

Example of essay on social media growth is a facilitator of free speech

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Social Justice and Political Revolution – The Case of the Arab Spring

Social Media Growth is a Facilitator of Free Speech, Social Justice and Political Revolution: The Case of the Arab Spring

Social media is acting as the harbinger of political and social change, especially in the Middle East. Since 2011, the use of social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube has grown manifolds with millions accessing them through mobile phones. As has been evident through the Arab Spring uprisings in other Arab countries, Egypt and Tunisia in particular, social networking sites can play a crucial role in spurring protests and bringing about planned and coordinated revolts. These revolts hold the power to topple governments – as witnessed in Egypt – and bring about substantial social change.

Social media and networking sites have found a rapidly growing user base in Middle Eastern and North African countries in recent years. As on July 2011, there were over eight million users of Facebook in Egypt alone , of which 78% were between 15-29 years of age . Comparatively, Twitter had a little over one million users in Egypt as on March 2011. However, the user base of the site grew by over 100% during and immediately after the revolution itself .

Social media use in Saudi Arabia has grown exponentially. In the years 2011 to 2012 alone, users of key SNSs such as Twitter YouTube and Facebook have grown manifold. According to a survey conducted by The Social Clinic, Saudi Arabian youth have particularly taken to Twitter, with over 3 million users in 2012 – an astounding 3000% growth over 2011, making it the

fastest growing Twitter base in the world. 45% of these users are women. The site is predominantly used by the youth, with the largest user group consisting of 25-34 year olds, while the second largest group is of 18-24 years . Similar success has been witnessed by YouTube as well as Facebook. At 920 million views per day in 2012, Saudi Arabia is the highest YouTube viewership in the world, with a 109% growth over 2011. With 6 million active users, Facebook is the Kingdom's third most visited site. While the age groups using the site are the same as Twitter, only 30% of Facebook users are women .

The ability to openly voice opinions and share news anonymously has empowered SNSs to play pivotal roles in recent revolts such as the Arab Spring in recent years. Demographics are an important factor in the use of technology and social media. Considering the fact that about 55-70% of the Middle East's population consists of those who are under 30 years of age makes it a ripe spot for social media and SNS usage and influence. Social media did not cause the uprisings in Egypt or Tunisia, it was the widespread discontent with oppressive leadership. However, SNSs were used extensively to disseminate news about atrocities and following protests that further spurred unrest and brought people together to fight for a common cause. In the case of Tunisia, after Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in SidiBouazid in December 2010, the news swiftly spread across the globe. Facebook and Twitter were used extensively for posting news of protests and this led to more protests being organized throughout the country. As SNSs have a global audience, these events inspired Egyptian youth to plan the protest at Tahrir Square. A Facebook page called ' Day of Revolution' was set

up marking the day that the protest would take place and it acquired over 90, 000 followers . The news of planned protests in Tunisia and Egypt reached other Middle Eastern nations and similar uprisings sprang up in Yemen, Jordan, Syria, Libya, Iran, Bahrain, Kuwait and Algeria .

A report revealed that between January to March 2011, the most popular hashtags among Arab Twitter users were related to the Arab Spring, with #egypt gaining 1. 4 million tags, #jan25 - which was the official beginning date of the Egyptian revolution - got 1. 2 million tags, #libya gained 990, 000, #bahrain got 640, 000 tags, and #protest was mentioned 620, 000 times . 63% of those who had participated in the Egyptian protests had relied on social media to keep updates on the latest news about the revolution .

In Egypt, over half the population being below the age of 25 years, with one out of every 5 Egyptian being between the age of 15-24 years . A majority of those who had participated in the Egyptian Revolution were aged below 29 years. With Egypt's high unemployment rate, the country's youth was faced with the evils arising from unemployment such as poor living standards and corruption. However, the causes of the revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya were quite different. While the Tunisian revolution mainly consisted of those belonging to the oppressed rural masses, the Egyptian revolution was taken up by the urban youth. On the other hand, the Libyan revolution was more tribal in nature . However, while each revolution had its own, distinct causes, the role that social media played remained more or less the same. The swift and widespread adoption of social media as a means of communication across the Arab world represents a marked change in the perception of social media among the population, especially among the

educated youth. With the widespread acceptance of SNSs, social media is now well placed to be a mode of critical political and social change. While SNSs did not cause the revolts or overthrow governments, and it was the citizens of these countries that marched against oppression, social media placed these issues – frankly, honestly, bluntly, with all their dark details – in front of the world, for all to see. However, at the end of the day, it is the courage of the people of an oppressed nation and their earnestness to seek freedom that forms the foundation of a revolt. Social media is a medium, a facilitator of protests. It provides the world with an open view of civil movements as they unfold, thereby limiting the scope for dictatorial regimes to resort to mass murdering of protestors in order to end revolts. This increased international visibility lends global support for the causes being pursued by revolutionaries. The governments of Middle Eastern governments such as Saudi Arabia have become acutely aware of the power that social media holds over a majority of their population, the youth, and are hence beginning to take positive steps towards social change.

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