



Department of Media & Communication

**The Facebook Revolution:  
A Content Analysis on the British Mainstream Media Coverage of the  
Protests in Egypt**

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## **Abstract**

The protests that swept across the Middle East during 2011, also named the Arab spring, have been labelled the Facebook revolution among western media. This study analyse why the media framed the protests the way they did in the context of the new media ecology. By conducting a content analysis this research focused on the cohort of British newspapers and their reporting on the protests. The findings suggests that the media had an instrumentalist approach to social media and a supportive attitude towards the protesters cause, which in combination might explain why they labelled it the Facebook revolution.

**Keywords:** new media, social media, new media ecology, Facebook, Twitter, Social movements, content analysis, mainstream media, radical media

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# 1. Introduction

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This study springs out from the observation that the protests in Egypt have been labelled both the Facebook- and Twitter revolution by western media. In academic circles the debate has been fairly polarized between the optimists and the pessimists, in regards to what role social media played in the protests. Scholars such as Evgeny Morozov argue that social media get underserved credit for its role in social uprisings, while too little emphasis is put on how it benefits authoritarian regimes to lock down civil unrest. Clay Shirky has a more optimistic approach and advocates the power of private communication between people, which social networking sites such as Facebook facilitates. However, the debate has reached a stalemate, which is not unusual when strong arguments meet. Therefore, this study aims for a different approach. Instead of finding out how social media impacted the protests and how it unfolded, this research will focus on how it was mediated by the mainstream media. Why did the mainstream media label it the Facebook revolution? How did they report within the new media ecology?

By studying the media and how it reported on the protests in Egypt, the question of causation is turned around. Instead of focusing on what really happened, the question is how this reality was constructed. In the new media ecology, which will be described later, the number of touching points towards the citizens, organizations, government etc has increased. New media technology facilitates a more intricate society in terms of communication. Therefore, studying the media means to untangle these relations and analyse the information that has been mediated. So by studying the mediated content in depth, this research aims to learn more about the mainstream media and how it reported on the protests. The rationale behind the decision to focus on the so called Facebook revolution is that mainstream media is well known for being sceptic towards new media; though during the Arab spring their attitude has seemed very optimistic. This study aims therefore, through an explanatory approach, to put this observation to the test and learn more about how the mainstream media, or more precisely the British national newspapers, actually reported on the protests.

This research will retrieve its empirical data by conducting a quantitative content analysis. This method is chosen because the aim is to analyse mediated content, whereupon a content analysis will be both sufficient in terms of gathering relevant data, as well as efficient because of its quantitative approach (Read more in chapter 3.3). Hopefully the findings in this research can be a contribution to the study of new media and the society; by offering valuable information

concerning how social media impact social movements. By focusing on the mediated content within the new media ecology, this research aims to analyse how the protests was labelled the Facebook- and Twitter revolution.

## **2. Theoretical and empirical view**

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## 2.1 New media

What is new media? It is a straight forward question that requires an elaborative answer. First of all new media is a term that applies to the modern media of its time, which in the 1950's was the television and today in 2011 is the Internet. So where does the line between old and new media go? While it is tempting to refer to the television as 'old' new media, since it was regarded as the new medium of its time by scholars, it is not a descriptive term. All mediums at some point was new, speech was a new medium when humans first started to exchange information through their vocal cords. It took thousands of years to develop language into a tool for communication. Today media is perpetuated by technology that is developing in an ever increasing pace, so fast that scholars these days, such a Paul Levinson (2009) see it necessary to talk about the 'new' new media to keep up with the rapid developments within media studies.

Marshall McLuhan's theories offer an interesting take on the difference between old and new media, basically by saying that there is no static border between the two. In his book "Understanding Media: The Extension of Man" (1964), he coins the phrase "The medium is the message", where he argues that new mediums feed from older mediums. To use the example from the previous paragraph; the new medium of words consumed the older medium of sounds, and in a more modern context the newer medium of film consumed the older medium of the novel. McLuhan's theory explains that it is not the content of a medium that defines it, but how the medium is used. This means that new media consist of older media and therefore it is impossible to differentiate between the two. Today this consumption is more intense than ever before and there is nothing indicating that it will slow down. With the digitization of all kinds of information such as speech, text, image and film, and the possibility of connecting everyone to everyone on the Internet, has made McLuhan's theories increasingly relevant.

The Internet to some extent is the medium of all mediums in the sense that it incorporates all previous mediums. In McLuhan's terms it is consuming generously from older media such as the newspaper, radio, television etc. Henry Jenkins (2006) argues that this media convergence leads to a cultural shift, and that it is a constant force for unification that evolves through change. In other words, media convergence is a convergence of how we use media which in turn change how media is produced and consumed. According to Jenkins (2001) "Media fosters a new participatory folk culture by giving average people the tools to archive, annotate, appropriate and re-circulate content" (p. 93). The user of new media is no longer confined to only consume media, but can now also produce. He claims that this is a paradigm shift that impacts every level

of society, and that it is first evident in cultural forms. Participatory culture is the key to understand the social, economical and political impact of convergence.

This convergence of technologies and mediums, and the rise of a participatory culture are anticipated to have a sound impact on the public sphere – Habermas’ theory of Öffentlichkeit – which in essence is a sphere based on “[...] information, communication, debate, media – public conversation on issues of moment” (Downing & Ford, 2000, pp. 29-30). Bennet (2003) argues that new media facilitate the creation of distributed public spheres, where people can deliberate in multiple forums online. This differs from the traditional Habermasian sphere which is governed by a top-down hierarchical flow of information, where a few influential players decide what issues to be put on the agenda. The speed in which technology is developing and impacting the society, creating new spaces where citizens exercise their civic rights, makes it difficult to get a deep understanding of how the new media actually affect, not only the society at large, but also how mainstream media report on New Media. The next chapter will take an ecological approach to the problem, by trying to illustrate how the Social-, Radical- and mainstream media interact and how it can impact mainstream media’s reporting on social movements.

### ***2.1.1 New media ecology***

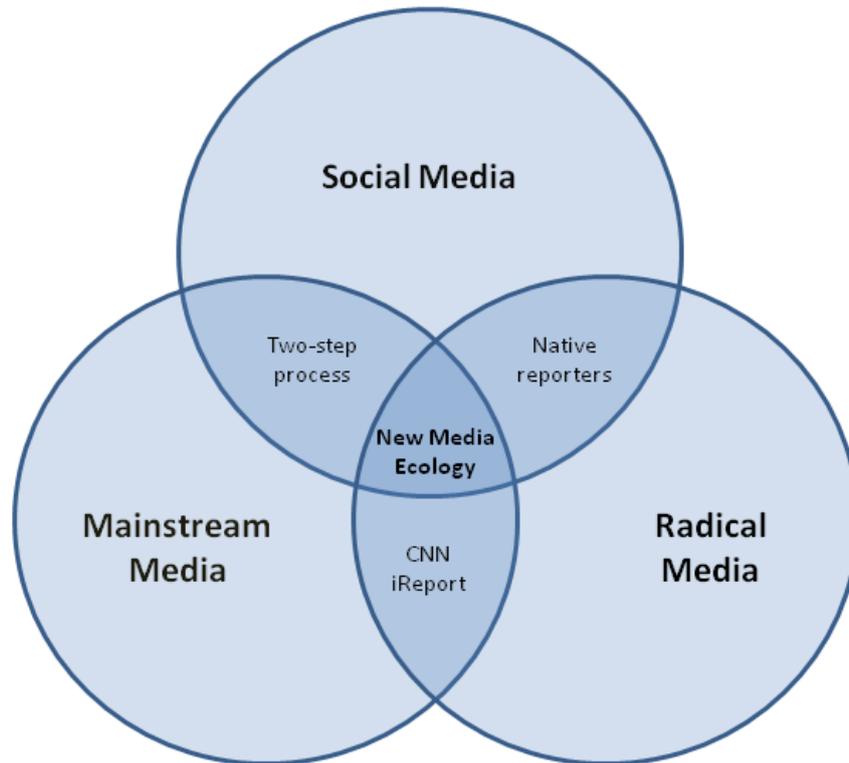
New media is an inextricable part of the modern society, often referred to as the information society. Together with the constantly changing and developing society, new media both reflect and impact these developments (Youngs, 2007). With the burgeoning of the Internet and ICT (Information Communication Technology), the border between media and society is becoming increasingly blurry. Online public spaces such as discussion forums become public spheres where democratic exchange of ideas and opinions takes place (Papacharissi, 2002). Technology both shape and is being shaped by society through a series of transformations. The new media ecology is a fast developing environment, where the digitization of all kinds of content opens up new spheres of political-, economical- and sociological communication. The participatory culture drives social change, and shape the future of the society. Social media play a key role, and the way it is being mediated by the media contributes to how it is perceived by society, and consequently how it impacts the society. This section aims to explain one of these transformations by focusing on the ecology so to get a better understanding of how information is spread and generated through new media. This aspect is important to understand when studying how mainstream media reports on new media, and the movements that operate within this new ecology.

Since the Internet became a household success in the mid 1990s its impact on media studies has been significant. Mark Poster published his book “The Second Media Age” in 1995 (Poster, 1995), just as the Internet was introduced to the household market, where he pointed out how this new medium was different from the earlier ones. He made a distinction between the first and the second media age, where the first was the age of mass media where one speaks to many, while the second “digital” media age was based on two way communication where many speak to many. His observations and predictions have turned out to be quite precise in terms of how digital media differs from broadcast media. Though the second media age might still prevail, Levinson (2009) sees it necessary to highlight the significance of the social media by calling it the ‘new’ new media. In tune with Jenkins participatory culture he emphasizes the paradigmatic change that the opportunity to create and share content means to the media and consequently its impact on the society. Just as Poster was a pioneer in understanding the future impact of digital media, Levinson is predicting the future impact of social media. This however illustrates the rapid developments within the field communication technology and media studies, and the paradigmatic impact it entail.

New media ecology is a relatively new term that is being increasingly mentioned in academic papers and debates. It spring out of the more traditional term “media ecology” which in short means the study of media as environments. Neil Postman (1993) argues that:

Technological change is neither additive nor subtractive. It is ecological. I mean “ecological” in the same sense as the word is used by environmental scientists. One significant change is generates total change. If you remove the caterpillars from a given habitat, you are not left with the same environment minus caterpillars: you have a new environment, and you have reconstituted the conditions of survival; the same is true if you add caterpillars to an environment that has none. This is how the ecology of media works as well (p. 18).

This suggests that media ecology consists of a system based on technologies, where every technology is vital for the ecology as a whole. So when new technologies are introduced, or to use McLuhan’s words; ‘when new media consumes the content of old media’, institutions that have been created within certain environments are threatened. Within the new media ecology these institutions clash more frequently, as well as in a different way than before. This chapter will present several touching points between different institutions within this new media ecology.



**Figure 1:** This is an illustration of three institutions within the new media ecology and their touching points. They are grey areas that raise new concerns in terms of how it impacts the Media ecology, and will be discussed in this chapter. Within each of the touching points are topics that are discussed in this section.

The Internet has brought significant changes to the new media ecology in a very short time, and information is generated and distributed in new ways. Social media connect people so they can create content and exchange information, while mainstream media pick up on news generated by the radical media, who in turn rely on information and content from social media. This section aims to give an oversight of the new media ecology so to get a better understanding of the role of social media.

### **2.1.2 Radical media**

Chris Atton (2002) characterizes radical media as non-hierarchical and that it often constitutes of collective modes of organisation that are coupled with a radical political agenda. He refers to John Downing and Ford's (2000) explanation on how radical media differs from radical media (2002):

Downing explicitly places the organisation of radical media and their journalistic practices in opposition to a construction of mainstream media that is largely monolithic, centred on profit making, hierarchical organisation and a practice of journalism that, by dint of its routinisation and codification as a profession, is implicitly exclusive. Against this he presents an ideal type of radical media, one that is radically

democratic in terms of access and political aims, and that is some undefined way “purer” than the elitism of professional media. (p. 492)

Radical media function as a counter weight to the mainstream media by offering alternative values and different standards for news gathering and dissemination. This serves the social movements in two ways; firstly as an alternative channel for disseminating their message to a wider audience, and secondly to maintain an access to the mainstream media. The latter means that social movements reach mainstream media through radical media. “This entails developing media to encourage and normalise such access, where people of low status ... can make their own news, whether by appearing in it as significant actors or by creating news themselves that is relevant to their situation” (Atton, 2002, p. 493).

The “pure” media, as Downing defines it, is mainly criticizing the undemocratic practices of monolithic news organizations and their financial biases, while praising the clear and “honest” journalism that radical media represent. Radical media is pure because the reporters have a clear agenda and report accordingly. Nonetheless, it does not mean that radical media reporters are unbiased. Atton (2002) call them native reporters and argue that they “[...] use their role as activists in order to represent from the inside, the motives, experiences, feelings, needs and desires of the wider social movements they thus come to represent. Dealing with events and actions, their contributions superficially resemble eyewitness reports in mainstream media.” (p. 495) Native reporters have the advantage of being part of the story that the mainstream media reports on, and their observations and opinions become a part of the mainstream news framing. Atton argue that native reporters that are perceived as “[...] “ordinary people” can in various ways disrupt the framing of the mass media, and denaturalise the dominant social processes of the media” (Atton, 2002, p. 497).

### ***2.1.3 The two-step process***

Another disruptive element in the new media ecology is its effect on opinion forming. Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld (1955) argued that “[...] mass media alone do not change people's minds; instead, there is a two-step process. Opinions are first transmitted by the media, and then they get echoed by friends, family members, and colleagues” (Shirky, 2011, pp. 4-5). In this two-step process, opinion leaders such as husbands, club members and fellow employees function as a mediator between the media and the non-opinion leaders – the people. In their study they found that opinion leaders, more than non-opinion leaders, think that mass media have an influence on their opinion (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). With new media, and social media in

particular, this two-step process is still highly relevant but follows perhaps a different pattern than with mass media. In the mass media ecology the listener or reader is in the end of the news process, while in the new media ecology ICT grants them access to other parts of the process. They are no longer confined to consume “packaged” mainstream media, instead they have the opportunity to not only access information in early stages of the news production, but also participate through interactive communication on online forums and various social media platforms. On the other hand opinion leaders can reach a larger audience of people, no longer confined to family and work related relations. The traditional power relations are challenged by new media such as social networking sites where people develop their opinions online – outside the traditional spheres.

Clay Shirky (2011) argues that the two-step process is amplified by new media. He refers to an incident in South Korea where teenage girls gathered in thousands to protest against U.S. beef imports. Many of them had been radicalized through the discussion forum of a website connected to a popular boy band with a community with around 800,000 active users. These girls are not typical political activists who would go to the streets for such a cause, but Shirky argues that the opportunity for communicating online allowed the member to form political opinions through conversation. This means that new media both disrupt the ecology and amplify the two-step process of opinion forming. These implications to the media ecology are theorized by Jenkins’ (2001), through participatory culture, which emphasizes the impact that conversations in cyber-space can have on society.

Similarly to the role of radical media, content aggregators function as mediator between the creator and the mass media. Ethan Zuckerman (2010) explains how hundreds of millions of people create content online, and how “ [...] aggregation sites report international news by collecting content already published on citizen media platforms” (p. 12). This contextualizes the importance of the aggregators and their filtering processes, and its impact on mainstream media who occasionally pick up on news stories online. This shows how people are no longer restricted to be only receivers at the end of the news story process, but instead become an inextricable part of it. Downing and Ford (2000) argue that communication networks, such as social networking sites, play a very important role in the media ecology. Social media constitutes a different kind of media audience “[...] who are active members of social networks that, in times of social tumult and political crisis, are often the best-placed heralds of the new and the best-informed advisers on movement strategies to those networks” (p. 33). Further he argues that network that facilitates interpersonal communication does not operate through the media, though they are

both fed by the media and feed into the media. This suggests that social media and mainstream media are intrinsically connected, and that these connections can best be studied during social protests. The active members who are at the right place at the right time become important hubs in the network and operate to a certain extent as aggregators and spokesmen in the radical media, and thereby they are the linkage between the social movements and the mainstream media.

The theories in this chapter suggest that the new media ecology is different from the traditional mass media ecology. The “two-step” process, in social networking sites and online discussion forums, change people opinions before the news reach the mainstream media, which in return report on these two-step processes – like in the example from South Korea where thousands of teenage girls in a deliberative process online took a political stance which in turn was reported on by the media. This leads to acceleration in news dissemination, as well as changing the news framing. Timur Kuran, quoted in Holger Lutz Kern (2010), argues that:

[...] people who dislike an authoritarian regime tend to publicly support it as long as the opposition seems weak because the costs of siding with the seemingly unpopular opposition are higher than the psychological costs of pretending to support the secretly despised status quo. However, because of such “preference falsification,” even slight surges in the strength of the opposition can lead to “revolutionary bandwagons” in which authoritarian regimes that once appeared unshakeable quickly see their support crumble (p. 5)

With new media these “revolutionary bandwagons” have the potential to roll much faster than in mass media ecology. Social Networking sites such as Facebook facilitate immediate communication between opinion leaders and the people, while the rapid reporting on the events through the mass media confirms whether they should jump on the bandwagon or not. Radical media plays the key role in manipulating the framing of the events which are crucial for how the event unfold.

## **2.2 Mainstream Media**

Mainstream media today is usually understood as newspapers and broadcast media broadcasting radio and television. New media such as the Internet basically converge, or consume to use McLuhan’s words, all these previous mediums, creating new ways for the users to access information and according to Jenkins (2001) fundamentally change the culture for how media is consumed by the audience. This means that the content creators, like newspapers and broadcast media, have to adapt themselves and their products to fit into this new culture where every reader, listener and viewer also are content creators. Mainstream news websites such as the

Guardian implement journalist blogs on their website, while CNN have a section called iReport where the readers can publish their content. The distinction between professional and amateur media is becoming increasingly blurry. Internet and the digitization of content allow any medium, whether it is broadcast media or newspapers, to create almost the same content based on audio, video and text. In other words, Internet converge broadcast media and newspapers online. So to define mainstream media today is a challenge because of convergence and its adjustment to the participatory culture.

McLuhan's (1964) theory of hot and cold media offer an alternative take on the characteristics of mass media versus new media. As mentioned earlier he argues that it is not the content that defines the medium, but how it is used. A medium such as the High Definition television is a very hot medium because it does not leave much room for neither participation nor imagination. If the very same television set were to show a cartoon in black and white, it would be cooler because it requires more imagination and participation from the viewer. Internet on the other hand is a very cool medium because it practically, though it is not necessary the norm, invite for participation (Levinson, 2001). The user is not restricted to only receive information, but can participate by communicating or creating content online. McLuhan's theory functions as a thermometer that differentiates mediums based on how they are used. Traditionally mass media, such as television and newspapers, is recognized as a hot medium because a few speak to many and that there are few possibilities for interactivity with the audience. But as mentioned in the previous paragraph, convergence, especially on the Internet, blurs the line between mass media and new media. Nevertheless both newspaper and television still exist in their old "hot" form to use McLuhan's terminology, and is often referred to as the mass media.

### ***2.2.1 Critique of the mainstream media***

To distinguish the core characteristics of old and new media, it can help to look at the critique that has been raised towards them both. Mass media have been heavily criticized for its one way dialogue with the audience, and consequently being a critique against the Habermasian public sphere that theorizes this ecology of mass media and socio-political governance. Cyber-utopians argue that new media can improve democratic processes, while cyber-pessimists claim the opposite. Georges Duhamel, (quoted in Poster, 1995) argues that the cinema is:

[A] pastime for helots, a diversion for the uneducated, wretched, worn-out creatures who are consumed by their worries ..., a spectacle which requires no concentration and presupposes no intelligence..., which kindles no light in the heart and awakens no hope other than the ridiculous one of someday becoming a 'star' in Los Angeles (pp. 4-5).

This quote illustrates both the contemporary critique towards the mass media as something that pacifies the audience and feed them unnecessary information, and at the same time is the current cyber-optimists strongest arguments for why new media can improve the society by facilitating interactive and intellectual conversations online. Theodor W. Adorno continues Duhamel's critique of the mass media by arguing that the cultural industry cements and reifies stereotypes in their own interest, and consequently makes it harder for the people to change their preconceived ideas (Poster, 1995). Adorno claim that mass media practically is equivalent to fascism in the sense that the people are told what is better for them, and they abide those on the top. According to Poster (1995) Habermas acknowledge the problem of one-way speech in the mass media but choose a different approach. "For Habermas, what saves the media from complete authoritarian, technological determinism is not that they mark an alternative to the logocentric subject but rather that they institute an even stronger version of it, one enhanced by the recognition that the technology itself contains libratory elements" (Poster, 1995 p. 13). In other words, though the public sphere is not ideal for two-way communication, limiting responses from the public to yes or no i.e. on television polls, Habermas argue that the mass media have an emancipator potential in the sense that it disseminate information to a large audience. New media however is promised, especially by the cyber-optimists, to add the interactivity to the media which mass media lack. Cyber-pessimists on the other hand might choose to use Habermas' argument, turn it around, and argue that the digital divide hinders new media to reach the large audience in a democratic manner.

### ***2.2.2 Previous research***

Julie Jones from the University of Oklahoma and Itai Himelboim from the University of Georgia (2010) have conducted a research on how blogs are framed by the US national and local newspapers. Their content analysis was based on 7 major national and local newspapers across the USA, gathering 377 articles in the period 1999-2005. They used the terms blogs, bloggers, blogging, weblogs, web logs or blogosphere in the citations or abstracts to filter the articles. The term blog was defined as a medium that has no ties with any news organization so to make a clear distinction between professional and amateur blogs. In their coding frame they used 3 dependent and 3 independent variables:

The first dependent variable (DV) in this study was the value of blogs as framed by the story: a threat or a benefit and to whom. The second DV was the narrative frame of the story: a new or a common phenomenon. The third DV was a frame that associated blogs or bloggers with journalism or journalists. The three independent variables included in the analysis were: a time variable (year of publication), the

section of the paper where the article appeared and the newspaper in which the article appeared (Jones & Himelboim, 2010, p. 279).

Mainstream media function as a watchdog in the modern democratic society. The public sphere is the arena where a constant mediation between the people and the media find place, and where the aim, through deliberative processes, is to reach a consensus on opinions. This relation between the media and the public sphere has granted the mainstream media exclusive power over the public debate, which new media such as blogs have the potential to disrupt. From a journalistic perspective this disruption may harm the mainstream media as an objective and autonomous player in the society. Jones and Himelboim (2010) researched how blogs are framed by the US national and local newspapers, and they found that:

Only one in ten articles associated blogs and bloggers with journalism or news media. Furthermore, this is the only category where blogs were discussed as a threat more than as a benefit. In other words, blogs were discussed less and mainly as a negative phenomenon only in stories that placed bloggers and journalists in the same field (P. 283).

This finding indicates that the newspapers are quite sceptical towards blogs as a form of journalism. Further in their research Jones and Himelboim (2010) argue that, in the formative years of the blogosphere, mainstream media instead of focusing on the challenges that blogs would have to face to become reliable sources of information, distanced themselves from the blogosphere indicating stagnation instead of innovation in their news reporting. The big news organisations play out their role as gatekeepers, which consequently lead to a wider gap between the mainstream media and new media.

### **2.2.3 Instrumentalist view**

Technology is an integral part of media, both historically and present. As mentioned in the new media theory chapter (2.1) above, McLuhan defines the medium based on how it is used and not by its content. Technology, seemingly in an increasing fashion, drives the evolution of the media by offering new ways of communication. Just like Gutenberg's movable type revolutionized the media by making it possible to communicate with the masses, the Internet revolutionized the media by facilitating a two way dialogue with the masses. The proliferation of new digital products such as mobile phones and computers, and the rapid developments within ICT such as social media, accelerates the convergence of mediums. New media technologies that facilitate online public spheres, e-petitions, e-polls, Internet based elections etc are examples on how media and society are getting more closely connected. So to understand the new media or the society at large, it is also important to acknowledge that technology shape society and vice versa.

Gillian Youngs (2007) suggests looking at technology through an endogenous perspective that sees it as an integral part of society by acknowledging that; technology impacts how power is expressed politically, economically and sociologically. The endogenous view on the other hand, she argues; is an instrumentalist view where technology, both in our personal lives and in the study of communications, is seen as a tool outside social processes.

Shirky (2011) continues Youngs' (2007) critique arguing that technology, and ICT in particular, is understood in an exogenous way or more precisely an instrumentalist way. In a political context he claims that:

The instrumental view is politically appealing, action-oriented, and almost certainly wrong. It overestimates the value of broadcast media while underestimating the value of media that allow citizens to communicate privately among themselves. It overestimates the value of access to information, particularly information hosted in the West, while underestimating the value of tools for local coordination. And it overestimates the importance of computers while underestimating the importance of simpler tools, such as cell phones (Shirky, 2011, pp. 2-3).

The instrumentalist view in other words represents a limited understanding of the complex duality between technology and society. In news organizations, and perhaps mainstream media in particular, the generalization and simplification of the story might be appealing. In a media ecology that is becoming increasingly entangled into to political, economical and sociological processes, the impact of an instrumentalist view can influence the future development of the society. Whether or not the media have an instrumentalist approach to technology; highlighting it can give important information to why the media labelled the Egyptian uprising the Facebook revolution. Media's approach and relation to technology is very complicated, therefore it is necessary to break it down to definable entities, in this case the instrumentalist view.

#### ***2.2.4 Social movements and the media***

The previous chapters illustrate how important both the new media and the "old" mainstream media are for social movements, and how the new media ecology facilitates new ways of interaction between the people and the media. Just as Gutenberg's printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century drove the protestant reformation by making the bible accessible to the people in their local language, the social movements of the 1960s was partly driven by their notion of knowing that, for the first time in history, the whole world was watching their protests (de Donk, Wim B. H. J. van, 2004). Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) argue that, "Movements are generally much more dependent on media than the reverse, and this fundamental asymmetry implies the greater power of the media system in the transaction (p. 116). Accordingly, they claim that movements

need media for three major purposes: mobilization, validation, and scope enlargement. The mainstream media is an important mobilization tool for the movements when they want to reach an audience outside their own sphere. To attract a large audience function as a validation that they fight for the right cause, while scope enlargement puts the focus on their cause and attract third party players into the debate which normally favours the stronger party. In new media ecology however, the same principles adhere in terms of their goals, but are utilized through media in new ways as discussed in the new media chapter above.

In conjunction with the three major purposes for why movements need the media, Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) list three elements of media coverage that is of special interest for movement actors:

(1) standing, that is, the extent to which the group is taken seriously by being given extensive media coverage, regardless of content; (2) preferred framing, that is, the prominence of the group's frame in media discourse on the issues of concern; and (3) movement sympathy, that is, the extent to which the content of the coverage presents the group in a way that is likely to gain sympathy from relevant publics (pp. 120-121).

In the new media ecology social movements can interact with the media in new ways, and thereby having new tools for gaining media coverage. Native reporters are a good example of how new media makes it possible for movements to gain the mainstream media's attention. By being able to create their own news, based on the movements own views and values, they have greater control of the mainstream media's framing of them and their cause. Radical media provide access to the mainstream media based on terms that are suitable for the movements (Atton, 2002). This illustrates how the new media ecology is different from the traditional media ecology, and why it is important to be aware of it when studying the new media.

When protests break out both the media and the movements try to interpret what is happening. The mainstream media is based on hierarchical, structural, profit based news organizations that consequently colours the framing of events – though, whether this is done discretely or not depends on the news organization. But it is exactly this that Downing criticizes about the mainstream media when he compares it to the “pure” radical media. Social movements and the radical media are not less biased, as been highlighted in this chapter; they utilize it in ways that benefit their cause. The purity lies in the fact that they are open about their agenda and report accordingly, thereby avoiding the problem of reporting objectively. Nonetheless, these media systems are interacting more frequently than before because the new media ecology facilitates this.

### **2.2.5 Previous research**

In a previous research Sonora Jha (2007) analysed Internet's influence on the coverage of social protests. She argues that "Given the multiple points of access to the movement's discussions available via the Internet, journalists could actually have moved beyond reliance on (and suspicion about, and ethical concern with using) protester press releases, meetings, or other material" (p. 50). The new media ecology provides several new touching points between the movements and the media, which has the potential of changing the ways they interact. Jha's (2007) content analysis, based on articles from 1999, found on the other hand that the Internet had no impact on how protest coverage was carried out. These findings however are consistent with previous literature she argues, particularly with a study from 1994 that journalist's forms of information retrieval are different but the power structures and the sources and news frames are still similar to what it was when Internet was in its infancy and before that.

Jha's (2007) research compared the coverage of two separate movements; the Vietnam anti-war protests in 1967, and the anti-WTO protests also known as the "Battle of Seattle" in 1999. By comparing these two movements that are so distant in time, but similar in many other aspects, Jha aims to find out if the Internet has any impact on media coverage of such events. The time frame was set to three weeks; divided into the week before the protest, during the protest and after the protest. The sampling was taken from one national newspaper and one local newspaper relevant to where the protests found place, and counted a total of 444 articles. For analysing the sourcing the following variables were used: "Official (Govt. and Trade) Sources," "Authoritative (Govt. and Trade) Sources," "Official (Protester) Sources," "Authoritative (Protester) Sources," and "Unknown Protesters."

### **2.2.6 Autonomous strand**

The "Battle of Seattle" in 1999 is often used as a reference example, in academic texts, when theorizing the modern or "new" social movements, which utilize new media such as the Internet and SMS (Short messaging System) for mobile phones to organize and coordinate protests. The "Battle of Seattle" has been recognized for its success to coordinate a wide spectrum of social movements to join for a common cause (de Donk, Wim B. H. J. van, 2004). Manuel Castells (2001) argues that this is a new way of protesting; when people and NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) converge in the online sphere for special purpose. Benet's (2003) theory of distributed spheres, which is discussed above, can efficiently be used as a backdrop in the framing of the new social movements. Relating to this he also argues that technology facilitates

an identity driven sub-politics where “Communication in diverse networks is ideologically thin, but rich in terms of individual identity and lifestyle narratives” (p. 150). This means that social movements shift away from being based on ideologies and fronted by strong leadership, to non-hierarchical organisations that are less driven by ideologies and more concentrated on causes. Lincoln Dahlberg and Eugenia Siapera (2007) argues that “[...] rather than being a collection of rational individuals, rational discursive publics, or a set of strategically articulated and antagonistic groups, community is theorized in autonomism as pure power” (pp. 9-10). They call it the Autonomous strand; where the “multitude” gains power through commonalities.

### ***2.2.7 The protest paradigm***

Previous studies have suggested that news organisations have a tendency to favour reporting that focus on clashes between police and demonstrators instead of the political manifestations behind the movements that protest in the streets. The protesters are generally characterized as violent and disturbing elements to law and order in the society, and the more deviant a movement is characterized in the mainstream media, the less favourable the news articles was about the movement (McCluskey, Stein, Boyle, & McLeod, 2009). “For instance, news coverage of protests and demonstrations – events that often include a social critique on political matters – has tended to marginalize protest groups, a phenomenon that has been labelled the “protest paradigm” (McCluskey et al., 2009, p. 355). Douglas McLeod (2007) argues that:

Most protest groups operate with limited resources and have a difficult time securing public visibility, disseminating information, and exerting influence. Though the Internet has certainly compensated somewhat for the lack of resources in achieving such goals, most protest groups still attempt to engage mass media. However, getting media attention puts many protest groups in a precarious situation. A peaceful protest that focuses on articulating issue positions is not likely to fit established news conventions for what makes a good news story (p. 185).

These observations indicate that within in the mass media ecology newspapers are influenced by the broadcast media and vice versa, and it is this symbiosis of values and attitudes that shape the way movements are framed in the media. In the new media ecology this symbiosis has a different structure and pattern that might impact the protest paradigm. There are now more opportunities for groups or movements with limited resources to gain publicity through new media. McCluskey et al. (2009) conducted a research that aimed to find out how the community structure impact the protest coverage in the local newspapers. One of the variables in their content analysis investigated the headline valence, aiming to understand the tone of the articles so to be able to assess how the newspapers depicted the protests. They note that a headline sets

the tone for an article and that it might have significant impact on how the following text is interpreted by the reader (McCluskey et al., 2009, p. 361). Therefore, analysing the headlines can help analysing the newspapers attitude towards the protests.

McLeod (2007) conducted a discourse analysis of the Los Angeles Times and how it framed the Day without Immigrants Demonstration of 2006. He seeks to find out how the protest paradigm applies to this “mainstream” movement that fight for immigrants’ rights, and aim to gain a better understanding of questions such as: “Which characteristics of the protest paradigm are most robust in case of this protest group? To what extent was the pro-immigration movement successful in generating widespread publicity without succumbing to the delegitimizing forces of the protest paradigm?” (McLeod, 2007, p. 188). In his analysis McLeod identifies a set of protest paradigm characteristics: (1) News frames; where the media selects certain way of framing the news to promote a particular point. (2) Reliance on official sources and official definitions; where media rely heavily on certain official sources, such as public officials, in their reporting. (3) Invocation of public opinion; where the media either use polls, or make generalization based on interviews with bystanders, to point out how the protesters are different from the mainstream society. (4) Delegitimization; where the media fail to adequately explain the protesters cause. (5) Demonization; where the media exaggerates the protesters actions or causes to make headlines. New media have the potential to impact all these characteristics by providing new streams of information that represent a wider spectrum of views and opinions.

McLeod’s (2007) analysis found that the derogatory news frames, such as riot and police versus protester, were notably absent from the Los Angeles Times coverage of the event. “Instead, much of the coverage was framed as a national celebration of positive energy, devoid of violence, civil disobedience, and visible conflict” (McLeod, 2007, p. 189). The reason for this, he argues, might be because there was little violence, property damage etc for the journalists to report on, so instead they turned their focus to the sheer size of the event and the numbers of participants, which was significantly high. The reliance on official sources was also unexpectedly low; something McLeod thinks is connected with the fact that there was very little confrontation with authority. Also the abstractness of the protest in terms of political cause might have been a factor to why the journalists did not rely on official sources. Instead, McLeod observes, the protesters was given unusual amounts of space in the newspaper, and he concludes that:

From a theoretical standpoint, this study found evidence that journalists have more latitude to deviate from the protest paradigm when they are covering a group that has goals and tactics that are more consistent with mainstream public opinion and more acceptable to political elites (McLeod, 2007, p. 191).

The Los Angeles Times' coverage of the event avoided many of the protest paradigm pitfalls due to the above mentioned reasons. Though, according to McLeod (2007), the journalists failed to explain the underlying issues and the politics behind the protests. He found that “[...] there was not a single article that provided the kind of detailed exploration and explanations that would allow the audience to not only understand the immigration controversy, but also to formulate intelligent policy positions” (McLeod, 2007, p. 191). Therefore the newspaper failed to provide “mobilizing information” that potentially could inform and encourage the public to take part in the protest.

## 3. Methodology

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### **3.1 Introduction**

The new media ecology, as discussed above, has the possibility to disrupt the monolithic structures of the traditional news environment. It is a part of the online public sphere, or spheres, where interactivity facilitates new and rapid modes of information exchange. Journalists, governmental officials, social movements, activists and protesters, now, participate on more equal terms than ever before. The new media ecology facilitates an environment where power structures are being re-structured. This research aims to investigate how the new media ecology might impact the mainstream media by analysing how the mainstream media report on social movements and new media. Previous research suggests that mainstream media have a rather negative attitude towards new media and little impact on their reporting, where they dismiss its potential of delivering serious journalism and consequently distancing themselves away from the other participants in the new media ecology (Jha, 2007; Jones & Himelboim, 2010). This research offer an explanatory approach to the mainstream media's reporting on the protests in Egypt 2011, which resulted in the toppling down of the president Hosni Mubarak. The media has repeatedly named it the Facebook- or Twitter revolution, seemingly being very enthusiastic about the role of social media in the uprising towards the president. How does this relate to previous research that argues that mainstream media have a tendency to be negative towards both new media and protest groups? (McCluskey et al., 2009; McLeod, 2007) Did the mainstream media's position within the new media ecology influence their reporting on the protests in Egypt?

### **3.2 Research questions**

This research aims to give a deeper understanding of how the mainstream media reported on the Egyptian protests in terms of their attitudes towards the protesters and the role of new media such as social networking sites. Since there is no clear theory nor previous research that correspond with this research, a set of research questions has been set up to function as focus points and guide for the design and execution of the content analysis. The research questions aim to link the variables in the coding scheme, focusing on mainstream media's framing of the protests and new media in particular.

RQ1: How did the journalists frame the protests in terms of their attitude towards the protesters cause, did they report in tune with the protest paradigm?

RQ2: Did the journalists report on new media in an optimistic- or sceptic manner, and to what extent did they use new media as source in their articles?

RQ3: Did journalists report on social media in an instrumentalist way where they favour action-oriented responses to technology?

The first research question focuses on the framing of the protesters, aiming to provide data explaining mainstream media's attitude towards the protesters cause. Previous research suggests that mainstream media tend to focus on violence between protesters and police instead of focusing on the rationale behind the protests. The second research question looks at how the media reported on new media, and to what extent they used it as a source. Previous studies indicate that mainstream media have a negative attitude towards New Media technology, which is interesting given the observation that the media has been seemingly positive in the sense that they have labelled the protests in Egypt as the Facebook- and Twitter revolution. The third research question asks whether or not newspapers have an instrumentalist approach to new media technology. If so, it may indicate that mainstream media fail to really understand the new media ecology in which they operate, and what are the consequences?

### **3.3 Research Design**

This research uses the protests in Egypt as a case study, focusing on British newspapers and their coverage of the event – commonly known as the Egyptian revolution. The decision to focus on a particular event has several reasons. The research has an explanatory approach where it builds on a range mainstream and new media theories, so to gain a deeper understanding of how the new media ecology functions. In other words, the research uses an actual real life event to explain how the mainstream media report on new media. Most previous research also focus on real life events when analysing media coverage on protest movements, which means that the methodologies and findings from their research will be more applicable and relevant. The case study approach allows for analysing the media coverage within a specific time and space, which means that the findings can be understood within a specific context and therefore give more meaning. This research does not test any hypothesis, instead it is guided by a set of research questions that aim to provide data that can give valuable information about how the mainstream media reported on the Egyptian protests and give a better understanding of why it has been labelled the Facebook- and Twitter revolution.

Quantitative content analysis has been chosen as research method for gathering data. It is often used in media studies because it makes it possible to analyse a large body of articles and systematically organize the data. Arthur Asa Berger (2000) lists five advantages of the content analysis as a research method which are highly relevant to this research. (1) It is unobtrusive –

which means that, unlike interviewing or participant observation, it does not interfere with the research results. (2) It is relatively inexpensive – which holds true in this research since it uses online tools, more precisely LexisNexis, to access the articles, and PASW (formerly known as SPSS) to code and process the data. (3) It can deal with current events, topics of present-day interest – which is very valuable in this research because it analyses a very recent event, and previous content analysis research makes it possible to swiftly quantify the data and put it in perspective – both historically and academically. (4) It uses material that is relatively easy to obtain and work with – LexisNexis provides organized and structured set of articles based on search criteria, which provide easy access to the material. (5) It yields data that can be quantified – this is the common thread through all the advantages, and is perhaps both its strongest and weakest argument. The fact that data are being expressed in numbers has its benefits and caveats.

This research examines what the newspapers have been writing about the protests in Egypt. It analyses the manifest content which means that; only what is explicitly stated in text is analysed – in contrast to the latent content which analyses the hidden meaning behind the words. Quantitative content analysis has been criticized for putting too much emphasis on comparative frequency of different symbols' appearance. “Holsti (1969) described this focus on "the appearance or nonappearance of attributes in messages" as "qualitative content analysis" (p. 10) and recommended using both quantitative and qualitative methods "to supplement each other" (p. 11)” (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005, p. 36). This research however collects data solely through a quantitative method, where the focus is on how the mainstream media has reported on the protests in Egypt. In other words, this research is not aiming to understand the underlying reasons for why the protests in Egypt evolved the way it did, but how the media reported on the event. Therefore a quantitative method is sufficient, as well as efficient, when analysing the event in retrospect.

### **3.4 Text acquisition**

The content analysis began with finding the relevant articles on LexisNexis, and the following keywords and Boolean terms were set up to retrieve the articles; Egypt anywhere and, Facebook anywhere or, Twitter Anywhere and, Protestor anywhere or, Demonstrator anywhere. So the articles has to contain both the word “Egypt” and “Facebook” or “Twitter”, along with “Protestor” or “Demonstrator” which emphasizes that social media is mentioned together with the protests in Egypt. The date was set between 25 January 2011 and 16 February 2011 to cover the protests from beginning to end. By focusing on this time period the chances for retrieving

articles, based on the mentioned keywords, are relatively high. Articles mentioning i.e. “Egypt” “Facebook” and “Protestor” within this time period have a high probability of being about the events in Egypt. All National UK newspapers, including Sunday editions, were selected for the content analysis. The rationale behind this is that this research aims to analyse how British media reported on protesters and new media during the protests in Egypt. In other words, the focus will be on the cohort of British newspapers, and not how they individually reported – though some differentiation between tabloids and broadsheets media might be relevant in certain cases within the analysis. Duplicate options were set on high similarity so that the most obvious duplicates were left out. Because the total findings of articles were no more than 87, it was not difficult to detect the few remaining duplicates when reading the articles. The sample also consisted of many non relevant articles, which did not report on the events in Egypt, but rather referring to them when reporting on typically Tunisia or Libya. The final sample therefore consisted of 57 articles, which were arranged in a chronological order and exported to a PDF file for reading, and then the data was directly inserted into PASW statistics software.

The samples are drawn from several newspapers and they are represented with different numbers of articles. Broadsheet newspapers have in general more articles in the total sample compared to the tabloids due to the fact that they are more concerned about foreign affairs such as political protests abroad. Their commonality however is that they are all national newspapers in the UK. Since this research focuses on the British media in general, and because the aim is to analyse the British Newspapers as a whole, it was natural to include all the national newspapers in the sample. It also benefitted the total amount of relevant articles within the time frame. It proved to be a challenge to retrieve a satisfactory amount of relevant articles that mentions both the protesters and social media, and therefore the parameters were adjusted (see chapter 3.6).

### **3.5 Coding scheme**

The coding scheme was designed based on the research questions mentioned above. The selection and structure of the variables are inspired by the previous research of Jones and Himelboim (2010) and Jha (2007) (see chapter 2.2.2 and 2.2.5). The first variable is the (1) “case number” which corresponds with the article numbers in the PDF to identify the different articles. The three next variables are the (2) “date” when the article was publicised, the (3) “newspaper” it was printed in, and (4) “number of words in the article”. The fifth variable (5), “tone towards protests” looks at the headline of each article to see whether it is positive or negative to the protests, and is inspired by the research from McCluskey et al. (2009). This

variable aims to gather data that can indicate the newspapers attitude towards the protests, rather than determining whether they reported in tune with the protest paradigm. The findings, however, will be interesting as an indicator on the overall attitude towards the protests. The sixth variable (6) “Tone keyword mentions” counts the number of times the words “riot” and “demonstration”, including related words such as “rioters” and “demonstrators”, occur in the article. These findings will hopefully in conjunction with variable 5 help understand the newspapers focus and attitudes towards the protests.

The seventh variable (7) “protesters quoted” counts the number of quotes from three categories of protesters. First category is civilians which encompass protesters that are not affiliated with any movement or organisation. Second category is activist protesters which have an affiliation with a non-governmental organisation or movement, while the third category is professionals which apply to protesters who do not fall into the previous categories and that are part of a professional body such as the government or news organisations etc. This variable aims to provide data about the sources that mainstream media use, and which category of protesters that potentially have the strongest impact on the media framing. The variable will not answer to what extent native reporters (Atton, 2002) were quoted and whether or not they had an impact on the media framing, which require a different in depth analysis of the protesters, and is beside the scope of this research. Instead, hopefully this variable, in conjunction with the fifth variable, can give valuable data about the mainstream media’s attitude towards the protests and who among the protesters were interviewed. For clarification; the number of persons quoted, and not the total number of quotes, are counted.

The eight variable (8) “New media sources” aims to provide data that indicate to what extent the mainstream media use New Media as sources in their articles. This variable draws on the research of Jha (2007) which found that even though mainstream media have access to “trustworthy” online information they stick to traditional patterns of obtaining sources for their news articles. The variable consists of three categories that identify how new media has been used as sources; the first one is “URL is referenced in print” which means that the exact address of the website is mentioned. Second; “Website explicitly mentioned as source” means that an Internet website is clearly referenced as the source for the information presented in the article. Third; “Website mentioned in narrative” means a website has been, not referenced, but mentioned in the article as a part of the story. The ninth variable (9) “tone towards social media” looks at whether the articles have an optimistic or sceptic attitude towards social media in the sense that it had an important impact on how the protests evolved. An article may also be considered “neutral”,

meaning that it does not take any clear stance, or “none” meaning that it did not mention social media and its role in the protests. Variable ten (10) “social media emphasized”, aims to provide data about to what extent the mainstream media have an instrumentalist view towards social media. First category applies if social media is emphasized as a tool for coordinating and mobilizing protesters to the streets, implying an instrumentalist approach from the mainstream media. Second category applies when social media is emphasized for communication and building awareness about the cause among the people and the protesters, suggesting an anti-instrumentalist view. The third category applies if social media is seen as a tool for accessing and disseminating information among the people, which implies an instrumentalist view. If neither of these categories are appropriate they can either be marked as “none” which means that the article does not emphasize the role of social media at all, or it can be put in the other category if it does not fit into the three first categories.

### **3.6 Pilot**

Before running the full scale content analysis a pilot was conducted to uncover weaknesses with the sampling and coding scheme. The first problem to reveal itself was that article’s that covered both the protests and mentioned new media was very scarce after 15<sup>th</sup> February. In addition the samples after this date were dominated by the news story concerning the assault on a CBS reporter in Tahrir Square, Cairo, which was almost exclusively represented among the last articles of the sample. Therefore the end date was moved from 18<sup>th</sup> February to 15<sup>th</sup> February so to get a more relevant sample, but still covering the protests from start to end. The keywords in LexisNexis was also moderated, so before ending up with the above mentioned keywords minor changes was conducted to retrieve more relevant articles in terms of mentioning social media. More emphasis was put on Facebook and twitter, while the mentions of “Egypt” were emphasized less by tweaking the parameters, which resulted in a larger sample but according to the pilot was just as relevant. In addition to this, the following definition of which articles to be coded was implemented: The major part of the article has to address the protests in Egypt, and articles that report on other protests and mentions the Egyptian protests are to be dismissed.

The coding scheme also saw several changes as a result of the pilot. Variable 5 was broken down to only look at the headlines to determine whether it has a positive or negative attitude towards the protests. This proved to be more precise and sufficient considering the aim of the variable. Variable 6 were broken down to more quantifiable data by counting the number of quotations from the different categories, instead of defining which category of protesters was given most

influence in the article as a whole. Variable 10 was modified slightly so that the categories are more differentiable but still cover a broad range of ways that mainstream media emphasized the role of social media.

### **3.7 Critique**

The main limitations to this research has been that there is a very limited amount of previous research that have a similar approach to how mainstream media report on new media. This is most likely a result of a too wide approach to the topic, and therefore it has been difficult to find literature that could help focus the research design. Instead a wide range of both literature and previous research has been consulted, but with the outcome that the research try to answer too many big questions. This broad approach also affected the coding scheme, were the variables cover a wide range of research questions, and thereby not allowing an in depth variable analysis. This research would have benefitted from a more concise approach, focusing on how mainstream media reported on the protests in terms of new media framing.

## 4. Main findings and discussion

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“For all that the graffiti around the square hail the anti-government protest as a "Facebook Revolution", the crowd that has gathered there over the past 10 days no longer just includes the young, middle-class social-networking activists whom the West might see as potential leaders” (The Sunday Telegraph, 06.02.2011).

## 4.1 Introduction

This section aims to present the data from the content analysis, and then discuss and compare the findings with previous research. The discussion and analysis will follow the research questions in numerical order, where the first question will look at how the newspapers framed the protesters and the second and third question will look at; how they reported on new media. Protester framing is interesting because it will provide information about how mainstream media, such as newspapers, report within the new media ecology. This data can help explain their attitude towards the protests and put it in a historical context by comparing it with previous research. Given the observation that the Egyptian protests has been labelled the Facebook- and Twitter revolution in the mainstream media, which suggests a very positive and optimistic attitude both in regards to the protesters cause as well new media technology, analysing the media's attitude towards the protesters cause and new media can be valuable.

## 4.2 Research question 1

How did the journalists frame the protests in terms of their attitude towards the protesters cause, did they report in tune with the protest paradigm?

By counting the frequency of the keywords “riots” and “demonstrations” and compare that data with the “Tone towards protests” variable, it is possible to get a clearer picture of how the newspapers reported on the Egyptian protests. The two keywords are not contradictory towards each other, but are supposed to indicate a slightly different focus. When “rioters” are mentioned it is reason to assume there is a higher probability that the article focus on the clashes between protesters and police, while when “demonstrators” are mentioned there is a higher probability that the article focus on the protesters cause because it frames the protesters as demonstrators, which indicate a more peaceful way of depicting protesters.

	None	Supportive	Neutral	Critical	Total
<b>Riots</b>	0	45 (51.1%)	33 (37.5%)	10 (11.4%)	88 (100%)
<b>Demonstrations</b>	5 (3.0%)	90 (54.2%)	58 (34.9%)	13 (7.8%)	166 (100%)

**Figure 2:** Table showing how many times “riots” and “demonstrations” were mentioned, and comparing it with the articles attitude towards the protests.

Almost all of the articles in the coding scheme were either supportive or neutral towards the protests, while just 3 articles were critical and another 3 articles was defined as being “none”. In figure 2 above, data shows that 51.1% of “riots” mentions were found in articles that are

supportive towards the protests. “Demonstrations” have a slightly higher percentage of 54.2%, indicating that articles mentioning this word are more likely to be supportive compared to “riots”. Mentions of “riots” on the other hand, with 37.5%, have a higher probability of being neutral, while “demonstrations” with 34.9% have a lower probability. So articles that focus less on clashes between police and protesters have a higher probability of being supportive of the protesters cause. Articles that on the other hand have a high count of “riots” mentions are more likely to be neutral. These findings are in tune with the “protest paradigm” to the extent that it indicates that there is a connection between the fact that when journalists focus on clashes between police and protesters, there is a higher chance that they are less concerned about the rationale behind the protests, given the assumption that supportive articles are more likely to listen to the protesters.

	None	Supportive	Neutral	Critical	Total
<b>Civilians</b>	0	40 (62.5%)	24 (37.5%)	0	64 (100%)
<b>Activists</b>	0	15 (51.7%)	12 (41.4%)	0	29 (100%)
<b>Professionals</b>	3 (7.9%)	18 (47.4%)	15 (39.5%)	1 (2.6%)	38 (100%)

**Figure 3:** Table showing how often either “civilians”, “activists” and “professionals” were mentioned, and comparing it with the articles attitude towards the protests.

Figure 3 shows that articles that have a high count of civilians being quoted are more likely to be supportive towards the protests. 62.5% of civilian quotations were found in supportive articles, while only 37.5% was found in neutral articles. Professionals quoted was the least likely to be in supportive articles with 47.4%, which is quite significant difference from civilians. These data however indicate that articles that quote civilian protesters are more likely to be supportive of the protesters cause. Activist quoted falls between civilians and professionals where 51.7% of the quotations are found in supportive articles. These findings indicate that the British media supported the “normal” people in Egypt and their uprising towards their government.

By comparing and contrasting the data from table 1 and table 2, it can be argued that articles framing the protesters as peaceful demonstrators and that quotes civilian protesters, are more likely to be supportive. And on the other hand; articles that focus on clashes between police and protesters and that quotes professionals such as journalists, military- and governmental officials etc are more likely to be less supportive of the protesters cause. This latter observation confirms the “protest paradigm” in terms of; not focusing on the political manifestations behind the protests, but rather on officials that comments the violence that unfolds in the streets. This data

does not, however, go in depth of how the newspapers reported on the events, and neither does it give a comprehensive understanding of whether they reported in tune with the “protest paradigm” or not. The data on the other hand indicate that there are traces of the “protests paradigm”, but that it does not prevail.

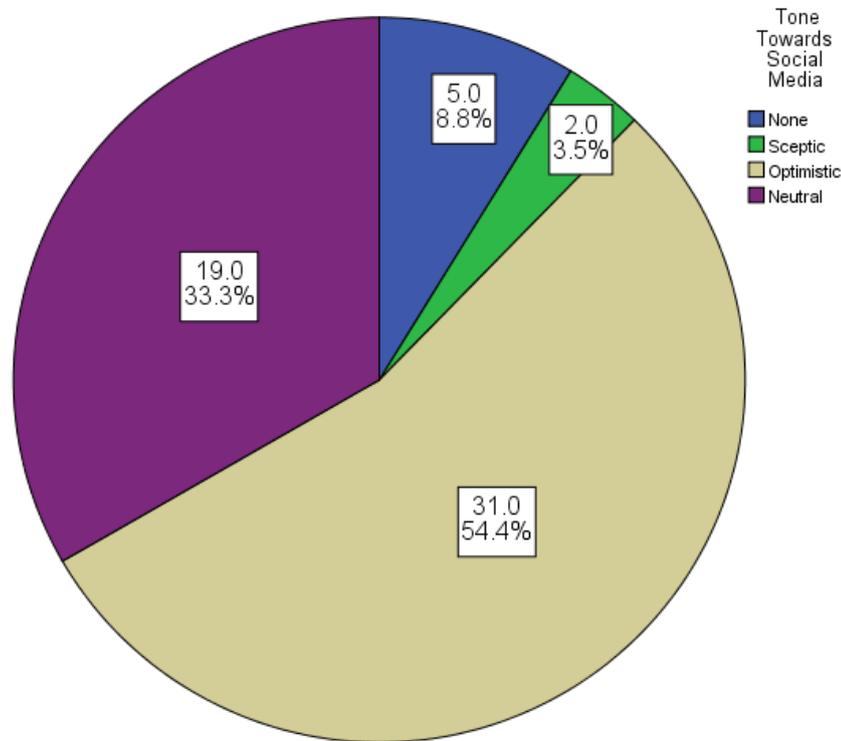
McLeod’s argument (see chapter 2.2.7) that the journalists are more likely to deviate from the “protests paradigm” if the protests corresponds with the mainstream opinion is an interesting observation to be aware of when analysing the protests in Egypt (McLeod, 2007, p.191). In this case it is a foreign press, in the UK, that report on events in a country that is very different from their own. It is reason to believe British media were supportive to the protesters cause, especially given the high count of supportive headlines, and that they enthusiastically labelled it the Facebook- and Twitter revolution. In other words, the high count of supportive articles suggests that the protesters cause were in tune with the British media’s opinion. Despite this, data show that if the articles focus on violence they are less likely to be supportive, though these finding are significantly less than articles focusing on the protesters cause. Overall, the British newspapers attitudes towards the protesters cause, during the protests in Egypt, are in general supportive. It is important however to keep in mind that the article sample in this research are filtered so that all of them mention social media in some way or another. Given the finding that there is a connection between the media’s attitude towards the protests and their attitude towards social media (see figure 6), there is reason to believe that the sample of articles used in this research is skewed because the journalists are more likely to be supportive when they write about social media in conjunction with the protests in Egypt.

### **4.3 Research question 2**

Did the journalists report on new media in an optimistic- or sceptic manner, and to what extent did they use new media as source in their articles?

This research question is quite straight forward in terms of analysing the data from the coding scheme. The variables address the research question directly, but their reliability much depends on the coder’s work, which needs to have a clear set of parameters for the different categories within each variable, so that the coding can be conducted in a consistent manner. This needs to be taken into consideration in the analysis, but it can be mentioned that the coding in this research was done by one person and therefore more likely to be consistent. This however was possible due to a fairly small sample of articles, and needs to be taken into account if applied to a larger sample. This research question will be approached by presenting the main findings

concerning social media and how the newspapers reported on it, and then draw on previous research in the discussion.



**Figure 4:** A pie chart illustrating the percentage of articles that were either “optimistic”, “neutral”, “sceptic” or “none” towards social media’s role in the protests.

The variable ‘tone towards social media’ looked at how the articles characterized social media, and whether or not it had an impact on how the protests were carried out. The findings typically appeared in paragraphs where Facebook and Twitter was mentioned. Figure 4 shows that 54.4% of the articles were optimistic, which means that they emphasize social media’s impact on the protests. See the following example:

*“Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social networking sites have played a vital role in Egypt’s protest movement, just as they did in Tunisia, enabling demonstrators to keep in touch and to organise rallies” (The Independent, 28.01.2011).*

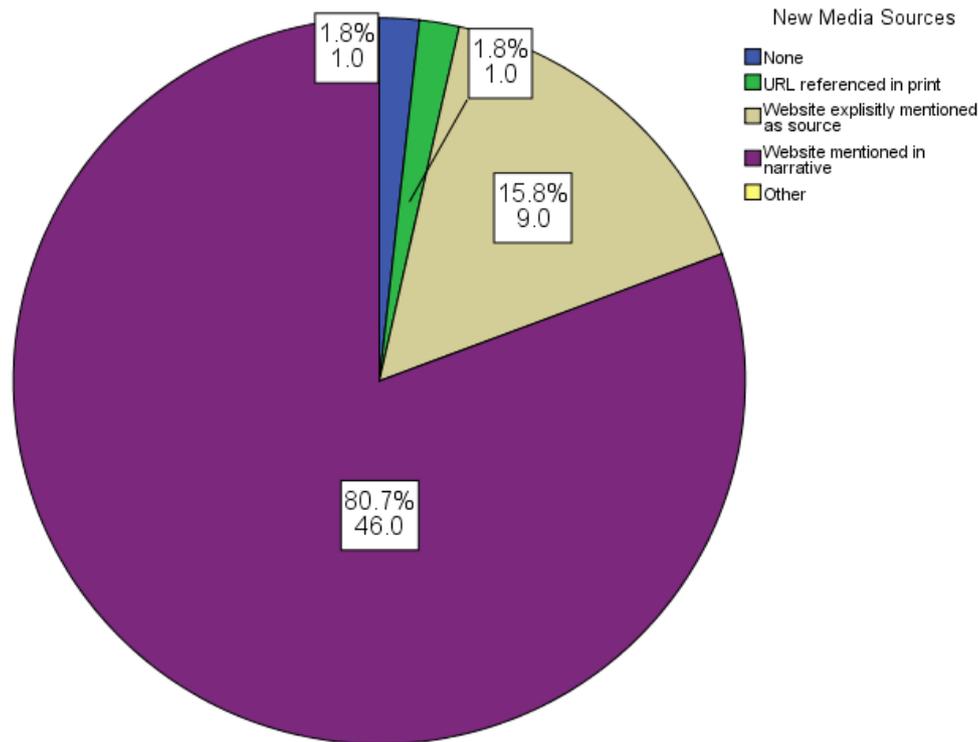
All of the articles in the sample are either mentioned Facebook or Twitter, or both, due to the parameters that was set up for the text acquisition. When social media was mentioned without emphasizing its impact on the revolution it was coded as neutral. 33.3% of the articles were considered neutral, which makes it the second largest after the previous mentioned category, optimistic. See the following example:

*“Protest groups took to the streets despite a police crackdown and a shutdown of Facebook, Twitter and mobile phone networks which had been used to organise demos” (The Sun, 29.01.2011).*

The remaining two categories, sceptic and none, had a very low count, respectively 3.5% and 8.8%. In cases where Twitter or Facebook, or other social media was mentioned without referring to the protests it was coded as “none”. If it on the other hand referred to the protests, and in a way that it dismissed the idea that it had an impact on the protests, it was coded as “sceptical”. See the following example:

*“Through sheer willpower, through courage in the face of Mubarak’s hateful state security police, through the realisation - yes – that sometimes you have to struggle to overthrow a dictator with more than words and Facebook, through the very act of fighting with fists and stones against cops with stun guns and tear gas and live bullets, [...]” (The Independent, 12.02.2011).*

As the citations illustrate this variable is very much dependant on how the coder understands the text. Nevertheless, given that the coder has been consistent, the data indicates a quite optimistic attitude towards social media. This is interesting considering previous research (Jones & Himelboim, 2010) that argues that newspapers have a sceptical attitude towards new media. It is important to keep in mind that all the articles in the sample somehow mentioned social media, and therefore sceptic articles are very few. It is reason to assume that many articles that are sceptical towards social media does not mention neither Facebook nor Twitter, and because of that are not be included in this data. Despite the fact that these are superficial findings in terms of being based on a single variable, it might be a good starting point for gaining a better understanding for why the Egyptian uprising was labelled the Facebook revolution.



**Figure 5:** A pie chart illustrating to what extent the mainstream media used new media as source in their reporting.

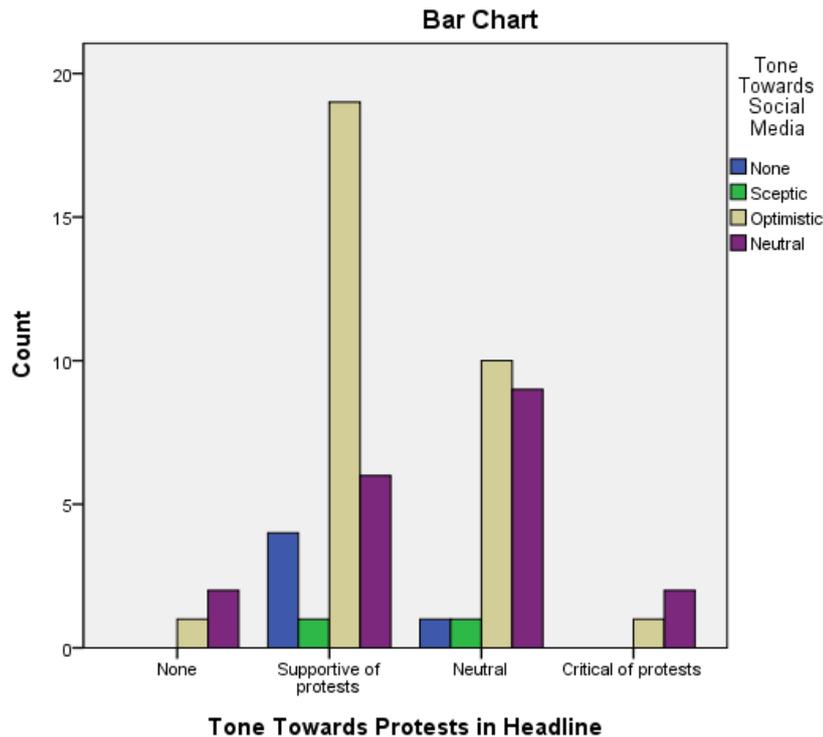
Previous research has proved that new media, such as the Internet, has very little impact on how mainstream media cover protests. Instead journalists rely on traditional structures and procedures for retrieving their information (Jha, 2007). Figure 5 show that 80.7% of the articles mention new media in the narrative, which is an expected figure given that all the articles in the sample had to mention either Facebook or Twitter. More interesting is that 15.8% explicitly mentioned a website as source. Compared to previous research this is a fairly high number, suggesting that the newspapers in this case have used new media actively in their reporting. However, this finding is not very descriptive because all the articles in the sample had to mention a social medium. The majority of these explicitly mentioned websites typically was Twitter statements that were quoted by journalists. So figure 5 in reality is illustrating that approximately 15% of the articles used citations directly from either Twitter or Facebook, meaning that the remaining 85% of the articles only mentioned them in the narrative. This is an example of how Twitter messages were cited:

*“Mohamed El Baradei, the Nobel peace prize winner and retired nuclear inspector who is now a leading opposition politician, wrote on Twitter: “Egypt will explode. Army must save the country now!”” (The Guardian, 11.02.2011).*

Out of these 15 % where websites were explicitly mentioned as a source, a total of 9 articles, only one was not related to a twitter citation, and instead mentioned Wikileaks as explicit source. In

addition to this only one article cited a URL, the specific address, as source. This indicates that the journalists are very reluctant to use new media as sources in their reporting, and even though their articles are optimistic towards the role of new media in the protests, they refrain from using it in their articles. This corresponds with Jha's (2007) research which found that journalist's forms of information retrieval are different but the power structures and the sources and news frames are still similar to what it was even before the Internet. The occasional Twitter citation might illustrate that the journalists do use new media when doing research, but avoid using these sources in their articles because it does not fit in with the traditional structures of how news are produced within their news organizations. A Twitter statement like the example above is typical because it originates from a well known person, usually with a verified account, which is used as a quotation in the article. To elaborate on Jha's finding; the journalists apply traditional methods of quoting important figures in the protest movement, onto a new medium such as Twitter. In other words, a Twitter statement fits into the structure of traditional news reporting. This also relates to Jones and Himelboim's (2010) research which found that mainstream media discussed blogs less and mainly negative only in stories that placed bloggers and journalists on an equal level. In the case of the Egyptian uprising the journalists focused on the new media as a tool for organizing the protests (read more in research question 3), which is outside their own domain of interests. The optimistic way that the British journalists reported on new media did not threaten their own role within the media ecology, which might explain how mainstream media can be negative towards new media, and at the same time be so positive towards the role of social media during the Egyptian protests.

The finding in this chapter supports Jones and Himelboim's (2010) research, suggesting that mainstream media distance themselves from one of the most central aspects of the new media ecology, namely the new media. The journalists clearly are a part of it. They maintain their own blogs, i.e. The Guardian journalist's blogs, and they are on Twitter. Despite of this, they refrain from using social media as source in their articles. This makes the mainstream media journalists a part of the new media ecology, but the mainstream media organizations distance themselves. To some extent it can be argued that the mainstream journalists find themselves somewhere in the gray areas where the three institutions (see figure 1) merge, closer to the "native reporters" and bloggers, than their own news organization.



**Figure 6:** A bar chart that compares two different variables, ‘Tone towards protests in headline’ with ‘tone towards social media’.

In research question 1, above, findings suggests that the British media were supportive of the protesters cause. In addition to this they were also very optimistic towards the role of social media in the Egyptian uprising, and often emphasized how important Internet was to facilitate the protests. Figure 6 shows that when an article is optimistic towards the role of the social media there is a 61.3% chance that it is also supportive of the protesters cause, while when the article is neutral towards social media there is only a 31.6% chance that it is supportive towards the protests (see Appendix 1). This means that there is a correlation between the attitude towards the role of social media and the protesters cause, which might suggest that the newspapers attitude towards the protest had an impact on their attitude towards social media since it was a tool that benefitted the protesters. When dividing the newspapers into two categories, left and right, depending on their political affiliation, it becomes yet more evident that there might be a correlation between the two variables. Data from newspapers leaning towards the left indicates that their articles which are optimistic towards the role of the social media have a 72.7% chance to also be supportive of the protesters cause, while the articles that are neutral towards social media only have 20% chance to be supportive towards the protests. For the right leaning newspapers the figures are 55% and 44.4% respectively (see

Appendix 2). The exact reason for why this is the case need further investigation, but it gives a deeper understanding of the initial findings, and highlights that the issue is more complex than it can appear when only looking at the cohort of British national newspapers.

#### 4.4 Research question 3

Did journalists report on social media in an instrumentalist way where they favour action-oriented responses to technology?

Mainstream media play an important role in the new media ecology as demonstrated in chapter 2.1.1, and the instrumentalist view is interesting to consider because it can say something about the journalists attitude towards new media technology. This will give a better understanding of how British newspapers report on social media, and how their own role as a broadcaster might influence their reporting. It will be an important indicator to how the newspapers emphasize social media, and how this might impact their reporting.

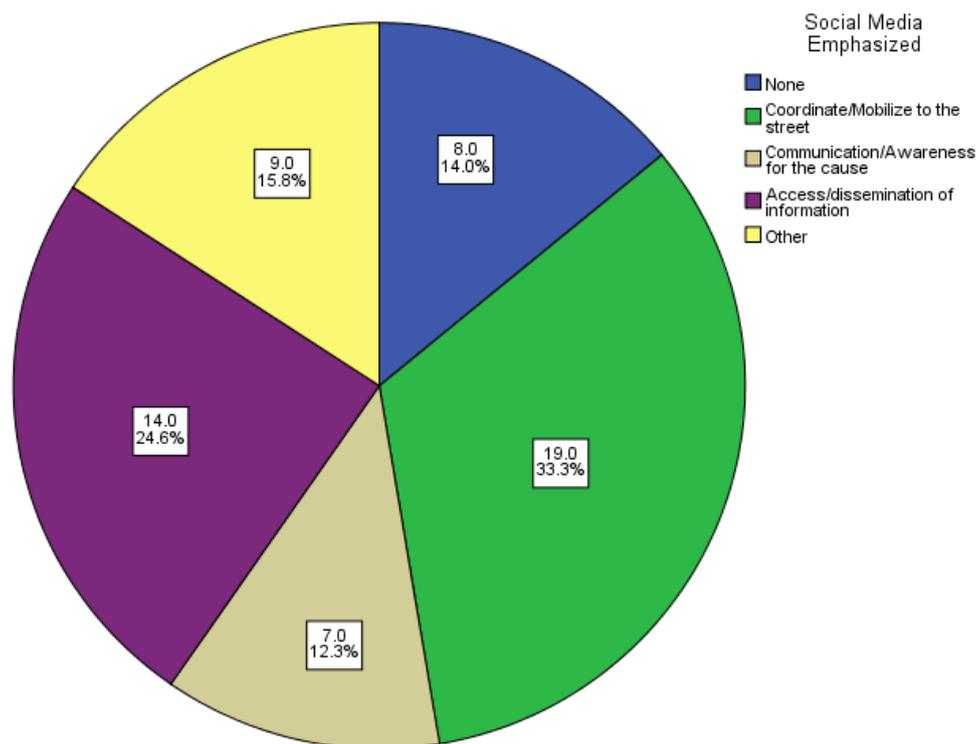


Figure 7: A pie chart that illustrates how the mainstream media emphasized social media.

The pie chart above shows that the ‘communication and awareness’ for the cause has a very low representation, while the two other categories, “coordinate” and “access”, both are significantly

higher. In terms of evaluating the instrumentalist view the latter category indicates that the British newspapers have an instrumental approach to technology. A majority of the articles however focus on social media as a tool for coordinating and mobilizing people to the streets. The emphasis is on its ability to coordinate and stage the protests, in terms of functioning as a tool for the protesters. This category supports the instrumental view approach by degrading social media to just a tool, and thus fail to emphasize the importance of a deliberative forum for people become aware and engaged in the cause. On the other hand it emphasizes social media as a tool for local coordination where people work together for a specific cause, which is opposite of an instrumentalist view that over estimates access to information. The ‘coordination and mobilization’ category therefore are double headed and must be analysed with caution. But what it shows is that much of the journalists focus was on social media as tool for coordination, and that it does not necessarily mean that the emphasis was on the value of private communication between people, but rather on the instrumental value of the medium.

‘Communication and awareness for the cause’ emphasizes social media as a facilitator for deliberation and engagement. Statistics show that long articles, which normally are news features that elaborate more thoroughly on the topic and thereby provide a more nuanced description of social media, are not more likely to emphasize ‘communication and awareness’ compared to medium- and short length articles (see

Appendix 3). However, the same statistics show that short articles are significantly more likely (45%) to focus on coordination and mobilization; compared to if they were medium- or long length. This suggests that the journalists attitude towards social media are consistent in terms of article length, and that long article features are not more likely to emphasize the importance of private communication to raise awareness of the cause. In other words, the articles do not change character whether they are a short news report or a longer feature article.

Data also shows that when an article is optimistic towards social media there is a significant higher probability that it emphasizes coordination and mobilization, while if the article is neutral towards social media the article is more likely to emphasize access and dissemination (see Appendix 4). This might suggest that the journalists have an instrumentalist approach to social media in the sense that they emphasize its role as a tool for logistically coordinating people to join the protests in the streets. When they are optimistic and perhaps enthusiastic about the role of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook during the protests, the journalists are more prone to emphasize social media as a tool, and thereby fail to acknowledge the importance of private communication between people. The articles that are neutral towards social media are more likely to focus on the ‘access and dissemination’ aspect which emphasizes the importance of being able to retrieve and share information online. This means that when the journalists report on social media in a less optimistic manner they are more likely to focus on social media as tool for accessing and disseminating information. The correlation between optimism towards social media and an instrumentalist approach might indicate that the label - “a Facebook revolution” – is based on enthusiasm from the journalists’ part, towards social media as a tool for coordination, which does not pose as a threat towards their position as a news broadcaster within the new media ecology.

Clay Shirky points out that the instrumentalist view over estimates the value of access to information, while it under estimates the value of tools for local coordination (Shirky, 2011). The findings in this research indicate that the media did focus on social media as a tool for coordination, but that they failed to emphasize the importance of private communication between people. Research question 1 also indicates that the British newspapers were positive towards the protesters cause, which means that they took the side of the demonstrators. The sitting President, Mubarak, sanctioned both the media and eventually the Internet by basically switching it off. Neither the media nor the people were allowed to mediate from protests which to some extent put both protesters and journalists in a similar situation, opposing the authorities in Egypt. This might explain the optimism from the media, and perhaps especially foreign

newspapers, because social mediums such as Facebook and Twitter were at times the best sources of information. Despite this; findings in this research suggests that the newspapers were very reluctant to cite social media as source during the protests, but that it is obvious that they use it frequently. Twitter statements from high profiled persons were often used as quotations in the articles, indicating that the journalists in fact use Twitter.

## 5. Conclusion

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This research has positioned mainstream media, in this case British newspapers, within the new media ecology, so to analyse how they reported on the protests in Egypt. Based on the observation that western media labelled the uprising the Facebook- and Twitter revolution, the aim of this research were to find out why social media was emphasized – especially knowing that previous research has found that mainstream media in general have a negative attitude towards new media and actively distance themselves from it. The new media ecology restructures the flow of information, opening new spheres for interaction between citizens, organizations and the media, which creates new touching points between institutions. By analysing these touching points in the context of how the newspapers reported on the protests in Egypt, it provides the best source for understanding how mainstream media report within the new media ecology.

The cohort of British national newspapers seems to have deviated from the “protest paradigm” due to their very supportive attitude towards the protesters cause. In this case the newspapers reported on an event that unfolds in another country which is different not only geographically but also culturally and politically. They took the side of the people, the protesters, against the “tyrannical” regime that has been governing the country for three decades. This was an initial key finding for the further analysis of how newspapers reported on new media. Statistics showed that when journalists wrote about social media in an optimistic manner, they were also more likely to be supportive of the protests. This suggests that the newspapers focused their optimism towards social media, and emphasized it as a very decisive tool for staging the protests. Findings in this research support the idea that the newspapers projected social media as a tool for organizing the protests, while failing to emphasize the importance of communication between people. Mainstream media perhaps used social media as a symbol of the Egyptian peoples fight for democracy in their own country.

Even though the findings indicated that the newspapers attitude towards social media and its role in the protests were very optimistic, statistics show that they do not use new media as source in their articles. Though it appears that the journalists do use social media such as Facebook and Twitter, they refrain from using it in their articles. But when they do, most commonly they quote Twitter statements from well known people with verified accounts. This practice resembles to a certain extent the methods of “traditional” journalism, which suggests that Twitter statements fit into the “normal” structure of news reporting. These findings support previous research (Jha, 2007), which argue that mainstream media retrieve their information differently from before, but

the power structures and the sources and news frames are still the same as it was before the Internet.

Findings in this research also suggest that the newspapers have an instrumentalist approach in terms of failing to acknowledge the importance of private communication online. Though the focus was on social media as a coordinator to stage the protests, they did so by approaching it as merely a tool for protest leader's to disseminate their orders, while barely emphasizing the value of private communication between the protesters. This approach proved to be consistent, and did not vary depending on article length, meaning that long feature articles were not more likely to give a more in depth analysis of social media. When the articles were neutral, or less optimistic, towards the role of social media in the protests, data indicates that they were more likely to emphasize the importance of access and dissemination of information – which can be argued to be a quite instrumentalist approach. Interestingly though, when the articles were optimistic towards social media, they were more likely to focus on the importance of social media as a tool for 'coordination and mobilization'. So when the journalists were enthusiastically positive to the protests as well as being optimistic towards social media, they were more likely to have an instrumentalist approach in terms of seeing it as a tool merely for coordination and dissemination of information. This enthusiasm and instrumental approach might be part of the reason for why the protests in Egypt were labelled the "Facebook- and Twitter revolution.

Mainstream media's position within the new media ecology is strained in the sense that it is sceptical towards certain aspects of new media. This research found evidence that confirms previous studies which argue that mainstream media are reluctant to acknowledge blog- and citizen journalism. Instead they distance themselves from it, which is apparent, in this research, when only one article out of 57 mentions new media as a source. The fact that journalists are becoming increasingly entangled within the new media ecology, where they find themselves being part of social media but not allowed to fully report on it, might position them further away from their own news organizations. Similarly to "native reporters" they become satellite reporters with an unknown affiliation. How big impact new media ecology have on mainstream media coverage of the protests in Egypt is hard to say, but it is fair to argue that it had an impact in terms of applying an instrumentalist view. The journalists distance to their news organizations, and the requirements to report according to certain conventions, does not allow them to report on new media in a nuanced manner. Therefore they might resort to an instrumentalist view which is in tune with the news organization that they work for.

This research would have benefitted from a larger sample, but the timeframe and the focus on Egypt as a case, limited the number of relevant articles. Further research can learn from this by widening the scope of the case study to include perhaps protests in other countries and extend the timeframe. This requires on the other hand a more concise and narrow approach to the topic. Research question 2, as mentioned earlier, is limited by the fact that it does not break down the variables into more quantifiable entities, and relies too much on the coder's consistency when conducting the coding. It is suggested that further research analyse more in depth the media's instrumental approach to social media, and how it impact their coverage of social movements. This study has only observed this instrumentalist approach, but future research should analyse its substance, and investigate how it impacts media reporting.

Findings in this research argue that the labelling of the Facebook revolution, by the mainstream media, might be partly influenced by the new media ecology. The fact that it influences the journalists to approach the social media and its role in the protests in an instrumentalist way indicates that it has an impact on how it was labelled. The western media's supportive attitude towards the protesters cause, and their instrumentalist approach, can be argued to have been a factor in labelling the protests the Facebook revolution.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1

**Tone Towards Protests in Headline \* Tone Towards Social Media Crosstabulation**

				Tone Towards Social Media				Total
				None	Sceptic	Optimistic	Neutral	
Tone Towards Protests in Headline	None	Count	0	0	1	2	3	
		% within Towards Media	.0%	.0%	3.2%	10.5%	5.3%	
	Supportive of protests	Count	4	1	19	6	30	
		% within Towards Media	80.0%	50.0%	61.3%	31.6%	52.6%	
Neutral	Count	1	1	10	9	21		
	% within Towards Media	20.0%	50.0%	32.3%	47.4%	36.8%		
Critical of protests	Count	0	0	1	2	3		
	% within Towards Media	.0%	.0%	3.2%	10.5%	5.3%		
<b>Total</b>		Count	5	2	31	19	57	
		% within Towards Media	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

## Appendix 2

Tone Towards Protests in Headline \* Tone Towards Social Media \* Political Stance Crosstabulation

Political Stance					Tone Towards Social Media				Total
					None	Sceptic	Optimistic	Neutral	
Left	Tone Towards Protests in Headline	None	Count	0	0	0	1	1	
			% within Towards Media	.0%	.0%	.0%	10.0%	4.0%	
		Supportive of protests	Count	1	1	8	2	12	
			% within Towards Media	50.0%	50.0%	72.7%	20.0%	48.0%	
	Neutral	Count	1	1	3	6	11		
	% within Towards Media	50.0%	50.0%	27.3%	60.0%	44.0%			
	Critical of protests	Count	0	0	0	1	1		
		% within Towards Media	.0%	.0%	.0%	10.0%	4.0%		
	Total	Count	2	2	11	10	25		
		% within Towards Media	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Right	Tone Towards Protests in Headline	None	Count	0		1	1	2	
			% within Towards Media	.0%		5.0%	11.1%	6.3%	
		Supportive of protests	Count	3		11	4	18	
			% within Towards Media	100.0%		55.0%	44.4%	56.3%	
	Neutral	Count	0		7	3	10		
	% within Towards Media	.0%		35.0%	33.3%	31.3%			
	Critical of protests	Count	0		1	1	2		
		% within Towards Media	.0%		5.0%	11.1%	6.3%		
	Total	Count	3		20	9	32		
		% within Towards Media	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

**Appendix 3**

**Social Media Emphasized \* Word Length Crosstabulation**

				Word Length			Total
				Long	Medium	Short	
Social Media Emphasized	None	Count	2	4	2	8	
		% within Word Length	14.3%	19.0%	9.1%	14.0%	
	Coordinate/Mobilize to the street	Count	4	5	10	19	
		% within Word Length	28.6%	23.8%	45.5%	33.3%	
	Communication/Awareness for the cause	Count	2	2	3	7	
	% within Word Length	14.3%	9.5%	13.6%	12.3%		
Access/dissemination of information	Count	3	5	6	14		
	% within Word Length	21.4%	23.8%	27.3%	24.6%		
Other	Count	3	5	1	9		
	% within Word Length	21.4%	23.8%	4.5%	15.8%		
Total	Count	14	21	22	57		
	% within Word Length	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

**Appendix 4**

**Social Media Emphasized \* Tone Towards Social Media Crosstabulation**

				Tone Towards Social Media				Total
				None	Sceptic	Optimistic	Neutral	
Social Media Emphasized	None	Count	3	1	2	2	8	
		% within Tone Towards Social Media	60.0%	50.0%	6.5%	10.5%	14.0%	
	Coordinate/Mobilize to the street	Count	1	0	15	3	19	
		% within Tone Towards Social Media	20.0%	.0%	48.4%	15.8%	33.3%	
	Communication/Awareness for the cause	Count	0	0	6	1	7	
	% within Tone Towards Social Media	.0%	.0%	19.4%	5.3%	12.3%		
Access/dissemination of information	Count	1	0	6	7	14		
	% within Tone Towards Social Media	20.0%	.0%	19.4%	36.8%	24.6%		
Other	Count	0	1	2	6	9		
	% within Tone Towards Social Media	.0%	50.0%	6.5%	31.6%	15.8%		
Total	Count	5	2	31	19	57		
	% within Tone Towards Social Media	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		