

The Rise of Social Media and Its Impact on Quality Journalism: A Case Study of the Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract. One of the most pressing issues concerning media in the early twenty first century is the youths' news consumption and their behaviors as excessive online news consumers. There is no doubt, quality journalism in a modern social democracy is crucial for shaping public opinion and community consensus. Vehkoo (2009-2010) argues: "difficulties in defining quality are especially problematic because the issue of the quality of journalism is not merely a question of increasing the value of a product to consumers. Rather, quality is a central element in achieving the social, political, and cultural goals asserted for journalism in democratic societies." [1] However, it is worth to mention that there are no universal quality criteria for assessing how journalism may operate because it is culture-specific and relates to more socio-economic and education backgrounds. As a result, since blogging was first coined in 1997; there is a widespread argument whether citizen journalists could be considered journalists and what impact they may pose on traditional quality journalism (Boyd and Ellison 2007) [2]

Thus, this research-paper is going to draw the attention on the Sultanate of Oman case in order to emphasize that even in one of the most controlled, conservative and authoritarian media framework in the Middle East countries, citizen journalism speaks louder than quality journalism to bring the right action home, especially in 2011, 2012, 2013.

These years witnessed some political and social changes due to the latest Arab uprising, which lead the activists in this country to use the social platforms e.g.: Facebook, twitter, Whatsapp and blogs as channels to convey their messages to their governments and authorities. Interestingly, the role of citizen journalism and political bloggers redefined the frontiers of journalism by creating different layers of information and opinion, and they succeed in booming the freedom of speech, resulting in removing some ministers, improving the quality of education and the employment spheres, and eliminating corruption. However, within some contexts, it is widely witnessed that citizen journalists and political bloggers used to shift away from the traditional ethics of journalism, raising serious questions about freedom of speech, privacy and confidentiality, while causing some social chaos and unnecessary strikes.