Summary and response

Summary and Response Summary In the article, New Study Quantifies Use of Social Media in Arab Spring, Catherine O'Donnell reports about the findings of a study done by Philip Howard, a main researcher and associate professor in communication at the University of Washington, that indicates social media such as Twitter, blogs, and Facebook facilitated conversation, which agitated for democracy, liberty, and revolution prior to the mass protests. Howard analyzed the contents of YouTube, Twitter, and blogs to compile the findings of a study entitled " The Project on Information Technology and Political Islam" that attribute the role of social media in agitating for revolution in Arab countries. Reflecting mainly on Egypt and Tunisia, O'Donnell shows how Howard's study indicated that social media formed online networks that organized core groups of activists to advocate for political reforms; she reports specific ways in which Howard's study shows the opposition groups used social media to influence political debates. First, she argues that Twitter enabled people to engage in instantaneous conversations, especially during the overthrow of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The discussions on Twitter crossed borders, and influenced the neighboring nations to converse about the political affairs in Tunisia and Egypt. As a second point, she quotes the findings that point out videos protests communicated the events of the Arab uprising to the rest of the world. Not only were the video protests important inside Egypt and Tunisia, but also Howard's findings show the rest of the globe depended on them for updates on the uprising. For instance, twenty-three videos attracted 5. 5 million views. In addition to Twitter and video protests, the instant Facebook messages and blogs inspired the revolution in Arab countries, and the

attempts of the government to stop social media conversations resulted in strong activism. The opposition groups utilized blogs and Facebook to pass the information about the need for political change to many audiences. In sum, O'Donnell reports how Howard's findings associate the social media with the Arab uprising.

Response

O'Donnell strongly contends that the social media, especially Twitter was instrumental in facilitating communication that led to the Arab uprising. She firmly quotes Howard who indicated, " During the week before Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's resignation, for example, the total rate of tweets from Egypt-and around the world-about political change in that country ballooned from 2, 300 a day to 230, 000 a day." O'Donnell is right to indicate its significance in influencing the political debates in North Africa and the Middle East. Twitter facilitates instantaneous communication between people in different locations. Using Twitter is a necessary channel of communication for two reasons: It is accessible for live updates and can organize core groups of activists to demand for political change. Regarding the real-time updates, the use of Twitter for instantaneous communication has become popular; people utilize it to send live photos and messages, and most people located in different parts of the globe can receive real-time communication. Depicting a similar situation in the Middle East, Gruzd and Tsyganova's article entitled " Politically Polarized Online Groups and their Social Structures Formed Around the 2013-2014 Crisis in Ukraine" indicates that.." Due to Twitter's accessibility, it is one of the most popular social media platforms used for various protests." Thus, as long as many people have

access to Twitter, the spread of information will be fast, and people will form collective decisions that will guide their actions. For instance, people with a common goals communicated through Twitter in Ukrane, and decided to stage protests advocating change. In addition to the instantaneous communication, Twitter can organize strong activist groups. The networks formed online mobilize members to advocate a shared goal. In fact, Gruzd and Tsyganova mention that Twitter formed strongly connected groups in Ukraine that agitated for political change through protests. For instance, the Twitter handles of the activist groups in Ukraine contained crucial information; they guided the members on how to join and engage in debates. Gruzd and Tsyganova stated, " the discussion board section of the group contained 15 threads with most popular topics including a general discussion, how to join the rebellion, and opinions about the events." Thus, Twitter facilitates conversations that guide the implementation of shared goals. Catherine O'Donnell's report about Howard's findings is accurate: Twitter is an essential tool for spreading information and forming strong groups with common goals.

References

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