry*, differences between both groups of respondents from Egypt and Spain emerged. Egyptian respondents demonstrate confusion between the roles definition and impact of the different persons involved in the industry (reporters, producers, cameraman, anchors,..etc.), unlike Spanish respondents who demonstrate awareness about the same area. Scholars (Craft et al., 2017; Pérez-Rodríguez and Delgado-Ponce, 2012) emphasize the essentiality of knowledge about media industry for trust and engagement with news after establishing correlations between these variables. This study supports such correlations as shown in the findings on media skepticism.

Assessing respondents' trust in the media, it was found that Spanish respondents, despite skeptical, show better level of trust than their Egyptian counterparts. Egyptian respondents in the qualitative and quantitative responses demonstrate the essentiality of views of peers or trusted persons in their circles for them to be able to form an attitude or an opinion toward different issues. This comes at the expense of intentionally seeking information through official news websites for instance; which further justifies mostly depending on social media for news. On the other hand, Spanish respondents demonstrate lack of trust in a more critical manner; consciousness about the reasons why they do not trust the media,

yet acknowledge that professional news media is what they should follow to remain updated and informed. This is emphasized through their primary source of information being websites of newspapers/magazines, while still using social media and friends' network for elaboration and context. In both cases respondents highlighted journalists' selection by noting that different media organizations take sides, and hence users must be aware to select what to follow (selective exposure).

Chart 61: Trust in the media – Comparative
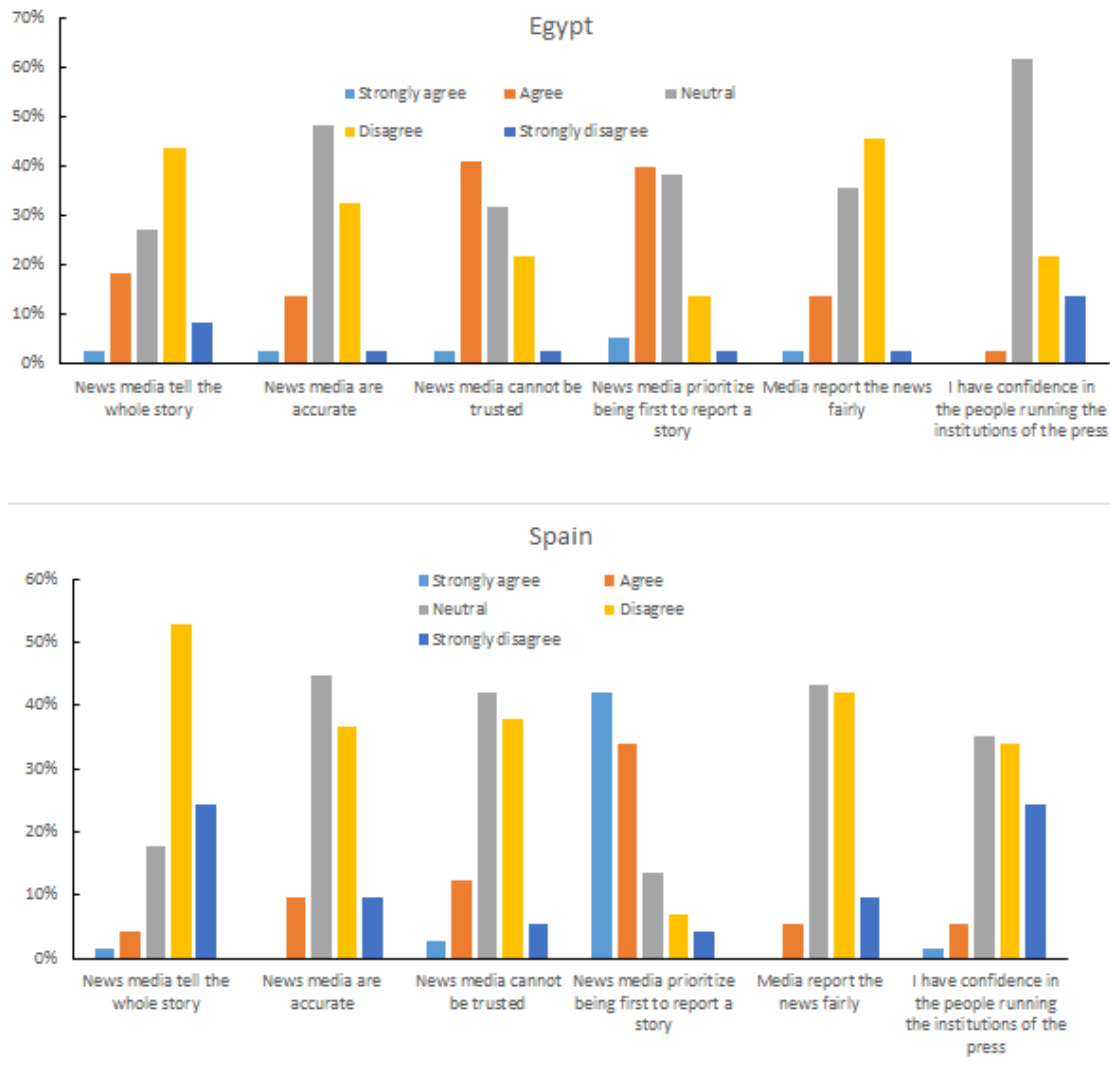
In light of these findings, it is worth noting that results from the different variables tested in each of the two cases are compatible with each other as displayed. Adding to that, reference to the argument on criticism versus cynicism is essential for the different consequences each has on news engagement and also political engagement. Being cynical refers to having a general judgment, usually negative in case of cynicism towards the

media, based on which an individual takes a decision of disengagement. For example, the judgment that news media lie or present negative content all the time and so I am not interested to follow news anymore (Buckingham, 2000; Mihailidis, 2008). Despite the fact that Egyptian respondents cannot be described as completely cynical, since they show engagement to news and politics, still they are more inclined toward this side of the continuum. Being critical, nonetheless, entails awareness of the essentiality of news and media that is based on knowledge of how the media works and hence a developed ability to think beyond the explicit content and awareness of a person's potential role to introduce changes to the displayed content (Buckingham, 2000; Mihailidis, 2008). Spanish respondents do not perfectly meet the criteria of being critical but as well are more inclined towards it than Egyptian respondents.

Having analyzed the differences and similarities between Egyptian and Spanish respondents, regarding their news perception, knowledge and trust, delving into their actual content-focused news experience is what the next section is about.

9. 5 Harmful messages and the *(ir)responsible* 'human behavior':

9. 6 Automaticity, Cynicism and Critical Thinking

As highlighted in the previous section, being critical or cynical has its implications on news engagement. Same applies for automatic consumption of news or taking whatever content we encounter for granted. With the majority of respondents in both countries reporting accidental exposure to news (91.8% Egypt, 85.1% Spain), it is essential to understand the negative and positive sides. On the good side, Kim et al. (2013) found the accidental news exposure is positively correlated to political participation suggesting that it fosters citizens' engagement to politics. Yet, the scholars highlight that this is only valid with users who "consume less entertainment online". This emphasizes how personal preferences play a role in the impact such exposure might have. However, if individuals do not willingly and deliberately search, filter, select and read news, they lack personal motivation to seek such type of content. Such lack of affinity for news could also indicate lack of awareness of its relevance to them and hence its role in a society. According to the findings, Egyptian and Spanish respondents have the motivation to seek news and understand its essential role; however in the case of Egypt lack of trust interferes with youth's choices.

In that sense, maintaining critical thinking and understanding why this specific content surfaces in our ways is indispensible. If we took a close look how the social networking sites work, we would find compliance with the bases of selective exposure through features of personalizing content; where users receive content that goes in line with their interests, opinions and beliefs based on algorithms that use clues to surface different content to each individual based on their perception of his/her interests, opinions, location, language..etc. Accordingly, users become in a *bubble* and are rarely exposed to opposing views that might potentially cause "dissonance". As highlighted by scholars, on the internet you see what you want to see rather than what you need to see through the created information bubbles potentially leading to inaccurate beliefs, opinions and decisions (Resnick, Garrett, Kriplean, Munson, & Stroud, 2013; Pariser, 2011). With respondents from both countries resorting to social media for news (despite the different order of priorities), the question arises about whether they are conscious about this process or not, and how they behave when it comes to information on social media.

But before exploring that, first the results regarding the exposure to harmful content for both cases, Egypt and Spain is demonstrated to compare and understand the scope of the problem.

9. 7 Fake News and Hate Speech: Exposure and Detection

When asked whether or not they are aware that some news stories shared on social media are fake news, a massive majority of respondents from both countries (97.3% Egypt, 97.3% Spain) reported that they are aware about it. Also, the majority of respondents support the statements that fake news on social media can cause confusion; it is important to check credibility of news article before sharing it

Respondents displayed rejection to the statement; if the headline is interesting I share without reading; sharing news stories shared by friends without reading; that they do not necessarily check the sources of information in a news story before they share it.

When it comes to the statement I only share news stories by professional news media, more Egyptian respondents supported the statement with more Spanish reporting neutral

When asked whether they believe they have the competencies to tell whether or not a news story is fake; Egyptian respondents' responses were more dispersed that their Spanish

counterparts who mostly supported the statement.

In the case of Egyptian respondents, a discrepancy between their awareness of the problem and their actions could be noted, besides the prevalence of *neutral* responses indicating doubts. The percentages displayed reveal awareness from the side of the Egyptian youth about the potential impact of fake news and their reported existent perception that the source which delivers the news is important to consider, which was barely reflected in the previously mentioned findings on verification ability. However, there is also a high percentage who reported neutral positions, in that sense, indicating confusion, indifference or lack of enough awareness (like the case with sharing news stories only from professional sources, where more than a third stated being neutral about it).

In the case of Spanish respondents, in line with the findings on verification ability, the percentages displayed reveal that youth are more aware about the essentiality of double checking content than of verifying sources. This has been reflected through their more dispersed responses to the statement about checking sources of information in a news story before sharing. In line with the qualitative findings, respondents show that they care about the credibility of information and understand their responsibility when sharing content.

Regarding their ability to detect fake news, Spanish respondents show more confidence in their competencies than their Egyptian counterparts with the majority reporting *neutral*.

When asked whether they have seen hateful or degrading writings/speech on social media which inappropriately attacks certain groups/individuals, the majority of respondents (67.3% Egypt, 87.8% Spain) confirmed that they have been exposed to such content. When asked about the sources of such content or where they mostly encounter it, user generated content emerged as a main source. Egyptian respondents mostly encounter hate speech in comments on news articles (59.5%); posts by individuals on Facebook/Twitter while sharing news articles (55.5%); statuses and/or tweets (40.5%). Similarly, Spanish respondents mostly encounter hate speech in statuses and/or tweets (78.4%), posts by individuals on Facebook/Twitter while sharing news articles (63.8%) and comments on news articles (48.6%).

Chart 62: Sources of hate speech – Comparative
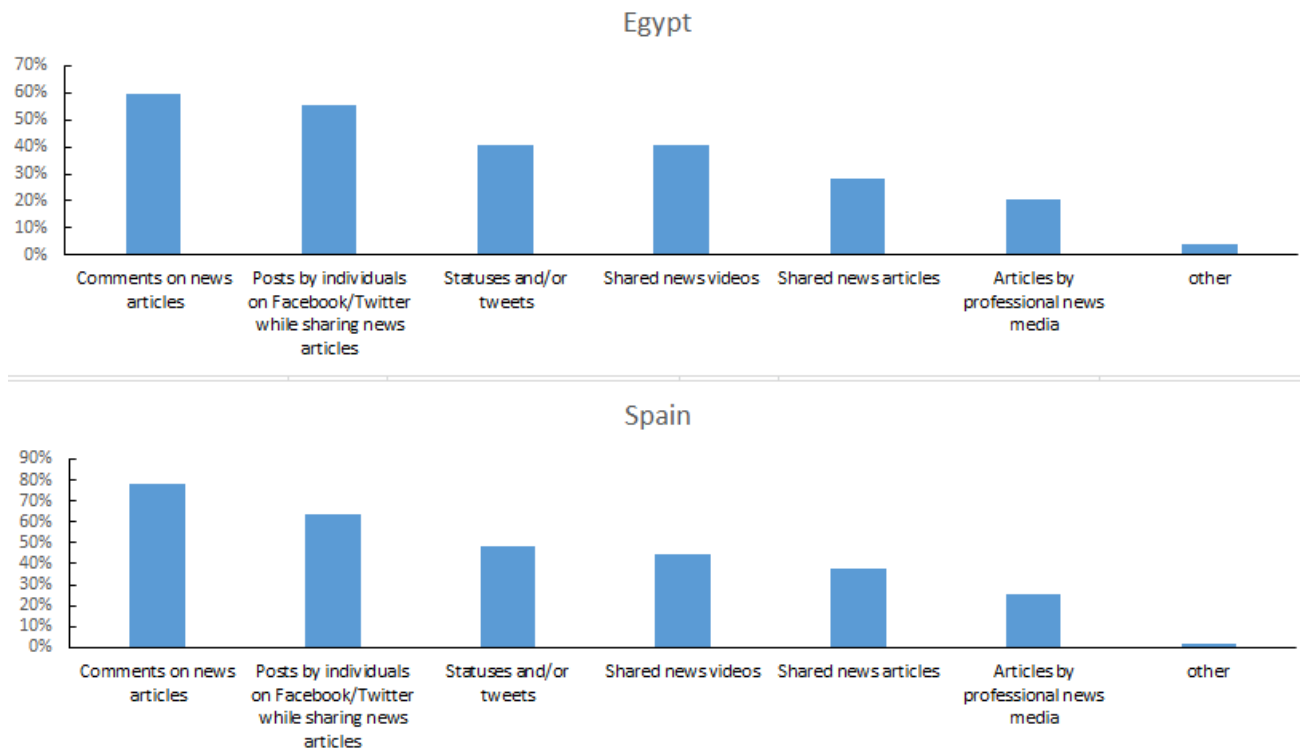
Egypt

Spain

Interestingly, respondents from both countries reported that hateful writings they encounter attack individuals/groups for political views most (77% Egypt, 86.5% Spain). For Egyptian respondents encountering hate speech for religious beliefs/religion (52.7%) and gender (32.4%) come next. For Spanish respondents encountering hate speech for gender (74.3%) and sexual orientation (70.3%) come after political views.

Chart 63: Reasons for hate speech - Comparative
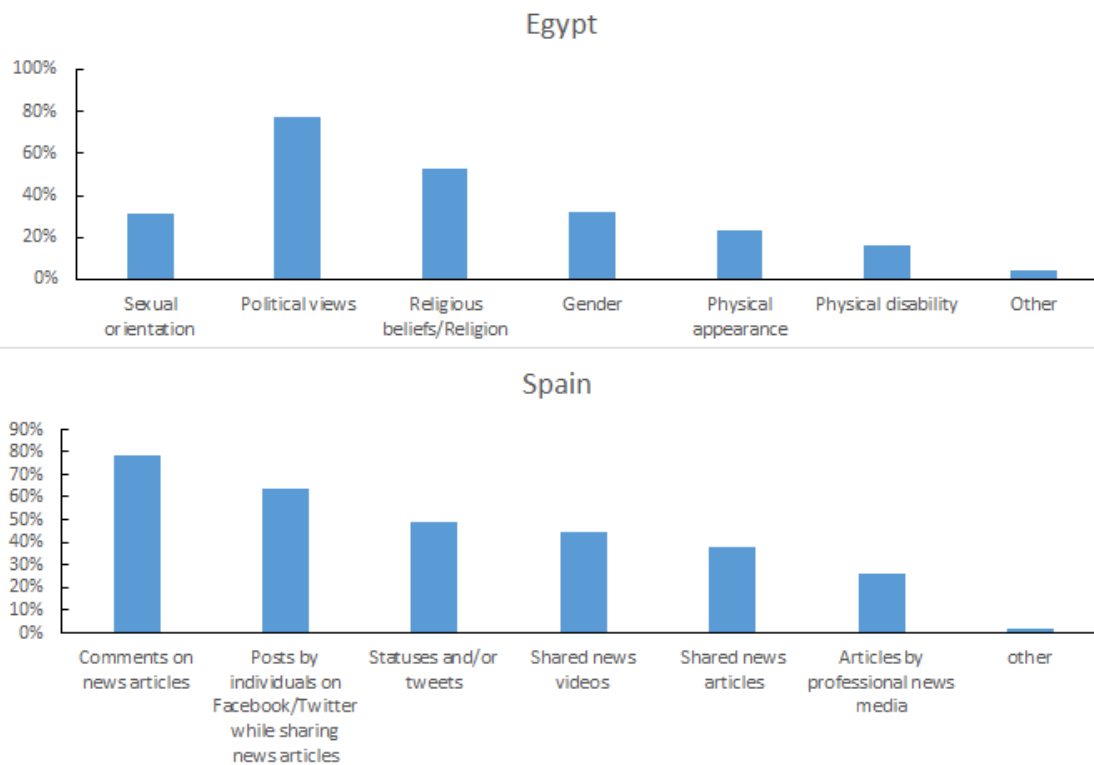
Egypt

Spain

When asked about their reactions to harmful content (fake news or hate speech), the majority of respondents stated that they ignore it (50.9% Egypt, 47.3% Spain). For Egyptian respondents 27.3% stated that they would be more proactive by posting other positive material in response offering a different view from that in the hate speech or try to correct false information, and 27.3% mentioning they would report the material to be removed. For Spanish respondents, more proactive options of reporting the material to be removed (37.8%), talking to someone about how it makes them feel (29.7%), and posting other positive material in response offering a different view from that in the hate speech or try to correct false information (23%) were reported.

Findings from both countries reveal that harmful content does shape a considerable part of youth's online news experience. Thanks to social media platforms' being sources or main carriers of news, such material is woven within the content youth are exposed to. As previously highlighted, personalization algorithms aggravates the problem through creating the echo chamber effect; the more youth interact with harmful content (intentionally or unintentionally) the more likely they get multiplied exposure to it. Hence, youth's online behavior can massively contribute to the problem or the solution depending on the extent to which such behavior reflects responsibility towards the community and the self.

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9. 8 Reading, Sharing and Content Generation

As previously mentioned scholars (Fletcher et al., 2018; Parlapiano and Lee, 2018) note that false material multiplies on social media much more than truthful content thanks to algorithms which makes individuals' exposure to content in line with their beliefs higher creating a filter bubble (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Dornan, 2017; Hawdon et al., 2015). Hence, many scholars agree that human behavior online complicates the problem of mis/dis-information (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Anderson & Rainie, 2017; Newman et al., 2017; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Consequently, youth's news behavior was investigated through understanding how they read, share and generate content online.

Reading: According to the qualitative findings of both countries, Egyptian and Spanish respondents only read headlines of news stories on social media most of the time. Respondents from both countries demonstrate awareness that professional journalists in many instances use sensationalism and write misleading headlines (clickbait content) with the sole purpose of attracting users at the expense of content quality. Despite so, still respondents barely read full stories, unless it concerns "big events" as noted by Egyptian interviewees, or "interesting" to them as noted by their Spanish counterparts. It is paradoxical that despite being aware and clear that fabricated news and misleading headlines are common on social media, still the majority of students just read the headlines and rarely clicks on them for full stories. Spanish respondents shed light on how reading nowadays has changed; more like skimming through the overload of information encountered. Besides headlines, what else do young people read? Comments.

Based on the findings from both countries, minor percentages of respondents stated that they never read comments (8.2% Egypt; 9.2% Spain), which means that the majority does. Investigating their motivations (four categories), Egyptian and Spanish respondents were found to have different priorities. With seeking information being the primary motive for Egyptian respondents, it becomes clear how important the role of peer citizens in creating content has become, and especially how it is regarded by a majority as complementary to the information provided by journalists through the news article itself. This should be taken into account bearing in mind how studies (Erjavek, 2014; Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012) revealed that hate speech exists in many instances in comments on news as previously highlighted. And further, the problem aggravates with scholars emphasizing hate speech producers' techniques of rewriting and reshaping the meanings in the news articles

consistently to serve their purposes (Erjavec and Kovacic, 2012). For Spanish respondents, social interaction is the primary motive to read comments. Hence, it becomes clear how peer citizens can impact each other's opinions through creating an online public sphere for deliberations. This means, in the context of this study, that being conscious about the creators of content is necessary not to be misled. Entertainment motivation comes second to Egyptian respondents, while information motivation is second for Spanish respondents.

Sharing: Motivations behind youth´s sharing behavior on social media is investigated. The motivations were divided into four categories: information seeking, socializing, entertainment and status seeking (Lee & Ma, 2012). For respondents from both countries, information seeking and socializing motivations are most influential. For information seeking motivation, most respondents stated that sharing news on social media:

- **helps them store useful information** (64.5% Egypt, 33.8% Spain)
- **helps them keep up to date on the latest news and events** (32% Egypt, 50% Spain)
- **it becomes easy to retrieve information when needed** (41% Egypt, 33.8% Spain)

Socializing is also regarded as an essential motive for respondents to share information on social media; the sampled youth stated that:

- **it is effective to exchange ideas with other people** (44% Egypt, 39.2% Spain),
- **it makes them keep in touch with people** (40% Egypt, 13.5% Spain)
- **it helps them interact with people when sharing news** (30% Egypt, 47.3% Spain).

Entertainment and status seeking were less important as motivations to share news in the cases of both countries.

But how likely are respondents to share in the first place? According to the quantitative findings, Egyptian respondents are more likely to share news than their Spanish counterparts as reflected by the percentage of participants reporting they never share news on social media (8.2% Egypt, 21.6% Spain). However based on the qualitative findings, most Egyptian interviewees demonstrated reluctance to share news on social media mainly for fear of being judged for views and of unintentionally misinforming. While Spanish

interviewees demonstrated the fear of unintentionally misinforming their community as the main reason they do not share. Such findings go in line with the fact that youth from both countries demonstrated care about veracity of any material they share.

For those who share, compatible with the mentioned justification, Egyptian interviewees stated that they share light content and avoid sharing political material. Spanish interviewees on the other hand mainly share content in line with their beliefs intending to influence others and prove their stances correct. An interesting perspective provided by one Spanish respondent is how awareness (or lack of it) about personalization algorithms should guide the decision to share and the content to be shared in an attempt to avoid restricting one's surfaced content to one side of the argument. Such stance displays awareness of the impact of online behavior on the content an individual is exposed to; hence intention to avoid echo chamber effects by resisting yielding to confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance affected selection (selective sharing; part of Arendt et al's .(2016) MRS).

Content Generation: Respondents' motivations to write comments are investigated; mainly part of examining hate speech exposure. The percentage of respondents who stated that they never write comments is higher than those who never read comments. Close to a third (27.3%) of Egyptian respondents and more than a third (33.8%) of Spanish respondents reported never writing comments. For those who write comments; information motivations followed by personal identity were ranked highest by respondents from both countries.

Regarding information motivations respondents stated that they write comments/ posts on news articles to:

- **share their experience** (39.2% Spain, 45.5% Egypt),
- **ask or answer questions around the topic addressed** (27% Spain, 21.8% Egypt)
- **note missing information and correct inaccuracies or misinformation** (21.6% Spain, 13.6% Egypt)
- **educate others by giving more details about the issue addressed** (12.2% Spain, 29.1% Egypt)

Regarding personal identity motivation to write comments/posts, respondents stated they write comments to **express their opinion and/or emotion** (52.7% Spain, 29.1% Egypt)

The demonstrated quantitative findings are well-matched with the qualitative findings for both countries, with respondents mentioning educating others when they have information as essential. This especially applies to Spanish interviewees who underscored the importance of becoming an effective part in the public opinion through deliberating and expressing stances with peer citizens.

9. 9 Final remarks on harmful content and human behavior

Based on the demonstrated qualitative and quantitative findings, respondents from both countries are exposed harmful content on social media. With the interface of social media platforms blending all types of content together, such content is inevitably part of youth's online news experience. This is confirmed by several factors:

- The use of social media platforms for news
- Reading headlines most of the time without the full story
- Reading comments for information seeking purposes
- Sharing for information seeking purposes
- Writing comments driven by information providing motives

The findings for both countries highlight the fact that user generated content has become an essential source of information for many young people. If not used for facts, youth seek content generated by their peers for context, elaboration or even opinions to help them form their own.

These revelations emphasize how responsible human behavior is inevitable nowadays to help restrict and organize the chaotic online information environment. As aforementioned, scholars (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Anderson & Rainie, 2017; Newman et al., 2017; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017) emphasize that human behavior is one of the main factors contributing to the aggravation of the "information disorder" phenomenon online (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018).

Discrepancies between respondents' reported critical thinking skills and their actual behavior could be noted in both countries. Despite their perceived ability to detect harmful content such as fake news, respondents fail to display this through their behavior. A prevalent support to that is the fact that they barely read full news stories online with the

great majority reporting reading only headlines despite realizing how misleading they could be. Further when it comes to their ability to verify, findings reveal lack of verification in many instances. In the case of Egypt, in line with Flanagin & Metzger's (2000) findings, the majority of Egyptian respondents verify information online mostly *sometimes* or *rarely*. However, in the case of Spain, based on the findings, the verification activities need to be divided into content-related verification activities and author-related ones. When it comes to author related activities (such as checking author's goals, verifying qualifications..etc), Spanish respondents verify *sometimes* or *rarely*. On the other hand, when it comes to content-related verification activities the majority of Spanish respondents responses range from often to sometimes (such as seeking other sources, checking for completeness, verifying if the information is opinion or fact..etc).

So what implications does this have for democracies and where does political engagement stand?

9. 10 Perception of Political Knowledge and Political Engagement

Based on a general estimate of the political engagement status for respondents from both countries, an inference could be made that Spanish respondents are more engaged to politics and demonstrate more awareness than their Egyptian counterparts. Based on the qualitative findings, Spanish interviewees have clear attitudes/opinions regarding their political orientation and the political parties they support. On the other hand, Egyptian youth experience fluctuations when it comes to the level of engagement to politics. As explained, the year 2011 was a turning point in that sense, with Egyptians demonstrating high levels of political engagement, thanks to the revolution. Ever since that, the country has been witnessing political and economic changes which led to lack of trust in the political institutions as inferred. Further, Egyptian youth believe that it is useless to become active in the political arena since they will not be able to influence the government.

Contrasting these positions with the findings regarding news engagement and media trust, compatibility is established. Youth's lack of political trust and hence interest, is regarded as a natural result of being cynical rather than apathetic. Scholars argue that lack of satisfaction towards the media is correlated with indifference towards politics and hence lack of political engagement (Pinkleton et al., 2012). Accordingly with Egyptian youth's

media trust findings, it is implied that they would be more hesitant to trust political institutes.

Based on this position, a perception of inability and ineffectuality drives youth's disengagement from politics. Hence, when asked about the extent to which they believe that political participation can influence government policies and decisions, most Egyptian respondents reported normal influence (37.2%) and low influence (21.8%). On the other hand, Spanish youth's responses to the same question were dispersed among normal influence (32.4%), strong influence (28.4%), low influence (25.7%).

Well-matched, the majority of Egyptian respondents showed minimal interest in politics. More than one third of the respondents reported being somewhat interested (34.5%), with more than a third (32.7%) reporting being slightly interested in politics. While Spanish respondents showed a higher level of political interest; more than half moderately interested (51.4%), with 17.6% reporting being somewhat interested.

When asked about the extent to which they consider themselves knowledgeable and well-informed about current events, the majority of Spanish respondents reported being *moderately knowledgeable* (60.8%), with 21.6% reporting being *somewhat knowledgeable*. The majority of Egyptian respondents (40.9%) reported being *somewhat knowledgeable*, followed by 19.1% reporting being *moderately knowledgeable*. These findings, well-matched with the other findings, reveal that Spanish respondents' perception of knowledge about current events is higher than that of Egyptian respondents. One justification is the level of news engagement and news sources; Spanish youth primarily seeking websites of professional media.

Chart 64: Perception of knowledge –Comparative

Egypt

- Extremely knowledgeable - Moderately knowledgeable - Somewhat knowledgeable
- Slightly knowledgeable - Not at all knowledgeable

Spain

- Not at all knowledgeable - Slightly knowledgeable - Somewhat knowledgeable
- Moderately knowledgeable - Extremely knowledgeable
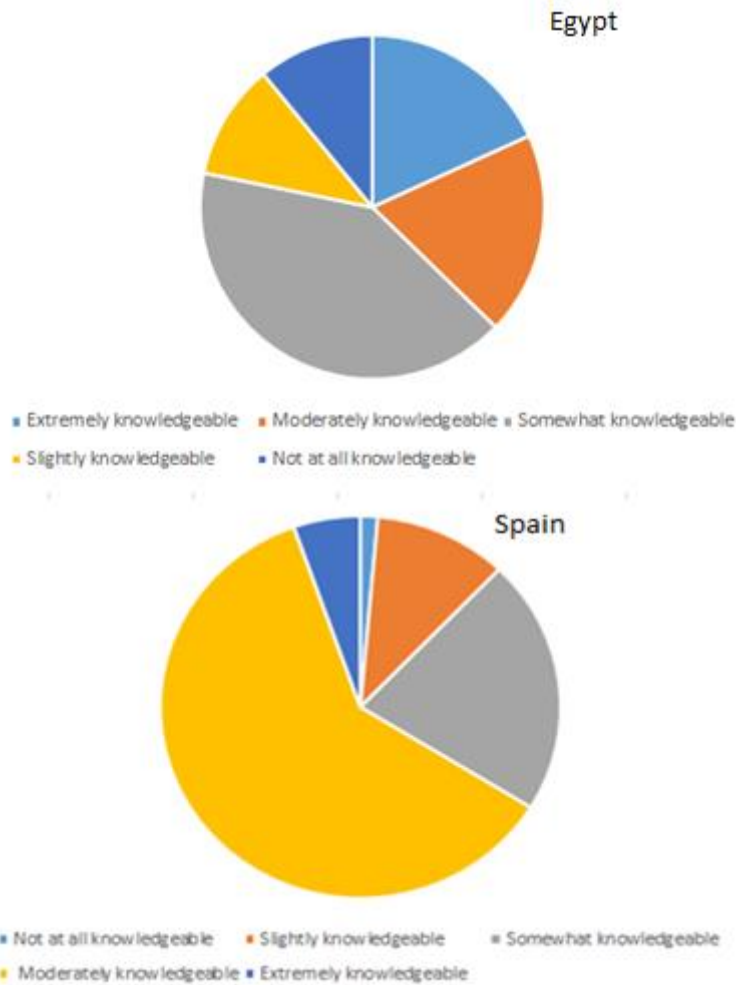
Regarding offline political participation, qualitative findings reveal voting and participating in demonstrations as the two most acknowledged forms of participation to respondents from both countries. Quantifying the findings, the biggest percentage of Egyptian respondents report having attended a public hearing (35.5%), followed by having spoken to a public official in person; posted a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker; and voted in elections (19.1% each). On the other hand, more than half of the Spanish respondents reported participating in demonstrations, protests or marches (59.5%), and voting in elections (54.1%). More than one third (32.4%) stated that they have spoken to a public official in person, and more than a quarter (25.7%) reported attending a public hearing, town hall meeting or a city council meeting.

When it comes to online political participation, the activities done by Egyptian respondents could be ranked based on frequency as follows: writing to a politician, making a campaign contribution, signing up to volunteer to a campaign/issue, sending a political message, then

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writing a letter to a newspapers' editor. While the activities done by Spanish respondents could be ranked as: writing a political message, signing up to volunteer to a campaign/issue, making a campaign contribution, writing to a politician, then writing a letter to a newspapers' editor. It is worth mentioning that none of the activities mentioned are done with a frequency higher than 6 for both countries, with 'writing a letter to a newspaper editor' getting a 0, meaning never, in both cases.

In both cases, offline political participation appear to be better practiced by respondents. This is supported by qualitative findings with Spanish interviewees emphasizing on the importance to get personally involved in the political events to form a better opinion and make informed decisions.

9. 11 Summary and Conclusion:

Overall, there are more similarities than differences between the findings of the Egyptian and Spanish cases. The same correlations were concluded in both cases as demonstrated in the findings and analysis chapters of each.

The most important differences between the findings of the two countries are in the level of engagement to news as concluded based on differences in:

- Trust in the media; cynicism versus criticism
- Knowledge about the news media industry
- Primary sources of news
- Informational use of social media platforms

Further, motivations to read were found to be different. Such finding is related to primary sources of news; Egyptians' being social media and Spanish's being professional media. This leads to a conclusion that Spanish respondents realize social media for their original role as news disseminators/carriers and are aware about how socializing (and being informed while doing so) is its first purpose rather than counting on it for obtaining information to build opinions on.

When it comes to harmful content, respondents from both countries are highly exposed to such content as shown in the findings. Respondents from both countries realize the extent to which the spread of fake news can cause confusion and the fact that sometimes

professional journalists use sensationalism in the headlines to attract users' clicks. Despite so, the majority of respondents from both countries report rarely reading beyond the headlines encountered. Yet, based on the qualitative findings, they believe they are able to detect fake content. The demonstrated findings reveal that the majority of respondents perceive themselves as critical news users able to discern fact from fiction and detect harmful content. However, taking into account their behavior this is not always the case.

When discussing hate speech, one common argument between respondents from both countries is the fact that media polarizes and separates people by using stereotypes, labels and the 'us and them' rhetoric. Such polarization exists in both the Egyptian and Spanish societies (especially currently in Catalonia). This is supported by the fact that Egyptian and Spanish respondents report hate for political views as the most encountered type. Despite these findings, the majority of respondents ignore harmful content when they see it.

In light of such findings, youth from both countries suffer an environment charged with misleading content which is a symptom that potentially affects citizens' political engagement negatively. According to scholars, the two main prerequisites of a healthy democracy are dissemination of relevant facts and information by politicians and the media, and citizens' use of such information in a manner that suits their preferences and at the same time "correct mistaken conceptions" (Kuklinski et al., 2000). With the majority of youth in both countries demonstrating confirmation bias's existence in their news/information seeking behavior, the task of the news to "correct mistaken conceptions" is more challenging than ever before. This especially applies with levels of media trust playing an essential role; lack of it leading to lack of engagement with the news.

Youth from both countries demonstrated good levels of political engagement, with the Spanish youth found to be more engaged. Offline political participation was found as the preferred/most resorted to type (with respondents showing higher levels than in case of online political participation). Spanish youth are more interested in politics than their Egyptian counterparts and perceive themselves as politically knowledgeable in a higher level. Here, it is relevant to contrast this with respondents' reported verification ability.

Having demonstrated that, the majority of respondents from each country demonstrated high levels of news literacy. The theses hypotheses and research questions were supported with some correlations found to be stronger than others.

Having reached the end of the findings analysis, the next chapter presents concluding remarks based on the results of this study.

Chapter 10

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

This final chapter of the dissertation presents findings-based concluding remarks according to the model proposed by the study, its hypotheses and research questions. Further, implications, best practices, recommendations and future research are included in this chapter.

10. 1 Concluding Remarks based on the Findings:

This study is developed with the main objective of positioning news literacy, through the empowerment paradigm, as a weapon against online harmful content and for fostering political engagement. Accordingly, the researcher delved into understanding the dynamics of youth's online news experience; their news diet, platforms used, sources sought, content exposure…etc. as demonstrated. From that experience news literacy is positioned as a mediating factor towards an effective and healthy political engagement. The study was applied on samples from Egypt and Spain with an attempt to compare between the findings that emerge from different groups of respondents, living in different conditions; cultural, political and economic contexts.

The study's proposed hypotheses and research questions are supported, with the findings of the two cases (Egypt and Spain) reflecting similarities more than differences. According to the demonstrated quantitative results, the majority of respondents have high levels of news literacy. Hence, news literacy was found to be positively correlated with:

- ‣ The ability to identify hate speech on social media (H1A)
- ‣ The ability to identify fake news on social media (H1B)
- ‣ Caring about the veracity of content before sharing on social media (H2)
- ‣ Motivation to seek news (H3A)
- ‣ Engagement to news (H3B)
- ‣ Perception of current events knowledge (RQ2)
- ‣ Political engagement (RQ3)

In addition youth's patterns of news use on social media; how they read, write, share content was demonstrated (RQ1) providing context to the findings.

Findings from the quantitative research (survey questionnaire) are supported by findings from the qualitative research (focus group discussions). While the main objective of the questionnaire is investigating correlations as well as quantifying results regarding youth's online experience and political engagement, the focus group discussions targeted understanding beyond youth's self-reported answers.

Hence, the plan of the focus group discussions was initially set with four major categories; news media use, news media content, industries and effects; personal motivation to seek news and political engagement. During the discussions the fourth category of hate speech and fake news emerged with participants (from Egypt) reporting noticing hatred incitement for political views in the news media. Following the model proposed by this study, findings concluding remarks can be demonstrated as follows:

▶ **Exposure to News Online; Content, Platforms and News Behavior**

Findings reveal that there is a decline in the traditional media use, hence confirming and justifying the importance and weight this study gives youth's online news experience. Investigating RQ1 of the study, all the study participants are social media users, with differences in the most used platform in each country; Facebook in Egypt and Twitter in Spain come at the top of the list of most used social networking sites. Regarding the content youth are exposed to; the majority of participants in both countries reported accidental exposure to news while doing other activities online. Respondents from both countries confirm their exposure to fake news and hate speech mainly in material generated by peer users (user generated content), while some reporting finding it in articles of professional news media.

Before discussing respondents" news behavior; it is essential to mention their media trust/skepticism state. As previously highlighted and as reflected in quantitative and qualitative findings, Spanish respondents despite skeptical are more trusting to professional news media than their Egyptian counterparts. Despite the fact that causality cannot be established in a determining manner, a relationship between knowledge about the industry and trust levels is inferred and supported by other studies. Hence, stemming from that, if being cynical and being critical are two ends of a continuum, Spanish youth are more inclined toward the critical end while Egyptian youth are more inclined toward the cynical

end. Despite so, a discrepancy between respondents reported critical thinking levels and their actual behavior could be noted in both cases.

As previously demonstrated, youth's behavior was investigated in terms of their reading, sharing and commenting (as a means of content generation). Almost all respondents from Egypt and Spain admitted only **reading** the headlines of stories in most instances, despite being fully aware and conscious about the fact that headlines are often inaccurate or even misleading. The reasons deducted include, not being fully involved, not having the time to read full stories, and selecting only content of interest to them to read. This brings up audience's selection with concepts of confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance acknowledged. Further, the majority of respondents read comments on news articles. The motivations to do so are ranked differently for each of the two countries. With seeking information being the primary motive for Egyptian respondents, it becomes clear how important the role of peer citizens in creating content has become, and especially how it is regarded by a majority as complementary to the information provided by journalists through the news article itself. For Spanish respondents, social interaction is the primary motive to read comments. Hence, it becomes clear how peer citizens can impact each other's opinions through creating an online public sphere for deliberations.

When it comes to **sharing behavior**, information seeking and socializing motivations are most dominant for Egyptian and Spanish respondents. Based on the findings, Egyptian respondents are more likely to share content on social media than their Spanish counterparts. One common reason for not sharing for both groups of respondents is fear of (unintentionally) misinforming their community. As for **generating content**, respondents who comment on news articles in both countries are less than those who read. Information motivations followed by personal identity were ranked highest by respondents from both countries

So, do findings support the statement that human behavior is a main factor in the spread of harmful content? The simple answer is yes. Scholars (Fletcher et al., 2018; Parlapiano and Lee, 2018) note that false material multiplies on social media much more than truthful content thanks to algorithms which makes individuals' exposure to content in line with their beliefs higher creating a filter bubble (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Dornan, 2017; Hawdon et al., 2015). This is supported through the repeated emergence of concepts of

confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance as influencing youth's online news behavior (reading, sharing and creating content).

News Literacy, harmful content and political engagement

According to the results of the questionnaire, the majority of respondents have high levels of news literacy (66% Spain; 65% Egypt). One of the factors that could possibly have an impact on this result is the fact that respondents come from a media and journalism studies background. Detailed findings show youth's performance with regards to the different constituents of news literacy. When it comes to **motivation**, quantitative and qualitative results show that youth are intrinsically motivated to seek news. In the focus group discussions, the interviewees highlighted repeatedly that it is important to stay updated for their "own good". In accordance, the questionnaire findings reveal that the majority of youth highlighted the essentiality of following the news because *they like to* and also *for their own good*. Respondents show understanding of the importance of the role news play.

When contrasted with their responses through which their engagement to news is assessed, such awareness of the importance of news is reflected in the case of Spain and not reflected in the case of Egypt. When it comes to Spain, youth's behavior reflects consciousness of the importance of news through the fact that they directly seek professional websites of news for information. On the other hand, in the case of Egypt, social media plays the biggest role in shaping respondents' news diets; instead of seeking news through professional media's websites, respondents count on their 'news feeds' on social media as analyzed.

With regards to **knowledge areas**, results were close in both countries with the exception of knowledge of the news media industry area; Spanish respondents demonstrating higher knowledge level in this area. All in all respondents from Spain show good results in the five knowledge areas assessed. Results displayed show that the majority of respondents are aware about news content selection from both sides, the journalists´ and the audience´s reflecting knowledge of content. Further, findings reveal respondents' high level of *knowledge of the news media industry*. This occurs through the demonstration of awareness of ownership's influence on content, the meaning of being objective and of the role played by producers/editors in the news selection decisions. Respondents show awareness of the meaning making process, the agenda setting function of news media and

the economic pressure's impact reflecting *Knowledge about the news media effects*. In addition, findings indicate that respondents are knowledgeable to a good extent about the fact that news content is not a mere reflection of the world and that some criteria interfere with the construction of such content. This demonstrates *Knowledge about the real world*. Last, *knowledge of the self* is explained through motivation and locus of control. Respondents believe they are in control of how far they are informed and knowledgeable about the world, and how they can possibly avoid being misinformed taking responsibility for these aspects. However, when it comes to controlling the information they get from news media or learning about credible information in case of being misinformed, there is less consensus with regards to how far they control that.

Respondents from Egypt show best results in *knowledge of content* displaying understanding of journalists' and audience's selection functions. This is followed by *knowledge of media effects* where respondents display a good extent of understanding to the different types of effect (agenda setting, economics, the meaning making process). When it comes to *knowledge of the news industry* moderate level is displayed with awareness and understanding of ownership impact is displayed while confusion about the different roles in the news industry is shown. Neutral positions were most prevalent in the area of *knowledge about the real world*; despite showing awareness about the constructed nature of news, still doubts were expressed regarding matters such as whether the journalist's first obligation is to truth. *Knowledge of the self* is explained through motivation and locus of control. The results show that youth believe that they control media influences but not entirely; they still perceive some influences as not fully under their control.

Egyptian and Spanish respondents' credibility assessment and verification ability **skills** were assessed to go in line with other relevant responses in the survey as previously explained in the findings. Credibility assessment was found to be in line with respondents media trust results; Egyptian respondents demonstrating lower trust level than their Spanish counterparts. Regarding verification ability, results show that Egyptian respondents verify news stories sometimes to rarely. While Spanish respondents results show that they engage in content-related verification more frequently than author-related verification.

The tables below shows the average scores for main variables in the study for both groups with high level and low level of news literacy in each of the two cases: Spain and Egypt.

SPAIN	Low News Media Literacy (N=25) 34%	High News Media Literacy (N=49) 66%
Motivation	11.15	14.52
Locus of Control	14.8	18.01
Credibility Assessment	10.56	14.92
Verification Ability	21	26.57
Offline Political Participation	1.13	1.62
Online Political Participation	1.1	1.57
Perception of Political Knowledge	2.68	3.49
Political Interest	2.65	2.81
Motivations to read news comments online	1.97	2.53
Motivations to write comments online	1.74	2.13
Fake News	18.45	20.87
News Media Skepticism	16.35	17.29
Political Engagement	6.14	8.81
Hate Speech	3.97	4.57

Table 58: Variables average scores for high and low levels of news literacy - Spain

EGYPT	Low News Media Literacy (N=38) 35%	High News Media Literacy (N=72) 65%
Motivation	12.68	14.04
Locus of Control	14.82	17.75
Credibility Assessment	11.32	15.79
Verification Ability	21.03	25.79
Offline Political Participation	1.42	1.58
Online Political Participation	1.03	1.21
Perception of Political Knowledge	2.71	3.5
Political Interest	2.53	2.79
Motivations to read news comments online	2.13	2.5
Motivations to write comments online	1.89	2.08
Fake News	19.79	21.67
News Media Skepticism	16.71	17.42
Knowledge	32.47	41.67
Political Engagement	7.68	9.08

Table 59: Variables average scores for high and low levels of news literacy - Egypt

News literacy was found to be correlated with the variables examined with different levels. In the case of Spain, the strongest correlation was established between the level of news literacy and caring to check veracity of news items before sharing (H2), followed by the ability to identify fake news (H1B), motivation to seek news (H3A),news literacy and perception of current events knowledge (RQ2), , the ability to identify hate speech (H1A), followed by engagement to news (H3B) and finally news literacy and political engagement (RQ3).

In the case of Egypt, the strongest correlation was established between the level of news literacy and the ability to identify fake news (H1B). This is followed by news literacy and caring to check veracity of news items before sharing (H2), news literacy and perception of current events knowledge (RQ2), followed by engagement to news (H3B), motivation to seek news (H3A), the ability to identify hate speech (H1A) and finally news literacy and political engagement (RQ3).

This means that respondents with higher levels of news literacy are more motivated to seek news, more engaged to news, better able to identify harmful content (fake news and hate speech), and hence care about the veracity of content before sharing. This means that news literacy can create a more *responsible* news experience by raising the level of consciousness of citizens to detect harmful content and hence consider consequences before sharing/contributing to the online public sphere.

Further, respondents with higher news literacy level also have a higher perception of political knowledge and score better when it comes to political engagement. Despite the weak correlation established, news literacy through enhancing citizens' information diet can mediate the process of political engagement by enhancing the ability to make informed decisions.

Despite the, statistically, weak correlation between news literacy and political engagement, still the average score for political engagement is significantly higher for the group with high news literacy level as displayed in the tables.

▶ **Political Engagement:**

As previously mentioned, political engagement is estimated based on political interest level, political efficacy and political participation (offline and online). Based on a general assessment of the political engagement status for respondents from both countries, an inference could be made that Spanish respondents are more engaged to politics and demonstrate more awareness than their Egyptian counterparts. Based on the qualitative findings, Spanish interviewees have clear attitudes/opinions regarding their political orientation and the political parties they support. On the other hand, Egyptian youth experience fluctuations when it comes to the level of engagement to politics.

According to the findings demonstrated, the model proposed by the study is supported; news literacy is put forward as a mediating factor that enhances youth's online news experience and reflects positive impact on political engagement. Youth political engagement and sense of responsibility needs to be boosted and fostered in the sense of taking actions to encourage what is best for their community rather than yielding to harmful phenomena - fake news and hate speech – that result in misperceptions. This is potentially boosted through news literacy which enhances the sense of appreciation to

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quality information and raises awareness about how relevant such information is to youth's daily lives as one of its main pillars.

10. 2 The Study Limitations

The conducted study has some limitations as follows:

▶ Being an exploratory investigation, the study used purposive sample with a number of participants less than that required for the results to be representative. This means that generalization should be carefully done to the population of youth in Egypt or in Spain.

▶ The number of respondents to the survey in Spain is less than that in Egypt and the same applies to the number of focus group discussions. This might have an impact on the comparative analysis findings.

▶ The different constituents of news literacy were assessed based on self-reported data due to time constraints. A longitudinal or experimental evaluation can result in different findings.

▶ Variables of culture, economic and political environment were not controlled for impact when conducting the comparative analysis.

10. 3 Implications, Best Practices, Recommendations and Future Research

This study is inspired by the information chaos the world is currently witnessing, the impact and implications this entails. Over the past years, major events, such as Trump election, Brexit and Columbia's peace agreement, took the world by surprise. Common among these events is the fact that they reveal a polarized environment calling attention to the factors contributing to citizens' decision making. Misinformation, disinformation and political misperceptions are symptoms of the alarming phenomenon of harmful content woven into citizens' daily information diets especially in the online sphere. This, coupled with the rise of social media platforms as sources of news, especially to younger generation, present a red flag that calls for action. The consequences are indeed deemed as warning signals. Journalism is weakening as a result of new challenges posed with the continuously evolving media ecosystem, and citizens losing trust in the professional sources accordingly becoming more vulnerable to information overload and its complications.

In light of this, news literacy, under the big umbrella of media literacy, is presented as a field that requires the involvement of three main actors to flourish; journalists, citizens and academics. Whether we like it or not citizen's (ir)responsible online behavior can contribute to the solution or aggravation of the problem. Citizens are no longer on the receiving end of the information ecosystem, they are now closer to being partners in content creation and dissemination. The news environment is no longer only about the information filtered by journalists as content gatekeepers, it is further about audience selection, big data, personalization algorithms, technology companies and human behavior.

Figure 8: News Literacy – (Chair on MIL for Quality Journalism, 2018)
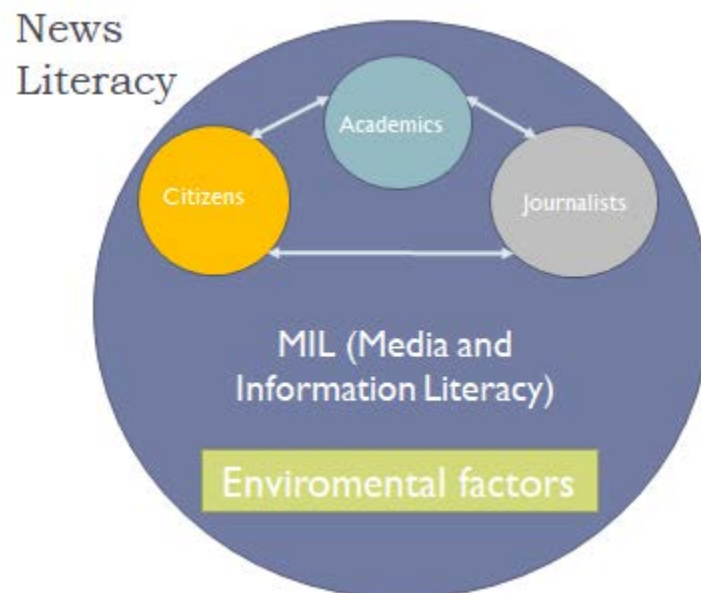
As a subfield of media literacy, news literacy equips citizens with the necessary tools to enable and empower them against harmful content, mainly fake news and hate speech. These two types of harmful material are most prevalent on social media, and as explained, are regarded as two sides of the same coin. Fake news and hate speech are both driven with anger and agendas for gains at the expense of truthfulness resulting in dividing and polarizing opinions and attitudes. With exposure to such content, misperceptions result leading to misinformed citizenry who make decisions and take actions accordingly. With the knowledge and skills under news literacy, citizens can better engage with news, maintain critical thinking when judging news media credibility, decipher and avoid the influence of harmful content as demonstrated by the correlations in this study. Further, the more citizens trust their abilities to get informed, the more likely their political engagement

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will be boosted thanks to the historical relationship between news and political involvement.

On the other hand, the uniqueness of news literacy lies in the fact that it brings journalists as key actors in the process. Collaboration from the side of news media is inevitable. Optimists believe that phenomena such as fake news can work in favor of professional journalism. Now more than ever quality journalism became a need for survival. In that sense, involving journalists in the field of news literacy is essential to provide the practical perspective, to regain users' trust and reflect on their own work. The first step is admitting that the current online environment has taken its toll on the quality of journalism. Journalists are under pressures such as immediacy of breaking news versus accuracy and verification, and audience trust versus maintaining their economic survival. This inevitably aggravates the information chaos problem by allowing false and misleading content to grow. Respondents in this study accuse the professional media of inciting hatred primarily for political views and hence dividing the people and labeling them. Hence, news literacy is deemed essential for journalists to incorporate and regain their image as legitimate sources of information to citizens by proving transparency and educating the public about their work.

10. 4 Best Practices:

In light of this it is essential to point out to the fact that there already are news media organizations involved in the process. Forty-six verified media organizations form part of what is known as Poynter's International Fact Checking Network (IFCN). Among these media organizations are France 24, The Guardian and Washtington Post. These organizations can be regarded as presenting professional journalism news media initiatives.

The reason for that is the fact that there are common techniques they use in order to fact check information which happen to have positive impact on citizens. These techniques as analyzed by observation are:

- Involving citizens/crowdsourcing by making them contribute to the content selection process besides providing information when applicable. This leads to:

    o Boosting citizens' motivation to seek news from professional sources

- Entailing higher involvement from users on the cognitive level

- Raising awareness about the necessity of being critical

- Providing tips educating citizens about how to verify and fact check information and also how the journalists in the organization do so. By doing this professional news organization are regaining audience's trust and contributing to citizens' knowledge and skills:

    - Knowledge about the news media industry and knowledge about content are directly improved. Besides indirectly enhancing the other three knowledge areas (news media effects, the real world and the self)

    - Fostering skills of accessing, filtering, evaluation and production

- Disproving false online content demonstrating how fake information disguise in the form of real news stories to deceive and mislead users.

10. 5 Recommendations and Future Research

In light of the demonstrated implications and finding, this study puts forward recommendations to academics, journalists and citizens.

▸ **Developing cooperation between academic researchers and the news industry:**
With the attempt to enhance and define the constituents of news literacy as an independent subfield and a multidimensional construct
According to Hornik & Kajimoto (2014), the academic educators or scholars usually introduce the "macro-view approaches" to media which deals broadly with different concepts and theories; setting theoretical foundations to news literacy. However, this is not enough in a practical sense of analyzing a news story for instance. Consequently, the "micro-view analytical tools" is what journalists can provide to the field.

▸ **News Literacy mediating political engagement:**

Positioning news literacy as a key mediating element in citizens' political decision making process and hence their political engagement. According to the findings of this study news literacy can potentially improve youth's news experience making it a responsible one by understanding how decipher truth from falsehoods. Further this occurs by breaking down the content encountered and analyzing it beyond its explicit meaning. Hence, a decision based on correctly perceived information can be made in a vote rather than decisions based on internally and externally caused political misperceptions.

▸ **News Literacy for Journalism Appreciation:**

Positioning news literacy as a mechanism to appreciate quality journalism is inevitable as highlighted by those who practice it and by scholars. Boosting trust in the media does not only require skills, it requires knowledge about the industry, pressures, challenges and roles.

▸ **News literacy for journalists:**

News literacy should include dimensions that help journalists maintain the ideal values of journalism by developing techniques to overcome the challenges journalists face. This could occur through critically considering the news selection process, means of dissemination and language use among other aspects. Setting guidelines to avoid misinforming citizens is inevitable. Besides, raising awareness in the news industry about the field of media literacy and news literacy to engage journalists is an essential step.

▸ **Maintaining transparency for trust**

Transparency about how the industry works and the different roles of those involved is key for regaining audience's trust. In addition it includes educating news users about verification and fact checking techniques as implemented in the best practices mentioned.

▸ **News Literacy and the affective dimension**

Based on reviewing literature, this study defines news literacy as a multi-dimensional construct with three constituents; motivation, knowledge and skills. However, with the post-truth era we live in, with the media in many instances using

emotions rather than facts to manipulate opinions, including the affective dimension as a key constituent is essential in future research

▶ **Social media platforms, algorithms and echo chambers**

The findings of this study support the fact that social media's role in the news sphere is ambiguous. As revealed, some perceive them as carriers and disseminators of news and information, while others count on them as sources of news. Accordingly, defining the responsibilities of such platforms is vital, besides raising users' awareness about the algorithms used to construct their online bubbles and echo chambers. Confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance emerged repeatedly in the findings as users' mental barriers that act as a challenge to making informed decisions based on exposure to different viewpoints. This further means that interacting with harmful content means higher and deeper exposure to it on social media platforms.

▶ **News literacy promoting 'watching the watchers'**

As repeatedly highlighted, news media are no longer the sole gate keepers of information. Despite at its surface appearing liberating, yet risks emerged with information overload and lack of professional filters. Hence, the current information ecosystem obliges citizens to take the role of 'watching the watchers'. Hence, news literacy should be positioned to empower citizens for that role through engaging with, appreciating and comprehending quality journalism.

As aforementioned, setting the theoretical grounds for news literacy is still underway. Hence further research is necessary in order to seek defining and examining theoretical tenets for news literacy. It is essential to explore the relevance of the affective dimension of youth's news experience with news and hence its relevance to news literacy. In addition, more research is necessary to investigate the relationship between news literacy and political engagement delving deeper into correlations between the different constituents of each of the two constructs. It is also important to understand the role different contexts play in that sense; cultural, political and economic environment.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Focus Group Discussions Plan

Focus Group Plan

<u>Objectives</u>

This methodology will be used as a qualitative technique that helps the researcher gain an insightful vision about the area researched. Consequently, the researcher will conduct two focus group discussions with the selected sample of Spanish youth. The main objectives of the focus group discussions are:

- Gaining information about habits of news consumption
- Understanding how Spanish youth define and experience news
- Investigating how youth view the news media landscape in Spain
- Investigating how respondents relate to news, their motivations and level of engagement with it.

<u>The Session Plan</u>

Following the study conducted by Craft et al. (2013) conducted on teenagers with the target of measuring news media literacy, the focus group questions will fall under three broad categories; news media use; news media content, industries and effects; and personal motivation to seek news. In addition a category of political engagement is added to serve the purpose of this study. The general themes/questions that fall under the different categories will be as follows:

<u>News Media Use</u>

Sources of News:

- If I ask you to tell me how you define news, what would you say?
- How do you get yourself updated with what is going on (in Spain/Egypt or in the world)? Do you have a regular habit of checking news?
- What about social media as compared to other media for news? Which do you follow more and why? Social media versus traditional media for news

Knowledge of current events

- What were the major events that occurred over the past week and caught your attention?
- Why has these specific issues caught your attention?

What would you define as news? What specific issues could possibly catch your attention to follow how the media cover it? Why?

News Media Content, Industries and Effects

News Selection Process

- Now, something happens; an accident, an event…etc. what do you think makes it go to the "news"?
- How does the selection process of news happen from your point of view?
- Do you think news selection is a standard process everywhere?

Objectivity, Agendas, Bias

- To what extent do you think an event is delivered objectively through the news?

News Relevance:

- How far do you personally think news is important to follow? How far does it impact your daily routine/life?

Perception of news media

- What do you think about the **Spanish** news media's coverage of events especially in an issue like the Catalonia independence? Which Spanish news sources do you prefer (private/public/social media & blogs)?
- What do you think about the **Egyptian** news media's coverage of events? Which Egyptian news sources do you prefer (private/public/social media & blogs)?
- What type of news are you most interested to follow? Why?
- Are there specific types of events that interest you to the extent that you decide to follow how the different media cover it, TV, radio, newspapers, traditional and online? Big news versus daily political updates for instance
- What makes you say a news story is credible? Defining Credibility...how do they define it?

Personal Motivation to Seek News

- Do you follow all news content?
    - Is there any/a particular type of news that interest you? What would that be?
- Why do you follow this specific news content? (How far do you think news relate to you?)

Critical thinking: Detecting harmful messages

- How far do you think you are able to identify a fake news story or junk news that use specific techniques to influence public opinion?
- How far do you think you are able to identify hate inciting material against certain groups of people?
- Can you give examples for both?
- When you encounter news on social media platforms, do you feel that it is enough to read the headlines or you to tend to click to check the whole story?
- Do you share news content? Why? Why not?

Political engagement

- What do you think the main role of the news (media) is?
- Does the news help you have a role in political life?
- What was the last political activity you engaged in? When?

My name is Sally Tayie, I am conducting my doctoral research mainly on youth´s news experience online and political engagement in Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), Spain. I would love to hear from you about your online news use and exposure to different types of content which will help me introduce ideas to improve this experience as part of my study. The survey should take 10 minutes and your responses are completely anonymous. It is completely voluntary to participate.

You can share any questions you have with me on: sallytayie@gmail.com

I really appreciate your effort, time and valuable input.

News Use Behavior

1. **How often do you use each of the following media to get information about events, public issues and politics?**

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Television					
Radio					
Traditional Newspapers/Magazines					
Websites of newspapers/magazines					
Professional news organizations on Facebook and/or Twitter					
Mobile applications of professional news organizations					
Sites with news reports generated by regular people (such as blogs)					
Statuses, comments, tweets or posts of friends on Facebook and/or Twitter					

2. **When you go online, especially on social media, do you encounter or come across news and information on current events, public issues, or politics when you may have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news?**
   o   Yes   o   No   o   I'm not sure

Social Media and News Engagement

3. **How frequently do you visit each of the following social media websites**

	Multiple times a day	Once a day	A few times a week	Once a week	A few times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	I don´t use this social media platform
Facebook								
Twitter								
Instagram								
YouTube								

4. **There are many sources you could turn to in order to read the news and current events <u>online</u>. For each of the following, please indicate how major or minor of a source it is for you, personally, when reading news and current events <u>online</u>.**

	Is a major	Is a minor	Is rarely a source	Is never a	I´m not familiar

	source of news for me	source of news for me	of news for me	source of news for me	with this news source
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Youm7.com					
Akhbarak.com					
Google/Google News					
El Watan newspaper					
Al Ahram newspaper					
Al Masry Al youm newspaper					
Al Akhbar newspaper					
Masrawy					
AlJazeera					

5. **To what extent does following news on <u>Facebook</u> help you:**

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
to stay informed about current events and public affairs					
to get news about current events from mainstream news media					
to get news about current events through friends					

6. **To what extent does following news on <u>Twitter</u> help you:**

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
to stay informed about current events and public affairs					
to get news about current events from mainstream news media					
to get news about current events through friends					

7. **I share news on social media because (check all that applies):**
   - ❏ It helps me store useful information
   - ❏ It is easy to retrieve information when I need
   - ❏ To keep up to date on the latest news and events
   - ❏ I can interact with people when sharing news
   - ❏ To keep in touch with people
   - ❏ It is effective to exchange ideas with other people
   - ❏ To prove to people that my opinion is the correct one
   - ❏ It helps me pass time
   - ❏ To combat boredom
   - ❏ It helps me to relax
   - ❏ It helps me feel important when I share news
   - ❏ It helps me to gain status when I share news stories
   - ❏ It helps me to look good when I share news stories

- ❏ I never share news on social media
- ❏ Other (please mention)

8. **On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with these statements.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
News media tell the whole story.					
News media are accurate					
News media cannot be trusted					
News media prioritize being first to report a story					
Media report the news fairly.					
I have confidence in the people running the institutions of the press.					

Fake News Perception and Detection

9. **Are you aware that some news stories that are shared on social media are fake news (made up stories that contain false information)?**
   - o Yes
   - o No

10. **How far do you agree with the following statements?**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The spread of fake news on social media can cause confusion about basic facts of current events					
I think I have the competencies to tell whether or not a news story is fake					
It is important to check the credibility of the information in a news article before sharing it					
If the headline of a story is interesting enough I share it without reading the content					
I do not necessarily check the sources of information in a news story before I share it					
I only share news stories from professional news organizations					
I share news stories if I found it shared by my friends without necessarily reading it					

Hate Speech Exposure

11. **I read comments/friends' posts on news articles on social media to (check all that apply):**
    - o Get more information about the issue addressed in the article
    - o Get updates on the story
    - o Compare my opinion to the opinion of others in the community
    - o Have some fun reading people's humor about the issue
    - o See perspectives and views of people to help me decide
    - o Estimate political response and attitude of the community

o   I never read comments or friends´ posts on news articles
o   Other (please mention)

12. **I write comments on and/or posts about news articles on social media to (check all that apply):**
   o   Educate others by giving more details about the issue addressed
   o   Ask or answer questions raised around the topic in the story
   o   Share my experience
   o   Note missing information and/or correct inaccuracies or misinformation
   o   Express my opinion and/or emotion
   o   Add humor to the discussion
   o   See others' reaction by engaging in debates
   o   Persuade others with my opinion
   o   I never write comments or posts about news articles
   o   Other (please mention)

13. **During your daily social media browsing, have you seen hateful or degrading writings or speech online, which inappropriately attacked certain groups of people or individuals"?**
   o   Yes   o   No   o   I'm not sure

14. **(If Yes) These hateful writings attacked certain groups of individuals for their: (check all that apply)**
   o   Sexual orientation
   o   Political views
   o   Religious beliefs/Religion
   o   Gender
   o   Physical appearance
   o   Physical disability
   o   Other (please mention)

15. **(If Yes) I have encountered hateful content on social media displayed in: (check all that apply)**
   o   Comments on news articles
   o   Posts by individuals on Facebook/Twitter while sharing news articles
   o   Statuses and/or tweets
   o   Shared news videos
   o   Shared news articles
   o   Articles by professional news media
   o   Other (please mention)

16. **If I encountered <u>hate speech or fake news</u> on social media I would:**
   o   Ignore it
   o   Share it with my friends
   o   Talk to someone about it and how it makes me feel
   o   Post a negative comment attacking the person who is responsible for this hate material or false information
   o   Post other positive material in response offering a different view from that in the hate speech or try to correct the false information
   o   Report the material to be removed
   o   Other (please mention)

News Literacy

17. **Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with these statements.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I don't see what news does for me.					

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I follow the news because I'm supposed to.					
I follow the news for my own good.					
I follow the news because I like to					

18. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with these statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information.					
I am in control of the information I get from the news media.					
The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do					
If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed.					
If I take the right actions, I can stay informed.					

19. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree on these statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
News companies choose stories based on what will attract the biggest audience					
People pay more attention to news that fits with their beliefs than news that doesn't					
The owner of a media company influences the content that is produced					
Two people might see the same news story and get different information from it					
People are influenced by news whether they realize it or not					
News coverage of a political candidate will influence people's opinions					
News makes things more dramatic than they really are					
A news story that has good pictures is more likely to show up in the news.					
A story about conflict is more likely to be featured prominently					
A journalist's first obligation is to the truth					

20. Who has the most influence on what gets aired on the local TV news?

- o Individual reporters
- o The anchor, the person reading the news
- o The cameraman
- o The producer/editor
- o Don't know

21. **One common criticism of the news is that it is not objective. What do people who make that criticism typically mean by it?**
    - o The reporter gives only the facts about the story
    - o The reporter puts his or her opinion in the story
    - o The reporter's story relies too much on the opinions of people who are neutral
    - o The reporter doesn't make the purpose of the story clear
    - o Don't know

22. **If a topic gets a lot of coverage in the news, people who pay attention to the news are:**
    - o More likely to think the topic is important
    - o Less likely to think the topic is important
    - o Neither more nor less likely to think the topic is important
    - o Don't know

23. **Most news outlets depend on advertising to make money. What is a possible effect of this?**
    - o News could encourage people to buy things they don't need
    - o News could emphasize things that aren't really important
    - o All of the above
    - o None of the above. There are no effects
    - o Don't know

24. **Please rate the degree to which you find the professional news media information online to be:**

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
Believable					
Accurate					
Trustworthy					
Biased					
Complete					

25. **When reading the news or current events information (by professional journalists or individuals) online, how often do you:**

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Check to see who the author of the article is					
Check to see whether contact information for that person or organization is provided					
Verify the author's qualifications or credentials					
Consider the author's goals/objectives for posting information online					
Seek out other sources to validate information you find online					
Look for an official "stamp of approval" or recommendation from someone you know					
Consider whether the information represented is opinion or fact					
Check to see that the information is complete and comprehensive					

Political Engagement

26. **Over the past 12 months, which of the following activities did you engage in (Check all that applies):**
    - o Attended a public hearing, town hall meeting, or a city council meeting
    - o Called or sent a letter to an elected public official
    - o Spoken to a public official in person

- o Posted a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker
- o Attended a political rally
- o Participated in any demonstrations, protests or marches
- o Voted in……………………..elections
- o written a letter to a news organization
- o Participated in groups that took any local action for social or political reform
- o Been involved in public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees
- o None of the above

27. How often do you use the internet for the following activities (10 point scale)
- o Write to a politician
- o Make a campaign contribution
- o Sign up to volunteer to a campaign/issue
- o Send a political message
- o Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper

28. To what extent do you believe political participation (through any of the forms mentioned in the previous two questions) influence the government policies and decisions?

Strong influence	Normal influence	Low influence	No influence at all	Do not know

Perception of Current Events Knowledge and Political Interest

29. How far do you consider yourself knowledgeable and well-informed about current events?

Not at all informed	Slightly informed	Somewhat informed	Moderately informed	Extremely informed

30. Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?

Not at all interested	Slightly interested	Somewhat interested	Moderately interested	Extremely interested

❖ **Gender**:
- o Male
- o Female

❖ **Age**:
- o 16 to 20
- o More than 20 to 25
- o More tan 25 to 30
- o More than 30

Annex 3: Spanish Questionnaire

Mi nombre es Sally Tayie, estoy llevando a cabo mi investigación doctoral principalmente sobre la experiencia de las noticias de los jóvenes en línea y el compromiso político en la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB), España. Me encantaría saber de usted acerca de su uso de noticias en línea y la exposición a diferentes tipos de contenido que me ayudarán a presentar ideas para mejorar esta experiencia como parte de mi estudio. La encuesta debe tomar 10 minutos y sus respuestas son completamente anónimas. Es completamente voluntario para participar.

Puede compartir cualquier pregunta que tenga conmigo en: sallytayie@gmail.com

Aprecio tu esfuerzo, tu tiempo y tu aporte valioso.

Uso de Noticias

1. **¿Con qué frecuencia utiliza cada uno de los siguientes medios para obtener información sobre eventos, asuntos públicos y política?**

	Siempre	Muy a menudo	A veces	Raramente	Nunca
Televisión					
Radio					
Diarios/Periódicos / revistas tradicionales					
Sitios web de periódicos / revistas					
Medios de comunicación/Organizaciones de noticias profesionales en Facebook y / o Twitter					
Aplicaciones móviles de organizaciones de noticias profesionales					
Sitios con informes de noticias generados por personas normales (como blogs)					
Estatuses, comentarios, tweets o publicaciones de amigos en Facebook y / o Twitter					

2. **Cuando se conecta en línea, especialmente en las redes sociales, ¿encuentra noticias e información sobre eventos actuales, asuntos públicos o política cuando es posible que haya estado en línea con un propósito distinto a recibir las noticias?**
    o   Sí   o   No   o   No estoy seguro

Redes sociales y participación de noticias

3. ¿Con qué frecuencia visita/utiliza cada uno de los siguientes redes sociales?

	Múltiples veces al día	Una vez al día	Algunas veces a la semana	Una vez a la semana	Algunas veces al mes	Una vez al mes	Menos de una vez al mes	No uso esta plataforma de redes sociales
Facebook								
Twitter								
Instagram								
YouTube								

4. Hay muchas fuentes a las que puede acudir para leer las noticias y los eventos actuales en línea. Para cada uno de los siguientes, indique qué tan importante o menor de una fuente es para usted, personalmente, al leer noticias y eventos actuales en línea

	Es una importante fuente de noticias para mí	Es de menor importancia para mí como fuente de noticias	Raramente es una fuente de noticias para mí	Nunca es una fuente de noticias para mí	No estoy familiarizado con esta fuente de noticias
Facebook					
Tuenti					
Twitter					
YouTube					
WhatsApp					
Yahoo! News					
El País Online					
El Mundo Online					
Antena 3 Online					
Sitio web del periódico					

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	regional o local				
20 minutos Online					
El Confidencial					
El Diario					
La Sexta Online					
RTVE Online					
ABC Online					

5. **¿En qué medida seguir noticias en Facebook te ayudan a:**

	De ningún modo	**ligeramente**	**algún tanto**	**moderadamente**	**extremadamente**
mantenerse informado sobre eventos actuales y asuntos públicos					
para recibir noticias sobre eventos actuales de los medios noticiosos dominantes					
para recibir noticias sobre eventos actuales a través de amigos					

6. **¿En qué medida seguir noticias en Twitter te ayudan a:**

	De ningún modo	**ligeramente**	**algún tanto**	**moderadamente**	**extremadamente**
mantenerse informado sobre eventos actuales y asuntos públicos					
para recibir noticias sobre eventos actuales de los medios noticiosos dominantes					
para recibir noticias sobre eventos actuales a través de amigos					

7. **Comparto noticias en las redes sociales porque (marque todo lo que corresponda):**
   - ❏ Me ayuda a almacenar información útil
   - ❏ Es fácil recuperar información cuando la necesito
   - ❏ Para mantenerse al día con las últimas noticias y eventos
   - ❏ Puedo interactuar con personas cuando comparto noticias
   - ❏ Para mantenerse en contacto con las personas
   - ❏ Es efectivo intercambiar ideas con otras personas
   - ❏ Para demostrarle a la gente que mi opinión es la correcta
   - ❏ Me ayuda a pasar el tiempo
   - ❏ Para combatir el aburrimiento
   - ❏ Me ayuda a relajarme
   - ❏ Me ayuda a sentirme importante cuando comparto noticias
   - ❏ Me ayuda a ganar estatus cuando comparto noticias
   - ❏ Me ayuda a verme bien cuando comparto noticias
   - ❏ Nunca comparto noticias en las redes sociales
   - ❏ Otro (por favor mencionar)

8. **¿Hasta qué punto está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones?**

	Muy en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Muy de acuerdo
Los medios de noticias cuentan toda la historia.					
Los medios de noticias son precisos					
Los medios de noticias no pueden ser de confianza					
Los medios de noticias priorizan ser los primeros en informar una historia					
Los medios informan las noticias de manera justa.					
Confío en la gente que dirige las instituciones de la prensa.					

Percepción y detección de noticias falsas

9. **¿Sabe que algunas noticias que se comparten en las redes sociales son noticias falsas (historias inventadas que contienen información falsa)?**
   - o Sí   o No

10. ¿Hasta qué punto está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones?

	Muy en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Muy de acuerdo
La difusión de noticias falsas en las redes sociales puede causar confusión sobre los hechos básicos de los eventos actuales					
Creo que tengo las competencias para decir si una noticia es falsa o no					
Es importante verificar la credibilidad de la información en un artículo de noticias antes de compartirlo					
Si el título de una historia es lo suficientemente interesante, lo comparto sin leer el contenido					
No necesariamente verifico las fuentes de información en una noticia antes de compartirla					
Solo comparto noticias de organizaciones de noticias profesionales					
Comparto noticias si la encuentro compartida por mis amigos sin leerla necesariamente					

Exposición a discursos del odio

11. Leí comentarios / publicaciones de amigos sobre artículos de noticias en las redes sociales para (marque todo lo que corresponda):
- o   Obtenga más información sobre el tema abordado en el artículo
- o   Recibe actualizaciones de la historia
- o   Compare mi opinión con la opinión de otros en la comunidad
- o   Diviértete leyendo el humor de las personas sobre el tema
- o   Ver perspectivas y puntos de vista de las personas para ayudarme a decidir
- o   Estimar la respuesta política y la actitud de la comunidad
- o   Nunca leí comentarios o publicaciones de amigos en artículos de noticias
- o   Otro (por favor mencionar)

12. Escribo comentarios y / o publicaciones sobre artículos de noticias en las redes sociales para (marque todo lo que corresponda):
- o   Eduque a otros dando más detalles sobre el tema abordado

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- o   Preguntar o responder preguntas planteadas sobre el tema en la historia
- o   Comparte mi experiencia
- o   Indicar la información que falta y / o correcta las inexactitudes o la desinformación
- o   Exprese mi opinión y / o emoción
- o   Agregue humor a la discusión
- o   Ver la reacción de los demás participando en debates
- o   Persuadir a otros con mi opinión
- o   Nunca escribo comentarios o publicaciones sobre artículos periodísticos
- o   Otro (por favor mencionar)

13. **Durante su navegación diaria por los medios sociales, ¿ha visto escrito de odio o degradante discursos en línea, que atacó de manera inapropiada a ciertos grupos de personas o personas "?**
   - o   Sí
   - o   No
   - o   No estoy seguro

14. **(En caso afirmativo) Estos escritos de odio atacaron a ciertos grupos de personas para su: (marque todas las que apliquen)**

   - o   Orientación sexual
   - o   Puntos de vista políticos
   - o   Creencias religiosas / Religión
   - o   Género
   - o   Apariencia física
   - o   Discapacidad física
   - o   Otro (por favor mencionar)

15. **(En caso afirmativo) He encontrado contenido odioso en las redes sociales que se muestra en: (marque todas las que correspondan)**
   - o   Comentarios sobre artículos periodísticos
   - o   Publicaciones de individuos en Facebook / Twitter mientras comparten artículos de noticias
   - o   Estatus y / o tweets
   - o   Videos de noticias compartidas
   - o   Artículos de noticias compartidos
   - o   Artículos de medios de noticias profesionales
   - o   Otro (por favor mencionar)

16. **Si encontraba <u>discursos de odio o noticias falsas</u> en las redes sociales, haría lo siguiente:**
   - o   Ignoralo
   - o   Compártelo con mis amigos
   - o   Habla con alguien sobre eso y cómo me hace sentir
   - o   Publique un comentario negativo atacando a la persona que es responsable de este material de odio o información falsa
   - o   Publique otro material positivo en respuesta que ofrezca una visión diferente de la del discurso de odio o trate de corregir la información falsa
   - o   Informe el material que se eliminará
   - o   Otro (por favor mencionar)

Alfabetización de noticias

17. Por favor dígame cuánto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con estas declaraciones.

	Muy en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Muy de acuerdo
No veo lo que las noticias me hacen.					
Sigo las noticias porque se supone que debo hacerlo.					
Sigo las noticias por mi propio bien.					
Sigo las noticias porque me gusta					

18. Por favor dígame cuánto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con estas declaraciones.

	Muy en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Muy de acuerdo
Si los medios de comunicación me informan mal, es mi propio comportamiento lo que determina qué tan pronto voy a aprender información creíble.					
Tengo el control de la información que recibo de los medios de comunicación.					
Lo principal que afecta mi conocimiento sobre el mundo es lo que yo mismo hago					
Si presto atención a diferentes fuentes de noticias, puedo evitar estar mal informado.					
Si tomo las acciones correctas, puedo estar informado.					

19. Por favor dígame cuánto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con estas declaraciones.

	Muy en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Muy de acuerdo
Las compañías de noticias eligen historias basadas en lo que atraerá a la audiencia más grande					
La gente presta más atención a las noticias que se ajustan a sus creencias que las noticias que no lo hacen					
El propietario de una empresa de medios influye en el contenido que se produce					
Dos personas pueden ver la misma noticia y obtener información diferente de ella					
La gente está influenciada por las noticias, ya sea que se den cuenta o no					
La cobertura de noticias de un candidato político influirá en las opiniones de las personas					
Las noticias hacen las cosas más dramáticas de lo que realmente son					
Es más probable que una noticia que tenga buenas imágenes aparezca en las noticias.					
Una historia sobre el conflicto es más probable que aparezca resaltada					
La primera obligación de un periodista es la verdad					

20. ¿Quién tiene la mayor influencia en lo que se transmite en las noticias de televisión locales?

- o Reporteros individuales
- o El presentador, la persona que lee las noticias
- o El camarógrafo

- o El productor / editor
- o No sé

21. Una crítica común a las noticias es que no es objetivo. ¿Qué significan típicamente las personas que hacen esa crítica?
- o El periodista solo da los hechos sobre la historia
- o El periodista pone su opinión en la historia
- o La historia del reportero se basa demasiado en las opiniones de personas que son neutrales
- o El reportero no aclara el propósito de la historia
- o No sé

22. Si un tema recibe mucha cobertura en las noticias, las personas que prestan atención a las noticias son:
- o más probable que piensan que el tema es importante
- o Menos probabilidades de pensar que el tema sea importante
- o Ni más ni menos probable que piensan que el tema es importante
- o No sé

23. La mayoría de los medios de comunicación dependen de la publicidad para ganar dinero. ¿Cuál es el posible efecto de esto?
- o Las noticias podrían alentar a las personas a comprar cosas que no necesitan
- o Las noticias podrían enfatizar cosas que no son realmente importantes
- o Todas las anteriores
- o Ninguna de las anteriores. No hay efectos
- o No sé

24. Por favor, califique el grado en que encuentra que la información de los medios de noticias profesionales en línea es:

	De ningún modo	ligeramente	algún tanto	moderadamente	extremadamente
Creíble					
Preciso					
Confiable					
Parcial					
Completa					

25. Al leer en línea la información de noticias o eventos actuales (por individuos o periodistas profesionales), ¿con qué frecuencia:

	Nunca	Raramente	A veces	muy a menudo	Siempre
Compruebe para ver quién es el autor del artículo					
Verifique si se proporciona información de contacto para esa persona u organización					
Verificar las calificaciones o credenciales del autor					

Considere las metas / objetivos del autor para publicar información en línea					
Busque otras fuentes para validar la información que encuentre en línea					
Busque un "sello de aprobación" oficial o recomendación de alguien que conozca					
Considere si la información representada es opinión o hecho					
Verifique que la información esté completa y exhaustiva					

El compromiso político

26. **En los últimos 12 meses, ¿en cuál de las siguientes actividades participó (marque todo lo que corresponda):**
    o Asistió a una audiencia pública, a una reunión del ayuntamiento o a una reunión del ayuntamiento
    o Se llamó o envió una carta a un funcionario público electo
    o Hablado a un funcionario público en persona
    o Publicó un cartel político, una pancarta, un botón o una pegatina para el parachoques
    o Asistió a un mitin político
    o Participó en cualquier manifestación, protesta o marcha
    o Votado en las elecciones
    o Escrito una carta a una organización de noticias
    o Participó en grupos que tomaron cualquier acción local para la reforma social o política
    o Participé en grupos de interés público, grupos de acción política, clubes políticos o comités del partido
    o Ninguna de las anteriores

27. **¿Con qué frecuencia utiliza Internet para las siguientes actividades (escala de 10 puntos; con 1 siendo nunca y 10 siendo siempre)**
    o Escribir a un político
    o Hacer una contribución de campaña
    o Regístrese para participar como voluntario en una campaña / problema
    o Envía un mensaje político
    o Escribir una carta al editor de un periódico

28. **¿En qué medida cree que la participación política (a través de cualquiera de las formas mencionadas en las dos preguntas anteriores) influye en las políticas y decisiones del gobierno?**

Fuerte influencia   Influencia normal   Baja influencia   Sin influencia en   No lo sé
                                                                absoluto

Percepción del conocimiento de los acontecimientos actuales y interés político

29. ¿Hasta qué punto se considera informado y bien informado sobre los eventos actuales?

No informado en absoluto	ligeramente informado	Algo informado	Moderadamente informado	Extremadamente informado

30. En términos generales, ¿qué tan interesado estás en política?

No del todo interesado	ligeramente interesado	Algo interesado	Moderadamente interesado	Extremadamente interesado

❖ **Género**:
- Mas
- Hembra

❖ **La edad:**
- 16 a 20
- Más de 20 a 25
- Más de 25 a 30
- Más de 30