CITIZEN vs MAINSTREAM JOURNALISM:

THE CLASH BETWEEN THE LEBANESE FORCES AND THE POPULAR BLOCK ON

THE ELECTIONS IN ZAHLE

A Thesis proposal

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Abstract

This research presents a study and a closer insight on the practice of citizen journalism and its effects on the profession in Lebanon. On Sunday May 6th 2018, a large dispute took place between two political parties running for the elections in Zahle- Lebanon: runner for the Popular Block, Mrs. Myriam Skaff and the Lebanese Forces. What triggers this study is the fact that the dispute was recorded by citizens while traditional media were absent. The videos were spread across social media, and afterwards, the Lebanese media interpreted the incident. The aim of this study is to stress on the role of citizen journalism in today's media landscape. The outline of this paper will include an introduction which covers an overview about the incident that happened between the two political parties, along with a definition of citizen journalism, a literature review about current studies, a theoretical framework which involves an understanding of the theory studied and its concepts. In this study, the framing theory is used to investigate the visuals found in the reporting of the dispute between the political parties and the public sphere theory helps to examine how media can influence and shape citizen's opinions. This study uses a qualitative research method of in-depth interviews to obtain more focused explanations on what mainstream journalists think of citizen journalism and a discourse analysis to shed lights on how each Lebanese television station framed the event. It was found that citizen journalism threatens mainstream journalism since it does not respect its ethical norms and journalists are finding it hard and rich at the same time to cope with the challenges posed by this new concept of journalism.

Keywords: Citizen Journalism, Mainstream Journalism, Framing Theory, Public Sphere Theory, Lebanese Media, Lebanese Forces, Popular Block.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Media platforms are a reflection of consumers' likes and dislikes. To some extent, what appears on social media reflects societies' main events. When sharing a story, journalists may not face any legal consequences for revealing unpleasant imagery to the public; however they must have the ability to make the right decision at the right time, by being aware of what to share. In the global age, the world became interconnected and interdependent. People are aware of crises around them and are becoming a part of each event, since every individual plays the role of a reporter when an incident or a crisis suddenly occurs. Citizen media are a new social tool where individuals gather information and give out news. Cohn (2007) uses the term "citizen journalism" with different synonyms that refer to different acts and are associated to the diverse uses of social media, e.g. "public journalism", "civic journalism", "stand-alone journalism", "networked journalism", "open source journalism", "crowd-sourced journalism", etc… Duffy, Thorson and Jahng (2010) define the term "citizen journalism" as an unprofessional individual who is not trained well in the journalism field but can report the news around him in his community. Also, Baase (2008) defines the term as participatory and democratic journalism. A study conducted by the "Project for Excellence in Journalism" (2008) concluded in its annual report that a lot of communication researchers and scholars have been "scripting the demise of the profession at the hands of citizen journalists or the contributors", however, some research suggests that "citizen journalism is an overrated phenomenon." Therefore, the crowd-sourced journalism creates a threat for the traditional journalism field.

On May 6th 2018, an incident took place between the Lebanese Forces and the Popular Block supporters. Each political party filed charges for election manipulation and fraud against

the other. The dispute was recorded by citizens who were present, the videos were spread online, and the Lebanese media reported on the incident based on the content provided by the users.

The aim of this study is to understand how Mainstream Media can rely on Social Media to cover news events. Hence, this study seeks to understand how mainstream journalists and editors cope with the challenges posed by citizen journalism.

This research attempts to answer the following questions: What were the frames that Mainstream Media adopted to cover the case under study? How did citizen journalists cover the event, thus shape the public opinion on this clash?

Statement of the problem

This research reveals the challenges citizen journalism pose to mainstream journalism, giving out an analysis on how Lebanese media interpret political incidents, more specifically the incident between the two political parties on the Parliamentary Elections Day. Media platforms, especially television stations, have always been criticized for their decision making in the newsroom. In addition, newscasters are often described as "biased" because of the way they report the news, since the objectivity is affected by the political opinions (Weaver &Wilhoit, 1991). The concern over ethics is not a new subject, as it has always been a dilemma since the 80's especially with the rise of "new media" where every citizen is playing the reporter's role in his own niche. On another level, today, with the evolution of new media, citizen journalism is the new journalism as it is considered the evolution in this field. This new form of globalization has affected the way media reports its news to viewers. Traditional media relied in many ways on the public journalism that affects the rules of ethics followed by the mainstream journalism.

Consequently, through the study, we highlight the importance of citizen journalism and the added value it presents.

Purpose of the study

In Lebanon, citizen journalism is considered a very powerful source of information. However few studies have been conducted on this subject in the country. The current study is proved useful by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of citizen journalism and the impact this transformation has on the norms of journalism. In this study, the reader will be more acquainted with the importance of ethics in mainstream journalism while reporting a certain incident like the dispute between the two political parties. In addition, the study aims to find the challenges that citizen journalism pose to the field, knowing that journalists rely on user-generated videos and then use them in their stories. A recent research using journalists' concerns about user-generated media content revealed how they consider this new phenomenon a threat to their field (Kaufhold, Lasorsa & Lewis,2010; Örenbring, 2013, Anden-Papadopoulos &Pantti, 2013). According to Rosen (1999), this new phenomenon raises attention and concerns on the imagery and editorial quality as well on the accuracy of news and the credibility of storytelling when reporting.

Journalists contribute to the public sphere and have an important responsibility towards the people. Media function as a tool to represent the public's different opinions. Hence**,** nowadays with the "new media" every citizen is a reporter in his own society**.**

The literature review will elaborate on the challenges citizen journalism raises on traditional media while stressing on the importance of ethics in the fieldwork**.**

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter provides a review of the literature with regards to the framing of the news events. Also, this chapter looks on previous studies about citizen journalism versus mainstream journalism.

2.1 Media and Power

Nowadays, media ethics is a critical subject in journalism, especially with the fact that media are mainly owned by wealthy powerful men where objectivity is threatened. Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) state the importance of ethics in media basing their study on the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Corporation (IRIB). The study surveys and examines the perception of "students and communication lecturers" towards media principles on Iran news Television. Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) mention Foucault (1978) in their study as a resource for their discourse. With the evolution of media, from the old media to the new media, consumers can now control media and use it rather than being manipulated. Foucault (1998) argues that power is not acquired to specific groups or regimes in society, rather it is present everywhere and it comes from everywhere. Therefore, it is a kind of "regime of truth" uncontrollably spread in the society. Massey (1994) disagrees by explaining that a certain power can control another and can weaken it. Therefore, certain groups in society might have more power than the others which allows them to be dominant. In today's world, media should be approached as a series of processes of mediation because individuals are not only consumers and users of the media platforms; they are also involved in technology and becoming a part of it (Heidegger, 1977). As many individuals and consumers see media as a source of power, Foucault (1997) states that power is a producer of reality, thus in his opinion it does not oppress or censor rather it shapes the behavior of its consumers unintentionally. To enhance his statement, Foucault (1991) used

the "Panopticon technique" to explain the concept of knowledge and power. This metaphor used by Foucault explains how surveillance through media nowadays can shape users' behavior and discipline. Thus knowledge is achieved by monitoring and observing users, therefore the more knowledge the observer accumulates the more powerful he becomes. And in today's world, users are being watched over and monitored by a hidden surveillance technique. Hence, the Internet is responsible of having an effect on how people engage together and shaping each individual's culture. That's where Guillmor (2010) steps in and acknowledges individuals as not only consumers but responsible of the new media by being a part of it. Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) results revealed that Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Television (IRIB) did not respect media's ethics and principles: "freedom of expression" and "objectivism".

2.2 Journalism ethics

The media landscape became more diverse than ever especially with the evolution of new technologies. Therefore, basic principles of journalism are becoming more vulnerable. The norms of journalism are many such as: objectivity, credibility, reliability and ethics. However, these principles are divided to three in this research and used as variables to be studied in the next part, the methodology chapter.

2.2.1 Reliability

The journalist's first obligation in his job is to be true and loyal to his audience. In that regard, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) state that every truth can be doubted. However, journalism is by itself "a practical and functional form of truth". This phenomenon is called "journalistic truth" which is a process of collecting and fact-checking. With large flow of data, especially in this new age, a journalist should maintain his transparency towards his readers so the audience can make its own judgments and assessments of the news. Hence, technology may change the

way the news travels between audiences, however the trust must last and always be present. The commitment that journalists have to their citizens is the core of every news organization and the basis to its credibility. Also, telling the whole truth is another important subtitle of reliability, giving the reader some time later on to make his own perception or point of view.

In that regard, Maksimainen (2017) defines that reliability is the usage of the correct facts and scientific information. He found an approach called evidence-based journalism which helps journalists evaluate the facts and existing data in order to choose the most accurate and engaging story to publish.

2.2.2 Objectivity

Journalists should maintain their objectivity when reporting news whether they agree with the information being transmitted to the audience or not, as they should preform reporting in an unbiased manner leaving the conclusions and opinions to the public. Objectivity is an important principle that a journalist should wisely practice and maintain regardless of his personal beliefs and opinions.

Journalistic objectivity includes two compositions:

- Depersonalization: journalists should not express their own views, beliefs or give out their personal explanations (Entman 1989, p. 30; Nelkin 1987, p. 91).

- Balance: journalists should be totally able of presenting both controversial sides of a story without favoring one (ibid).

However, with the digital age, journalists are not the only ones holding the truth behind the story; hence, the new media is changing their role. They choose to ignore the journalistic principles when it is not convenient for them or when they feel that it might bring them less

attention to their story. Sunderland (2015) stresses on the importance of objectivity in his article titled "Objective reporting: it has never been more necessary" in which he states that what distinguishes one journalist from another is this respect of evidence in his stories and how he preserves the disciplines of objective reporting. For many, objectivity in reporting is seen as either outdated or too boring for the readers. However this act is not only about reciting data and putting them into context, rather it is about searching for facts and editorial judgments to finally submit a journalistic story (Sunderland, 2015). Nonetheless, respecting journalistic principles is hard especially in the times of digital information, where manipulating the facts and twisting them for personal profit is dominating.

2.3 Citizen journalism and ethical codes of conduct

There have been several factors influencing the change of traditional media over the years. Harcup (2009) discusses four essential factors that led to changes in this profession: social cultural change, technological inventions and advancement. Shapiro (2014) also describes the transformation of journalism as "dizzying". Also, technological advancement has enormously affected how journalism is practiced with the rise of new media platforms which gives the opportunity for citizens to practice the profession e.g. blogging, tweeting. Hence, the use of mobile phones and web 2.0 tools (World Wide Web sites) made it possible for the audience to interact with news anchors and reporters (Hood, 2011).

On another level, Deuze (2005) posits that journalism should serve the public and maintain fairness, neutrality, objectivity and, most importantly, respect the profession's ethics. Journalism ethical codes were not respected as they should be in today's fieldwork nor do they form the reality in journalism practices. Heinonen (1999) presents the codes of conduct

introducing the ideals of the profession, although these ideals do not always match with reality, they are important elements in characterizing the journalistic profession.

With the rise of technological advancement, the audience became a significant contributor and the source of many news and stories. Bowman & Willis (2002) state that participatory journalism lead to citizen journalism and considered it as a process of collaboration and conversation between media and the audience, in which there was a lack of editorial journalistic sense. Citizen journalism, as the term "citizen" indicates, is in relation to active citizens and participants in their community (Rodriguez, 2010). World Bank (2000), Indonesia, conducted a study titled "Voice of the Poor" in which it found that the greatest concern of poor people is not their food, poor shelter or lack of health facilities however it is the absence of liberty of speech. When people have the ability to freely speak up and express their thoughts and ideas they become empowered and can better represent themselves in their community. In the article about Kibera news network in Kinya, Mwaura (2014) considers that citizen journalists are able to perform journalists' duties such as collecting the data, sharing them with the people although scholars bound the term "journalists" to be used for the citizens as they are considered unprofessional.

2.4 The profession vs. the community

Noor (2017) examines the importance of citizen journalism considering it as a threat to mainstream media. In the study titled "Citizen Journalism vs. Mainstream Journalism: A Study on Challenges Posed by Amateurs" Noor (2017) states that citizen journalism plays an efficient role in reporting sudden events such as crashes, floods or disasters where reporters cannot attend on time. However, media researchers had two split opinions, some fears mainstream media might lose audiences especially with the rise of new technology (Bowman & Willis, 2003), and others believe that citizen journalism can never entirely replace mainstream journalism (Bentley, 2008).

Wang (2014) examined the role of journalism in society and the evolvement of media with technology through the years, especially in the media system in China. Using semiotic analysis and coding scheme he concluded that compared to mainstream journalism, citizen journalism represents news reports in a different way, e.g. lacking access to many credible information sources, lack of knowledge in editing videos.

In a study titled "Connecting blog, Twitter and Facebook use with gaps in knowledge and participation", Woo Yoo (2014) focuses on the features of the internet that facilitate political engagement especially because it is a low-cost communication tool. Farell (2012) states that the internet is a communication and interaction platform between users, with less time and efforts to expose and share ideas. Another study by Bonfadelli (2002) acknowledges that the more people become knowledgeable, the more they become powerful. In his study titled "The Internet and knowledge gap: a theoretical and empirical investigation", Bonfadelli (2002) explores the use of Internet in Switzerland. Through his surveys and collection of data, he found that access to the Internet is still dominated by well-educated young males and has created a gap between them and those who do not access the Internet, especially between the years 1997 and 2000.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses framing, as the framework chosen for this study. An overview of the framing theory and its main concepts will be provided. At the same time, the study will use the public sphere theory to study the people and culture in the heart of the crises.

3.1 Framing theory

Framing defines an indirectly bound process of public opinion shaping, where the manner through which rhetorical elements and news coverage are presented to an audience can shape the mass opinion (Iyengar 1991; Scheufele 1999). The framing theory in its sociological footing was first put out by Goffman (1974) who explained that people understand the events and issues around them through their primary framework and constantly struggle to make sense out of these events. The framework is considered as primary because it is often taken for granted by the user. Goffman (1974) divided the theory into two widened categories. The first one is related to natural frameworks, neglecting social forces into the causation of any event, and identifies the events as physical occurrences. The second category is the social framework provided in describing the events to which frameworks are applied. Goffman's approach aims to construct meaning through frames in order to make sense of social situations. Framing focuses on how media makes certain events more salient than others and presents them to the public eye. Thus, the way certain events are framed is mostly a choice taken by journalists based on specific reasons. Gamson and Modigiliani (1989) attempted to explain that frames can refer to words, images and phrases used to be presented to a certain audience in order to be informed about a certain issue. However, Durham (1998) defined framing as a modernist assembly of reality, which gives the audience the chance to receive the same news at the same time.

Framing is about "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman 2004, 5). It refers to how events and incidents make sense for media professionals and the audience (Reese et al. 2001). Mark Kirwan's (2015) article reviewing the "Calais Migrant Crisis", tells about the migration struggle situated in the major French port, city of Calais to the United Kingdom. It was found that the frames utilized for reporting could alter the mass audience's perception. This was proven in the Guardian's newspaper reporting of the Calais crisis where the frames specified did influence the mass audience. The paper focused on the Calais crisis through five main frames: nationalistic, humanitarian, economic, security and anti-immigration. Another study focusing on the red tide story "Telling The Red Tide Story: Framing And News Media Coverage In Florida" done by six researchers (Z. Li, B. Garisson, S.G. Ullmann, P. Hoagland, B. Kirkpatrick, L.E. Fleming, 2013); found that red tide news coverage is most often framed as an environmental story. The study examined how the news coverage was framed and covered in terms of environmental risk, health risk, and economic risk. Not to forget that this study and the previous one were based on newspaper articles for the lack of data collection on television news coverage or digital media, though it would have been more valuable if such data existed. Another study conducted by Pain, P. (2017) examines how citizen journalism can raise the voices of unheard communities and movements in two very resource-poor areas in India. The study analyzes how two citizen journalism organizations in Central India: the Video Volunteers and CGNET Swara, train citizens and what kind of frames are used to produce news. The study found that citizen journalism is the voice of unheard citizens in the community and the reason behind its success is the fact that it uses reasonable and effective frames when covering stories. The research investigated its results through qualitative interviews

with 30 participants, a focus group of 15 participants and a content analysis of 400 news stories posted in the year 2015–2016.

Tankard (2001) gave a meaning to framing through eleven different devices as he identifies them through headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics and charts. He also identifies framing through the word choice, metaphor, exemplar, description, argument and visual image (Gamson&Lasch, 1983; Pan &Kosicki, 1993). Through framing the visual elements in each shot is considered to add a different meaning when framing the content. A long shot, medium shot or a close up can bring a different meaning to the content with the audience closer to the narrator's viewpoint. A zoom forth or back by a camera can have an extra signification to the context. These frames are explained in details in the method chapter of this study.

This study focuses on the visual elements as they are considered to have deeper effects on the audience than written words. In that matter, Kazmierczak (2001) explained that these visual elements are in a way a reflection of reality. Visuals are considered as a system that allows people to communicate and process thoughts and images about a certain reality. Visual literacy is the "ability to construct meaning from visual images" (Giorgis, Johnson, Bonomo, Colbert, & al, 1999: 146). It includes a certain group of skills which enable an individual "to understand and use visuals for intentionally communicating with others" (Ausburn & Ausburn, 1978: 291). Visual literacy includes what is seen with the eye and what is 'seen' with the mind. Kazmierczak (2001) does not only relate visual literacy to the graphic composition, but he also relates it to other elements such as the camera angle and "proximity of subject to viewer".

3.2 Public Sphere theory

Public sphere theory is another important theory that can be used in this research, McNair (2003) states that the mass media have been playing, since the eighteenth century, a massive role in the public sphere becoming the most influential tool in shaping and influencing the audience. In that regards, citizen journalism is dangerous because it is a combination of citizen's beliefs and understandings of today's world, influenced by the societal and political background. The term "public sphere" was first used in Jürgen Habermas's book. In his book, Habermas (1962) explains how the media functions as an enabler of the public sphere helping citizens debate about matters of public interests to finally achieve harmony and participate in civic activities. Other researchers added the term "alternative" to the theory as they considered that anyone can debate about public matters without the need to participate in civic activities. Those Habermasian critics led to the formulation of "alternative public sphere" theory (Haumann, 2014). Later on, researchers investigated the term "online public sphere" and the impact of citizen journalism on the traditional news media through highlighting how citizen journalism plays an essential role in empowering citizens through self-improvement and growth (Allan &Thorsen, 2009; Gillmor, 2004; Jones, Vanderhaeghen & Viney, 2008; Sonwalkar, 2009). In this sense, citizen journalism is a form of public participation in producing news and eventually influencing media's role with the public sphere theory (Deuze & Dimoudi, 2002). In addition, citizen journalism is diverse. Therefore this new form of media can increase variety and multiplicity of public discourses. Moreover, Antony and Thomas (2010) state that citizen journalism is "a direct response to lapses in the performance of the traditional mass media role in the public sphere" (p. 1284).

Chapter 4: Research Questions

This research project is based on the incident that took place on the 6th of May, 2018 when a clash arised between two political parties, the Lebanese Forces and the Popular Block, in the context of the parliamentary elections. Each party blamed the other of bribery and theft of citizens' identities. After the incident, charges were filed, however, there was no media covering on the field. Instead, citizens were present, they filmed what occurred on their phones and they uploaded it online so the public can see it. After that, media stations sent their crews to Zahle to cover the story live.

In a world that became digitally addicted to new forms of media, people rely on different means to collect information about what is going on around them. Therefore, citizens are becoming a source for media to report on daily incidents. The incident under study was aired by Lebanese television stations will be analyzed through discourse analysis to see which stations used user-generated videos to talk about the story. Also, in-depth interviews will be conducted with selected reporters that covered the story.

This research will answer the following questions: What were the frames that mainstream media adopted to cover the case under study? How did citizen journalists cover the event, thus shape the public opinion on this clash? Would professional journalists have covered it differently?

Chapter 5: Methodology

This chapter explains the research design used for this study. It discusses what research methods are employed. This part also describes how the proposed methodology will allow to gather reasonable data and to reach the objectives of this thesis.

5.1 Research Design

While analyzing why the media relies on citizen journalism and whether it respects or not the norms of mainstream journalism stories; this study seeks to understand how mainstream journalists and reporters cope with the challenges imposed by citizen journalism following a qualitative research method of in-depth interviews to obtain a more focused insights on what mainstream journalists think about citizen journalism.

Chadwick, Treasure, Steward & Gill (2008) state that interviews are a form to explore different viewpoints and experiences about a certain matter. In that regard, a qualitative research helps to gain and provide knowledge about the tackled issue.

5.1.1 Sampling and Procedure:

This study examines the case study through:

i.   Discourse Analysis:

To check how each Lebanese television station framed the incident, the coverage will be analyzed by the choice of words and videos aired to be seen live. The following channels were chosen for this study because they reported the incident through user-generated videos uploaded online by citizens. They are:

- Orange TV known as OTV

- Al Jadeed television station or New TV

- Tele Liban or TL

- Al Manar television station

- Lebanese Broadcast Corporation International known as LBCI

The videos selected are:

- The live coverage of the television stations mentioned above

- The report of the incident aired on the 8 pm newscast of Al Manar television station only, as the other television stations had no newscast on that night.

ii.   In-depth Interviews:

As for the interviews, they were conducted with journalists who covered the incident between the two political parties:

- Mr. George Akl, reporter of Otv television channel

- Mr. Ramez El Kady, news anchor and reporter at Al Jadeed television channel

- Mr. Aly Badawi, reporter at Al Manar television channel

- Mrs. Rima Assaf, reporter at LBC

- Mr. Othman Majzoub, head of news department at Tele Liban

Chapter 6: Data Gathering and Analysis

This section presents the findings the interviews conducted with the journalists that covered the incident on the 6th of May, 2018, as well as the discourse analysis of the incident aired on television stations. Then, the data will be analyzed and compared to the literature review and to the theoretical framework to answer the research questions.

Discourse Analysis:

The qualitative method is chosen to examine how each television station tackled the case and whether or not they used the user-generated videos. All samples were gathered from the archive department of the 5 TV stations chosen for the sake of this study.

a. **Orange television station (OTV):**

May 5, 2018- Incident:

The live coverage of the incident between the two political parties was first aired on OTV by interrupting the live show of news presenter Mr. Georges Yasmine. The latter begins the live coverage by saying: "it was reported to the television channel that an incident happened in Zahle", then the introduction is followed by the video as uploaded by the citizens who were present the moment the incident happened. The presenter took a minute of silence after stating that the picture speaks louder than words (Translated to:الصورة هيي بتحكي).

The video began by showing a large group of people wearing red shirts and walking around the incident scene. The presenter continues: "we got a report from Zahle announcing that the Lebanese Forces defenders' purposely broke many slogans and flags… " (Translated to أفدنا من (زحلة من زملاء وأيضًا عدد من الاشخاص اللذين اتصلوا أن مناصري القوات اللبنانية عمدوا على تكسير شعارات وأعلام... Nonetheless, To stress more on the incident, a small clip showed Mrs. Myriam Skaff deprecating

the incident while stating: "the video is available now on all social media platforms showing how

the Popular Block supporters were beaten" (Translated to: كيف موجود على كل التواصل الاجتماعي

يضربون جماعتنا لتوليد حالة رعب).

"ننتقل الى زحلة كما افادنا زملاء ايضًا سوف نشاهد شريط في زحلة فيه ممارسات معينة، سنراها سويًا ونترك التعليق

للصورة. لا يمكننا ان نسمع لا صوت للفيديو. اذاً كما افادنا من زحلة من عدد من زملاء واشخاص اتصلوا فينا ان هناك

مناصري القوات اللبنانية عمدوا الى تكسير شعارات واعلام في زحلة في إطار الخلافات الانتخابية والتشنجات.

وننتقل الى زحلة مجددا لنستمع الى السيدة ميريام سكاف بعد الادلاء بصوتها: "... على جميع التواصل الاجتماعي كيف

يتهجمون على جماعتنا لخلق حالة رعب وهذا الامر غير مسموح وانا احمل المسؤولية لجميع قوى الامن والدولة لان الطرق

التي يعملون بها البعبدة عن الديمقراطية والحضارة نرفضها. ونطالب توقيف جميع الذين اعتدوا على مكاتبنا في حوش الامراء

وبيتنا في مار الياس، الفيديو موجود. في حال لم يتوقفوا اليوم، هذا يعني ان الدولة تحميهم وتساعدهم. اما بالنسبة لاتهامنا في

دفع الرشاوى، تلك اشاعة تطلق دائمًا وعارية عن الصحة وجزء من الحملة ضدنا. هذا عيب! كنا نأمل أن تكون الحملة

الانتخابية هذه السنة خالية من المشاكل وديمقراطية."

ننتقل مجددا الى الاشكال الذي تحدثت عنه السيدة ميريام سكاف واتهمت القوات اللبنانية بافتعاله، ننتقل لنرى الفيديو من دون

صوت مجددًا، ان الجهة المعنية في هذا الكلام لم ترد على كلام السيدة ميريام بعد ولكن هناك اشعاعات تقال ان هذا التعدي

حصل بسبب الرشوى التي قامت بها الجهة التابعة للسيدة ميريام وتحكتر القوات اللبنانية لتسوية الامر قبل الدولة اللبنانية.

وننتقل الآن الى الزميل جورج عقل الى حوش الامراء من زحلة لنسأل جورج عن سير العملية ونسب الاقتراع والاشكالات

وهل عادت الامور الى مجاريها، تفضل: "ان الاشكالات في زحلة مستمرة منذ الصباح، ولربما الاطراف التي تعاني من هذه

الاشكالات هي القوات اللبنانية والكتلة الشعبية وانصار النائب نقولا فتوش. بكل الاحوال، وقع اشكال بين القوات اللبنانية

وانصار فتوش على ضبط اموال ورشاوى. أيضًا وقع إشكال بين أنصار القوات اللبنانية والكتلة الشعبية بحيث ان الكتلة الشعبية

تتهم القوات اللبناية بالاعتداء على إحدى المنازل التابعة لمناصريها، في وقت تنفي القوات اللبنانية هذا الامر وتعتبر أن الاشكال

ما هو سوى إشكال فردي في إطار الاشكالات المستمرة في الانتخابات. ولكن البارز في زحلة هو المال الانتخابي في زحلة،

وتم صباحًا ضبط قلم لأحد أنصار نقولا فتوش ، هذا الشخص حاول تصوير اللائحة التي صوت لها من أجل كسب أموال

للحصول على موافقة قرار والخيار في زحلة. إذا المال الانتخابي هو سيد الموقف في زحلة التي جلنا في مختلف مناطقها.
إشارة إلى أن السيدة ميريام سكاف كانت قد أدلت في صوتها ورفضت الحديث عن أي مال انتخابي يطال لائحتها كما رفضت
الحديث على أن المعركة هي كاثوليكية وعتبرت ان المعركة هي على كافة المقاعد. صباحًا النائب السابق سليم عون أدلى
بصوته أيضًا ودعى الجميع للانضمام الى مسيرة العهد."

 In her speech, Skaff stressed that it is the security forces' responsibility to stop violence. Also, she denied that her party is bribing citizens to vote for her interest. Skaff continued by accusing the Lebanese Forces for sabotage and breaking into her home, stating: "You all saw what happened on the videos already spread online". Then, Skaff mentioned that the election should happen in a more democratic atmosphere, while stressing on the fact that the security forces should have arrested those who tried to sabotage the electoral process. After Skaff's speech, the presenter continued the live show and moved back to airing the video that was first spread online showing the Lebanese forces wearing red shirts braking into Skaff's residence. Although, the video is silent, however the television station showed it while the presenter continued by commenting on it. Finally, the reporter Mr. George Akl made an intervention and described the situation between the two political parties, live from Zahle, while stressing on both parties' point of view when reporting the incident live and by explaining how the Lebanese Forces supporters felt responsible about the disorder in the electoral process caused by their opponents and also by confirming that the popular block supporters declined such accusation and blamed their opponents for trespass on private property.

   b. **Al Jadeed television station (New TV):**

May 5, 2018- Incident:

The reporter of Al Jadeed Television Station was present when the incident happened between the two political parties. The reporter did not rely on user-generated viedos, rather the live coverage started with Mr. Ramez Al Kadi heading to where citizens were gathered and shouting at one another to report himself the incident without relying on what citizen's published online. The video aired by the channel shows the security forces gathered while Lebanese Forces supporters were heading towards Mrs. Myriam Skaff house. Mr. Al Kadi citizens heading to vote for Skaff while claiming that their identities were stolen by the opponents. After the latters' declaration, a clash happened between the defenders of Mrs. Skaff and the Lebanese Forces who blamed them for taking bribes. The reporter made sure to take the opinion of both sides concerning the incident. ,since he was present while the two political parties were in dispute and interviewed each party alone while trying to report live each one's point of view.

"حدث إشكال هنا، البعض يتهم بدفع رشا مالية، وأحد الاشخال هنا يقول أن جرى الجديث معة، يقول أن جرى احتجاز هوياته وهويات أربعو من عائلته، سوف نتحدث معه."

After the reporter introduction live on television, he interviewed the man who claims that his identity was stolen:

"ـ أنا آت الى زحلة لأنتخب ، وتم أخذ الهويات من يدي.

ـ هناك من يتهمك بأخذ رشوى لتنتخب

ـ ليثبت علي هذا الادعاء! هذا عيب، أنا أتيت إلى هنا لأنتخب.

ـ وأين هي الهويات؟

ـ تمت سرقتهم، هويتي وهوية ابني وكنتي. لا أريد أن أنتخب بعد الآن"

Then the reporter headed to where the Lebanese Forces supporters were gathered and interviewed them for another point of view about the incident:

"-ماذا حصل؟

- منذ الصباح جميع المنتخبين يأخذون المال لينتخبوا، وذهبنا لنسألهم عمّا يحصل ولكن لم يتجاوبوا معنا.

- والهويات التي سرقت أين هي؟

- لا وجود لهويات مسروقة، لأي هدف نريدها. هذا الرجل مدعي ومدسوس.

إذا هذه الاتهامات والاتهامات الضادة هي برسم القوى الامنية، إذ إن المواطن يقول أنه جرى احتجاز بطاقات هويته وهويات عائلته. وبالتالي تتحمل القوى الامنية مسؤولية هذا الامر."

c. Tele Liban station:

May 5, 2018- Incident:

There was no reporter or news anchor covering the incident, however there was a correspondent assigned by the station that directly went to the event location and took some soundless footage of the confrontation between the two political parties. The footage taken was aired on television as a non- edited and long video with a noisy background. The footages taken are similar to those spread online by citizens.

The video showed a group of citizens wearing red shirts with the slogan Elections 2018 (Translated to: انتخابات 2018) representing the Lebanese forces supporters, and another group wearing black shirts with the slogan Hawch El Oumaraa' (Translated to: حوش الامراء) representing the Popular Block party.

The video clearly shows a clash between the two political parties with an intervention of the security forces attempting to stop the confrontation while waving to the camera to stop recording. Since there was no journalist reporting the incident live on television or a news anchor explaining the events happening to the viewer, the video was explanatory by itself showing the political sides in dispute, shouting and arguing, while the security forces were trying to calm the

situation by splitting the political parties. The video started with a wide shot to let the viewer have a sense of what was happening then a close-up shot to the argument between the two parties so the viewer can see better the events and interpret the incident while listening to the arguments of both sides live on television.

d. Al Manar television station:

May 5, 2018- 8 pm news cast:

On the night of the elections, a report concerning the incident was prepared by journalist Aly Badawi in which he went into details on how the conflict started between the two political parties and how each handled it. The reporter based its data on what citizens published online since the user-generated videos were aired during the report, however he interpreted the situation by stating both parties point of view in his report. The video clearly showed the supporters of the two parties in conflict, although the report showed the Lebanese Forces defenders going over their opponents' private properties with bad intentions at first,

"أعمال ترهيبية تلك التي قام بها عناصر حزب القوات اللبنانية في مدينة زحلة. إعتداء جسدي ولفظي عند مؤيدي لائحة نقولا فتوش والكتلة الشعبية برئاسة ميريام سكاف في محاولة لدع الناخبين بالقوة عن المشاركة في الاستحقاق الانتخابي. مصادر آلية في مدينة زحلة أشارت إلى أن استفزازات عناصر حزب القوات بدأت منذ الصباح الباكر ووصل بهم الامر إلى التعدي على رجل طاعن في السن ونجله في حي الميدان الغربي. لم تقف بلطجة حزب القوات عند هذا الحد، حتى قاموا بالاعتداء على حرمة منازل المؤيدي للائحتي نقولا فتوش وميريام سكاف."

but then the report stated Mrs. Skaff's opinion by publishing her word in a press conference

"مذذ الصباح الباكر، بدأت الاعتداءات من عناصر القوات اللبنانية على بيوتنا وبيوت مناصرينا وعلى مكاتبنا الانتخابية مع عصيان وتكسير"

The reporter tried to maintain objectivity by reporting user-generated videos and checking the credibility of these videos by interpreting Mrs. Skaff's speech to states her point of view and also by interview the Lebanese Forces to understand their thoughts about the incident.

"رئيس الماكينة الانتخابية للقوات اللبنانية في زحلة ربيع فرنجي برّر ما جرى بأن عناصر حزب القوات اللبنانية قاموا بدور القوى الامنية في تعقّب الرشوة الانتخابية، وقال في تصريح صحفي إنه عندما لا تقوم القوى الامنية بعملها لا يمكن أن نسكت عن هذا الموضوع. وفي ما قالت القوات اللبنانية أنه تمّت تجهيز الاجهزة الامنية بالأماكن التي تدع غيها هذه الرشا، نفى مدعي عام البقاع منير بركات أن يكون أحد الأفرقاء في زحلة قد تقدّم بأي شكوى".

e. **Lebanese Broadcast Corporation International known as LBCI:**

May 5, 2018- Incident:

The incident was first reported by the journalist Rima Assaf, live from Zahle. In the studio the news anchor Mario Abboud interrupted the live show to comment on the dispute between the two political parties, where many citizens were arrested by the internal security forces.

"انتقل إلى زحلة في حوش الامراء حيث افتتاح الاشكالات و عمليات توقيف عدد من الاشخاص والاتهامات المتبادلة، وسنتوقف قبل لعرض فيديو الاشكال معًا".

Citizens' videos were aired live on television showing clearly the two political parties supporters arguing. Assaf proceeded by explaining the video's events while the camera was shooting the location. Assaf based her live coverage on citizens' user-generated videos, and tried to analyze the event when she got to where the incident took place in Zahle. The cameraman used wide shots of the security forces trying to calm the citizens as well as medium shots of the school Hawch Al Oumaraa' (ثانوية حوش الامراء) to give a sense of the location to the viewers.

While the reporter was proceeding her explanation about what happened, the soundless user-generated video is aired a second time on television with the reporters comments on the incident.

The reporter, then, conducted a quick interview with a representative of the Lebanese Forces, Mr. Georges Ofeich.

- "كيف تعالجون المشاكل؟

- نعالجها مع القوى الامنية، وستعود زحلة الى طبيعتها.

- يتهم المرشحون القوات اللبنانية بافتعال المشكل، ما هو ردكم؟

- نحن ضمير هذه المدينة ونريد حمايتها،فالقوات اللبنانية ترد على الاعتداءات أيًا كانت.

- نسمع من المرشحين اتهامات متبادلة عن وجود رشاوى، هل هذا صحيح؟

- نحن ضحايا في هذا الموضوع."

Afterwards, the television station reported live a live conference conduct with Mrs. Myriam Skaff to reflect her opinion about the incident.

"جميع التقارير كاذبة في حقنا! نشكر لجنة الاشراف على سير العملية الانتخابية للقيام بدورها وإلقاء القبض على المشاركين بهذه الاتهامات. منذ الصباح الباكر، بدأت الاعتداءات من قبل عناصر القوات اللبنانية على بيوتنا وبيوت مناصرينا ومكاتبنا الانتخابية مع عصيان وتكسير، وهناك أدلة موجودة وفيديوهات تداولتها وسائل الاعلام تدل على صحة كلامنا"

Therefore, through the reporting of LBCI it was found that the television station based her live coverage on user-generated videos, however it tried to maintain its objectivity by interviewing a Lebanese Forces representative and by reporting live the word of Mrs. Skaff.

It is important to note that all television stations named above, except for Tele Liban, at 17:00 pm in the evening of that day, covered live on air Mrs. Myriam Skaff's speech with her insights and opinions about the incident, in which she acknowledged the importance of the video spread on social media platforms by citizens and stated that the latter shows the truth.

In-depth Interviews:

On the 6th of May, 2018, the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections witnessed a scuffle between two political parties: Popular Block and Lebanese Forces, which resorted to violence, accusation of theft and sabotage of private properties. The clash took place at Zahle. However, what distinguishes this clash is the fact that citizens were the ones who reported first on the incident.

a. Role of Citizen Journalism

We conducted five interviews aiming at gathering more detailed information about the studied case in order to answer the research questions.

Reporter George Akl stated: "journalists and media stations are captive of social media platforms because they follow what people upload on these platforms to publish stories that interest the public". Also, the interviewee Aly Badawi agreed with Akl by stating that when a conflict happens, television stations rely on citizens to report to them. And when asked about what role journalists should play when a political incident happens, Akl replied that "Lebanon is known as politically biased and all media stations belong to certain political parties, therefore people, in our country, deal with their issues and problems according to their political beliefs". Badawi continued: "as a reporter of Al Manar television station, when reporting on political conflicts, I

determine its impact on the station's political line. Therefore, the conflict between the two political parties was marginal to us. Badawi stressed on the importance of credibility when reporting such incidents.

Whereas, the reporter of Al Jadeed television station, Ramez El Kadi considered that there is no objectivity in the Lebanese media as he insisted that every medium is politically sided and has an ally of a particular political line. Therefore, this reality makes the job of journalists difficult. "A journalist must respect media ethics guidelines, especially when reporting a political story, as each person has its own opinion and political backgrounds, and this can be challenging" El Kadi claimed. As for the reporter of LBCI Rima Assaf, she agreed with El Kadi and added: "Lebanon holds many political parties therefore media stations are obliged to be politically biased each one reporting its own point of view. The journalist is hostage of the system, but he tries as much as possible to cover the complete aspects of a story especially if it has a political aspect".

Also, Akl approved that journalism is based on citizens and day by day it is becoming depending on it. Therefore, journalists are no longer considered as the only providers of news; rather, journalists are copying the news as they are from citizens while adding their own touch. Akl also added that nowadays, people are a pillar of the news and an essential element in the event. In his opinion, Badawi agreed that media are depending on citizens social media feeds to provide stories to their viewers. However, Badawi added, that this sort of act comes with a big responsibility as the journalists' job is to check the credibility of the news shared on these feeds before sharing them with the viewers. Nonetheless, Badawi acknowledged that limitations cannot be set to what citizen journalists have to offer, yet television stations should place some restrictions when sharing such stories by evaluating the reliability of the sources.

On the other hand, Al Kadi stressed that citizen journalism lacks credibility and objectivity. For him the term was given to citizens who use their cellphone's camera to share stories on their own media feeds only to identify them from other citizens who do not present such behavior. And he refused the term "journalism" to be associated to them because the ethics of the profession and objectivity are threatened. In her turn, LBCI's reporter stated that citizens are allies to the profession but never a replacement, because they provide journalists with an additional source of information they can rely on but in return they should fact-check the information's accuracy.

Lebanese television stations are politically biased since they belong to wealthy and political man, as said the interviewees claim. However, with the technological advancements, social media is giving all citizens a platform to share their thoughts and to participate in ongoing online conversations. Nowadays, social media is becoming a platform that allows people to access stories and information published by citizens and mainstream journalists.

The interviewees are all aware of the fact that citizen journalism is a must today and it is becoming a reality that cannot be ignored, since citizen media is considered a form of public participation and virtual communication. Nonetheless, interviewees confirmed that even if a reporter relies on citizens online feeds to find an interesting story to publish, however checking the reliability of information and the credibility of sources is a must, because citizen journalists lack credibility and objectivity in their reporting since each one has his own beliefs and points of view which may affect eventually the way he reports a certain story.

Therefore, through the interview, the study found that respecting and maintaining objectivity is a dilemma that journalists face every day and a hard task because with the emergence of digital media unreliable information are viral across social media.

b. Ethical codes of Journalists

Akl highlighted how much news agencies are becoming more dependent on citizens reporting and emphasized the influence of citizen journalism on the profession. As for the incident that happened between the two parties, Akl assured the fact that it was first filmed and uploaded on social media platforms by regular citizens, due to the absence of media stations, this affected the way mainstream journalists covered the news later on. Badawi clarified that it is perfectly normal for journalists to be affected by what citizens provide on their media feeds, "because everyone can be emotional and subjective at times especially if the handled subject matters". On another level, Akl disagreed that OTV covered the incident subjectively, as he reported from Zahle both political parties and their opinions about the incident. Also, Badawi insisted that fact-checking is important.

The reporter of Al Jadeed affirmed that, in this last election, reporters relied on citizens posts to get their stories. However, Al Jadeed television station did not depend on what the citizens had to offer, as they did not repost the user-generated. Al Jadeed reporter, Ramez Al Kadi, confirmed that although citizens are able to perform journalists' duties however they are not qualified to be professional journalists because they lack experience and knowledge of the profession's ethical norms. In that sense, Al Kadi refused the term "journalist" to be used to describe citizen media. On the other hand, Assaf agreed with lateral Kadi by stating that citizens

can't replace a journalist, but they can complete his work. Assaf continued: "I experienced the importance of the partnership between journalist and citizen in the Syrian war, where citizens were able to have access to stories that journalists couldn't get. Therefore, as journalists, we were able to benefit from this relationship which provided us with information we were unable to get ourselves". In that sense, journalists' success depends on the strong partnership with the citizens which provide them with the information needed in the quickest way possible, because sometimes reporters cannot be on time to report incident the moment they happen.

Finally, Akl confirmed that citizen journalism is a preliminary source of information and the era of new media has already begun. He added: "Today, my first task at work is checking my Facebook and Twitter news feeds, to understand people's desires and concerns. And if we do not respect their interests, no one will want to hear about our stories and they will be searching for another source". Also, Badawi and Akl stressed on the importance of social media platforms. The interviewees highlighted the essential role of citizen's stories published across social media platforms, because they allow them to understand what the public want and what sort of subjects the citizens want to hear. That way, reporters can publish stories on television stations and media channels that interest the public and be confident that the viewers and listeners are enjoying what they hear and learn about.

Head of News Department at Tele Liban, Mr. Othman Majzoub, shared a different opinion on the conflict between the two political parties as he stated that the conflict was filmed by a correspondent for the television station who played the role of a citizen journalist, and he was present the whole time during the conflict and filmed it all. However, the reason why no reporter or news anchor commented on this political dispute was because the television station did not want to give it an importance. Rather, the correspondent for the television station

published the incident as it is to the public through the television station and tried to report the events through a video showing the conflict between the two political parties. The video contained a noisy background allowing the viewer to understand what was happening.

Finally, Al Kady confirmed that no one can ever take the role of a mainstream journalist. He assured that the medium might change with the evolution of technology and the new ways of communication. However the medium of information is not as important as the person transmitting the message itself.

The rise of social media has allowed the growth of citizen journalism by using the internet as a fast medium to spread information across the world. All interviewees agreed that citizen journalism is becoming a primary source of information and a quickest way to report a story, insisting on the fact that the time of "new media" has already began. Also, reporters confirmed that nowadays all television channels have special episodes, after or before the evening news, asking their citizens to update them with stories they find interesting so they can discuss they live on television. These kinds of episodes reflects the reality that all viewers and listeners are living, and are a chance for the citizens to feel that they are contributing in society by freely expressing their thought and points of view.

Chapter 7: Findings and Discussion

This research aims to study the framing of the political incident to highlight the difference between professional and user-generated videos, while focusing on how media can influence and shape citizens' opinions.

A. Framing Theory

This case study shows how user-generated videos can be subjective and declare only one point of view, as discussed in the previous chapter. For example, the footage published by citizens on their social media platforms only shows how disrespectful the Lebanese Forces were to their opponents, however there were no videos showing the other point of view. Therefore, citizen journalists were able to bring the images and footage they wanted closer to the viewers which might have formed, unintentionally, a background or an idea of what happened, in the people's mind, which might be different from the truth.

A.1. Technique of camera usage:

Based on the technical part, there is a difference between videos generated by citizens and the ones of professionals. Videos produced by journalists are perceived as high quality and use advanced technology in filming, unlike user-generated videos which are of lower quality using whatever medium they have about the event. For example, the video of the case study shows two opponents in a physical conflict with a low resolution, unlike the reports filmed by the television stations and edited with a neat cut between each shot.

Also, citizens used longer shots when shooting the incident in which some were long enough to make it boring for the viewer, keeping him waiting for the next event or leaving the post. However, in the professional video the main event is clearly seen and the rest is cut,

keeping the viewer entertained with a thrive for more. In addition, citizens use the zoom edition frequently to focus on the event happening in front of them while trying to give out more details to the viewers. However, zooming may occur in a low resolution and a picture out of focus which will eventually result in a low quality video.

In addition, the study shows citizen journalism videos without any sound or with brouhaha, therefore, in soundless videos, the citizen tries to understand the event through contemplating the images, and in chaotic ones, he benefits from hearing everything, giving him the sense of participating in the event. As revealed in the theoretical framework section, framing helps with highlighting certain events to promote a particular interpretation (Entman,2004).

However, in a professional video, the viewer notices the high quality of the sound in which the journalist or editor chooses what to hear, plus the journalist can edit a voice over for the video explaining the events witnessed on screen.

A.2. Access to information:

Mainstream journalists try to maintain objectivity as much as possible by interviewing the two political lines, as the data collected shows. Information about the incident was gathered from both parties. On the other hand, in the videos published online by citizens, the absence of a credible source stating what happened is noticeable. Citizen journalists, in this case, did not interview any political figure. The user-generated videos only show how the Lebanese Forces defenders were acting violently towards their opponents. In that regard, the viewer will have a subjective point of view judging the Lebanese Forces for their acts.

This case study shows that citizen journalists lack objectivity by using the same materials in citizens' online videos as some shots are filmed from a wide angle with a zooming feature in

the end and others were taken from a closer angle depending on the citizens' location. However, in professional videos, journalists are stepping in and asking questions regarding the incident, which allows them to obtain more credible and detailed information, in spite of their late arrival to the incident scene.

Noting the obvious differences between mainstream journalism and citizen journalism, all television stations depended on the citizens' videos since they could not get to the incident the moment it happened themselves, excluding Al Jadeed television station. As previously mentioned in the literature review, citizen journalism is considered as a success because it can have access to effective frames when covering a story (Pain, 2017). Nonetheless, Al Jadeed television station did not benefit from these user-generated videos, as the journalist Ramez Al Kadi was present at the moment of the incident happened and took his own footage to be aired later on. He accessed the scene and interviewed both parties' supporters.

B. **Public Sphere Theory**

The public sphere theory is the space where a public opinion can be formed in a certain society. Also, the theory clearly certifies that the information offered by a group of people is accessed by anyone and everyone has the freedom to express their opinion (Habermas, 1997). The digital age played its share into making the public sphere a more affective theory among the citizens, with the prominence of the term "citizen journalism". This new form of communication and interactivity on social media platforms shifted the role of the citizens from objective readers and listeners to subjective participants in any event (Benkler, 2006).

This study found that citizens were expressing freely their point of view about the incident through the images they were publishing on their pages. All the interviewees agreed that

in the age of social media and with the evolution of new technologies it is hard for the citizens not to get involved in every incident or event that happens around them. The emergence of the "virtual sphere 2.0" allowed people to become participants by expressing their political opinions, posting and commenting on their pages while participating in group online discussions (Papacharissi, 2009).

Also, the study shows that every individual can access the information and publish his own point of view whether in a political, environmental or financial matter, because, nowadays, it is easier for people to share their likes and dislikes on any subject they find themselves interested in. This study also points out that this was the first Lebanese elections in which social media platforms played an essential role, as all the participants agreed that they were getting their information about what was happening in the electoral process from citizens' shares on media feeds, especially when rumors about bribes and clashes between two political parties were uploaded.

Citizen journalism is a combination of the citizens' political beliefs, representing the news from eyewitnesses and it is a form of civic activity by citizens (Allan &Thorsen, 2009; Gillmor, 2006; Jones, Vanderhaeghen & Viney, 2008; Sonwalkar, 2009). Therefore, citizen journalism focuses on news, issues and cases that matter to the citizens. In other words, it can highlight events that the mainstream news media may not cover for the lack of means. Interviewees agreed that citizen journalism can help journalists have access to certain important information, stressing on the fact that their role is not essential but complementary to their profession.

C. Impact of citizen journalism on mainstream journalism

Citizen journalism is described as an empowering activity, because anyone can be part of it. Research has found that viewers tend to credit citizens' stories more than journalists' ones. In other words, videos published by citizens carry more emotions and subjectivity than those aired on television by professional reporters being based on objectivity and solid material (Puustinen & Seppänen, 2011; Williams, Wahl-Jorgensen & Wardle, 2011).

The study found that the new journalistic culture forms a certain basic background or idea into the citizen's minds forcing them to believe and agree with what they saw on their social media feeds, indirectly, because these kinds of user-generated videos can be emotional. Thus, this form of journalism forces people to stand up freely, and to raise their voices. All the interviewees agreed that people are shaping the news through social media, by reporting incidents around them. This creates power within citizens who are becoming participants in civic activities and power can shape the behavior of the latter, as mentioned in the literature review. However, some journalists might agree that people can be subjective in reporting issues and cases, others state that citizens can give out information at a time when it is impossible or hard for journalists to do so, e.g. in the Syrian war, it was tough for journalists to obtain information about the events, therefore they depended on Syrian citizens living there to send them pictures, about current situation of the citizens (Khasib, 2015).

News portals and blog sites are offering people around the world a way to share their stories while giving them a chance to play an active role in collecting, gathering, analyzing and reporting data into their social media networks. Results show that each individual has values and experiences that shape his opinions and ideas that eventually affect his way of reporting. The

interviewees also agreed that the norms of journalism might be in threat when citizens report without "credibility" and "objectivity".

People without any professional training are being labeled as journalists because they have the opportunity to post and share their experiences on media introduced by the modern technology with a limitless reach of the Internet (Barnes, 2012). On the other hand, this is creating a dilemma in the journalistic world among well trained reporters who are devoted to share sensitive cases with objectivity and impartiality. This study found that although there is no escape from taking into consideration what the people share on social media feeds, reporters should double check all the information available online. With the age of new technology, reporters feel more responsible because rumors can spread fast and false information may be aired on television stations if it is misinterpreted or taken as it is from blogs or websites. Interviewees confirmed that what distinguishes a journalist from any other citizen is his ability to be independent and credible. That being said, it was found that television stations should never follow citizens' stories as they are posted online without going through some background check to be certain of the content. Also, since Lebanon is politically divided and each political party has its own base of supporters, it is hard for journalists to maintain their objectivity without being subjective. However, in their opinion, this is what makes their daily jobs more interesting as they agreed that they always try to take into consideration all opponents points of view , especially in sensitive political cases, which helps them stay objective when sharing their news as much as possible.

The study found that the disadvantage of citizen journalism is that amateur journalists can fabricate a story from one point of view with superficial sources and make it viral which can pose problems. The interviewed journalists agreed that media reached the time where boundaries

cannot be put on citizens forcing them not to share news because every user is becoming participant. Web 2.0 has given citizens the ability to imitate journalists without following ethical guidelines (Steinman, 2009). Results finally found that it is the television stations' and media outlets' responsibility to air heavy and well balanced content to the audience, because it is not very likely to air content as it is from social media platforms since the journalist job is to dig in deeper to do his own objective research. In other words, interviewees found that citizens cannot replace trained journalists since they lack the norms of the profession affecting the quality of the image and the reliability of the information.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The new concept of journalism offered citizens an opportunity to be part of a process facilitated by the digital world. Researchers are split into two groups, those who are defenders of citizen journalism and those who are refusing the term as it is, stating that citizens are not trained or experienced enough to deserve the term "journalism". Media have provided web-connected media activists with user-friendly tools they need as citizen journalists. In an article written on Huck online magazine, by Alex King, in 2014, titled "*The revolutionary power of citizen journalism Little Brother is watching Big Brother*", King (2014) highlights the importance of the movement Mídia Ninja. The revolutionary movement stands for 'independent narratives, journalism and action' in Portuguese. It was established by Bruno Torturra, in 2011, out of frustration with news that often failed to reflect the truth. Torturra (2014) acknowledges the importance of citizen journalism in this new era stating: "Live streaming is the future of citizen journalism and a vital tool to build a stronger democracy". In contrast, critics of citizen journalism defend the traditional idea of media and emphasize on the standards and norms of the career (Steinman, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to understand the evolution of citizen journalism among Lebanese citizens and how it has affected daily life when a certain event occurs. The two theories used come together to analyze the way citizens are reporting and feeding mainstream journalists with stories they may not have access to.

The study shows that the video spread online by citizens lack quality. Nonetheless, almost all television stations aired the video in their live shows or newscasts. All the

interviewees agreed on the importance of citizen journalism and acknowledged that the rapid spread of the videos online help them to access neglected or under-covered stories.

As for the public sphere theory, citizen journalism can increase variety in public discourses; however this process is creating a dilemma among journalists by making their job sometimes harder. Results showed that civic or citizen journalism will never replace the traditional forms of journalism; in spite of its advantages and the fact that in some cases, reporters rely on it to get their news, especially where it is impossible or hard for them to cover the incident themselves. However, interviewees agreed that it provides an added value if used properly but it can affect the norms of the profession mostly its code of ethics.

With the ongoing evolution of new technologies, fact checking sources and maintaining objectivity became more challenging for media professionals working in the field. The evolution of media has generated many problems such as the poor quality and the lack of accurate information. Yet, the growth of media tools has allowed viewers to become participants, shifting them from passive receivers to active users. This progress of communication technology has drowned us to a time that makes us wonder, what if journalism has been replaced by citizen journalism? What if civic journalism becomes the primary and sole source of information?

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Appendix A

Transcribed interview with Mr. Georges Akl

Q: How would you evaluate the media coverage of the incident between the two political parties who ran for the elections in Zahle, the Popular Block and the Lebanese Forces?

R: In this year's elections media stations and journalists were captive of this new communication technology. This is the first election in which journalists follow what the people upload on social media and their feed. It's true that the media followed citizens' stories, however, when the voices were being counted, it was confidential and only journalists had access to the pulling rooms.

Q: What role should journalists play when a political incident occurs, with each medium being politically owned?

R: Considering the fact that Lebanon is politically biased and each media stations belong to political parties, facts are not reliable, people deal with incidents, issues and problems according to the political parties they support. There is no doubt about that!

When an incident happens, journalists should explore it and analyze it while considering objectivity, reliability and ethics.

Q: What are the challenges that Citizen Journalism pose to your profession?

R: Obviously, our profession became dependent on citizen journalism. Therefore, we are no longer considered as the only news provider, rather we find ourselves cloning citizens' online posts while adding our own touch at the end. Nowadays, people are relying on

social media as their primary source to be updated on the daily news. Television stations in particular and journalists in general are relying on social media platforms.

A while ago, I had the chance to work and do some research with the Reuters news agency, and we concluded that people are becoming the news agency itself. In fact, the citizens are the ones reporting to Reuters and not the other way around. Today it's safe to say, in my opinion, that the people are the news and an essential element of the event.

Q: Do you think there should be some restrictions to citizen journalism?

R: We have reached a time where we cannot go back, or put some restrictions. This is the social media age and we have to accept this fact.

Q: The incident that occurred between the two parties was first filmed and uploaded on social media platforms by regular citizens, due to the absence of media stations. Do you think this affected how journalists covered the news later on?

R: Honestly, as I recall, I reported both political parties and their opinions about the incident. Also, I stress on the fact that the television station OTV and myself did not take any political side, however we took into consideration both parties' opinions.

Q: Do you think that a time will come where citizen journalism will be considered as a primary source for journalists?

R: In fact, citizen journalism is already a preliminary source. The time of new media has already begun, and we are living it every day as citizens and as journalists. Today, my first task, before writing a story, is to check my Facebook and Twitter news feed, because

when I search my feed I understand and become more knowledgeable about what people

interests.

Appendix B

Transcribed interview with Mr. Aly Badawi

Q: How would you evaluate the media coverage of the incident between the two political

parties who ran for the elections in Zahle, the Popular Block and the Lebanese Forces?

R: Nowadays, every person has a cell phone linked to his social accounts. In last years'

elections, television channels relied on social media to get the instant news and disputes

the minute they happened.

Q: What role should journalists play when a political incident occurs, with each medium

being politically owned?

R: The role played when a political incident occurs, differs between each channel. Every

channel has its own political view in Lebanon. Also every channel reports the event

according to its importance and effect on the public, especially in the election period,

where news affects the public's decisions.

Al Manar television station stood apart from anything that could start a conflict.

Therefore, we did not focus on the incident politically however we tried to maintain our

objectivity when broadcasting the information

Q: What are the challenges that citizen journalism impose to your profession?

R: Social media users play an important role in evaluating the events. Citizen journalism

is, no doubt, important and channels can omit journalists and rely only on the social

media - citizens posting all incidents-. Therefore, each television station has a huge

responsibility in leading journalists, monitoring their stories and directing them to

properly deal with citizen journalism. This is what distinguishes a television station from another while broadcasting the same incident.

Q: Do you think there should be some restrictions to citizen journalism?

R: No, I don't think there should be any restrictions. There are no limitations that can stop citizen journalism. If citizen journalism was not trending, we would not be able to know about the incident and cover it.

Q: The incident that occurred between the two political parties was at first filmed and uploaded on social media platforms by regular citizens due to the absence of media stations. Do you think this affected how journalists covered the news later on?

R: Yes, sometimes we may be affected by the general political view. Also the way citizen journalists transmit the news might confuse the citizen.

Nowadays, Citizen's culture is influencing the journalists and the channels, which makes it challenging for the journalist to stick to objectivity.

Q: Do you think that, in the future, citizen journalism will be the primary source of information for journalists?

R: Yes, of course. Citizen journalism is absolutely the quickest way to report any incident. In fact, there are special episodes on television channels asking citizens to update them with stories using relative hash-tags, these stories are later on aired on daily news.

Appendix C

Transcribed interview with Mrs. Rima Assaf

Q: How would you evaluate the media coverage of the incident between the two political

parties who ran for the elections in Zahle, the Popular Block and the Lebanese Forces?

R: Television stations in Lebanon are politically divided, which may affect journalism

somehow. For that, each channel covers incidents according to the political party they

refer to. However, I think that LBC is trying to preserve its objectivity when covering

political debates. Therefore it is considered as a neutral channel since we do not support a

specific political party we rely on.

Of course, this comes with a price where we encounter several challenges to broadcast

the best possible objective point of view, like the speed of the news and its accuracy.

Q: What role should journalists play when a political incident occurs, with each medium

being politically owned?

R: it is hard for journalists to respect the norms of the profession with each medium

being politically owned because the latter filter the news according to its interests.

Q: What are the challenges that citizen journalism impose to your profession?

R: I think citizen journalism is an asset to journalists and plays the role of a supporter.

Q: Do you think there should be some restrictions to citizen journalism?

R: Citizen Journalism helped the journalists succeed, and helped them cover news they could not reach alone. I think that citizen journalists cannot compete with a good journalist, since the latter checks all available information and analyzes them before being published.

Q: The incident that occurred between the two political parties was at first filmed and uploaded on media platforms by regular citizens due to the absence of media station. Do you think this affected how journalist covered the news later on?

R: I think that citizen journalism help reporters know about incidents so they can cover the story. Journalists' job is to check, analyze and reformulate news in an objective and ethical way without being affected by the citizen journalists' story.

I personally experienced the importance of the partnership between journalist and citizen in the Syrian war, where citizens were able to have access to stories and journalists couldn't. Therefore, as journalists, we were able to benefit from this relationship which provided us with information we were unable to get ourselves

Q: Do you think that, in the future, citizen journalism will be the primary source of information for journalists?

R: Citizens can never replace journalists, but they play a role with helping them do their job. The success of journalists nowadays depends on their strong partnership with the citizens which will provide them with the information needed in the quickest way possible.

Appendix D

Transcribed interview with Mr. Ramez Al Kadi

Q: How would you evaluate the media coverage of the incident between the two political

parties who ran for the elections in Zahle, the Popular Block and the Lebanese Forces?

R: The concept of "Journalism" in our country is vague, since all television channels are

owned by political lines making our profession even harder.

Honestly, there is no independent channel or journalist in Lebanon, and that is wrong!

Reporters should maintain their objectivity when writing their stories but for us to do

that, we should be working in an independent channel, which is not the case in Lebanon

since all channels belong to a specific political party.

Q: What role should journalists play when a political incident occurs, with each medium

being politically owned?

R: Journalists should try to respect the ethical codes of the profession, regardless of the

political parties their television stations belong to. The stories should be given to the

viewers and listeners as they happened, so journalist should be independent and not

politically involved when reporting.

(*Discussion:* **Q:** We noticed you did not use citizens videos when reporting the incident

between the two political parties, unlike other television stations, you depended only on

yourselves to cover the story and publish it)

R: First of, I was near the location the moment the clash happened between the two political opponents and I took advantage of being there at the right time. Plus, no citizen could have reported the story better than a reporter himself.

Q: What are the challenges that citizen journalism impose to your profession?

R: I refuse to use the term citizen journalism. This term is used in Lebanon to give significance to every person that posts the news using his personal account on social media, but, in my opinion, these news are not reliable and do not respect the ethics of our profession.

Q: So what are the restrictions that should be set to citizen journalism?

R: There should definitely be some boundaries and limitations to citizen journalism, and journalists should be careful when using the latter stories because they lack objectivity and reliability. Citizen journalism is present and we cannot neglect it; therefore, reporters should know how to cover their stories and publish them.

Q: The incident that occurred between the two political parties was at first filmed and uploaded on media platforms by regular citizens due to the absence of media station. Do you think this affected how journalists covered the news later on?

R: It is normal to be affected with how citizens covered the incident, and this is what makes our job harder. We must put aside our subjectivity, do our own investigation and listen to both parties point of view before spreading the story to the people to let them have an objective judgment about the incident without influencing their opinions.

Q: Do you think that, in the future, citizen journalism will be the primary source of information for journalists?

R: There is no way that citizen journalism can ever replace journalism. The tool that allows news to be published can grow and evolve but it will never be as important as the content. Citizen activities and social media platforms are a way to transmit information but they will not replace the role of the journalists who check in an objective and ethical manner the content to provide a reliable.

Appendix E

Transcribed interview with Mr. Othman Majzoub

Q: What did you rely on to cover the incident that happened between the two political parties, Lebanese Forces and Popular Block, the day of the Lebanese Election?

R: Actually we have our own delegate who reported to us the incident that happened that day between the two political parties.

Q: There was no reporter present that day?

R: No, we only relied on our delegate to transmit us with the feeds and images we need. There was no reporter, neither a news anchor to discuss the incident on air because we did not want to give the dispute an importance.

Q: Citizens reported the story on their social media feeds, the television station did not rely on any of the feed available online?

R: No, as I said we did not give the dispute much importance and it was not necessary to take into consideration what the people published online, we have our own delegate who reports to us in time of need.