



# **Social Media and Civic Participation:** *Literature Review and Empirical Evidence from Bangladesh and Palestinian Territories*

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**BBC  
MEDIA ACTION**  
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH MEDIA  
AROUND THE WORLD



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# 1. Introduction

The media landscape is changing. The scholarly debate has intensified in recent years over the changing relationship between the traditional and newer forms of media (e.g. Internet and social media including mobile telephony) (Coffey and Stipp, 1997; Kayany and Yelsma, 2000; Kaye and Johnson, 2003; Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Dimmick, Chan, and Li, 2004). Some proclaim that TV, radio and newspapers have become "residual media" (Acland, 2007).

Social media has provided increased opportunities for users to generate their own content, share multimedia information and discuss about issues (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Such features have resulted in positive views about the potential of social media as participatory tools in developing countries. Indeed, there are various examples of how social media such as Short Messaging Services (SMS), Twitter, Blogs and Facebook have been used in facilitating civic participation. These range from reporting of bribes (ipaidabribe.com) in India (Klitgaard, 2012), mobile coverage of electoral processes and postelection violence in Kenya (i.e. Voice of Africa) (Mäkinen and Kuira, 2008 ), to coordination of protests against authoritarian leaders in the Philippines (e.g. impeachment of President Joseph Estrada) and Egypt (i.e. stepping down of President Hosni Mubarak) (Shirky, 2011). The list goes on with its fair shares of successful and less successful attempts. Most notably, the use of social media seems to have reached its zenith with the "Arab Spring" uprisings in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and other countries between 2010 and 2012. As summed up by an Egyptian protestor: "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate and YouTube to tell the world." (Howard, 2011, cited in World Bank, 2012).

At the same time, while access to the Internet and social media has remained limited in developing countries, rapid diffusion of mobile telephony in recent years

has led to growing optimism of this medium's potential for narrowing the digital divide (Moyo, 2011; Patterson, 2013). In particular, access to social media is likely to improve with the development of new mobile software and applications such as *Facebook Zero* and *FrontlineSMS*. While the former allow users to access Facebook by simply dialling a number, the latter gives users the opportunity to share and aggregate user-generated content via SMS. Both of which could be conducted even without the possession of an Internet-enabled mobile phone.

## Purpose of the study

Such developments highlight new opportunities for media agencies that seek to effect social change in developing countries. With a particular focus on developing countries, this study aims to cover:

- The nature of engagement with social media in its own right and alongside traditional media; and
- The way use of social media influences engagement and participatory outcomes.

With data from the BBC Media Action Global Grant surveys in the Palestinian Territories and Bangladesh on the relationship between social media use and civic participation, this report aims to aid BBC Media Action assess the value added of social media to their work on improving governance in least developed countries (LDCs). Findings from the literature and subsequent empirical analysis based on the communication mediation model show that:

- Traditional media remains the dominant source of media in LDCs but social media (particularly mobile telephony) is becoming increasingly important, which may change the nature of information sharing and activism;

- Multi-platform media use is more likely to lead to offline civic participation;
- Social media use is positively correlated with offline participation.

This report fulfils BBC Media Action's goal to understand the changing nature of participation through social media and to inform future programme designs with evidence-based research.

## Limitations of the report

Thematically, any study of social media could be deemed outdated with each evolution of the technologies that facilitate it and the resulting human behaviour that makes the analysis of it relevant. While this report is created according to the availability of scholarly and up-to-date literature, it is still part of an ever-fluid debate that mostly occurs in the United States and other developed countries. Additionally, a large number of empirical studies that touch on social media networks and political outcomes focus on recent elections in democratic countries.

This study recognises the limitations presented by the survey data and the methodological constraints these present:

- Survey data are cross-sectional and thus the evolution of correlations over time is implausible to test, such as the effect of social media on political knowledge and political efficacy, or whether online participation is time or medium-specific, i.e whether it has spill-over effects into offline participation in the future.
- It is unlikely to entirely discount endogeneity issues. Endogeneity arises when the independent variables are correlated with the error term of the regression. There are essentially three main sources of endogeneity: reverse causality or simultaneity, omitted variable bias, and measurement error.
- With the absence of panel data, it is not possible to test for reverse causality. Therefore, the associations tested can only be interpreted as correlations. For instance, when the associations of political attitudes and offline participation were tested, it was not possible to know with certainty if higher interpersonal discussion made the individuals engage in more offline activities as the result of a greater interest, or if on the contrary those respondents that were already engaging in offline participation activities were inherently more prone to have high levels of interpersonal discussion.
- Omitted variable bias occurs when there is an unseen variable or group of variables that affect both the dependent and independent variables. In the case of the Palestinian Territories, for instance, institutional factors such as *state censorship* is correlated with both low political efficacy perception and lower levels of interpersonal discussion.
- Finally, measurement error can bias our results by including spurious information in the econometric analysis. This becomes evident when we are talking about questions that involve a subjective answer, as the ones related to political attitudes. This was evident in the data analysis when we were trying to study the effects of self-reported political knowledge on other variables. Few people –and in some cases none of the respondents– alleged to have low political knowledge on key topics, leaving the variable unusable for data analysis purposes.
- As will be discussed, the very low penetration of Internet and social media in Bangladesh reduces the variability of the data used to analyse the effect of social media on other variables. Therefore, most of the analyses were only carried out using the Palestinian Territories data. The use of only one country to draw the results might limit the external validity of the data analysis.

## How the report is organised

This report provides a theoretically sound and empirically rich account. The paper is organised as follows: **Section 2** first sets the context by laying out definitions of media and participation critical in the understanding of this report. Traditional and social media are defined in the context of LDCs, highlighting the unequal penetration between developed and developing countries. While social media use is not as pervasive, its rising predominance warrants deeper analysis. Civic participation is also defined, drawing particular attention to the broadening range of activities available in the online world. **Section 3** presents the agenda-setting theory and the communication mediation model (CMM). Evolution of the two concepts is explored in light of the advent of newer media types. In particular, the CMM is drawn upon as a main conceptual framework for analysing the nature of engagement and the subsequent participatory outcome for both traditional and social media. **Section 4** adds to the complementary-substitutive debate surrounding social media. Two perspectives on how social media can contribute or hinder social capital formation are presented, drawing particular focus to the network characteristics of social media. This is followed by a discussion on the scholarly debate surrounding the substitutive-complementary role of social media. Further supplemented by our data analysis, this report finds that both media platforms play complementary roles in the current media landscape. **Section 5** presents the empirical findings on individual and participatory outcomes based on the existing literature and our analysis on the Palestinian Territories survey. We find that social media is positively associated with offline civic participation, thereby highlighting its potential for enhancing engagement in LDCs. Based on the findings from the report, we conclude in **Section 6** with recommendations for further research and future programming that could take complementary role of the media into greater consideration.

## 2. Setting the Context: Defining Media and Participation

If the Internet (and social media in particular) is transforming the mass media landscape, an account of this landscape is due. This discussion is relevant because traditional media remain as the most commonly used and trusted form of media in both developed and developing countries (International Telecommunications Union (ITU), 2010; Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)/Gallup, 2012). Moreover, communication practices associated with traditional media serve as a reference point for subsequent comparisons with that of social media. With transformation of the media landscape, the concept of civic participation in relation to media use is also undergoing dynamic change. While some civic activities are online replications of their offline counterparts, other activities take on new forms that can only exist in the virtual world.

This section broadly defines both traditional and social media with a keen focus on consumption patterns in developing countries, highlighting the continued importance of the former media for informational media use despite the praised emergence of social media. Literature around civic participation is presented, along with the two spectrums of online-offline and informal-formal participation. Such conceptual clarification is useful to set the stage for subsequent discussions on the roles of traditional and social media in bringing about participatory outcomes.

### Defining traditional media

Although concepts such as 'media', 'mass media' and 'traditional media' may sound intuitive, there is no consensus on their definition. Even within the field of communication, the boundaries are flexible and vary according to the exercise. Following this practice, "traditional media" is here defined using Steuer's (1993, p.7) notion of "traditional communication": "Traditionally,

the process of communication is described in terms of the transmission of information, as a process linking sender and receiver. Media are therefore important only as a conduit, as a means of connecting sender and receiver, and are only interesting to the extent that they contribute to or otherwise interfere with transmission of message from sender to receiver". Consequently, traditional media, for the aims of this section, encompasses media types based on what is conventionally perceived as one-way transmission: inter alia TV, radio, and newspapers.

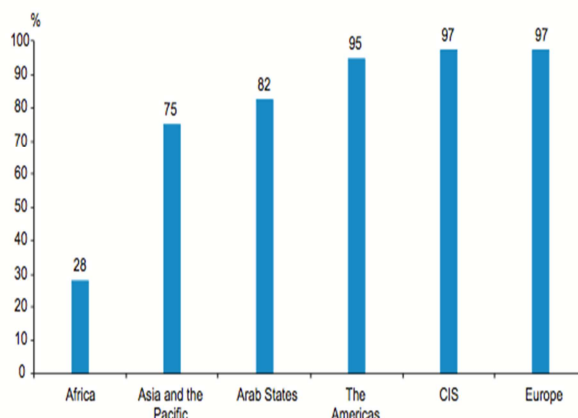


Figure 1: Proportion of households with a TV by region, 2009 (Source: ITU 2010)

### Traditional media use in developing countries

According to ITU (2010), a large proportion of households in the developing world have access to a TV and/or a radio, although penetrations differ across and within countries and regions. Even then, access is generally weak when compared with developed countries. Figure 1 illustrates the gap across – but obscures the diversity within – regions.

In general, TV tends to be more popular than radio in developing countries, with the exception of Africa and other LDCs, particularly among the rural population with lower income and limited electrification. Figure 12 in Appendix 1 shows the diversity among developing countries for which data is available.

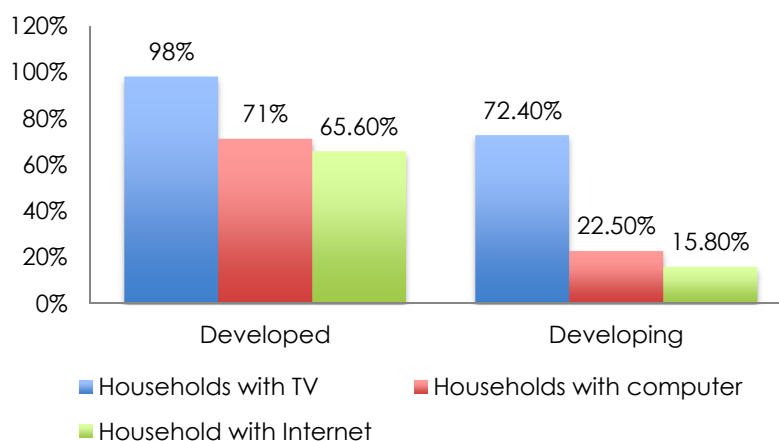


Figure 2: ICT Penetration Levels (Source: 2010 ITU Indicators)

The above trend is also observed in a series of country-specific studies conducted by the BBG and Gallup (2012).<sup>1</sup> For instance, in a nation-wide survey in Nigeria, a majority of respondents reported that the local radio (85% and 83% for non-Hausa and Hausan speakers respectively) and the local TV (84% and 72% for non-Hausa and Hausan speakers respectively) are their main sources of information for breaking news.<sup>2</sup> A similar survey in Zimbabwe highlights that radio is still the choice for news across all age groups, although younger respondents aged 19-24 tend to rely more on the Internet and mobile applications for news when compared with the older respondents (aged 25 and above) (BBG/Gallup, 2012).

There is also an urban-rural divide associated with the choice of broadcasting media. Studies in Cambodia and Zimbabwe show that, while a majority of respondents use the radio in general, urban residents tend to have greater TV access (e.g. in Cambodia) and tend to rely more on TV for news when compared with radio (e.g. Zimbabwe) (BBG/Gallup, 2012). The trend of radio use seems to mirror the national demographics: only 19.8% and 38.1% of the population are

urban in Cambodia and Zimbabwe respectively in 2010 (UN DESA, 2012).

Contextual factors also affect the ways people are using traditional media in developing countries. For instance, in areas unreached by conventional radio stations, community radio with programming related to local issues has filled this void (ITU 2010). In many instances, in Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, community radio not only offers local information, but also provides a channel for participatory interaction within the community:

"[t]he slogan of a community radio station in Mongolia—"Your radio is listening"—speaks volumes about the nature of this medium. Community radio is about the horizontal exchange of information—a participatory interaction between the community and the radio station rather than a vertical, one-way communication method, delivering information from a medium to the public." (CIMA 2007, p.6)

### Uneven media platform penetration

The predominance of traditional media in LDCs becomes clearer when computer and Internet penetration are taken into account. Figure 2 shows respective levels for each platform between developed and developing countries, with TV leading other platforms. This uneven distribution has direct

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 offers full discussion of traditional media coverage and penetration.

<sup>2</sup> In a Media Use Survey conducted in Nigeria in 2012, the following question is posed to over 3,000 respondents: "Which of these different sources did you use to follow the news about the government's decision to remove fuel subsidies?" (BBG/Gallup, 2012)

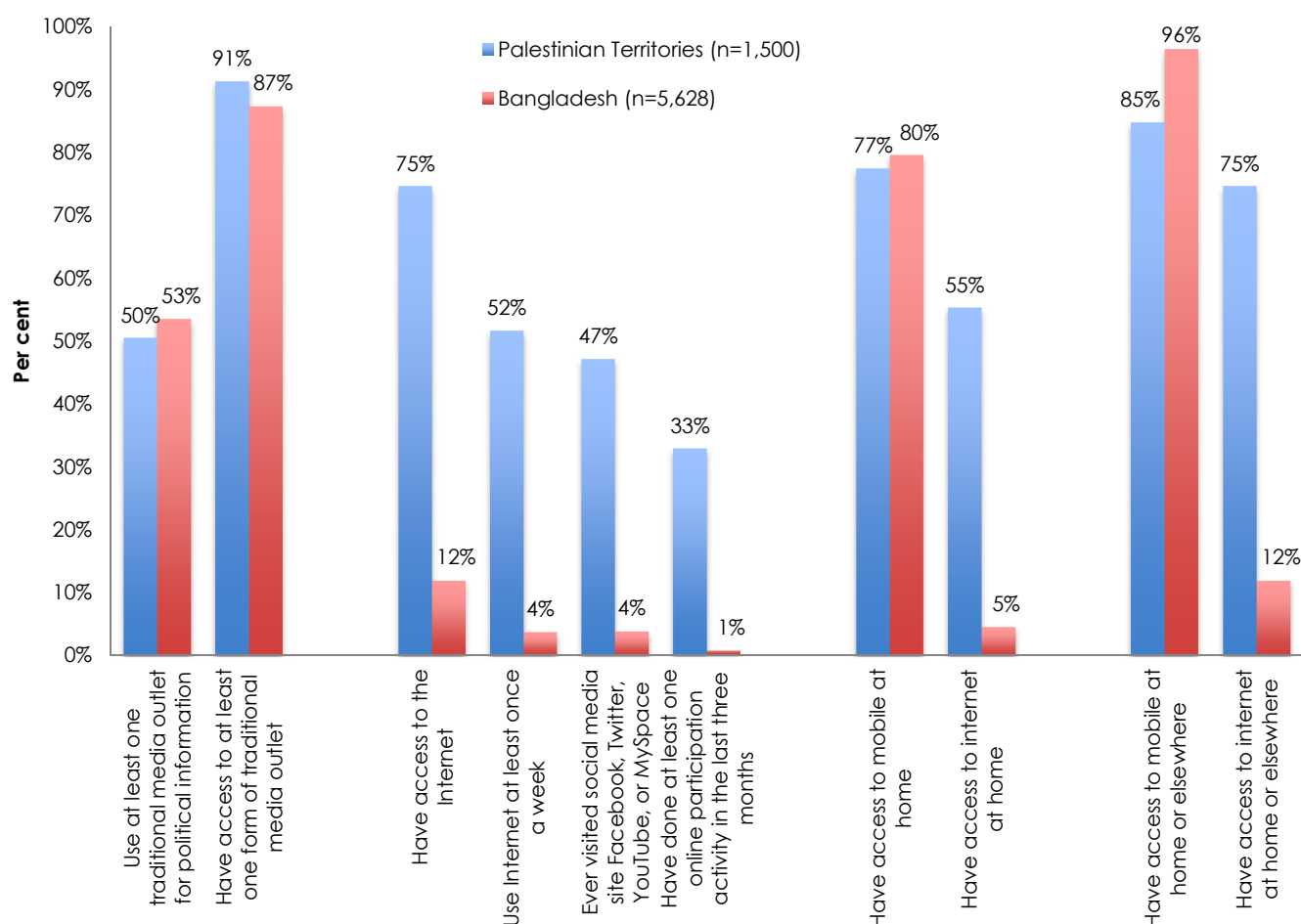


Figure 3: Media Use and Access Survey Results (Source: BBC Media Action Baseline Survey 2012)

implication on social media adoption and potential in LDCs. This is corroborated by the survey results from Bangladesh and the Palestinian Territories. We see high levels of use and access to traditional media outlets for political information compared to the Internet and social media, most notably in Bangladesh, where Internet access amongst the respondents is only 12%, as shown in Figure 3.

Quite striking, specifically, is the high level of access to mobile phones in both countries. This is a snapshot of the bigger context of rising subscription of mobile phone in both countries and combined with the increasing Internet subscription, this highlights the potential for LDCs to drive the growth of social media use for civic participation.<sup>3</sup>

### Social media: defining broadly

What differentiates social media from traditional media is that users change their role from passive content consumers on a “one-way street” information flow (Garcia, 2011) to active creators of content (Shao, 2009, cited in Näkki, 2011) by sharing, exchanging, and editing contents in actual time in online communities and networks (Williamson, 2011; Bhuiyan, 2011).

Furthermore, the key advent of Web 2.0, characterised by decentralised proprietor control, open platforms, interactivity, and collaboration has enabled the departure from static, independent websites and empowered people to effortlessly use the Internet in creative and innovative ways (Flew, 2008; Musser and O'Reilly, 2006; Scott, 2009; Ahlqvist et al., 2010). Sites that were

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 2 offers a fuller discussion of the enabling conditions for information and communication technology adoption.

launched in Web 1.0<sup>4</sup> made the jump to Web 2.0 by incorporating recently developed functionalities that facilitated the creation and dissemination of user-generated content such as including a real-time, community-moderated comments section; *share* buttons that link up to other social media sites; rich site summary (RSS) format; social networking; or instant messaging<sup>5</sup> (Correa et al., 2009; Willard, 2009). This user-driven, personalised, interactivity has blurred the boundaries between information producer and consumer (Flew, 2009; Ahlqvist et al., 2010).

Social media follows various formats, including online collaborative sites (*Wikipedia*), social network sites (SNS) (*Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, *Google+*, *MySpace*, *Friendster*), online forums, weblogs (or blogs, such as *Blogger*, *WordPress*, *Tumblr*, and *LiveJournal*), video blogs (or vlogs), microblogging (*Twitter*, for example), photo and video (*Pinterest*, *Instagram*, *YouTube* and *vimeo*), location (*foursquare*, *Loopt*), user rating (*Yelp*, *TripAdvisor*), content streaming (*Ustream*), social bookmarking (*Reddit*, *Digg*, *Delicious*), music (*Spotify*, *SoundCloud*) and plenty of social games (*Zynga*). Appendix 2 shows the most popular social media sites, both globally and within Bangladesh and the Palestinian Territories.

### Demographic factors in media usage

Analysis conducted on the data from both the Bangladesh and Palestinian Territories

<sup>4</sup> Cormode, G. and Krishnamurthy, B. (2008) argue that "content creators were few in Web1.0 with the vast majority of users simply acting as consumers of content." Users could only view but not modify the content of the Web1.0 pages. Websites relied on and remained static unless an independent or hired webmaster modifies the code and content of the webpage. There isn't a fine line that distinguishes the features of one from the other: the concept of Web1.0 as a retronym is understood in relation to Web2.0.

<sup>5</sup> The OECD (2007) classifies user-generated content as those that are not only available on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site that is available to a select group, but also those that are "created outside of professional routines and practices". This definition excludes emails and text messages (Joseph, 2012) unless they operate in a manner similar in creation, distribution and consumption to social media.

surveys contributes to the availability of empirics around media usage in LDCs as explained by demographic characteristics. What follows are the results of the data analysis on usage and access correlated with demographic variables, using probability econometric models:

### Palestinian Territories

This study sees how demographic controls relate to traditional and social media use in terms of coverage, as explained by their (1) use of traditional media outlets as their main sources of political information. An index that captures use of at least one of the traditional media outlets (radio, TV, and newspaper) for political information is generated. To determine the likelihood of use of at least one traditional media source for political information with the demographic controls a probit regression is used. Analysis points to a positive significant association between gender and traditional media use for political information, which may mean that **women are more likely than men to use at least one traditional media outlet for such purpose.**

Palestinian Territories			
	(1) use of traditional media	(2) access to traditional media	(3) frequency of media exposure
Education	.0586 (.0446)	0.0001 (.0519)	<b>-.1245**</b> (.057)
Income	0.0146 (.1283)	-.0072 (.015)	.0048 (.0165)
Urban/Rural/ Refugee	0.0144 (.0499)	<b>.1384**</b> (.0622)	-.0935 (.0672)
Sex	<b>.126*</b> (.0739)	-.0791 (.0855)	-.0013 (.0972)
Age	-.0078 (.0316)	-.0371 (.0364)	<b>.0924**</b> (.0412)
Constant	-.4332 (.2344)	<b>.9299***</b> (.2756)	
Observations	1188	1188	1062

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

Table 1: Probit regression results for use, frequency and access, Palestinian Territory survey data

Coverage can also be interpreted as (2) access to traditional media: what is the likelihood of access to traditional media outlets as explained by demographics. First, the percentage of respondents who mentioned access to at least one traditional media outlet, both in and out of home (combining access to television, radio, and press), is calculated. Using a probit regression model to determine the likelihood of traditional media access with our demographic controls: we see a positive significant likelihood between our urban/rural/refugee variable and access to traditional media, i.e. **rural residents are more likely to have access to at least one form of traditional media.**

The likelihood of (3) frequency of exposure to media is further tested using an ordered probit regression model (variable is coded as 1=regular exposure, 2=low exposure, 3=no exposure). We find a negative significant relationship of exposure to media with increase in education level, while having the opposite relationship with increase in age, **meaning the more educated are likely to have regular exposure to media, while older individuals are less likely to be exposed to media on a regular basis.**

However, *frequency of exposure* variable does not differentiate between traditional and newer forms of media, hiding the relationship between frequency of Internet use (4) and demographics. Frequency of access to Internet is grouped as follows: frequent use = 1 if [at least once a day + at least once every 2-3 days + at least once a week but less than once every 3 days]; non-frequent use = 0 if [at least once a month but less than once a week + less than once a month but in last year + less than once a year].

Probit regression shows a negative significant relationship between frequent use of Internet and gender, and frequent use of Internet and age. Women are less likely to be frequent users of the Internet, and frequent

use (at least once a week) decreases with age.

More specifically, the correlational reliability of demographics as determinants of social media use (5) is tested with variable that captures respondents' visit to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and MySpace. (Some social media sites allow for use without having a profile, but entails more than just an awareness of their websites.) Our probit regression results indicate a negative and significant relationship between social media use and gender and age: **social media use in terms of visits is less likely with women and as one gets older.** (The data do not support a robust analysis of demographics as determinants of the frequency of social media use because the data do not include questions on frequency of social media usage.)

VARIABLES	Palestinian Territories		
	(4) frequent Internet use	(5) social media use	(6) informal online participation
Education	.0591 (.0461)	.0288 (.0466)	.0136 (.0479)
Income	-.0069 (.0132)	-.0205 (.0134)	-.0158 (.0137)
Urban/Rural/ Refugee	-.002 (.0519)	.0584 (.0524)	<b>.1887***</b> (.0527)
Sex	<b>-.2209***</b> (.076)	<b>-.2188***</b> (.0773)	<b>-.2228***</b> (.0799)
Age	<b>-.3342***</b> (.0331)	<b>-.3962</b> (.0344)	<b>-.3288***</b> (.0362)
Constant	<b>.95426***</b> (.2428)	<b>.9428***</b> (.245)	.2913 (.2495)
Observations	1188	1188	1188

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

Table 2: Regression results for Internet frequency and social media use, Palestinian Territories survey data

Alternatively, reliability of using demographics as determinants of social media use can be determined by using *participation in informal political online activities* (6) as proxy to social media use. These include posting comments, queries or information on Facebook, blogs, and other online discussion; following

someone on Twitter; uploading photos or videos online; joining online groups; blogging; and watching clips on Facebook or YouTube. Probit regression analysis shows a positive and significant relationship with urbanity, while there is a negative significant relationship between gender and age: **informal online participation is more likely with urban dwellers and less likely with women and as one gets older.**

### Bangladesh

For Bangladesh, the *literacy* variable is included, since 30% of respondents indicate as non-literate and that might inform our analysis of media use (traditional, Internet, and social media). Notable is that 70% of respondents are in rural areas. Question (1) is also applied. The same probit regression, but now controlling for literacy (DLit), results in a positive significant likelihood of traditional media use and increase in education levels and income; a negative significant likelihood of traditional media use with illiteracy, rurality, being a woman and with increase in age. **The probit regression for question (2) resulted in interesting but unsurprising results: There is a positive significant likelihood of access to traditional media with increase in education and income levels, while negative significant likelihood with literacy, urbanity, being a woman, and with increase in age. Both usage of and access to traditional media outlets as sources for political information are more likely with the more educated and wealthy, while it decreases with illiteracy, among women, older individuals and rural residents.**

Question (3), which asks what the relationship of demographics is to frequency of exposure to media, results to positive significant likelihood between frequency of media exposure and urbanity, only. There is a negative significant likelihood between education and income level, and positive significant relationship between frequency of exposure and urbanity, gender, and age. The frequency of media exposure decreases with increases in education and income levels, while it decreases with rural residents,

amongst females, and increase in age. **More educated and wealthier individuals are less likely to be frequently exposed to media, while it is more likely among rural residents, women, and older individuals.**

VARIABLES	Bangladesh		
	(1) use of traditional media	(2) access to traditional media	(3) frequency of media exposure
Education	.2219*** (.0284)	.282*** (.0474)	-.2736*** (.0328)
Income	.0863*** (.0088)	.101*** (.0135)	-.083*** (.0103)
Urban/Rural	-.3174*** (.0405)	-.4793*** (.0623)	.5297*** (.0471)
Sex	-.4131*** (.0361)	-.5854*** (.0493)	.1604*** (.0419)
Age	-.0382** (.0169)	-.1403*** (.0234)	.0584*** (.0194)
Literacy	-.2525*** (.0539)	-.1544** (.0729)	.0475 (.0615)
Constant	.8525*** (.1664)	2.5733*** (.2486)	
Observations	5628	5628	4396

Standard error in parentheses

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

Table 3: Regression results for traditional media use, access, and frequency of exposure

In order to explain the relationship between frequency of exposure to new media and demographics, generating another variable that isolates new media frequency from the variable *MCAnyFre* would be useful. However, respondents who indicate that they access the Internet at least once a month or more, even keeping in mind that potential user-access frequency differences between developing and a developed country, account for less than 4% of the total responses. Even less is the number of respondents who mentioned that the Internet is their source of political information (1.19%). Those who have accessed the Internet sooner than 12 months ago only make up less than 9% of the respondents. This question becomes even more problematic since only 12% of respondents have access to Internet both in their house or other place. Distributional analysis of people who have used online outlets (Facebook, Twitter,

websites, and others) to comment or share issue is inconclusive due to small sample (less than 1% of responses).

Is there potential for mobile Internet use in Bangladesh? If we were to look at the percentage that has access (in their homes, at least), mobile access is higher than computer access in both countries. It is important to note that access does not necessarily mean ownership, especially when trying to make a distinction between mobile phone ownership which has implications on personalised use; and computer ownership which is mostly shared within the household when personalisation could be limited.

These survey results offer a clearer picture of the diversity of media use and participation within the two countries, upon which we build on the discussion of civic participation.

### Defining online and offline civic participation

There is a general lack of consensus in the literature on how civic participation should be conceptualised. In some instances, the term *civic* is affiliated to the role of a morally conscious citizen in achieving a common good – but this raises questions on who defines the common good, and who is excluded when we define *civic* in this way or any other way (Banaji, 2008). In other instances, the term *civic* is seen as a cognate to civil in “civil society” which brings activities of some religious groups and communities, including extreme right-wing political groups into the sphere of *civic participation*. Banaji and Buckingham (2010) also highlight that the term *civic* does not translate well across national contexts.

Another conceptual issue is related to the differing treatments of *civic* and *political participation*. For instance, Turnsek (2007, p.187) defines *political participation* to be action within the existing system and *civic participation* to be “action outside the political realm”. Verba et al. (1995, p.9) define *political participation* as “an activity that is intended to or has the consequence of affecting, either directly or indirectly,

government action.” *Civic participation*, on the other hand, takes on a more encompassing meaning to include societal or community actions as well. Against this backdrop, the choice of a workable definition ought to be based on the purposes of the exercise. Thus, in the context of the paper, the broader definition of *civic participation* shall be adopted:

“*Civic participation* includes a range of activities that can be social in nature and/or political or designed to influence policy making and decision making (this constitutes political participation, a component of civic engagement). Civic engagement includes being active on local community issues, volunteering, mentoring, getting involved in human rights activities and youth leadership” (BBC glossary, 2012:3).

Hence, in what follows, when *political participation* is discussed, it is viewed as a component of *civic participation*.

Offline Civic Participation	Online Civic Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working for a political council</li> <li>• Participating in an organised effort to solve a neighbourhood or community problem</li> <li>• Attending a meeting of the local town council or an official who works for a government agency</li> <li>• Lodging a complaint with a government body or a civil society organisation</li> <li>• Contacting a national elected official</li> <li>• Taking part in a protest, march, or demonstration on some national or local issue</li> <li>• Donating money or paying membership fee to charity or campaigning organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posting comments, queries, or information on Facebook or blog about a political or current affair issue</li> <li>• Following someone on Twitter who tweets about political or current affair issue</li> <li>• Viewing and uploading photos or videos on Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube that are political in nature</li> <li>• Joining a group online that tries to influence government policies</li> <li>• Blogging about a political or current affair issue</li> </ul>

Figure 4: Examples of civic participation activities (Adapted from BBC Media Action Baseline Survey 2012)

### Offline civic participation

*Offline civic participation* can take on diverse forms. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, cited in Zúñiga et al., 2007) highlight four dimensions to *political participation*, namely voting, campaign activity, contacting

officials, and collective activities. Somewhat similarly, Kim, Wyatt, and Katz (1999), cited in Zúñiga et al. (2007), distinguish between expressive (e.g. complaining) and collective forms of participation (e.g. campaigning or taking part in protests). Scholars also make distinctions between institutionalised (Goel, 1980) or formal participation (Steinberger, 1984) (e.g. voting) and informal participation (e.g. attending a civic forum) (McLeod et al., 1999).

The formal-informal dichotomy has proven particularly influential. Pew's Internet and America Life Project (Lee Rainie, 2008; cited in Badger, 2011) highlights that *civic participation* can be perceived along a spectrum of activities ranging from informal to formal participation. Informal *offline civic participation* can be further classified into both passive and active forms. An example of a passive or less action-oriented form of *offline civic participation* is information-seeking. While information-seeking is not a distinctive form of participation itself, informational media use highlights the importance of this element as a prerequisite for civic participation (McLeod et al., 2001). Active forms of *offline civic participation* could be working for a political council, taking part in a political protest, or signing a petition.

### Online civic participation

There are also multiple ways of defining *online civic participation*. In its most general form, *online civic participation* involves the use of the Internet and social media for civic purposes, such as posting videos or comments of political nature online. Similar to offline civic participation, types of online civic participation can then be situated in the informal-formal differentiation or along a spectrum ranging from expressive to collective participation. Vegh (2003) categorises online activism, which is defined as politically motivated movement relying on the Internet, based on the direction of initiatives. That is, whether one sends out information or receives it, calls for action or is called upon, or initiates an action or reacts to

one. The three areas are 1) awareness/advocacy, 2) organisation/mobilisation and 3) action/reaction. These are progressive steps of online participation leading from more basic information seeking (e.g. viewing a website, reading news online, signing up for a political newsletter) and distribution (e.g. pushing news feeds, starting a website, displaying campaign slogans on personal websites, posting blogs) to online direct action (e.g. contacting government officials or initiating and signing online petitions).

Another typology, offered by McCaughy and Ayers (2003), classify online civic activities based on their relationships to offline civic participation. *Online civic participation* could either be technology-enhanced or technology-based. *Technology-enhanced civic participation* refers to civic activities on the Internet and social media that enhance traditional participation (e.g. by serving as an additional communication channel or by coordinating action more efficiently for mobilisation purposes). This category also includes electronic versions of traditional forms of offline participation for which there is a clear offline counterpart such as online voting, online petition signing, emailing a government official (vs. sending a letter) and donating money online (vs. doing so offline).

On the other hand, *technology-based civic participation* refers to civic activities on the Internet and social media that are only possible online.<sup>6</sup> Examples of these new forms of online activities are shown in Figure 4.

Nevertheless, disagreement still exists within the literature on how to classify some perceivably newer forms of online participation. For example, as expressed by Oser et al. (2012), "starting or joining a political group through SNS can be understood as a parallel online activity to the offline act of having been an active member of a group that tries to influence public policy

<sup>6</sup> Some untraditional forms of participation are negatively viewed, such as politically motivated hacking (Christensen, 2011), which is beyond the scope of this report.

or government" (p.96). In addition, Zúñiga et al. (2007) critique that such classifications of online civic participation fail to take into consideration that "the context provided by the Internet means that the activities take on new dimensions and forms that are at once more visual, immediate, self-selected and impersonal" (Gennaro and Dutton, 2006, p.566, cited in Zúñiga et al., 2007, p.6).

Given that online civic activities, particularly those that involve social media use, are a relatively recent phenomenon, the literature on the topic remains limited. Nevertheless,

with the growing number of social media tools that enhance networking as well as reporting and monitoring of political events, there is growing interest among academics, politicians, media development agencies and policy makers to better consider the democratic value of social media in not only triggering online civic participation but effect offline civic participation activities. This interest is derived to a great extent from the vast body of evidence suggesting that traditional media has an effect on offline civic participation.

### Summary

- While Internet and social media use is on the rise, traditional media remain the dominant media source in LDCs.
- Civic participation, which constitutes a range of activities that can be social and/or political in nature, is conducted with the intention to influence policy making and decision making.
- Traditional or offline civic participation can be classified along the spectrum of formal (e.g. voting) to informal participation, which include passive (e.g. information seeking) and active forms (e.g. petitioning).

### 3. Theorising Media and Participation

While traditional media is pervasive, is it persuasive?<sup>7</sup> In light of the shifting media landscape, do social media enrich or critique conventional communication theories? In analysing the nature of engagement and the subsequent participatory outcome for both traditional and social media, this section draws on the communication mediation model (CMM) (McLeod et al., 2001; Shah et al., 2009) both as the narrative frame and empirical guide for the ensuing data analysis.

#### Agenda-setting

Agenda-setting theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw in the 1970s, accounts for the relationship between media and its users. Moving beyond previous approaches – most notable the “hypodermic needle” (Shaw 1979; McCombs, 2005) or “magic bullet” theory<sup>8</sup> (Morris and Ogan, 1996) – agenda-setting aligns itself with the multiple step flow model and assumes a direct, albeit not immediate, impact of the media on its audience (Shaw, 1979). Further, building on use and gratification theory (Shaw, 1979; Morris and Ogan, 1996), this approach suggests that the media serves the purpose of fulfilling people’s need for orientation in an increasingly confusing environment (Shaw, 1979; McCombs, 2005). In fact, “the basic claim of agenda setting theory is that people’s understanding of much of social reality is copied from the media” (Shaw, 1979, p.101). In this sense, the media’s agenda becomes the public’s agenda<sup>9</sup> (Berger and Freeman, n.d.; McCombs, 2005).

Moreover, agenda setting is based on the assumption that individuals (voters) resort to media for information regarding the political arena, as it constitutes its only connection to politics (McCombs and Shaw, 1991). Consequently, the theory highlights (or restricts) its scope to the informational role of the media. Simultaneously, it emphasises the mediating role of people, stressing that people turn to people for their opinion, not for information (Shaw, 1979). Indeed, agenda setting theory “recognises the importance of interpersonal contacts in determining the ultimate impact of media content on people” (Shaw, 1979, p.97), and is therefore fitting for the purposes of our inquiry. Hence, with no other sources of information, this approach predicts that the media agenda is likely to become the public agenda.

This occurs by dint of a transfer of *salience* – the relevance given to a certain theme – from one agenda to another. “Agendas are defined abstractly by a set of objects” (McCombs, 2005, p.546), which are the things that an individual has an opinion or an attitude about (McCombs, 2005). Objects, in turn, have attributes, qualifiers that describe them (McCombs, 2005). Attributes can also define a central theme, i.e. dominant ways of presenting the object that have wide public acceptance such as compelling arguments, in which case they are referred to as frames (McCombs, 2005). In this sense, “(f)or each object on the agenda, there is an agenda of attributes that influences our understanding of the object” (McCombs, 2005, p.546). Therefore, salience is a property of both objects as well as attributes, and its transfer from one agenda to another entails the transfer of objects and attributes (frames) as well. This points to the potential of the media to tell audiences *what* to think about as well as *how* to think about it (McCombs, 2005).

The power of the media’s agenda to influence not only cognition but also action has been increasingly acknowledged by the

<sup>7</sup> See Shaw (1979)

<sup>8</sup> The ‘hypodermic needle’ or ‘magic bullet’ theory use those metaphors to illustrate how the media directly injects into our beings or shoots to our heads, respectively, their message.

<sup>9</sup> Although agenda-setting theory does not regard recipients as passive, it stops short of addressing questions of will. That is, whether the acceptance of the media’s agenda (objects, attributes and frames) is due to identification or conformity. In this sense, the spiral of silence theory could prove complementary.

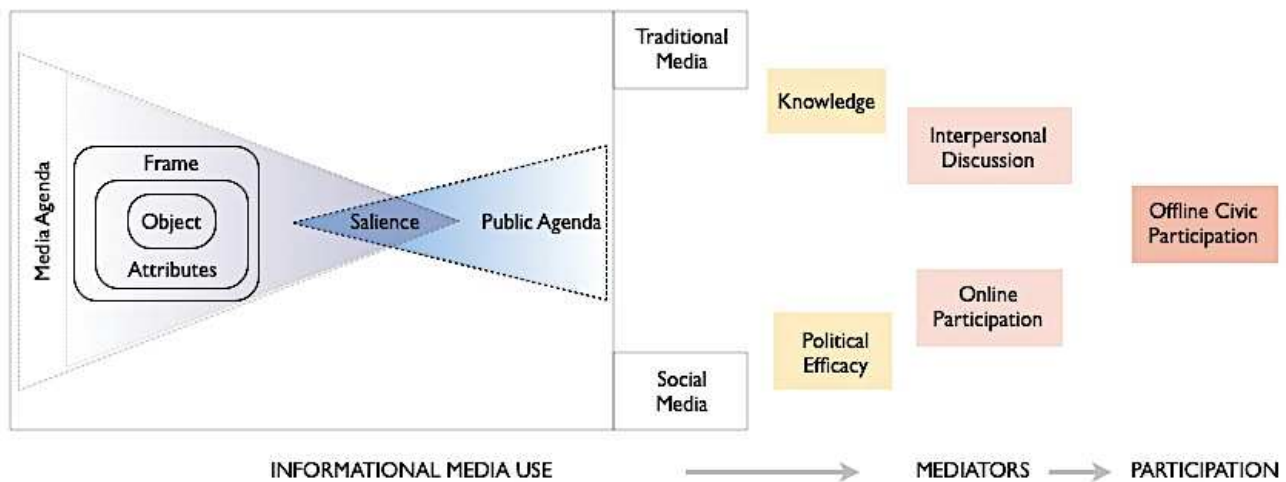


Figure 5: The Communication Mediation Model

theory. Although initially agenda setting theory focused on the informational function of the media and the cognitive aspects of the communication process (Shaw, 1979), its potential to form, prime and shape public opinion and ultimately influence observed behavior has been recognised (McCombs, 2005). As Shaw (1979, p.101) asserts "Attitudes and behavior are usually governed by cognition – what a person knows, thinks, believes. Hence, the agenda setting function of the mass media implies a potentially massive influence (...)". Despite the wide acclaim this theory has had, new developments, most notably the emergence of the Internet, have called its applicability into question. Such objections notwithstanding, agenda setting has maintained its leading position explaining the relationship between informational media use and public opinion as shown in Figure 5. In order to account for the translation from informational media use to action, specifically civic participation, an additional framework is required.

### Communication Mediation Model

The Communication Mediation Model (CMM) bridges the gap between media consumption and civic action, hypothesising an indirect impact. Figure 5 shows the basic conceptual framework of the CMM. It suggests that informational media use encourages mental elaboration (e.g. political efficacy and knowledge acquisition) and

citizen communication, which subsequently prompts civic participation. In the case of traditional media, the importance of interpersonal discussion as a mediator between media consumption and participation has been consistently reported (McLeod et al., 1996; Scheufele and Moy, 2002; Scheufele, 2002). The case of the Internet is particularly interesting as "[o]nline information seeking and interactive civic messaging—uses of the Web as a resource and a forum—both strongly influence civic engagement, often more so than do traditional print and broadcast media and face-to-face communication" (Shah et al., 2005, p.551). Thus, there are similarities between face-to-face political discussion and online political messaging. However, the differences are also noteworthy. While face-to-face communication occurs verbally mostly within the closest circles of interpersonal relationships, the latter is mostly textual than verbal (adding an element of preparation for communication) but it allows reaching wider audiences (Bryant and Oliver, 1994).

Moreover, there is cross-cutting effect of informational media use. That is, offline and online information seeking have effects on both political talk and online participation, which in turn individually spur civic participation. In this sense, the model also stresses the importance of the quality of media use, not only its quantity. Thus, this model opposes two perspectives: (a) that there are two distinct pathways from

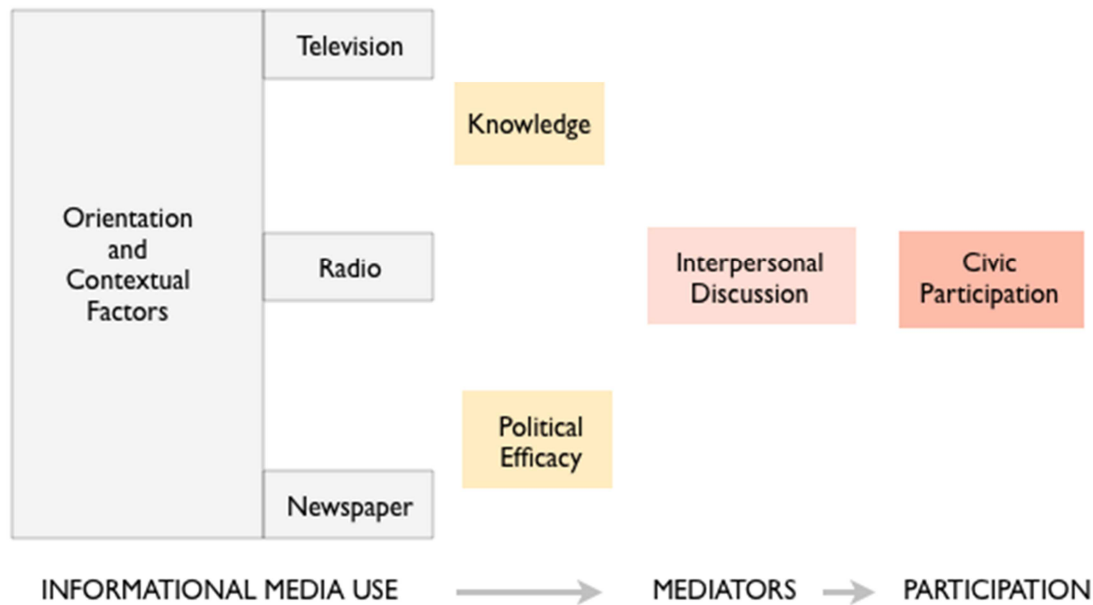


Figure 6: Offline Pathway for Traditional Media

informational media consumption (one online and one offline) to civic participation; and, (b) that Internet use erodes civic participation by providing a substituting experience leading to a dead end (Shah et al., 2005).

### Traditional media and the offline pathway to civic participation

The discussion of traditional media's influence in civic participation requires further specification in terms of content and medium. Here, an application of the CMM (McLeod et al., 2001; Satirovic and McLeod, 2001) is enlightening. As illustrated in Figure 6, a first differentiation points to content, namely: informational media use (e.g. news consumption). This is because exposure to a medium is a rather weak catalyst of participation in public life. Further, a distinction between the different media outlets is relevant in an analysis of participation because the latter varies depending on the former.

### Informational media use: agenda-setting theory and trust in media

The *agenda-setting theory*, as previously highlighted, can be drawn upon in accounting for how traditional media is used.

As originally conceptualised, traditional media is viewed as the only connection to politics (McCombs and Shaw, 1991). The acquisition of information will thus serve as resources for communication among individuals, thereby resulting in the formation of opinions. However, the advent of user-generated content via the social media has increasing called its applicability into question, as traditional media no longer forms the only connection to the political arena.

A discussion on trust in the media will also be useful in understanding users' choice of media for political information. According to GlobeScan (2006) "[m]ore people trust the media than their governments, especially in developing countries (...)" (GlobeScan, 2006). Although this bold statement comes from a reduced sample of countries,<sup>10</sup> it paints an interesting picture of the global importance of traditional media, thereby implicitly giving further credence to the agenda-setting power of traditional media. Overall, national TV is the most trusted news source (82% trust it, 16% do not), followed by national and local newspapers (75% vs. 19% and 69% vs. 23% respectively) and public radio (67% vs. 18%). Internet and blogs are

<sup>10</sup> It is based on an opinion poll for the BBC, Reuters and The Media Center. The countries analysed were: Brazil, Egypt, Germany, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Russia, South Korea, UK, US.

last (GlobeScan, 2006) (refer to Appendix 1). Although radio penetration is higher in countries like the Philippines, TV is the preferred medium for acquiring knowledge when available (ITU, 2010). These findings are consistent with those of Hargreaves and Thomas (2002) in the UK, identifying TV as “the supreme news medium” and report similar levels of confidence in newspapers and radio.<sup>11</sup>

### **Mediating factors: knowledge, political efficacy and interpersonal discussion**

The scholarship suggests that there are three intertwining factors that mediate the effects of informational use of traditional media on civic participation, namely: *knowledge, political efficacy, and interpersonal discussion*. Most accounts show that news consumption (whether from television or newspaper), particularly that with political content (de Vrees and Boomgaarden, 2006), is associated with participation.<sup>12</sup> This is related to the role of the media in furnishing information, creating awareness, and making events intelligible. By gaining exposure via the media, audiences gain knowledge about particular issues. There are differences, however, between television and newspaper conveyance of *knowledge*. The path from newspaper use to knowledge is twice as strong as the path from television to knowledge (McLeod et al., 1999). This suggests that television gives limited information and is used only to obtain information that enhances awareness (McLeod et al., 1999). Newspapers may present issues more technically, thereby becoming more daunting (Neuman et al., 1992).

*Political efficacy*<sup>13</sup> refers to the perception that one is capable of influencing the decision-making process (Goel, 1980). It is found to be positively related to participation but only to formal participation (McLeod et al., 1999). Another factor highlighted in the literature is the central role of *interpersonal discussion* for clarifying opinions, acquiring knowledge and prompting action (de Vrees and Boomgaarden, 2006). It enables people to engage in a cognitive exercise of sharing ideas and opinions and defend them, which confers a sense of competence and efficacy that is likely to translate into participation (de Vrees and Boomgaarden, 2006). This exercise is likely to be enhanced if discussion is conducted within heterogeneous networks that exhibit a wider range of viewpoints (Mutz, 2002; Scheufele et al., 2002). In a study on mass and interpersonal communication, frequency of political talk with friends and family have been highlighted as significant factors in influencing civic engagement (Hucfeldt and Sprague, 1995).

### **Traditional media use and civic participation**

The use of traditional media for news is largely associated with positive mediated effects on civic participation. In the case of TV news use, albeit subject to endogeneity issues, evidence shows that television news has a significant effect on trust in political and social institutions. These are determinants of political efficacy and cynicism, thus affecting political behaviour and participation (Moy and Scheufele, 2000). In the case of newspapers, the scholarship consistently shows that there is a positive effect of newspaper readership on civic participation. Unlike television, newspaper reading has a high mobilising effect (Scheufele et al., 2002; also subject to endogeneity issues). There is evidence that suggests that an important difference between television and

<sup>11</sup> Yet, one notes that state control over media may also influence trust and subsequently informational use of media. For instance, during the Kenyan presidential election in 2008, the mainstream media was accused of pro-government bias and self-censorship in their reporting (Miriri, 2008; Makinen and Kuira, 2008). This has led to distrust over the state-controlled media, and motivations for alternative information sources.

<sup>12</sup> One exception is Moy et al.'s (2004) study that shows no such link between local television news and local political participation.

<sup>13</sup> Political efficacy, or “the feeling that one is capable of influencing the decision-making process” (Goel, 1980, p.127), consistently has been viewed as having two dimensions (Converse, 1972). An internal dimension measures one's feelings of personal effectiveness, while external efficacy reflects one's beliefs about government responsiveness to individual influence attempts (Abramson, 1983).

newspapers is the sophistication of the information conveyed, thereby segmenting audiences based on their cognitive skills (Neuman et al., 1992). Similarly, while exposure to television news is associated with the transmission of low salience issues, exposure to newspaper is related to high salience issues (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006).

Radio news use posits contrasting evidence. While there is a negative mediated effect of political talk shows on participation in the United States (Moy and Scheufele, 2000), independent and community radios in developing countries suggest more positive mediated effects on participation:

- Independent Radio Network in Sierra Leone has led to more positive turnout in elections;
- Population Media Center (PMC) – present in 15 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America – has induced change via education in inter alia women's rights, HIV, and family planning (CIMA, 2007; PMC, 2013).<sup>14</sup>

Traditional media use for political content is thus in general associated with positive effects on civic participation, mediated by political knowledge, efficacy and interpersonal discussion. Given that the TV and radio are still preferred sources of media in most LDCs, the participatory potential of traditional media should continue be tapped on even with the emergence of social media.

### **Social media and the transformed pathway to civic participation**

Changes in technology have resulted to major shifts in how people receive

information and the fight for its control of production and consumption. Agenda-setting theory, if not its critique, remains key in explaining the rise of social media by looking at personal influence on an interpersonal level (Shaw, 1979). Before, traditional media gatekeepers deliberated on which information to release and when, dictated by their agenda which may be misaligned with the public's best interest. Now, the ease of use of and access to new media has allowed individuals who form their own agendas to find other individuals that possess similar agendas: the Internet has made it conceivable for people all around the world to connect and collaborate on similar content, with or without mediation by traditional mass media.

### **Mediated-unmediated content**

As shown in Figure 7, the addition of new and social media tools allows for an expanded arena for discussion through online platforms, i.e. *online participation*. Websites, emails, and hosted bulletin boards have facilitated conversations that often sidestep traditional media outlets (often, since traditional media outlets now also employ social media capabilities to engage with its users).

<sup>14</sup> In the case of PCM's work, it is arguably due to the application of the Sabido method. "Named after the pioneer in application of this entertainment-education strategy, Miguel Sabido, the Sabido Method is based on character development and plot lines that provide the audience with a range of characters that they can engage with — some good, some not so good — and follow as they evolve and change. Sabido developed this methodology when he was Vice President for Research at Televisa in Mexico in the 1970s" (PCM).

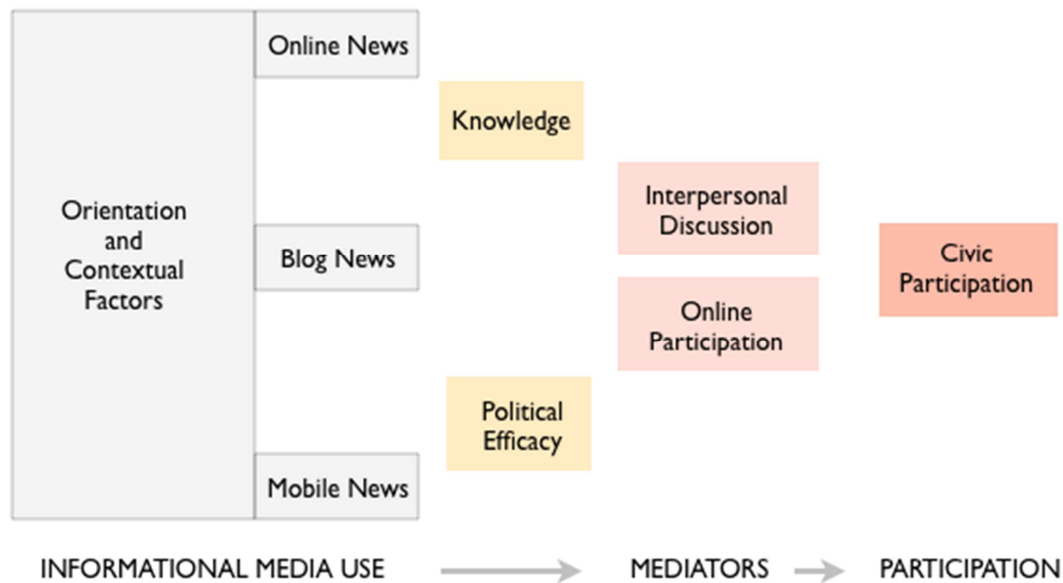


Figure 7: CMM - Addition of Internet and social media platforms

An explicit case of this unmediated content is a blog, short for web log, which are websites where individuals (bloggers) could create personal, interactive, journalistic content (Flew, 2008, p.96). Bloggers contribute to the online discussion independently, especially if their aim is to challenge the conventional line of discourse, or focus on a neglected issue or constituency. One example would be *AMERICAblog*, a widely visited, progressive-leaning news and opinion website with monthly traffic of 1 million page views per month and 300,000 unique readers.<sup>15</sup> Another is *somewhere in...blog*,<sup>16</sup> Bangladesh's first and largest blog community, and *Occupied Palestine*,<sup>17</sup> a blog that not only dedicates itself to human rights and liberation purposes, but also serves as a directory for other relevant blogs.

On the other hand, news media outlets such as *The Washington Post* in the United States and *The Guardian* in the United Kingdom now feature bloggers on their websites, who also feed into the conversation, albeit constrained by content and editorial guidelines. Readers can comment on news and views online in real time which would have been limited with traditional media.

Public participation could even include collecting, reporting, distributing, and discussing political content through news media outlets, such as CNN's iReport,<sup>18</sup> which allows submission of photos and videos of breaking news and happenings from the perspective of local citizens. Envisioned in 2006, it now has 750,000 registered members of local citizens, although editorial guidelines apply for selection and publication.

These cases highlight how unmediated content blurs the line between the media agenda and the public agenda. Media coverage signals to the public which political issues it deems important (Wallsten, 2007). Yet the democratisation of content production for then-passive users (von Hippel, 2005, cited in Flew, 2008, p.36) disrupts this one-to-many communication convention, which Mark Poster attributes to traditional media's "highly centralised control" (1995, p.33 cited in Flew 2008, pp.70-71). By tracking media coverage and blog discussion of 35 issues during the 2004 Presidential Elections in the US to see whether traditional media agenda influences blog agenda and vice-versa, Wallsten (2007), finds a two-way relationship between traditional media coverage and blog discussion rather than a unilateral one. This is further evidence, with respect to our model, that not only does information follow a

<sup>15</sup> *AMERICAblog*. <http://americablog.com/about-us>

<sup>16</sup> [www.somewhereinblog.net](http://www.somewhereinblog.net)

<sup>17</sup> [www.occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com](http://www.occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com)

<sup>18</sup> Also be referred to as participatory or citizen media.

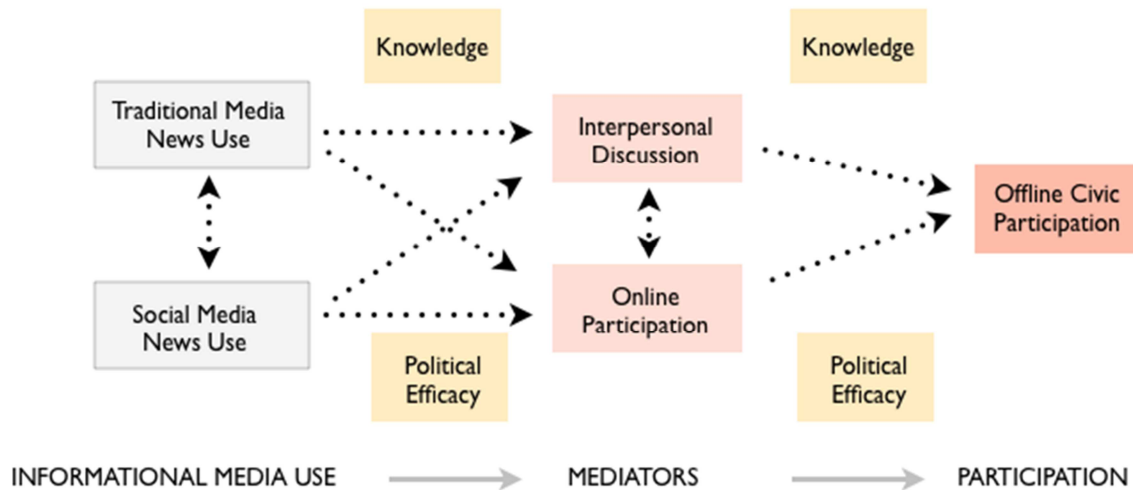


Figure 8: Theorised Pathways to Civic Participation. Source: Authors

singular trend, media sources also feed on each other to variegate the spaces where discussion occurs aided by developments in social media.

### Theorised pathways to civic participation

The combination of the two pathways (offline and online) has thus expanded the potential of media use to civic participation as

conceptualised in Figure 5. Cross-media effects also allow for other permutations of pathways leading to civic participation beyond the offline and online links presented above. Figure 8 highlights the multiple pathways and theorised relationships between constructs that will be tested in Section 5.

### Summary

- Both the Agenda-Setting Theory and the Communication Mediation Model can be drawn upon to bridge the gap between media consumption and civic action.
- The CMM hypothesised an indirect impact between informational media use and civic participation, suggesting that the process has to be mediated by mental elaboration and citizen communication.
- The addition of social media to the CMM has allowed for cross-media effect, thereby increasing the number of pathways to civic participation beyond the online and offline links.

## 4. Substitute or Complement? Social Media in the Current Media Landscape

Social media has brought about new potential for civic participation as highlighted in the CMM. This leads to another question – has social media enhanced or reduced the quality of engagement when compared with the traditional way. This could be examined through a social capital analysis. This section highlights two perspectives on the effects of social media on social capital formation. This is followed by a discussion on whether the emergence of social media has substituted or complemented traditional media in the contemporary media landscape. Empirical evidence from the Palestinian case study is used as illustration.

### Perspectives on social capital formation

This section presents two perspectives on the effects of social media on social capital formation. In particular, distinctive characteristics of social media that differ from conventional way of engagement are highlighted.

#### *Social media increases social capital.*

Social capital, as defined by Putnam (1995, p.67), refers to the “features of social organisations such as networks, norms and social trust [in facilitating] coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits.”<sup>19</sup> Traditionally, social capital formation is associated with face-to-face activities such as spending time with friends and participating in community life. Thus, when television viewing became a mainstream culture, there are concerns that community activities will be displaced by private ones (Putnam, 1995). This was found to be the

case for general television viewing but not for informational use (Norris, 1996).

Social media, with its unique characteristics, has warranted a revisit to the conception of social capital formation. At the very core of social media functionality is the network structure, consisting of nodes of individuals and/or organisations that are connected by one or more lines of relations, which may include values, ideas, finance, or emotions. These networks create social capital for actors, often based on their tastes and preferences (Mark, 1998), which they may use to leverage their exchange gain. The volume of the social capital possessed by each actor thus depends on the size of the network of connections each can effectively activate. Social media platforms become the services that provide the space wherein movement could commence or collapse (boyd and Ellison, 2007, cited in Willard, 2009; Lim, 2012).

Using Putnam's (2000) concepts of bridging<sup>20</sup>, weak-tie social capital, versus bonding, strong-tie social capital<sup>21</sup>, Williams (2006) notes that the type of relationships within social networks can predict different kinds of social capital. Research on social networks has shown that they are primarily being used to strengthen existing relationships. In fact, the more people see each other in person and communicate on the phone, the more they communicate online. Features of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, MySpace, and other social networking sites allow for the creation and preservation of both strong and

<sup>19</sup> Definitions of social capital is widely postulated, from Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) concept of the total actual or potential resources gained by membership in a group; James Coleman's (1998) enumeration of reciprocity, trust, and social norms that furthers individual or collective action; to any motivation to do things for each other as a result of group membership, according to Robert Putnam (2000).

<sup>20</sup> Aldridge et al. (2002) distinguish bridging from bonding ties by describing the latter as “weaker” and “less dense” such as those exhibited by connections between families and across groups (instead of within).

<sup>21</sup> Paul Adams (2012, p.59) defines strong ties as an individual's closest, most trustworthy and influential relationships, such as those with closest friends and family. He theorises that one has fewer than at least ten strong ties. Acquaintances formed based on similar interests form weak ties.

weak ties thus positively contributing to user's life satisfaction, trust, and public participation (Valenzuela et al., 2009).

In terms of strong ties, Adams (2012) theorises that as usage of social networking sites increase, communication with strong ties on social networks also increases. This contrasts with Donath and boyd's (2004, cited in Valenzuela et al., 2009) postulation that social networking sites do not foster strong ties since the technology is more suitable for maintaining links at minimal costs. Even so, social media facilitates weak-tie networks by connecting people from different life situations (Williamson, 2011). Facebook users have on average 160 "friends" yet only directly communicate with less than six of them (Adams, 2012, pp.60-63). Evidence further shows that users, in part due to security concerns around personal online profiles, are more likely to connect with people they already know than link with complete strangers (Steinfeld et al., 2013). Online social networks have made it simpler to establish and maintain weak ties, without having to transform them to strong ones.

Such social networking behaviours go beyond information gathering: they nurture social capital formation at the individual and community levels (e.g. collective actions). It is not clear, however, which specific features of social networking sites produce individual-level production of social capital, i.e. trust, reciprocity, or group credentials. Twitter allows users to gain followers and have their microblogs retweeted or pinned for conversation. YouTube enables others to reply to user videos with videos of their own, beyond gathering likes and commenting as a form of discussion. Facebook has a Wall, newsfeed, a mini-newsfeed, and pages wherein contents and comments can be displayed and shared and users can collect "likes" for their posts, and followers for their pages. Since peer acceptance and feedback are "strong predictors of life

satisfaction" (Valkenburg et al., 2006, cited in Valenzuela et al., 2009, p.881), social media could affect (positively or negatively) users' self-esteem, as evidenced by the positive association of Facebook use with life satisfaction and, to a weaker degree, social trust (Valenzuela et al., 2009).

### **Social media has no effect or even decreases social capital.**

While social media allow networks to be formed online, there are concerns that this exact trait may result in perverse uses which impede social capital formation. This could be due to elite capture of the network and unintended effects such as "echo chamber."

Advances in ICTs, not least of which the ability to design inexpensive devices, and the resulting entrenchment of social networks have created what Lin (2001, p.216) calls "cybernetworks". As earlier described, these "virtual" connections allow users to build "global villages" through bridging community ties with others, negligent of national boundaries. Such gains may not be possible, however, due to the existence of the digital divide (Castells, 2001). This has implications on the degree and effectiveness of citizen participation within and across societies. Those who possess the most "cybernetwork" capital can manipulate the infrastructure that allow for the openness or insularity of social media use, whether through political or economic control. This insularity creates the inadvertent effect of amplifying or "echoing" the same message between like-minded agents, ingraining the perceived validity of their own views, whether they be unbiased or not, untrue or not, incomplete or not. This is exacerbated not only by an authority that has substantial social capital, but also data mining technologies whereby similar interests between social network agents are exploited and distorted.

		Media Richness (Textual, audio and visual cues)		
		Low	Moderate	High
Social Presence (Immediacy and intimacy of interaction)	High		Social networking sites, e.g. Facebook	
	Moderate	Microblog e.g. twitter	Blog, e.g. blogspot	Video-sharing community, YouTube e.g.
	Low	Newspapers	Radio	Television

Figure 9: Classification of Traditional and Social Media Types (Source: Authors)

An example is Eli Pariser's (2011) finding that Facebook has an algorithm for selecting the content that pops out in the news feed wall, which is built on the previous clicking habits, in a phenomenon that he calls the "filter bubble". Therefore, users who usually click on content concerning political activism are going to find more information regarding civic engagement than users who do not, acting again in a reinforcement direction. Depending on certain contexts wherein a Facebook profile exists, specific political, economic, and social messages could be amplified and entrenched within these personal networks. This is, of course, both a more cynical application of the "echo chamber" effect of social media and an area of further research. These platforms could and have been used to deepen understanding of an issue, foster community building and initiate mobilisation.

### Substitutive-complementary media debate

Given the perceived differences between traditional and social media, there has been an intensification of scholarly debates over the changing relationship between traditional and newer forms of media (e.g. Internet and social media including mobile telephony) (Coffey and Stipp, 1997; Kayany

and Yelsma, 2000; Kaye and Johnson, 2003; Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Dimmick, Chan, and Li, 2004). Theories related to the substitutive-complementary media debate are discussed next.

### *Gone with the old, in with the new?*

Scholars have highlighted the possibility of *displacement effect* (Lin, 2001; Kaye and Johnson, 2003; Dimmick, Kline, and Stafford, 2000; Dimmick, Chan, and Li, 2004), as newer forms of media replace older ones. Assuming that time is a finite resource for all users, an individual who increases time spent on a new medium will inevitably do so in the expense of time spent on another medium.

In particular, Dimmick, Chan, and Li (2004) advance the *niche theory* and *gratification opportunities* in explaining such changes in media consumption pattern<sup>22</sup>. A medium is likely to replace or partially displace another medium if it is considered to have a *niche*. This occurs when the medium is perceived to have a high degree of *overlap* (in terms of functional similarity) and *competitive*

<sup>22</sup> See Dimmick, Patterson, and Albarran (1992) on the niches of cable and broadcast television and Dimmick, Kline and Stafford (2000) on the niches of email and telephone.

*superiority* (in terms of *gratification opportunities*) when compared with the other medium. *Gratification opportunities* refer to consumers' perception of a medium's attributes in fulfilling their needs. These attributes may include interaction, control over content and timeliness, among others. In an empirical study conducted in the United States, the Internet is found to have moderate overlap and high competitive superiority when compared with broadcast television, thereby displacing television usage in some aspects while complementing it in other ways (Dimmick, Chan, and Li, 2004).

### **Assessing overlaps and superiority of media types**

While the *niche theory* has yet to be applied to social media, one could draw upon the *social presence theory* and *media richness theory* (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) in understanding the potential overlap and competitive superiority of social media types when compared with traditional media types. The *social presence theory* suggests that a medium will have a high degree of "social presence" if it allows for high intimacy (interpersonal or mediated) and immediacy (asynchronous or synchronous) of interaction (Short, Williams, and Christie, 1976; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Similarly, the *media richness theory* proposes that a richer medium in terms of textual, audio and visual cues will be necessary in clarifying ambiguity within a given time interval (Daft and Lengel, 1986). Figure 9 shows the classification of selected social media types (microblog, blog, video-sharing community and social networking site) and traditional media types (TV, radio and newspapers).

In general, traditional media have low levels of social presence, albeit the increased interactivity attributed to enhanced radio and television formats, e.g. call-in programmes and televised voting (Lee, 2002; Nightingale and Dwyer, 2006; Macdonald, 2007). In comparison, social media types tend to acquire moderate to high levels of social presence on top of their varying degrees of media richness. Social media types may thus have moderate overlap and high competitive superiority when compared

with traditional media types, similar to the case of the Internet in Dimmick, Chan and Li's (2004) findings. Given the lack of complete overlap, the *niche theory* has pointed towards the possibility of complementary roles between traditional and social media. For instance, while a user may attain a media-rich experience watching TV news, he or she may wish to complement this media use with information search and discussion on a blog that provides a more immediate and intimate experience.

### **Towards complementary media use**

This brings us to a more complementary view of traditional and social media, as proposed by Dutta-Bergman (2004) in his *theory of media complementarity*. He critiques that the *displacement* effect, which evaluates media use based on differences in time spent, tends to over-emphasise on the centrality of the medium in creating homogenous patterns of media consumption across populations. Instead, more attention should be given to the content. An individual with a specific area of interest, e.g. presidential election, is likely to engage in content-specific consumption related to that domain across all media types, e.g. watching a live telecast of the presidential debate on television, subscribing to election topics on twitter, joining a Facebook group in support of a presidential candidate and writing opinions on the candidates in a personal blog. He or she is likely to *selectively expose* him or herself to media types that *reinforce* his or her predispositions and beliefs (Atkin, 1973; Zillmann and Bryant, 1985; Dutta-Bergman, 2004).

This is found to be the case in a study conducted in the United States whereby individuals who have gone online to obtain particular content, e.g. politics, sports, business, sports and health, international, government and entertainment, are also more likely to be those who follow these content more closely in traditional media (Dutta-Bergman, 2004). Similarly, Rojas and Puig-i-Abril (2009) have conducted a study in Colombia to test for the potential

contribution of online media consumption including online news use, blog news use and mobile news use in explaining expressive, mobilisation and participative behaviour. Interestingly, high usage of offline news and high level of conversations about current affairs are found to be predictors of high usage of online news.

Even among developing countries, media platforms are likely to serve complementary roles in the information gathering process. As shown in cases in China, Kenya and Egypt, media control has led to greater reliance on user-generated content in the social media (Shirky, 2011). Such a complementary role is likely to work best in moderately repressive regimes (Zuckerman, 2007; Mäkinen and Kuira, 2008), where governments are likely to be concerned with the *dictator's dilemma* (Kedzie, 2002). While repressive regimes are keen to reap economic benefits from Internet and mobile diffusion, they do not welcome the cultural and societal changes that accompany such development. In a study on the Egyptian revolt of 2012, Groshek (2012) finds significant causal relationship between Internet and mobile diffusion as well as democratic growth and economic growth. Tellingly, Internet and mobile diffusion is found to cause socio-political instability. This goes to show the potential effect of social media (used via the Internet and mobile platforms) in destabilising existing regimes through exposure to greater diversity of view points.

### **Agenda-setting in a complementary media landscape**

*Intermedia agenda-setting*, a second level agenda setting theory, can also be drawn upon to understand the complementary role

of cross media agenda setting. In the realm of online media, evidence has been found that agendas tend to converge between portal news outlets and traditional elite news on broadcast television and newspapers (Yu and Aikat, 2006; Meraz, 2009). In a separate study on the dynamics between traditional media and independent political blogs in the United States, Cornfield et al. (2005) find a higher level of influence from traditional media to blogs as opposed to from blogs to traditional media. This view is reaffirmed in Meraz (2009)'s study on traditional media blogs and independent political blogs. Findings suggest traditional media blogs tend to retain relative dominance over the setting of agenda, especially via internal links to news pages and connections to "A-list" bloggers who are past journalists that adhere to the professional norms and traditions. Yet, such influence tends to weaken down the "long tail" of media choices as aggregate effects from the network of links between blog to blog will blunt the singular agenda setting power of traditional media (Anderson, 2006; Meraz, 2009).

While there is a lack of social media research in this area in developing countries, a study on intermedia dynamics between online and traditional media in Ghana suggests that the state-owned online news portal of GNA tends to have a strong intermedia agenda setting effect on the privately-owned news portal of *Ghanaweb.com* and weaker effects on the traditional newspapers regardless of their ownership (Sikanku, 2011). This also points towards the added dimension of state control media when considering intermedia agenda setting within developing countries.

(1)		(2)	
VARIABLES	Informal Offline Participation	VARIABLES	Informal Offline Participation
Media Use Index	<b>0.446***</b> (0.0753)	Media Use Index	0.0524 (0.0706)
Traditional dummy	<b>-0.393***</b> (0.110)	Social dummy	<b>0.393***</b> (0.110)
Income	-0.00263 (0.0124)	Income	-0.00263 (0.0124)
Education	<b>0.0518*</b> (0.0273)	Education	<b>0.0518*</b> (0.0273)
Age	<b>0.142***</b> (0.0331)	Age	<b>0.142***</b> (0.0331)
Sex	<b>-0.583***</b> (0.0726)	Sex	<b>-0.583***</b> (0.0726)
Urban-Rural-Refugee	<b>0.0998**</b> (0.0473)	Urban-Rural-Refugee	<b>0.0998**</b> (0.0473)
Constant	<b>0.878***</b> (0.226)	Constant	<b>0.878***</b> (0.226)
Observations	1,069	Observations	1,069

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 4: Regression results: Relationship between multiplatform use and offline civic participation

### A multi-platform approach to civic participation: evidence from Palestinian Territories Survey

Data analysis on the BBC Media Action survey provides some evidence on the complementarity or substitutionary between traditional media and social media. In particular, individuals who reported the use of both media types are of keen interest, if they are more likely to engage in participatory activities when compared with those who use only one form. In order to test this, the variable *media use index* is created. It essentially takes three different values: 0 if the respondent does not use any kind of media; 1 if he/she uses either traditional or social media; and, 2 if he/she uses both. The coefficient associated with this variable indicates if the shift from one form of media to the use of both forms has a significant effect on the probability of engaging in civic participation.

For informal participation, an index that shows the engagement in 11 different activities related to offline civic participation is created (ranging from 1 to 11 depending

on the number of positive answers).<sup>23</sup> As the dependent variable was a count variable resulting from a sum of binomial results (1 if the individual had undertaken each activity, 0 otherwise), negative binomial regression with the informal participation index as the dependent variable is used. Two sets of regressions on the media use index are run, one controlling for the use of traditional media and the second one controlling for the consumption of social media.

<sup>23</sup> The 11 activities mentioned in the question G13 are: worked for a political council; participated in an organised effort to solve a community problem; attended a meeting of the local town council; contacted a local official; lodged a complaint with a government body; contacted a national elected official; taken part in a protest, march or demonstration; contacted a local member of Asherya; signed a petition; donated money, and used Wasta to get contact with a public official.

Table 4 shows some interesting results. When controlling for the use of traditional media, the media use index has a significant positive correlation with the engagement in offline participation activities. This can be interpreted as shifting from using only traditional media to multiplatform has a positive effect on offline participation, which reinforces the hypothesis that social media acts as a complement of traditional media, rather than substitute. Surprisingly, this conclusion does not hold in the opposite direction. In Column 2 the effect of the media use index controlling for the consumption of social media is not significant. That means that an individual that uses multiplatform does not have a higher likelihood of engaging in offline participation activities than an individual that uses exclusively social media.

## Summary

- The quality of engagement with social media can be analysed through an examination of social capital formation.
- Social media, with its network characteristics, can enhance the building of social capital through consolidation of strong ties and maintenance of weak ties. On the other hand, social media may have limited effects on social capital formation if there is elite capture of the network and “echo chamber” effects.
- Scholars have debated over the substitutive-complementary role of social media in the current media landscape. While some believe that social media will replace traditional media (displacement effect), others situate social media as a complementary platform to traditional media (theory of media complementarity).
- Evidence from the Palestinian Territories suggests that individuals who reported multi-platform approach media use are more likely to engage in offline civic participation when compared with those who only use traditional media. However, a shift from social media use to multiplatform use does not have a significant effect.

## 5. Online to Offline Participation: Empirical Findings

The inclusion of social media in the contemporary media landscape has broadened possibilities for online and offline civic participation. This section recalls the theorised pathways to civic participation derived from the CMM in Section 3. The empirics presented here frame our data analysis and highlight the links between the mediating factors indicated in the pathway model. Results show that social media use is positively correlated with offline participation. However, despite both online participation and offline participation having a positive correlation, the direction of the causality cannot be established with the current data.

### Empirics on media use and participation

#### Political knowledge, media use and political discussion

Various studies have shown that political knowledge is positively associated with both informational media use and political discussion (Eveland, 2004; Kwak et al., 2005; Kenski and Shroud, 2006). In a study conducted in the United States, Eveland (2004) highlights the importance of discussion in generating knowledge. He found that political knowledge is significantly influenced by *anticipated elaboration explanation* and the *discussion-generated elaboration*. The former suggests that individuals are motivated to acquire knowledge in anticipation of a discussion, and the latter highlights that people tend to obtain

and generate new knowledge from discussion. Interestingly, exposure to the information alone is insufficient in constituting knowledge acquisition. As highlighted in Figure 8, knowledge serves as linkages between *informational media use to communication processes (online and interpersonal)* and *civic participation*. However, due to the spurious nature of the knowledge construct in the Palestinian Territories survey, no further testing can be conducted.

#### Political efficacy and participation

Similarly, a positive relationship is found between informational use of online media and internal efficacy, i.e. beliefs in one's competence to effect a change (Kenski and Shroud, 2006). In addition, Zúñiga et al. (2009) find that political efficacy is a predictor for online and offline forms of civic participations, except for online expressive participation, among bloggers in the United States. Given that only bloggers are tested, one could not discount that the insignificant relationship between political efficacy and online expressive participation is also of pertinence to the bloggers tested. Positive relationships are thus hypothesised in our model as shown in Figure 8.

#### Informational media use and deliberation

Empirical evidence shows that the advent of

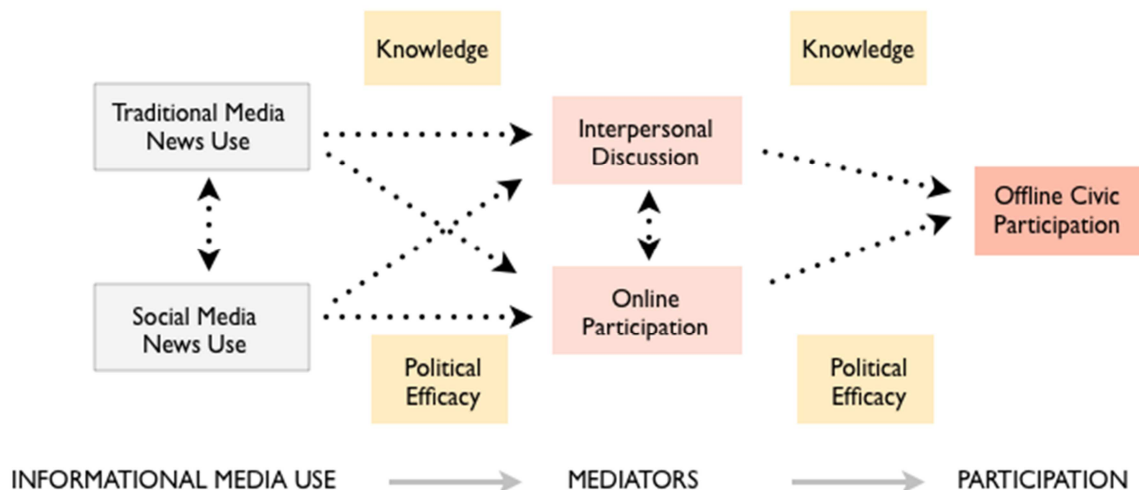


Figure 8: Theorised Pathways to Civic Participation (Source: Authors)

new and social media has not only increased *civic messaging* (which is one form of online participation) but also resulted in *interpersonal discussion*. The increase in discussion is found to be associated with newspaper and online news use in the US (Shah, Cho and Eveland, 2005) and with blog and mobile news use in Colombia (Rojas and Puig-i-Abril, 2009).

While both online participation and interpersonal discussion are forms of deliberation, they do exhibit different attributes when it comes to the interactive experience (Bryant and Oliver 1994; Zúñiga, et al., 2009). While interpersonal discussion tends to occur verbally mostly within the closest circles of relationships, the latter is mostly textual than verbal (adding an element of preparation for communication) but allows for a wider reach of audience (Bryant and Oliver, 1994). Shah, Cho, and Eveland (2005) find a weak but significant relationship between online participation and interpersonal discussion, suggesting that both communication practices may not be entirely dissimilar for users. The link between *online participation* and *interpersonal discussion* is thus also hypothesised in our model.

### **Informational media use, civic messaging and civic participation**

Empirical evidence confirms the theory of mediated effect between complementary use of media for information and civic participation, including one that finds an indirect effect of newspapers and online news use on civic participation (Shah, Cho, and Eveland, 2005). Although TV has an insignificant effect in this study, the opposite is evident when studied alongside print and online news use amongst bloggers (Zúñiga et al., 2009).

On the effects of mediators, Campbell and Kwak (2010) report positive association between civic messaging via mobile telephony and offline civic participation in the United States. On the other hand, a study conducted in Colombia (Rojas and Puig-i-Abril, 2009) shows no direct relationship between civic messaging and offline civic participation was established. Instead, they included two variables for

mobilisation.<sup>24</sup> This was found to be a significant mediating factor between civic messaging and offline civic participation. These relationships are examined in greater detail with the Palestinian Territory data set.

### **Evidence from the Palestinian Territories Survey**

The correlation between the use of traditional and social media and the political attitudes of the individuals are tested, based on the data from the Palestinian Territories. Analysis is restricted to two usual measures of the political attitudes of individuals, namely the level of political discussion and the perception of political efficacy reported by individuals. It is worth highlighting that the variables that intend to measure the political attitudes of the individuals are based on subjective responses. Thus, they are prone to present measurement errors and show biased results.

These indicators were taken from the variables constructed by BBC Media Action. The two target variables are: *GPolitDis*, an index of political discussion constructed as an average of three questions about the frequency of personal discussion with family/friends/other, and ranges from 1 (never) to 3 (always); and *PolitEff*, an index of political efficacy that takes three sub-questions that ask for the level of confidence of the individual in politics;<sup>25</sup> it ranges from 1 to 4, with 4 as the lowest level of political efficacy.

An OLS regression was used to determine correlation of these indicators of political attitude on the consumption of social media and the use of traditional media and Internet as sources of political information. Demographic variables such as income,

<sup>24</sup> Two measurements for mobilisation: (1) SNS mobilisation: "how often they mobilised their online social network contacts for social or political causes, on scale from "never" (0) to "frequently" (5)"? (2) Cellular phone mobilisation: whether they used their cellular phones to mobilise their contacts for social or political causes. ( $M = 0.1$ ,  $SD = 0.3$ )

<sup>25</sup> In particular, the three statements that compose the political efficacy index are: a) Sometimes, politics seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going; b) I don't think that the government cared much about what people like me think; and c) People like me don't have any say about what the government does.

VARIABLES	(1) Interpersonal Discussion	(2) Political Efficacy
Social dummy	-0.0660 (0.0703)	<b>0.223**</b> (0.0891)
Internet dummy	<b>0.0880**</b> (0.0431)	0.0165 (0.0543)
Traditional dummy	-0.00437 (0.0318)	-0.0166 (0.0406)
age*social	<b>0.102***</b> (0.0289)	<b>-0.113***</b> (0.0366)
Income	<b>0.0155***</b> (0.00546)	<b>-0.0128*</b> (0.00706)
Education	<b>0.0406***</b> (0.0122)	0.00175 (0.0157)
Age	-0.00977 (0.0189)	<b>0.0648***</b> (0.0245)
Sex	<b>-0.0966***</b> (0.0316)	-0.00604 (0.0406)
Urban-Rural-Refugee	-0.00371 (0.0211)	-0.0426 (0.0267)
Constant	<b>1.664***</b> (0.105)	<b>2.191***</b> (0.133)
Observations	1,116	1,026
R-squared	0.065	0.015

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 5: Regression results: Relationship between political attitudes and the use of media forms.

education, age, gender and location were added as controls for each individual. Besides this, an interaction term between the age of the individual and the consumption of social media have been included as a control, given that in general social media is used by young people (16-24 years old), and this might be biasing the results of social media towards the characteristics of the young population.

The first regression of Table 5 produces an insignificant correlation between the intensity of political discussion and both the use of social and traditional media; on the contrary, relying on the Internet as a main source of information produces a significant positive effect. The results on social media can be explained by the significance of the interaction term mentioned above; they can be interpreted as the fact that social media use might be weakly associated with lower levels of interpersonal discussion (negative coefficient of the social dummy), but this effect diminishes for older individuals (positive coefficient of the interaction term). Both income and education are positively correlated with the level of

political discussion, while males tend to have higher levels of discussion than women.

The second analysis focuses on the political efficacy index, which ranges from 1 (high trust in political institutions) to 4 (low trust). The OLS regression with the same independent variables produces some interesting results. While relying on the Internet and traditional media as sources of information does not have any effect, the consumption of social media does show a significant association with higher levels of political efficacy. We also can see how young people have a higher perception of political efficacy, while higher income reduces this indicator.

In brief, the use of social media has an ambiguous effect on the levels of interpersonal discussion (and its effect varies with age), while it has a positive significant correlation with higher levels of political efficacy. On the other hand, the use of traditional media is not correlated with any of these two indicators of political attitudes.

VARIABLES	(1) Voting Dummy	(2) Informal offline participation
Social dummy	<b>-0.728***</b> (0.204)	<b>0.381**</b> (0.167)
Internet dummy	-0.0564 (0.121)	0.144 (0.0919)
Traditional dummy	-0.126 (0.0916)	0.0114 (0.0728)
age*social	<b>0.213**</b> (0.0859)	-0.0314 (0.0671)
Political Efficacy	<b>-0.149**</b> (0.0707)	-0.0284 (0.0539)
Interpersonal Discussion	<b>0.439***</b> (0.0889)	<b>0.539***</b> (0.0724)
Income	0.0172 (0.0160)	-0.00374 (0.0127)
Education	<b>0.0654*</b> (0.0351)	0.0307 (0.0276)
Age	<b>0.445***</b> (0.0567)	<b>0.146***</b> (0.0464)
Sex	-0.121 (0.0914)	<b>-0.457***</b> (0.0741)
Urban-Rural	0.0731 (0.0603)	<b>0.103**</b> (0.0468)
Constant	<b>-1.391***</b> (0.394)	-0.0768 (0.319)
Observations	965	911

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 6: Regression results: Consumption of forms of media and offline participation

### Linking online to offline participation: empirical evidence

A review of available empirical evidence on the impact of political activity online on offline political participation points to mixed results. Bimber (2001) finds that obtaining information from the Internet does not affect the likelihood of voting, and finds a weak link between electronic media and other forms of participation. He concludes that obtaining information does not necessarily increase the likelihood of participation outside the Web. Therefore, political participation is not directed by the availability or cost of political information: even if it is easier to connect broader groups online, that does not mean that it is easier to convince them to engage in other forms of participation.

Scheufele and Nisbet (2002) find that, after controlling for other factors, the independent effect of Internet activity is practically non-existent and insignificant. Using panel data to control for developments over time, Jennings and Zeitner (2003) find that the effect of the Internet on political participation is negligible

when considering previous levels of engagement. Baumgartner and Morris (2010) find that the mobilisation effect of SNS is mainly medium specific; youth who used SNS as a source for political news were more likely to engage in online political activities.

More recent studies find modest positive effects of Internet activity on political participation.<sup>26</sup> A recent meta-analysis of studies of the impact of Internet use on civic engagement seems to confirm the positive impact of the Internet (Boulianne, 2009). The 38 studies span 1995 to 2005, and the results suggest that the Internet has a positive effect on civic engagement, although the strength of the impact is limited (cited in Christensen, 2011). Finally using a two-wave panel data survey of undergraduate university students in Canada, Vissers and Stolle (2012) find that Facebook activism does not distract from or crowd out other forms of participation. They find that Facebook activism is a medium that is at worst self-reinforcing in its activities, and at best has mobilising effects for those who are already politically interested.

<sup>26</sup> This could be due to changes in data and analytical methods (Christensen, 2011).

VARIABLES	(1) Voting Dummy	VARIABLES	(2) Offline participation dummy
Index Online Participation	-0.0299 (0.0282)	Index Online Participation	<b>0.174***</b> (0.0342)
Interpersonal Discussion	<b>0.447***</b> (0.122)	Interpersonal Discussion	<b>0.475***</b> (0.133)
Political Efficacy	-0.135 (0.0934)	Political Efficacy	0.0294 (0.104)
age*social	<b>-0.213**</b> (0.0862)	age*social	-0.0411 (0.0814)
Income	0.0341 (0.0218)	Income	0.00128 (0.0240)
Education	<b>0.0950**</b> (0.0469)	Education	0.0596 (0.0506)
Age	<b>0.795***</b> (0.0980)	Age	<b>0.206**</b> (0.0905)
Sex	-0.190 (0.125)	Sex	<b>-0.312**</b> (0.132)
Urban-Rural-Refugee	0.0444 (0.0794)	Urban-Rural-Refugee	-0.00326 (0.0850)
Constant	<b>-2.126***</b> (0.502)	Constant	-0.785 (0.547)
Observations	538	Observations	509

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

Table 7: Relationship between offline and online civic participation

Nevertheless, Vissers and Stolle also find that some Facebook activities hold more mobilisation power than others. For example, they find that posting and reading political messages on Facebook inspires future political activities such as donating for political causes, petition signing and contacting politicians. This finding suggests that engagement on SNS might have an indirect effect on political participation through the stimulation of e.g. political knowledge and efficacy.<sup>27</sup>

Overall, none of the studies discussed above, that question the existence of positive effects of Internet activity on political participation, report a negative link, or that using the Internet for political purposed should decrease the propensity to be active in real life. Even the most sceptical scholars, at most, find a weak and insignificant linkage, but none find a negative impact. This suggests that there is no evidence in the literature that online activism is displacing traditional offline participation.

### Evidence from the Palestinian Territories Survey

The survey from the Palestinian Territories allows testing for the effect of the use of social media and traditional media on fostering both offline and online participation, and the relationship between these two. Civic (offline) participation is divided to formal (voting) and other informal ways of civic engagement. For the first indicator, a dummy variable was constructed from the information on voting in the last general and local elections. The same variable in the previous analysis was used for the second analysis.

The first analysis was testing if the probability of voting was correlated with consumption of social media and the use of Internet and traditional media as main sources of political information. This was tested through a probit regression, including the rest of the demographic control variables. Interpersonal discussion and political efficacy were included as additional independent variables in order to control for individual political attitudes. The regression shows that the consumption of social media has a significant negative relation with the probability of voting, while the use of

<sup>27</sup> This is an interesting avenue for further research; however, these outcomes play themselves out over time and thus require a 3-wave panel data set to test.

Internet and traditional media as sources of information do not produce any effect. The somewhat surprising negative result for social media can be explained by the case that social media is mostly used by young population, who cannot vote given the age restrictions; if we include the interaction term between age and use of social media it exhibits a significant positive effect, confirming this explanation.

A test on the informal participation index was conducted on the same variables. The negative binomial regression on informal participation produces some interesting results, as shown in Table 6. While the use of traditional media and Internet as a source of information is again insignificant, the consumption of social media shows a highly significant correlation with the index of informal participation.

Finally, a test on the effect of online participation on the probability of taking part on both formal and informal offline participation activities was performed. This time, for the offline participation activities a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the individual has undertaken any activity considered as offline participation, 0 otherwise, was constructed. A probit regression tested both the voting and the informal participation dummies against the online participation index, with the demographic and political attitude controls. The results are shown in Table 7. In the first regression, online participation has no effect on the probability of voting, which again can be explained by the fact that online activities are done by young people between 16 and 24 years of age. In the second case, online participation is significantly positively correlated with the probability of undertaking an offline participation activity. This has two possible explanations. The first one is that people who carry out online participation activities get more prone to engage in offline activities. The second explanation, where the causality goes in the opposite way, is that the same people that engage in offline activities are the ones that use social media as a tool for online participation; this hypothesis would sustain the theory of SNS as a social reinforcement tool in society. Unfortunately, as the survey can only provide cross-sectional

information, with the current data we cannot test which of these two hypotheses is more plausible.

### **Does social media engage the disengaged?**

Offline participation has been criticised for excluding some demographic groups from the population; ethnic minorities, those with lower levels of income and education, women and the youth. However, the rise of online activism fuelled an academic debate about the potential of these new opportunities of participation to civically mobilise new groups in society. The current debate is well framed by the distinction made by Pipa Norris (2000) between the mobilisation and the reinforcement theses.

The mobilisation thesis argues that due to the availability of new information and communication technologies, previously disengaged groups of the population are being drawn into politics. In contrast, the reinforcement thesis assumes that the Internet will preserve the status quo, and in the worst case scenario may actually widen participatory gaps. Mobilisation theorists highlight Internet features that potentially mobilise disengaged groups: lower costs of gathering political information and communicating civic issues, and the interactive nature of the medium, "(...) which has the potential to strengthen the relationship among previously disengaged citizens and intermediary organisations and the political world" (Oser et al., 2012, p.2). The online consumption of political information not only increases the users' political knowledge, but enhances their interest in politics, leading to higher deliberation and civic engagement.

While reinforcement theorists accept these claims, they recognise that the Internet may not alter factors that influence participation stratification patterns. One of these main factors is resources, such as education and income, which still influence participation patterns, given the cognitive and technical demands of the medium. Another factor is political interest: if people are not politically interested, it may not make a difference that political information and opportunities for

participation are more readily available, particularly given the strong self-selection effect of the Internet in comparison to traditional media (Sunstein, 2011, cited in Oser et al., 2012). Furthermore, new media may only provide perception of governmental accessibility and responsiveness, becoming then a legitimising mechanism for representative democracy (Bucy and Gregson, 2001). The Internet traffic today is highly concentrated on a small quantity of websites, with English as an unofficial language, affecting its ability to empower new social groups into the political discourse.

### **Engaging the disengaged: empirical evidence**

No sufficient evidence supports one theory over the other. A number of studies in the United States (cited in Oser et al., 2012) indicate that while the Internet increases levels of political engagement, this increase is disproportionately in favour of the most socioeconomically advantaged and politically interested, thereby replicating participation gaps. Other cited studies note a decrease in the gender gap in both general and political Internet use. Of particular interest is the study conducted by Smith et al. (2009) for Pew Internet which explores the socio-demographic stratification trends on blogs and SNS. They find that in contrast to traditional acts of political participation – whether undertaken online or offline – forms of engagement that use blogs or SNS are not characterised by a strong association with socio-economic status. They find very high levels of engagement for young adults aged 18-29 compared to other age cohorts. Furthermore, they find a large association between income and education and online engagement, however this association is less pronounced than for other traditional forms of online participation. Nevertheless, even if there is evidence in support of the mobilisation theory, the relations between the political use of these sites and other forms of political engagement should be explored in order to give a more nuanced picture of the democratic potential of online activism.

## Summary

- Based on the Palestinian Territories survey data analysis, social media use is weakly associated with less interpersonal discussion, but this effect diminishes for older individuals; social media has a positive effect on political efficacy. Use of traditional media does not have any effect in either of the dependent variables.
- The same data analysis finds that the consumption of social media is associated with a lower probability of voting; however, controlling for interpersonal discussion, consumption of social media has a positive correlation with offline informal participation. Traditional media shows no effect.
- Interpersonal discussion seems to be an important variable in explaining both types of offline participation. Online participation and offline participation seems to have a positive correlation, but the direction of the causality cannot be tested with the current Palestinian Territories data.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusion

The literature review and empirical findings discussed above have shed light on the dynamic relationships of media and civic participation. The insights gained in this endeavor turn on three main axes: traditional media, multiplatform, and social media.

#### **Traditional media is still pervasive in most parts of the world, particularly in the LDCs.**

Despite the growing penetration and coverage of the Internet (and concomitantly social media), TV, radio and newspapers are currently the principal source of information in developing countries. To the extent to which the lessons from industrialised countries can be applied to LDCs, it can be expected that this influence will remain in the future and is likely to coexist with new technological and media developments.

#### **Multiplatform media use characterises the current media landscape.**

The evidence from the Palestinian Territories suggests that there is complementary use of social and traditional media to civic participation. In fact, data analysis shows that multiplatform media use is more likely to be associated with offline informal civic participation when compared with the use of traditional media independently.

#### **Similar to findings in existing literature, social media is found to be positively associated with political efficacy and offline participation in the case of the Palestinian Territories.**

Interestingly, the data analysis from the Palestinian Territories suggests the plausible correlation of informational social media use and offline civic participation in the absence of moderators.

### Recommendations

Given the purpose to aid BBC Media Action assess the value added of social media to their work on improving governance in LDCs, this study has given account to the nature of

engagement with social media in its own right and alongside traditional media and how its use influences engagement and participatory outcomes. Keeping in mind the limitations of the study enumerated in the introduction, the findings of this report provide empirical guidelines for recommendations for both further research and programming.

### Further Research

While this is not an exhaustive list, the endorsements made here relate to starting points for future research design that would hopefully abate the data and analyses limitations encountered in this study:

- Assess causality between social media use and civic participation through the collection of longitudinal or panel data and employing appropriate econometric modelling to determine to which degree is civic participation through social media time, platform and content-specific;
- Investigate the effect of institutional contexts on social media use and civic participation to control for potential influencers, such as censorship, political volatility, and even economic shifts;
- Explore the factors that influence uneven online participation across social groups, e.g. young people, women, or refugees, now having contributed to the empirics of use of and access to the Internet in LDCs;
- Reduce response subjectivity by designing more focused and knowledge-based queries around political events, figures, and policies;
- Expand methodological tools from surveys to direct online activity metrics to further reduce measurement errors;
- Elaborate on the intended meaning of political efficacy.

## Further Programming

Effective programming should be guided by economy, efficiency, and, in this case, evidence. Research and programming are not mutually exclusive recommendations. In fact, they are likely to be more effective if implemented in tandem. This report offers recommendations for potential programming in the Palestinian Territories as an exercise to highlight the findings presented:

- Follow-up online debates on Twitter and Facebook proceeding political TV or radio shows: timing allows for political knowledge to form and multiplatform format reduces the cost of embarrassment from face-to-face, expands participation.
- Live online chat rooms with presenters to discuss issues of concern that were raised in the programme.
- Empower marginalised sectors of society with the tools and training in order to fully participate through online ways. Some ideas include digital storytelling and journalistic tasks in response to a politically relevant issue, such as the environment, their local communities, the state of education, unemployment, Wasta, and corruption.

Other programmatic applications may include:

- Renting mobile phones in certain developing countries (most notably Africa). Mobile phones with social media access could be made available in different localities to which the respective broadcasting stations would be connected.
- Encourage technological innovation and entrepreneurship in promising localities.

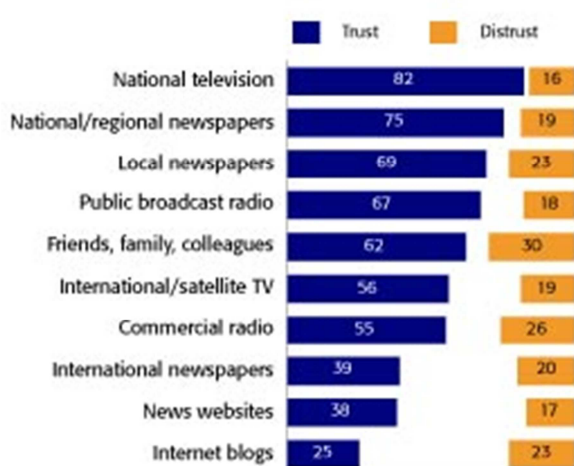
Taken together, these recommendations, along with the rest of the study, stress that social media is embedded in a deeper, more extensive communication environment, entrenched within a broader society, influenced by other cultures. While this study has offered evidence for a correlation between social media and civic participation, literature has theorised that social media alone could fail to mobilise citizens towards engagement. Thus, at least within the context of LDCs, social media must be seen as one tool out of many, ought to be studied and honed in order to realise its potential to effect civic participation.

## Appendix 1: Why Traditional Media?

The potential that the media in general and traditional media in particular have in a society has been acknowledged by all sectors. In fact, the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003 brought together the public, the private and the civil society sectors to discuss this topic. Target 8 of this meeting was “to ensure that all of the world’s population have access to television and radio services” (ITU 2010).

### Trust in Different Media Channels

Trust vs Distrust, Average of 10 Countries, by News Source



Base: Representative sample of 10,000 adults aged 18–65 in ten countries

The white space in this chart represents “Other” and “DK/NA”

GlobeScan.com

Figure 10: Trust in Different Media Channels (Source: GlobeScan)

Moreover, media users themselves highlight this importance. Indeed, “[m]ore people trust the media than their governments, especially in developing countries (...)” (GlobeScan, 2006). Although this bold statement comes from a reduced sample of countries<sup>28</sup>, it paints an interesting picture of the global importance of traditional media: national TV is the most trusted news source overall (82%

trust it, 16% do not), national and local newspapers follow (75% vs. 19% and 69% vs. 23% respectively), public radio is next (67% vs. 18%), Internet blogs are last (GlobeScan, 2006 – see Figure 10). Although radio penetration is higher in countries like the Philippines, when available, TV is the preferred medium for acquiring knowledge (ITU 2010). These findings are consistent with those of Hargreaves and Thomas (2002) who, studying developments in the UK, identified the TV as “the supreme news medium” and report similar levels of confidence in newspapers and radio.

The above notwithstanding, the radio continues to play an important role in certain contexts<sup>29</sup>. In many least developed countries (LDCs) radio remains the prevalent broadcasting device (ITU, 2010). Moreover, in rural areas within these countries, particularly where electricity is limited, radios are preferred – not the least also because this medium is relatively cheaper<sup>30</sup> (ITU, 2010). Further, in areas unreachable by conventional radio stations, community radio with programming related to local issues has filled this void (ITU, 2010). Community radio, however, is not just a “local radio”,

“[t]he slogan of a community radio station in Mongolia—“Your radio is listening”— speaks volumes about the nature of this medium. Community radio is about the horizontal exchange of information—a participatory interaction between the community and the radio station rather than a vertical, one-way communication method, delivering information from a medium to the public.” (CIMA 2007, p. 6)

<sup>29</sup> “Regarding the proportion of households with a radio, the majority of developed countries have stopped compiling this statistic, since penetration levels are very high (usually close to 100%) and there is more interest in newer ICTs, particularly the Internet” (ITU 2010).

<sup>30</sup> This tandem with TV, radio is also the main source of information for illiterate segments of the population (ITU 2010).

<sup>28</sup> It is based on an opinion poll for the BBC, Reuters and The Media Center. The countries analysed were: Brazil, Egypt, Germany, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Russia, South Korea, UK, US.

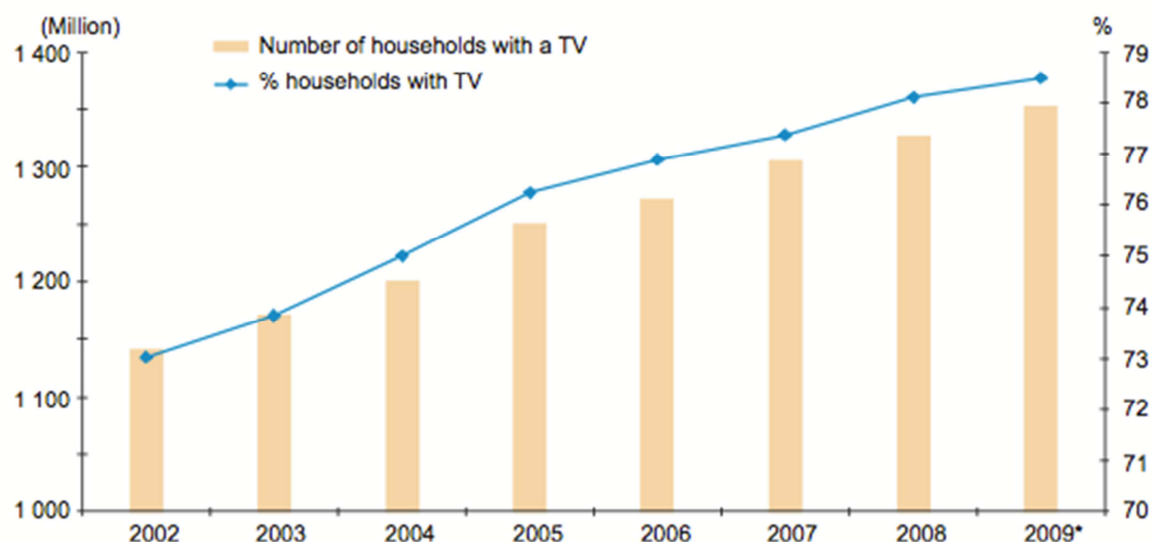


Figure 11: Proportion of households with a TV (2002-2009)

### Media Usage Profiles

The information provided above has to be interpreted in light of complementary data. For example, despite a growing trend worldwide in the number of households with TV (Figure 11), large segments of the population have no access to it. Arguably economic factors play an important role here (ITU 2010). This reality is particularly evident in developing countries (see Figure 12).

Although a higher level of specificity might be desirable, it is rather difficult to find such data for more than a handful of countries. However the evidence presented thus far points to the fact that the use of traditional media is necessarily context dependent. Different audiences use traditional media (and different medium) depending on location, age, gender, occupation, etc. The discussion below on the effects of traditional media on civic participation, the central question of this inquiry, ought to be interpreted in light of this fact.

### The plurality of media

Although often referred to as 'traditional media', analysis of its effects on civic participation requires further specification. As mentioned above, despite the multiple tools included, the scholarship has focused more on television and newspapers. In terms of

production the only distinction made is between public and commercial sources (de Vrees and Boomgaarden, 2006). The distinction between the different media outlets is relevant in an analysis of participation because the latter varies depending on the former. By the same token, the literature deems a further distinction necessary, namely: content. Exposure to a medium is a rather weak catalyst of participation in public life. The latter is determined by the content conveyed by the medium to which an audience is exposed (Moy et al., 2004).

### Radio

The analysis of the effect of radio use on participation on public life has been analysed in tandem with its content. In this sense, political talk radio has been studied and the evidence shows a rather negative effect on participation. The format of these programs tends to de-legitimise the authority and the government (Moy and Scheufele, 2000). This is detrimental to social and political trust, and to participation more generally (Moy and Scheufele, 2000).

Regarding community radio's effect, given its more purposeful nature, evidence has shown positive effects on behavioral change. Independent Radio Network (IRN) in Sierra Leone has affected participation in elections, Search for Common Ground contributed to prevent the violence from Rwanda spilling

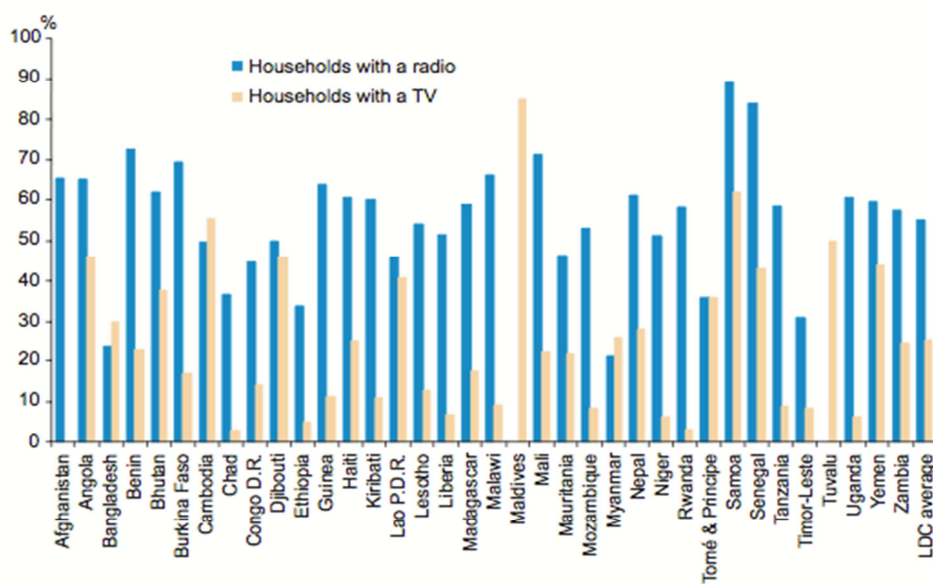


Figure 12: Proportion of households with a TV by region (2009)

over to Burundi, and most notably Population Media Center (PCM) – with presence in 15 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America – has induced change via education in inter alia women's rights, HIV, and family planning (CIMA, 2007). Although the channels of change are less clear, in the case of PCM's work, it is arguably due to the application of the Sabido method<sup>31</sup> (PMC, 2013).

### Television

Regarding the effect of television, broadly speaking, television watching has low mobilising effect. While Stamm et al. (1997) identify a low correlation between television use and involvement, Rothembuhler et al., (1996) finds no measurable effect at all. Apropos news and news watching specifically, it has a significant effect on political and social trust (Moy and Scheufele, 2000). These are determinants of political efficacy and cynicism, thus affecting political behaviour and participation (Moy and Scheufele, 2000). Hence, the evidence shows that television news has positive effects on

civic participation (Scheufele and Moy, 1998; McLeod et al., 1999; Scheufele et al., 2002).

### Newspapers

The scholarship consistently shows that there is a positive effect of newspaper readership and civic participation. Unlike television, newspaper has a high mobilising effect (Scheufele et al., 2002). There is evidence that suggests that an important difference between television and newspapers is the sophistication of the information conveyed, thereby segmenting audiences based on their cognitive skills (Neuman et al., 1992). Similarly, while exposure to television news is associated with the transmission of low salience issues, exposure to newspaper is related to high salience issues (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006). Regardless of these differences, the evidence suggests that news media affect knowledge and participation positively.

<sup>31</sup> "Named after the pioneer in application of this entertainment-education strategy, Miguel Sabido, the Sabido Method is based on character development and plot lines that provide the audience with a range of characters that they can engage with — some good, some not so good — and follow as they evolve and change. Sabido developed this methodology when he was Vice President for Research at Televisa in Mexico in the 1970s" (PCM).

## Appendix 2: Social Media Trends and Enabling Conditions

Implicit to the proliferation of social media is the transformative effect of information communication technologies (ICT), fulfilling what McLuhan envisioned as the “global village” (1962). In order to gain a picture of the expanse use and further possibility of social media effect, a survey of the current ICT trends, including Internet and mobile technology, is relevantly enlightening<sup>32</sup>.

### Fixed broadband penetration is increasing.

- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimates 590 million fixed (wired) □broadband subscriptions worldwide at the end of 2011.
- Growth in developed countries is slowing (5% increase in 2011), whereas developing countries continue to experience high growth (18% in 2011).
- Fixed (wired) □broadband penetration remains low in some regions, such as Africa and the Arab States, with 0.2% and 2% respectively by end 2011.<sup>33</sup>
- Thirty million fixed (wired) □broadband subscriptions were added in China, about half of the total subscriptions added worldwide in 2011.

### Internet penetration is increasing amidst the digital divide.

<sup>32</sup> A survey of the literature shows the imbalance in terms of the availability of reliable demographic data on the users and uses of social media between developed and developing world. For example, the Pew Internet & American Life Project (henceforth Pew Internet) of the Pew Research Center provides information on the American issues, attitudes and trends by conducting public opinion polling and social science research. At the time of this literature survey, no corresponding information for any developing country could be gathered due to lack of reliable sources.

<sup>33</sup> While not a focus of this study, one could postulate the effects of censorship to ICT development. In 2012 the Palestinian Territories scored an 83 or *not free* on Freedom of the Press Report conducted by Freedom House; a 43 or *difficult situation* on the Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders; and have been shown to have *substantial social filtering*, according to the OpenNet Initiative. (Source: “Censorship by country”. Wikipedia.)

- Thirty-three per cent or about 2.3 billion people of the world's total population were online by 2011.
- Only 25% in the developing world were online by end 2011, compared to 70% in the developed world.
- By end 2011, 70% of the total households in developed countries had Internet, whereas only 20% of households in developing countries had Internet access.

### Mobile phones will overtake PCs as the most common web-access devices worldwide by 2013.

Mobile has become the fastest and most popular tool for social media use<sup>34</sup> (Lunden, 2012). Mobility, immediacy, time management, and status (Leung and Wei 2000, Lee, 2001), or entertainment and transaction (Bae, 2001) are not innovative originations but reimagined dimensions of telephony gone mobile.

- It's estimated that the combined installed base of smartphones and browser-equipped enhanced phones will surpass 1.82 billion units by 2013, eclipsing the total of 1.78 billion PCs by then (Kallas, 2010).

### The developing world is now more mobile than the developed world.

- Mobile cellular penetration has reached 86% or almost 6 billion at the close of 2011, driven by developing countries, accounting for almost an

<sup>34</sup> This report assumes no differentiation of smart phones and feature phones in figures shown, the former equipped with operating systems that enable personal computer features and third-party applications. A report by mobile strategy firm VisionMobile estimates global smartphone penetration at just 27%. North American and European smartphone penetrations are the highest, with 63% and 51% market share, respectively, in contrast to the Asia-Pacific region (19%), Africa/Middle East region (18%) and Latin America (17%).

additional 530 million new mobile-cellular subscribers in 2011.

- India added 142 million new mobile-cellular subscribers, twice as many as in the whole Africa, and more than in the Arab States, Commonwealth of Independent States and Europe combined. Brazil, Costa Rica, Kazakhstan, Laos and Mali all exhibited the deepest mobile-cellular penetration in 2011.
- Mobile broadband reached a 40% annual subscription growth, resulting to more than 1 billion worldwide subscribers in 2011 amidst global disparities in mobile-broadband access and penetration in the developing (8%) and the developed countries (51%).
- The ITU estimates that there are less than 5 mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in Africa, compared to 90% in Japan and Sweden by the end 2011. In the same time period the BRICS increase the world's total mobile broadband subscribers by 144 million.
- Increased mobile phone functionality to include short messages services (SMSes) and social media applications, coupled with its less capital-intensive requirement, meant that most people in developing countries are likely to be adopting mobile phones for more than voice

communication in the future (World Economic Forum, 2012).

- Africans are not only using the mobile phone for voice calling, sending text messages, transferring money, checking prices of agricultural products and monitoring elections, they are also increasingly using the medium for taking photos, making films, surfing the Internet and social networking (Berger, 2008; 2010; Essoungou 2010; Etzo and Collendr, 2010; FreedomFone, 2010; Wasserman, 2011).

The ITU also notes that there are major country-specific players in the social networking arena (Lunden, 2012) that rival the number of major players:

- QQ in China (registered users topped at 990.0 million in June 2009 and active users make up a little over 50%);
- V Kontakte in Russia (at least 195 million accounts and an average of 43 million daily users at the close of December 2012);
- Mixi in Japan (over 21.6 million users as of May 2008);
- Google's Orkut in Brazil, India, and Paraguay (33 million active users worldwide).

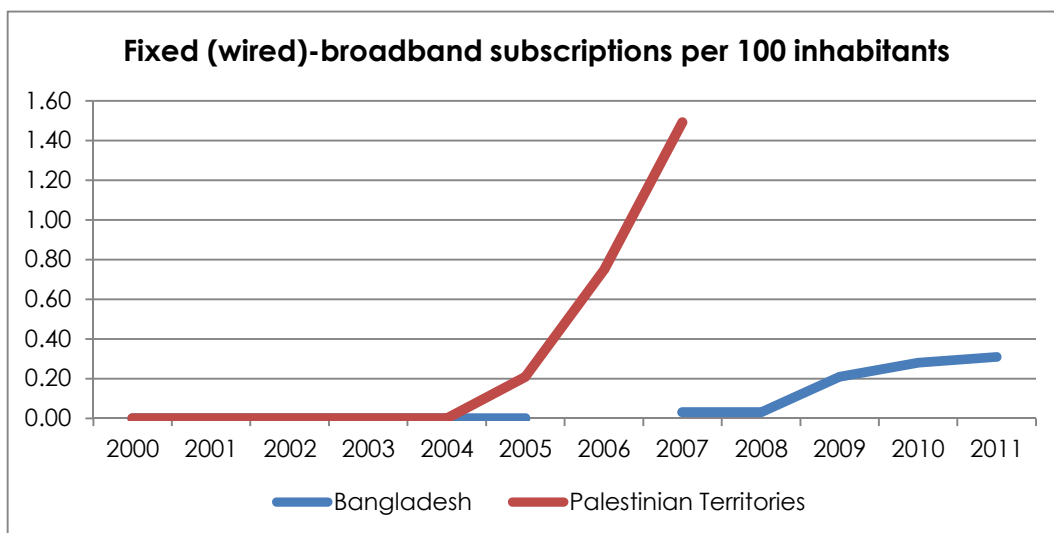


Figure 13: Source: ITU 2011

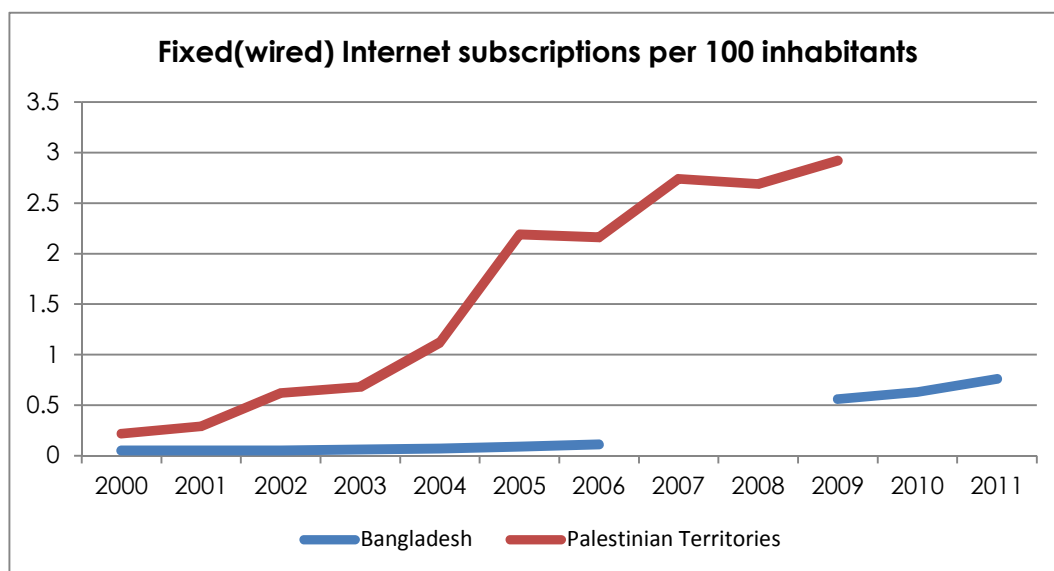


Figure 14: Source: ITU 2011

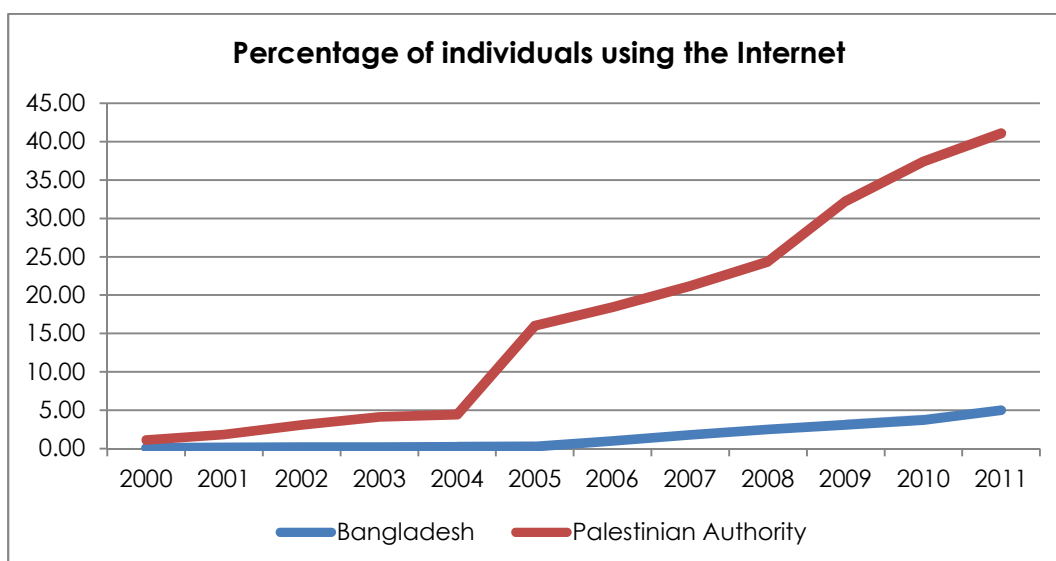


Figure 15: Source: ITU 2011

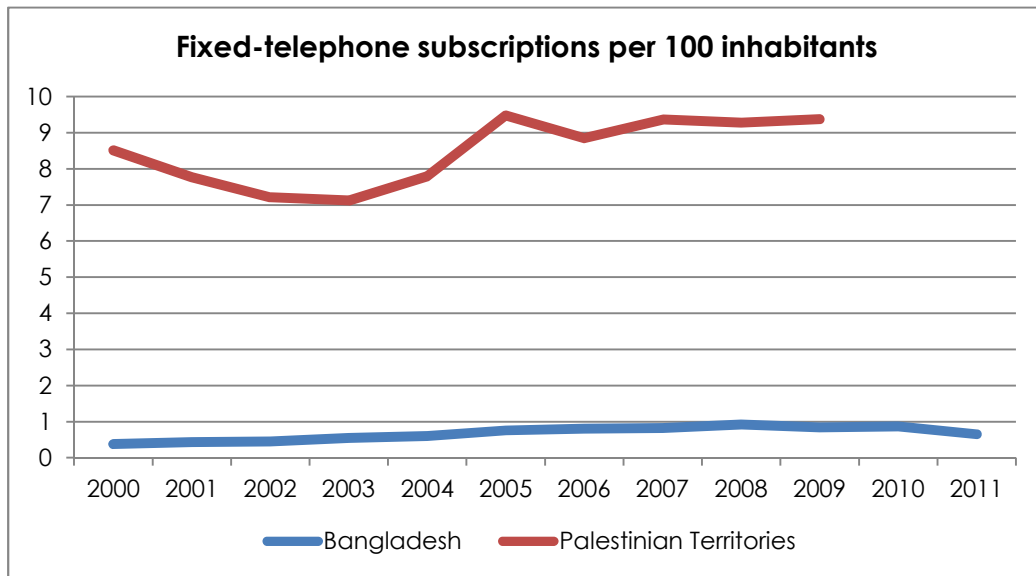


Figure 16: Source: ITU 2011

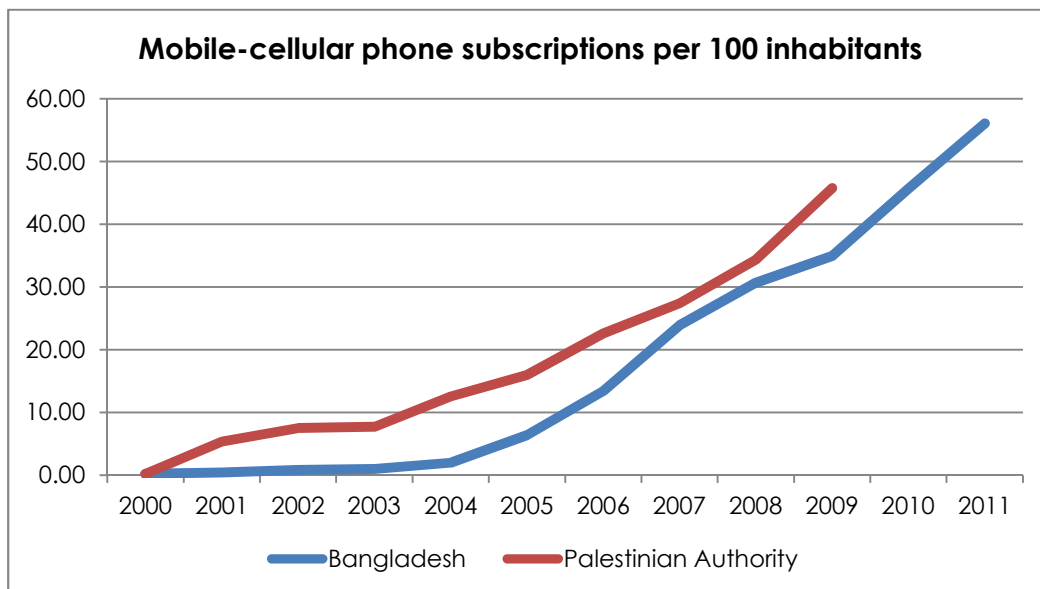


Figure 17: Source: ITU 2011

	Number of users	Average Monthly Visitors	Average time spent per month	Other
<b>Facebook</b> <sup>35</sup>	1 billion	584 million		300 million photos published per day; at least 125 billion friend connections; 3.2 billion likes and comments per day; 810 million (approximately 81% of our monthly active users) are outside the U.S. and Canada. 604 million monthly active users who used Facebook mobile products as of September 30, 2012.
<b>Twitter</b> <sup>36</sup>	555 million	182 million	89 minutes	175 million tweets per day; 750 tweets per second
<b>LinkedIn</b>	200 million <sup>37</sup>	85.7 million	21 minutes	
<b>Instagram</b> <sup>38</sup>	90 million			40 million photos published per day; 8,500 "likes" per second; 1,000 comments per second
<b>Pinterest</b>	25 million	104.4 million	405 minutes	
<b>Tumblr</b>	150 million			
<b>Google+</b>	135 million	61 million	3 minutes	
<b>YouTube</b>	800 million			4 billion views per day

Table 4: Most popular social media sites (Various sources)

Ranking	Global	Palestinian Territories	Bangladesh
1	Google	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Facebook</b>
2	<b>Facebook</b>	Alwatan	Google
3	<b>YouTube</b>	Google.ps	Google.com.bd
4	Yahoo	<b>YouTube</b>	Yahoo!
5	Baidu.com	Google	<b>YouTube</b>
6	<b>Wikipedia</b>	Shobiddak	Prothom Alo
7	Windows Live	Maan News Agency	bdnews24.com
8	<b>QQ.com</b>	Windows Live	<b>Blogspot.com</b>
9	Amazon.com	<b>Blogspot.com</b>	Banglanews24.com
10	<b>Twitter</b>	Yahoo	<b>Wikipedia</b>
11	<b>Blogspot.com</b>	Koora	<b>Somewhere in... blog</b>
12	<b>LinkedIn</b>	Babylon	<b>WordPress.com</b>

Table 5: Top sites based on traffic. Social media sites in bold (Source: Alexa, March 2013)

<sup>35</sup> Key Facts [online]. [www.newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts](http://www.newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts). Accessed January 19, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Bennet, S. (2012). Twitter facts and Figures 2012 Infographic. All Twitter [online]. [www.mediabistro.com](http://www.mediabistro.com). Accessed 19 January 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Nishar, D. (2013). 200 Million Members! LinkedIn Blog. [online]. [www.blog.linkedin.com](http://www.blog.linkedin.com). Accessed 19 January 2013.

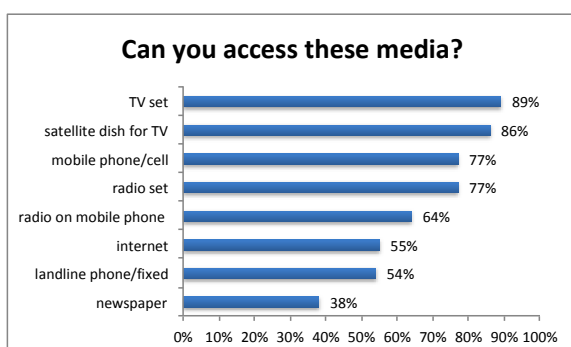
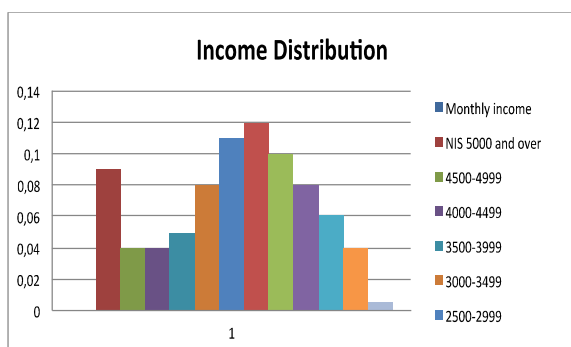
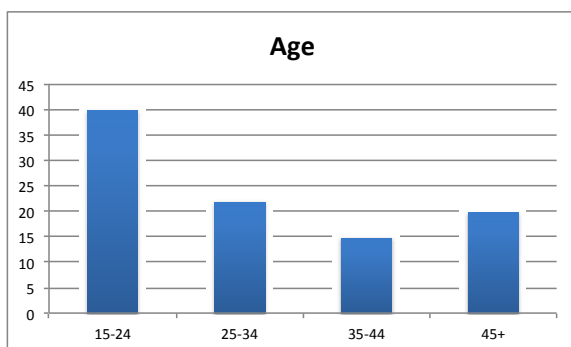
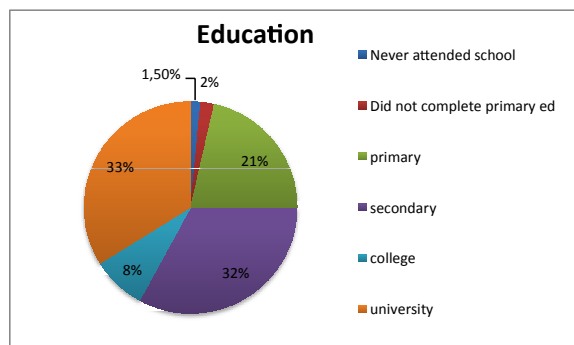
<sup>38</sup> Lynley, M. (2013). Now We Know How Many Active Users Instagram Really Has. WSJ Blogs. <http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2013/01/17/now-we-know-how-many-active-users-instagram-really-has/>, accessed January 19, 2013.

## Appendix 3: BBC Media Action Global Grant Survey Results

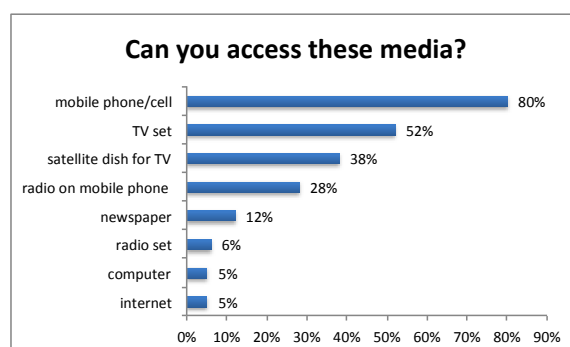
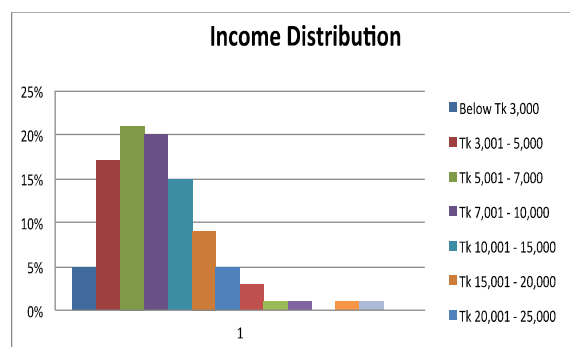
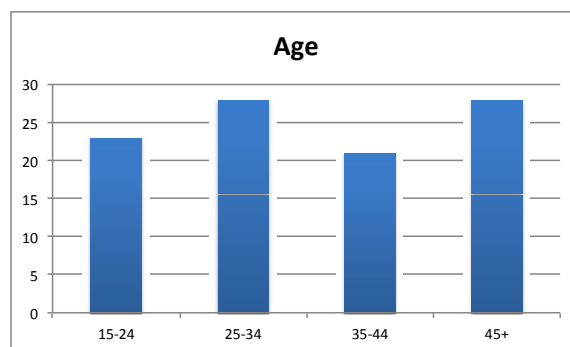
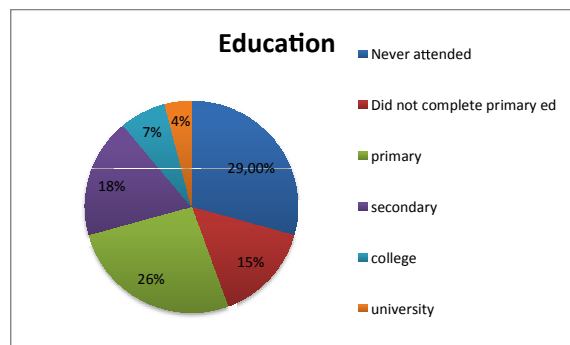
BBC Media Action commissioned baseline surveys for projects in the Palestinian Territories and Bangladesh under the Global Grant, funded by the UK's Department for International Development. These were

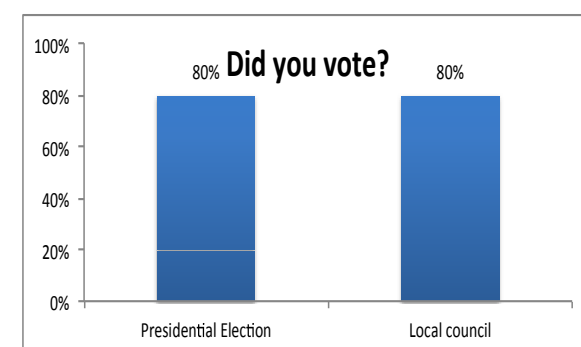
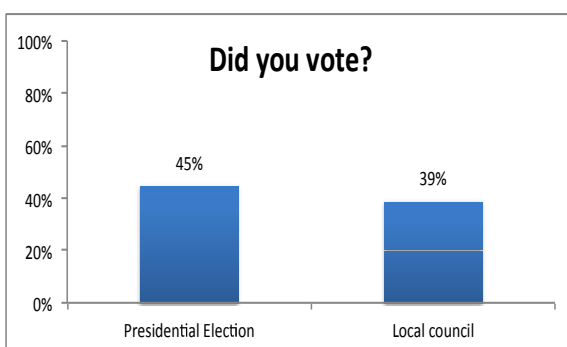
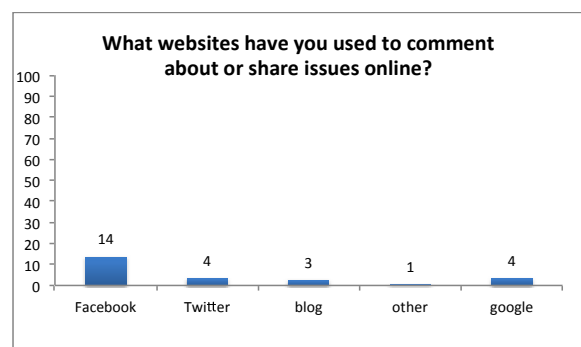
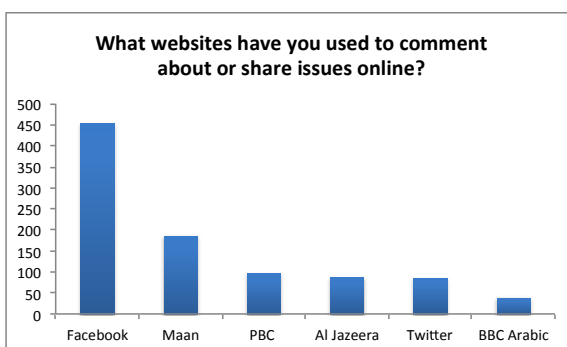
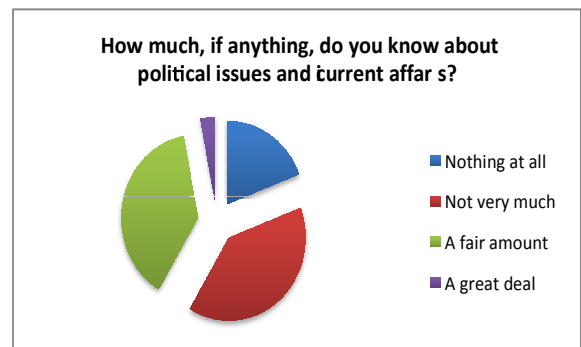
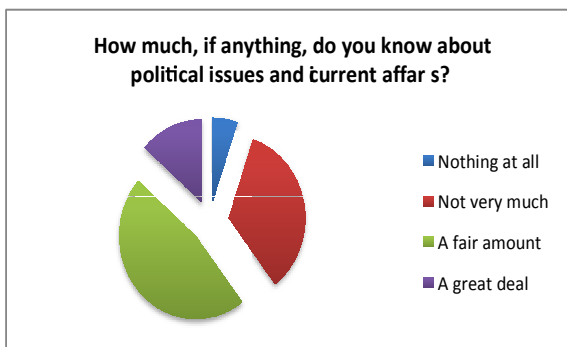
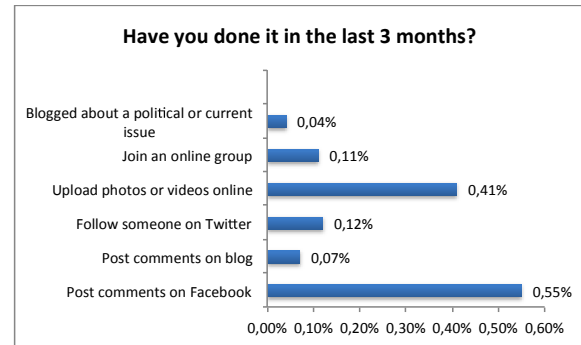
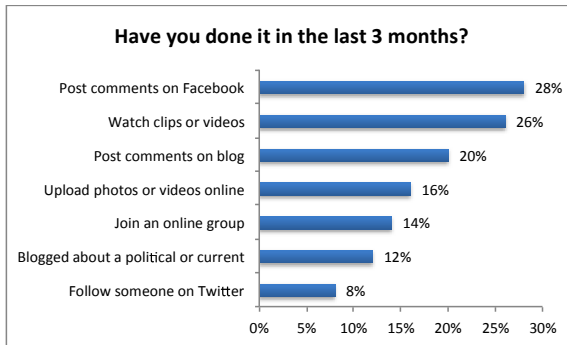
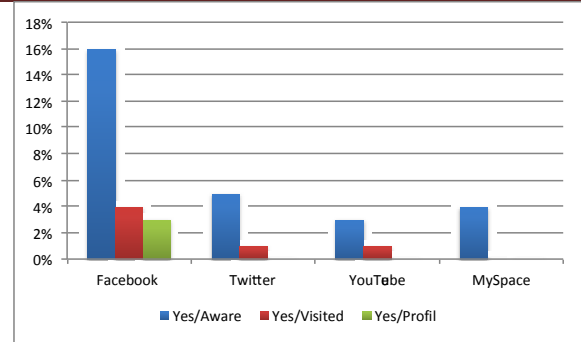
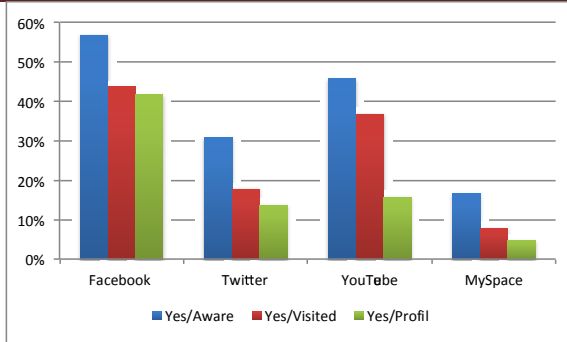
completed in August in the Palestinian Territories and October in Bangladesh. Surveys were cross-sectional and national representative of adults 15+; a total of 1500 (PT) and 5625 (BG) responses were collected.

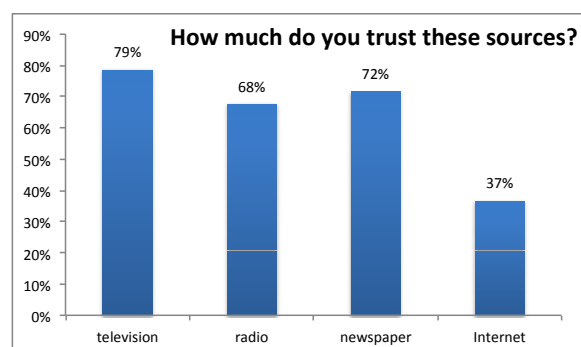
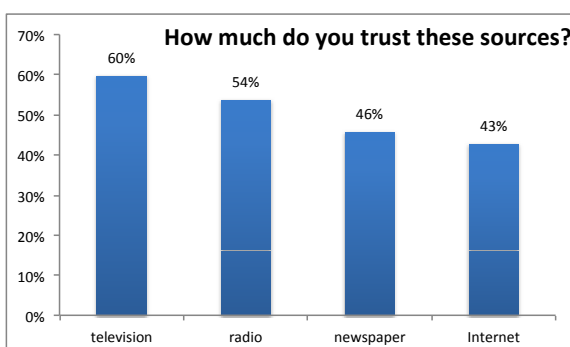
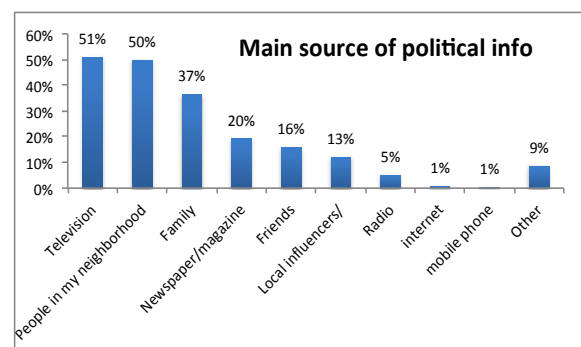
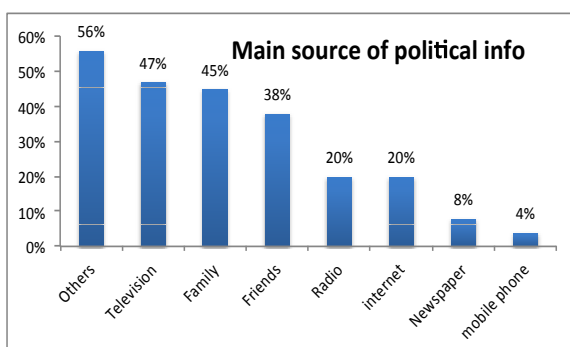
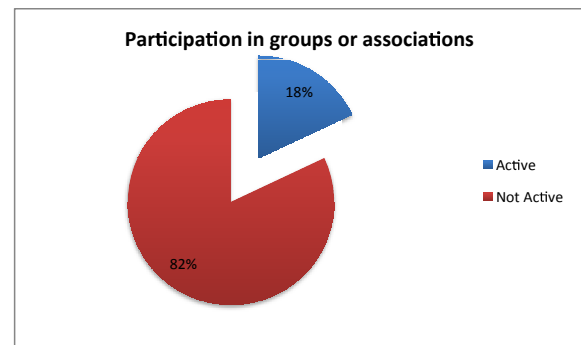
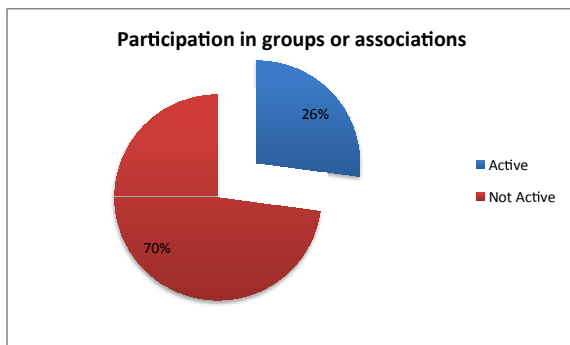
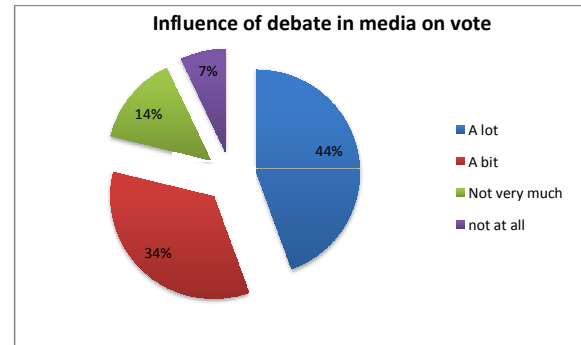
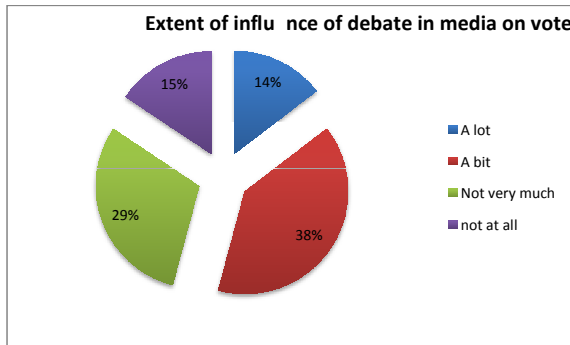
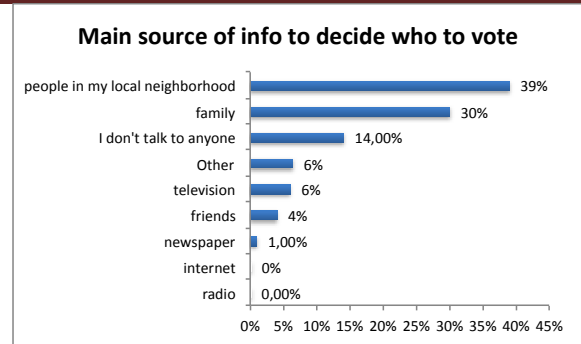
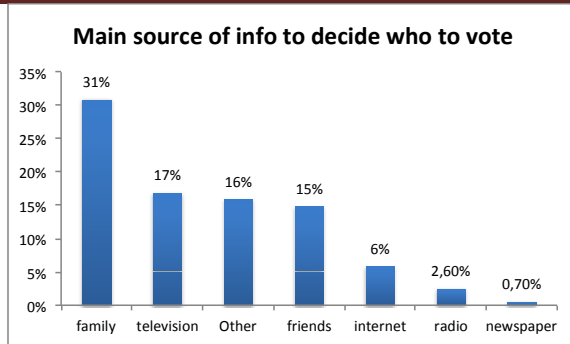
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