

The news Coverage of Aljazeera's Arabic Website for the Libyan Revolution 2011 - A quantitative Content Analysis Study

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and to explore the news coverage of Aljazeera's Arabic news website for the Libyan Revolution of 2011.

The researchers used the content analysis method as a tool of the study to know how this coverage was conducted through the monitoring and analysis of the news stories which were published by the website regarding the events of the Libyan revolution, and to identify the patterns which were used in this coverage and trends which included.

The results showed that the website posted (76) news stories within one week and using all journalistic patterns and the number of the news stories which were published by the news website were (11) news story daily, and the content of this coverage highlights the suffering of the Libyan revolutionists and focuses on the aspirations of Libyan revolutionists and the successes achieved by them.

The major findings of the study revealed that this coverage focused on monitoring the Arab and international reactions regarding the Libyan revolution and the developments of the situation in this area.

Introduction

Al-Jazeera news network emerged again through its news coverage for the Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan revolutions. Some observers confirmed that Al-Jazeera has a leading role in supporting the Arab youth in their revolutions and it was one of the reasons which has contributed to encouraging the revolutions in the Arab world.

Where the news coverage of Al-Jazeera played an important role in the success of Cedar Revolution that ended Syria's 29-year military presence in Lebanon in 2005 and was a testament to the transformational power of the Arab media revolution (Pintak 2008).

Key words: Libyan Revolution – Al-Jazeera news network - Democracy - Arab Media

During the events of the revolutions Al-Jazeera was an open platform for revolutionaries and the opponents of Tunisia, Egyptian and Libyan regimes which were the most of authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. The news coverage of Al-Jazeera led the Egyptians and Libyan governments to prevent Al-Jazeera from reporting the events, but they were not able to achieve this aim, because Al-Jazeera has caught the attention of the revolutionists who support it to be existed between them. Al-Jazeera was drawing a real image from the beginning of the events and this image had a big impact on Arab and international audience and has contributed to changing the reactions of international organizations toward Arab people and forced the Arab regimes to think in conducting serious reforms led to promote the democracy process in the Arab world.

Al-Jazeera changed the path of the Arab media in the Arab world through its programmes and news coverage of the Palestinian Intifada in 2000, the war on terror in 2001 and Iraq war in 2003 where Al-Jazeera revealed the crimes of Israeli and American armies against the civilians as well as the role of Arab regimes in supportly in the Israeli and American policies (Ayish 2002).

This paper examines the role of the news coverage of Aljazeera's Arabic website in supportly in the Libyan revolutionists through conducting content analysis for the news coverage of Aljazeera's Arabic news website for the Libyan revolution during the period from 12 to 18 March 2011 and will examine the extent of Al-Jazeera's contributions to highlighting the suffering of the Libyan people during the days of the revolution and their dream's in achieving democracy.

Literature review

The literature review submitted a brief idea about the studies which discussed the reality of Arab media and the democracy in Arab world.

Democracy and the Arab world

The term of democracy comes from the Greek language. It is combining two shorter words: Demos which means "the people" and kratos which means "the power or rule" (Arblaster 2002, p.15). Democracy meant the rule by the people or the majority but because the majority were also poor the democracy meant the rule by poor (Arblaster 2002, p.15).

Today, the meaning of democracy has changed according to Oberg (2006 cited in Al-Jenaibi 2010) who indicated that the current meaning of democracy has changed from its original Greek meaning that emphasis on people power where today the democracy is understood as meaning the authority of the

majority to make decisions. According to suggestions of Francis Fukuamay, a former US State department official that Western socialites arrived to the capitalist democracy which represents the final and highest stage of the development of human political and economic institutes (Arblaster 2002, p.1). In contrast, Arab people are seeking to achieve democracy in its meaning the rule by the majority of people. So far, the scholars seek to answer on an important question is why there are no Arab democracies (Diamond 2010).

Since decades, Arab people suffer from the rule of their authoritarian regimes which governs with an iron grip hand where there are not free elections, freedom of press, freedom of expression and human rights. In 22 Arab countries, people are suffering from their regimes where there are regimes controlling on the power since 30 years until now such as the Libyan and Yemeni regimes and the Egyptian and Tunisian regimes which stepped down after 30 years from the rule by the youth revolutions.

According to Diamond (2010) there are two key pillars of Arab authoritarianism; they encompass the patterns and institutions by authoritarian regimes which manage their politics and keep their hold on power, and the external forces that help to sustain their rule. Diamond (2010) indicated that the Arab states reinforce their authoritarianism through their techniques of monitoring, rigging, and repression, and the Arab League has turned into an autocrats' club.

On 14 January 2011, the Arab people started their revolutions against the authoritarian regimes. The Tunisian youth were able to topple the regime of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine who has governed Tunis for 31 years. Then the Egyptian youth started their revolution against the regime, and the revolution led to topple the regime of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak after 30 years at his rule on 11 February 2011. Then on 17 February 2011, the Libyan people have started their revolution against the regime of Muammar Gadhafi who has governed Libya since 40 years but he has used the military power against the civilians and killed more thousand to suppress Libyan revolutionists but they are continuing in their revolution. News media has a leading role in supporting Arab revolutions and many observers described the news media as a weapon in the hands of revolutionists.

News Coverage:

The news coverage process is simply defined as information printed by newspaper, broadcast by television and radio stations, or produced by internet-based media to keep audiences abreast of timely event and developments. The process of news is a distinctive category of mass media content(Stoval 1998, 98) .News aims to tell us what we want to know, need to know, and should know.

News coverage is current information made available to public-information without which people content decide what to think or how to act (Charnly, Mitchell 1975,6)

In sum and generally speaking news coverage may be defined as the concise, accurate report of an event. It is the report of an event development, or opinion that reporters and editors acting as agents for the public , believe will interest some or a great many of those who receive it (Shalabieh 2014).

Arab media and Al-Jazeera

Arab governments are keen to control on Arab media and employ them as important tool to promote their control on people. The Arab media are official platform for the Arab regimes and work to mislead the public opinion and do not discuss the sensitive issue as the human rights and freedom of expression and do not give the opponents of regimes chance to show up on the screens of official televisions, broadcastings and write in the newspapers. According to Seib (2005) the Arab governments use the media to control the public opinion. Lynch (2006, p.53) confirmed that the Arab governments work to dominate on the visual media and internet network and they imposed siege on them because they have a big impact on the Arab public opinion.

Ayish (2002) pointed out that the Arab governments dominated the media and operated it by ministries of information and the media organizations funded exclusively from national budgetary allocations, and their employees were viewed as part of public-sector bureaucracy where Limited transmission powers coupled with poor production resources, and Arab governments were keen to have inhibited the development of television into a major force of public opinion formation. In the 1990s, the emergence of satellite television created a new public sphere and led to start a new age of Arab media and the Arab world started to feel that the freedom of press became to appear in the Arab world and the Arab governments were not able to control the flow of news and information and most of satellite channels were their broadcasting centres in Europe because the Arab regimes did not allow them to work in the Arab countries (Ayish 2002).

In November 1996, Aljazeera started the broadcast from Doha in Qatar, its funding from Qatar's progressive Emir who offered an initial pledge of \$140 million dollars to help launch and subsidize Al-Jazeera over a five-year period through November, 2001, the channel airs news and current affairs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Pintak 2008). In 2001 Al-Jazeera launched its websites in English and Arabic languages on the internet network. According to Wenden (2005) Al-Jazeera's website was the first mainstream Arabic news site free from government censorship and control, and it promises a different and a new perspective on global events.

Al Jazeera is considered that a unique experience in the Arab world where it was the first Arab channel raises the slogan of press freedom and the opinion and other opinion and it adopted the western press style in its coverage of the events and talk show and panel discussions which appeared in the Arabic world for the first time and it contributed to discuss issues that are considered Taboo in the Arab world and that raises its popularity dramatically.

Al-Jazeera contributed through its serious programs such as "The opposite direction" which enables for the first time the opposition parties in Arab countries to deliver their voice to the masses through the platform of the program. This program contributed for to putting Qatar in political crises with Arab countries and arrived to the point of withdrawal of ambassadors and missions of some countries from Qatar. In spite of the responses of these acts but Qatar continued to ensure that it does not interfere in the work of the news network and that it has no authority to prevent the freedom of press (Lynch 2006, p.76).

Al-Jazeera was able in a short time to enter the global news market and challenge the international news networks and change the mapping of news world (Zyani2008). The impact of Al-Jazeera was a big at the international arena after its news coverage for the events of the war on terror in 2001. Al-Jazeera became the first enemy for the U.S. government which described it as the TV terror or Bin Laden TV when aired the tapes of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, through its news coverage of the events of 11 September 2001(Thussu 2006, p.192).

Al-Jazeera has become a military target for the U.S. military that destroyed Al-Jazeera's office in Afghanistan and arrested its reporter and camera man and they killed its reporter in Baghdad when was covering the Iraq war in 2003 because Al-Jazeera played an important role in highlighting the crimes of U.S. military against the Iraqi civilians. The American officials expressed their anger

from Al-Jazeera and called Qatari government to close Al-Jazeera but the Qatari government refused the American demands (Parks 2009).

At the beginning of 2011, the events of Arab revolutions started and Al-Jazeera emerged ageing through its news coverage and the observers indicated that Al-Jazeera's news coverage was unique and played a leading role in supporting these revolutions.

Goals of study

This paper aims to examine the role of the news coverage of Al-Jazeera's Arabic website in supporting the Libyan people in their revolution against the Libyan regime.

The main research question is: what is the role of the news coverage of Al-Jazeera's Arabic website for the Libyan revolution in supporting the Libyan revolutionists?

The study aims to:

- To identify the average of news articles published about Libyan revolution on Al-Jazeera's Arabic website.
- To identify the journalistic patterns which were used in reporting Libyan revolution by Al-Jazeera's Arabic website.
- To identify the sources which Al-Jazeera's Arabic website depended on to report the events of Libyan revolution.
- To identify the trends of news articles published on Al-Jazeera's website about Libyan revolution.
- To identify the topics of news articles published on Al-Jazeera's website about Libyan revolution.

Method

The researchers used the quantitative content analysis, describe a specific analytical method. This Method is used as research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest of communication. Because the content of analysis is a method that aims to produce a 'big picture' (deleting trends, patterns and absences overlarge aggregates of text) it is used to dealing with 'message' of the mass media (Deacon et. al 2007).

This paper relied on content analysis for the news coverage of Al-Jazeera's Arabic website; the researchers relied on collecting the whole contents related to

the subject of the study for (1) one week and was keen to save the news articles as html page every day online. The number of news article was (76) articles. The research used this method to answer the main research question of study: what is the role of the news coverage of Al-Jazeera's Arabic website in supporting the Libyan revolutionists and analysed the content of all news article in terms of journalistic patterns, prominence and placement, as well as the topic and trends of content in the news articles and sources of news articles.

The unit and categories of analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is the subject of the Libyan revolution where the researchers adopted five analytical categories; they are journalistic patterns, sources, the trends of news content, topics of news content and placement and prominence of news articles. The researcher designed coding sheet and coded the analytical categories as following:

- The journalistic patterns: To know what are the journalistic patterns which were used in the news coverage of the Libyan revolution by Al-Jazeera Arabic website, the journalistic patterns were coded. The journalistic pattern coding was based on four categories: a) news report b) news analysis c) opinion d) comment.
- Prominence and Placement: To test these terms, the prominence and placement of the news articles about the Egyptian revolution the prominence and placement were coded and the coding was based on three categories: a) lead news story, which is considered to be the most important news item, b) top news story, which is the next most important story c) other news story, which is considered to be the least important news item.
- Sources: To test using the sources of information in reporting the Libyan revolution by Al-Jazeera Arabic website, the sources of news articles were coded and the coding was based on four categories: a) Al-Jazeera's resources, b) global agencies c) global newspapers.
- Trends: To examine the trends of the news content published by Al-Jazeera website about the Libyan revolution, the trends were coded. The trend coding was based on five categories a) Neutral b) supporting the Libyan regime c) Not Supporte the Libyan regime d) Supporte the Libyan people e) not supporte the Libyan people.

- Topic of news article: to know the topics of news articles published about the Libyan revolution, the topics were coded and the coding was based on seven categories a) The crimes of Libyan regime b) The corruption of Libyan regime c) The aspirations of the revolutionists d) The achievements of revolutionists e) international reactions. f) Arab reactions g) other topics.

Agenda Setting Theory:

Agenda setting theory can be examined on two levels: the agenda of objects/issues and the agenda of attributes. McCombs and Shaw posit that “issue salience” transfer is the main objective of first level agenda setting studies. The “issue” refers to the object on which the attention of the media and the public are focused (McCombs, 2004 cited in Bashri 2008). Such issues or objects may include public issues, political candidates, public institutions or competing brands of goods (Ghanem 1996 cited in Bashri 2008). The research focus of second level agenda setting is the transfer of “attribute” salience from media to the public. Kisousis (2004 cited in Bashri 2008) and McCombs (1992 cited in Bashri 2008) have defined attributes as “characteristics and traits that fill out the picture of each object”. When it comes to media messages, attributes are also referred to as a “set of perspectives or frames that journalists and the public employ to think about each object” (Ghanem, 1996, p.17 cited in Bashri 2008).

Hence, the first level, the agenda of objects, is related to the transfer of salience of issues from the media to the public and thus focuses on what the public thinks about. The second level deals with the specific attributes of an issue and how media coverage influences how the public thinks about a particular issue.

Agenda-setting has evolved from a focus on media effects on the public perception of the most important issues of the day to a theory elaborating a hierarchy of communication effects. Its core is three levels of agenda-setting. The initial two levels were introduced during the first decade of research. Level three is recent. Evidence from the initial studies on this expanded view of agenda setting supports the Network Agenda Setting Model. This theoretical model asserts that the news media can bundle sets of objects or attributes and make these bundles of elements salient in the public mind simultaneously (Guo et. al 2012).

Findings and Discussion

Table (1): The journalistic patterns were used by Al-Jazeera's Arabic website

Journalistic pattern	Frequency	Percent
News Report	68	89%
News analysis	5	7 %
Opinion	2	2.7%
Comment	1	1.3%
Total	76	100%

Table (1) showed that Al-Jazeera's website published through the period from 12 to 18 March 2011 (76) news articles about the events of the Libyan revolution. This number from the news articles confirms the prominence of the event and Al-Jazeera's coverage was in-depth and comprehensive. The most of journalistic patterns that used to report the events were news reports where the website published (68) news reporters, were (89%) from the total of news articles, and (5) news analysis were (7 %) from the total of news articles. While the website published (3) news articles in other forms (opinion, comment) and were (6.4%) from the total of news articles.

The average of news articles which published in the website per day was around (10) news articles. This figure points out that the news coverage was expanded and comprehensive and the event was the primary event for Al-Jazeera.

Table (2): The prominence and placement of news articles in Al-Jazeera's Arabic website

Prominence and Placement	Frequency	Percent
Lead news story	65	86%
Top news story	11	14%
Other news story	0	0%
Total	76	100%

Table (2) showed that the news articles published in Al-Jazeera's Arabic website about the events of revaluation occupied important placement and privet prominence. The sites of news articles which occupied in the home page of the website confirm that the event was an important and the first story during this period. Where (86. %) from the total of news articles were lead news story and the number of articles was (65). and (14. %) from the total of news were top

news story and the number of articles was (11). These results confirmed that the news coverage of Al-Jazeera's website for the events was very important and aimed to put the event on the agenda of the Arab audience.

Table (3): The sources of news articles which published by Al-Jazeera's Arabic website

Sources	Frequency	Percent
Al-Jazeera's resources	54	71%
Global agenesis	11	14.5%
International newspapers	11	14.5%
Total	76	100%

Table (2) showed that Al-Jazeera's website depended on its resources in reporting the events, where the reporters and correspondents of Al-Jazeera were reporting the event on the ground moment by moment. And the results showed that the resources of 71% from the total of the news articles published by the website were Aljazeera's resources. And the recourses of 29% from the total of news articles were the global news agonies and international newspapers. This figure confirms that Al-Jazeera reported the events of revolution as an unusual event and covered the events under slogan "People make a revolution in Libya" and this means that Al-Jazeera realized its moral role in reporting the suffering of the Libyan people from the beginning of the revolution.

Table (4): The trends of news articles of the events of Libyan revolution in Aljazeera's Arabic website

The Trends	Frequency	Percent
Supported Libyan regime	1	1.3%
Not supported Libyan regime	21	27.6%
Supported Libyan revolutionists	34	44.7%
Not supported Libyan revolutionists	1	1.3%
Natural	19	25%
Total	76	100%

Table (4) showed that the trends of the content of most articles published in Al-Jazeera's website supported the Libyan people and their revolution and did not supporte the Libyan regime. And the news coverage of the events depended reporting the suffering of people in Libya and played important role to highlight the crimes of the Libyan regime against the civilians. Al-Jazeera's website published (55) articles supported revolutionists while the number of news story which published and supported the Libyan regime was (2) news articles. This

figure confirms that Al-Jazeera supported People's aspirations for freedom and democracy in Libya.

Table (5): The topics of news articles of the events of Libyan revolution in Al-Jazeera's Arabic website

The Topic	Frequency	Percent
The crimes of Libyan regime	15	19.7%
The corruption of Libyan regime	4	5.3%
The aspirations of the revolutionists	7	9.2%
The achievements of revolutionists	11	14.5
International reactions	16	21%
Arab reactions	6	7.9%
Other topics	17	22.4%
Total	94	100%

Table (5) shows the topics of news articles which published about the events of revolution, we can note that Al-Jazeera's news coverage focused on the regime crimes against the civilian and reported the aspirations of the revolutionists and their achievements during the military battles between them and the regime forces where Al-Jazeera's website published (42) news articles on these topics. And the website published (4) news articles about the regime corruption and the role of Gadhafi's family in the looting of the Libyan people's money. The topics of (22) news articles published in the website focused on the international and Arab reactions and the human, social and health situations in Libya and the role of international society in protecting the civilians.

The results of content analysis of 76 news articles published by Al-Jazeera's Arabic website confirmed that Al-Jazeera played a leading role in support the effort of Libyan revolutionists to get their freedom and achieve the democracy which call to achieve the justice and promote the human rights and equal opportunity among people and the freedom of expression as well as the right of peoples to choose their governments and their representatives. During the events, Al-Jazeera faced hard difficulties to report the events of revolution for audiences in various parts of the world. Its cameraman Ali Al-Jabber killed by the regime forces when he was documenting in his camera the crimes of Libyan regime and three reporters from Al-Jazeera were arrested and their fate unknown.

The news coverage of Al-Jazeera for the events of Libyan revolution proves that Al-Jazeera is the voice for the Libyan revolutionists, Zayani (2008) confirmed that Al-Jazeera the CNN of the Arabs and the voice of Arab world,

Lynch (2006, p.47) indicated that Al-Jazeera is the Arab Fox news and voice of new Arab public and Figenschou (2010) confirmed that Al-Jazeera is a voice for the voiceless because it covers the forgotten stories in the world.

Conclusion

The emergence of Al-Jazeera news network and the new constellation of Arab satellite broadcasters have created a new public sphere in Arab world and a new atmosphere has contributed in promoting the freedom of press and expression. Al-Jazeera has a key role in publishing the cultural and social awareness between Arab people. And it is outlet for Arabs to express their views and aspirations which seeking to achieve real reforms lead to stop the authoritarian practices for Arab regimes. Al-Jazeera has become media power effects on the Arab and international arena and the last events in Arab world confirmed that the Arab mass media started to play a key role to encourage Arab people to demand in democracy where Pintak (2008) confirmed on the transformational power of the Arab media revolution.

In the end we can say that the events of Arab revolutions confirmed that Al-Jazeera is an important power effects on political and social life in the Arab world, where U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton said that the events of Arab revolutions confirmed that Al Jazeera is gaining more prominence in the U.S. because it offers "real news" and she confirmed that The U.S. is losing the "information war" in the world because Al-Jazeera was "changing peoples' minds and attitudes (Tomasky2011). While Walt (2011) stressed that Al-Jazeera is the winner from Arab revolutions and Al-Jazeera with its round-the-clock coverage put a lot of Western coverage to shame and Al Jazeera may have emerged as an even more potent revolutionary force.

تغطية موقع شبكة الجزيرة الإخبارية الناطق باللغة العربية لأحداث الثورة الليبية لعام 2011

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على التغطية الإخبارية لموقع شبكة الجزيرة الإخبارية الناطق باللغة العربية لأحداث الثورة الليبية لعام 2011.

واستخدم الباحثان أسلوب تحليل المضمون كأداة في تنفيذ هذه الدراسة للتعرف على هذه التغطية من خلال رصد وتحليل القصص الإخبارية التي نشرها الموقع حول أحداث الثورة الليبية، بالإضافة إلى التعرف على الأنماط الصحفية المستخدمة في هذه التغطية والاتجاهات فيها.

وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الموقع نشر (76) قصة إخبارية حول أحداث الثورة الليبية في غضون أسبوع واحد بمعدل (11) قصة إخبارية يوميا ، كما استخدم كافة الأنماط الصحفية في تغطية هذه الأحداث، وكان مضمون هذه التغطية يسلط الضوء على معاناة الشعب الليبي و تطلعاته إلى الحرية. كما أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن هذه التغطية ركزت على رصد ردود الفعل العربية والدولية بشأن الثورة الليبية وتطورات الوضع في ليبيا.

مصطلحات الدراسة:- شبكة الجزيرة الإخبارية - الإعلام العربي - الثورة الليبية- الديمقراطية

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