

Trends of Contemporary Research for New Media in Egypt

A Critical Assessment

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Introduction

The World Wide Web emerged in Egypt as a new medium long after its beginnings worldwide in 1990. It represents the personalized form of *new media* to a large number of people. In Egypt, over the past ten years – from 2000 to 2009-the internet users reached 12,568,900 compared to 450 000 in the year 2000, with a growth percentage of 2693.1%. It has become a platform for new forms of interactive communication, marketing communication and advertising. Despite the rapid growth of internet users in Egypt, latest statistics show that the Middle East use of internet constitutes only 3.3% of world web users (www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm)

The participatory nature of *new media*, with more dynamic, user generated content that is circulated among participants attracts all *new media* users to join it. It is experienced through different forms and networks as blogging, You Tube, Face book, Tweeter, Flicker and so on. This new form of media interactivity and convergence between the traditional and new media influenced the cultural, political and social life of users in the whole world.

The most revolutionary medium of all *new media* is the World Wide Web. After the launch of the internet, and its accompanying features, interaction and freedom, the communication and information are

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never the same again. The enormous growth of the *new media* and consequently the size of its users, attracted researchers from various disciplines to study its potentials and effects on its users.

In mass media literature, the term of *new media* is defined as the forms of communicating in the digital world, which includes publishing on CDs, DVDs and, most significantly, over the Internet. It implies that the user obtains the material via desktop and laptop computers, smart phones and tablets. Another definition includes the concept that new methods of communicating in the digital world allow smaller groups of people to congregate online and share, sell and swap goods and information. It also allows more people to have a voice in their community and in the world in general. (www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia)

This paper aims at providing a review of the most significant Egyptian and Arab studies in *new media*, using the historical approach in its first part. This research will trace the topics of *new media* revealed during the survey of the Egyptian Masters' theses, PhD dissertations, and research articles in Cairo University journals. Within each research theme of topics, analysis will focus on theories used in research, types of study-whether descriptive or analytical, and the most important results in each study. The second part of this paper will use the comparative approach to examine the Egyptian internet marketing studies, and compare it to Western trends in the same field.

Reviewing *new media* research in Egypt suggests the following major trends of research themes:

1. Studies on users and uses of *new media*
2. Effects of *new media* on target audience
3. Studies concerning user generated content
4. Web integration with other media

5. Internet marketing and advertising

First trend: Users and uses of new media

A considerable number of significant studies focused on studying the uses and users of the internet from various perspectives. This trend includes all studies that used uses and gratifications theory to examine the audience of *new media* in the Arab region and how they use *new media*.

One research aimed at describing the relationship between the usage patterns of Libyan university students of the internet and their exposure to mass media. The research used survey method to measure the variables related to the relationships of Libyan university students with the internet. (Mazid, Mahmoud, 2005)

Usage patterns of new media in Bahrain has also been analyzed using uses and gratifications theory. Using the survey method, results indicated that there is no relationship between demographics of users and usage patterns of new media, but correlation between the level of credibility of the internet as a source of information among users and usage patterns has been proved. (Ahmed, Gamal, 2006)

One researcher took a different perspective to study the uses of internet of a specific segment – university professors working in Emirates. The range of different Arab nationalities in the sample allowed the researcher to compare between them. Results found that university professors deal with Emirati national newspapers and not with any news website that belongs to another country. (Abdul Wahab, Khaled, 2006)

Other researches that use this theory concentrated on specific type of audience as children, family or professionals. One research investigated uses and gratifications of internet among children aged 12-15 using a survey. Although this study was one of the most early

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studies in new media (2002), results indicated the spread of internet usage among children, specifically at afternoon timing. (El Tokhy, Araby, 2002).

Another research investigated the motives, reasons and usage patterns of internet among professionals. Using survey among a sample of 150 senior employees in three Egyptian sectors, the research found that motives for the internet use are related to the professional level of the senior employee. It also concluded that the more the employee use the internet, the less he uses other media of communication (El Hussein, Amani, 2005).

One of early researches in the area of web users focused on internet usage as a means of communication in the religious sphere. The research used content analysis of Islamic websites to analyze the issues they handle, communication forms used and how internet can be used in the religious sphere. Results found that article writing is the most format used in Islamic affairs, as it represents the highest levels of merging between traditional and *new media*. (Younis, Mohamed, 2002). Another researcher used the same methodology to trace the image of Islam in the international websites. (Hassan, Zeinab, 2007)

Another research related to identity in *new media* examined the reflection of Arab identity on the message sender in radio and television. Method used was a survey among 139 news writers, correspondents, translators, directors and anchors. Results showed that most of message senders rely on the internet as a second source of gaining information. The Egyptian identity for them meant a national belonging that has different political, cultural and Islamic orientations. (El Sayed, Mohamed Abdul Badie, 2005)

Analyzing the users of news websites took a different angle, focusing on the role of websites users in the manufacturing of media content.

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The study used the quantitative content analysis of Arab and American websites, as well as two survey questionnaires for directors of media websites relevant to Arab newspapers and TV channels. The study took several theoretical approaches as citizen, participatory journalism, electronic agenda setting and electronic media gatekeepers. Results showed that Arab web users are not that active in providing websites with media content that could influence the nature of its media coverage, as users mostly comment on some news, articles or pictures, without real participation in the production of media content. The study also found that American websites were more interested in giving users a space to publish their content on their sites and provide different forms of sections that allow for users to be present on its site. In addition American websites were more keen to add more interactive links to social networks, hosting blogs, design surveys and publish pictures of users. (Bekheit, Said, 2008)

Assessing the trend of users and uses of new media, we can conclude that the prevailing methods of study used in almost all available Arab researches uses descriptive analysis. The research tools are either surveys or content analysis. Historical, comparative and analytical methods of research were also utilized.

The theoretical frame of uses and gratifications dominates many studies on the internet. A clear and prevailing trend is using the theory to examine exposure to *new media*, usage habits or studying specific audience as children, or professionals. The reviewed studies on uses of the internet in Arab countries showed similar patterns of use of new media by similar segments of users across Arab nations.

Second trend: Effects of new media on target audience

Research studies in this area attempted to explore the effects of use of *new media* on its diverse users-specifically family and children. Topics included the measurement of internet effects on level of

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involvement, family communication patterns and children-parents relationship. Other thread of topics concentrated on the effects of *new media* on political environment.

Effects studies discussed topics related to *new media* and family matters as family communication patterns. One researcher used the analytical approach to conduct a survey among families living in Greater Cairo where one member in the family uses the internet. The research was about the effect of using modern communication technology on family communication patterns. Major uses of the internet were mainly for gathering information, followed by utilitarian uses as participation in discussions or making decisions. The pattern of communication inside the families of the sample ranged between adjusting pattern and discussion pattern. (Hanafy, Nermine, 2003)

Children usage of internet has also been studied from the angle of interactive relationships between parents and children. Besides using uses and gratifications, the researcher also used the social expectations approach for unrevealing future expectations from the internet for both parents and children. Results indicated that interactive dialogue between parents and children has been lost, as parents' role towards their children internet usage has turned to be very little. (El Semary, Heba, 2003)

In a latter study, the researcher examined the level of involvement when using the internet. The researcher used experimental theory which involves the idea that the more the person uses the internet, the more positive influence the user gains, when usage is extended from just gaining information to experimenting the process of using the net that ends with being involved and having a positive effect for using the net. Using survey method, results measured the percentage of involvement among a sample of internet users and found a correlation between experience of internet usage and variables as feeling of being

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in a virtual world, losing sense of time and adoption of exploratory behavior. (Fahmy, Nagwa, 2005)

One study focused on the influence of communication messages on gaining of information in electronic forms of communication. (Ali, Safa, 2003). Another study investigated the uses of *new media* among university students and its relationship with social alienation. Using survey method, results indicated a relationship between the variables of motivation for using new media and their feeling of social alienation. (Bakir, Mohamed, 2006).

Effect of *new media* on **political participation and reform** is a unique trend which appears in Egyptian studies. The new media, and more specifically social networks played the hero role in the transformation of Arab Politics across the whole Arab region. It is without social media, the sounds of Tunisia's first tentative protests, or Egypt's events may have never escaped the borders of the villages where they occurred. The issue of political activism and human rights has been heightened through different *new media* forms, even before the start of political reforms in many Arab countries.

In a critical assessment of the role of *new media* in the Arab region, Pintak argues that in the light of recent Arab events, the role of the Arab journalist is being redefined as the revolution institutionalized the role bloggers used to do which is straddling the line between political activists and citizen journalism as they used to report stories off limits to the mainstream. The passion for change pervades many Arab news organizations, but it is epitomized by Al Jazeera's Arabic channel. "Al Jazeera-the Arab news network has become an instrument of Arab political empowerment and mobilization", says Essam Khouri-editor of Beirut's Daily Star (Pintak, 2011).

Before the start of political protest against political regimes in the Arab region, a clear trend in Arab new media studies can be traced. It

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focused on examining the relationship between internet usage and politics in different ways. Political awareness among private university students and how it relates to interactive communication has been detected using uses and gratifications theory. Using a structured survey on a sample of students in three universities, the researcher found that internet influence the methods of political participation of students, as they rely on it as a major source of national and international news and information. News websites ranked the first among the most preferred websites. (Genid, Hanan, 2003)

The role played by information technology and internet in the democratic process in the Arab world had been researched within the political, economic and social environments. The basic assumption in the research is that the internet is not just a means of communication, but it can be used to achieve political change through the increase of political participation and the enhancement of the individuals' role to influence political decisions. The research that was conducted in 2003, predicted the revolution of January 25, 2011. The researcher-in his critical discussion of possibilities of the internet-mentioned that Arab countries will control information technology as part of their authority to limit personal freedom of their public, as if he is witnessing the political reform revolutions going on in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Yemen. The research-through comprehensive review of literature, and examining the available evidence in Arabic and international statistical reports-reached an important conclusion which is that internet could have different and contradictive effects on the democratic process. (Hamada, Bassiony, 2003)

Another masters' thesis titled "the Effect of Using New Media on the Formation of the Public Opinion Towards International Issues", conducted a descriptive field study on a sample of 400 respondents.

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Results found informative motives were the most compelling motive for using *new media* to follow political international issues. (Sarg, Inas, 2005)

The role of the internet in achieving the democracy and interactivity of communication has been detected through a content analysis of Arab online clubs. Results found that the online clubs used formal Arabic in its communication. Most members are from the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. Political topics were the most topics that interest the members. (El Shamy, Abdul Rahman, 2005)

One masters' thesis highlighted the treatment of news websites to political formation process in Saudi Arabia through an analytical and descriptive study of news editorials of many websites as Ilaf, Al Jazeera, Islam online, CNN Arabia, BBC Arabia, Saudi Affairs, the gate, Arabia Net, Middle East online, and others. Results revealed that websites' attitudes towards political reform is related to the website identity and its' media strategy, as well as the political environment. (Abo Ras, Abdulla, 2007)

Other research focused on the relationship between exposure to online and print press and political cognitive level of Egyptian youth. The researcher conducted an analytical study of topics published in Ahram, Al Masry Alyoum and Wafd, as well as websites of National Democratic Party, Ekhwan online and Masrawy. (El Labban, Sherif, 2007)

Third trend: User-generated content/ Blogging

Blogging research in Egyptian studies formed another trend in *new media* studies. The researchers-in the very few studies that tackled blogging-analyzed the blogging content, the bloggers and the motivations as well as satisfaction concerning blogging.

One researcher used the theory of diffusion of innovations to analyze

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the characteristics of blogs and bloggers and know the gratifications resulting of blogging. His study used a descriptive method through content analysis of blogs and an analytical method through collecting information about bloggers. Results found that respondents knew about blogging through the internet, then friends which prove that the knowledge of the innovation pre-determines the persuasion of adoption of innovation and decision making of implementation of the innovation. The basic motivations behind establishing blogs were to fight corruption, to enhance political awareness, to defend human rights and finally to satisfy the hobby. (Fadel, Abdel Sabour, 2008)

Another research used a different theoretical approach to study blogs-“The Public Sphere Theory” by Habermas. The research titled “Blogs as an Interactive tool in Political Participation”, analyzed the discourse discussions of constitution amendments in Egypt. It used content analysis and comparative analysis to compare between different blogs. Results found that discussions in some blogs depended on evidence to prove their point of view, while those blogs who lacked evidence used humanitarian perspective in defending their own point of view. (Rabie, Abdel Gawad, 2008)

Another angle used to study blogs was analyzing blogs as a source of freedom of expression for the individual and the group. The study relied on the historical, descriptive and analytical method, studying the development of blogs on the Arab and international levels, as well as analyzing its dimensions and its relationship with expression of variety of views. Results found that blogging turned to be a new form of mass media that we can consider as “alternative press”, or “parallel press” to the print and electronic newspapers. Results also highlighted the importance of blogs as a source of expression of opinion, which is more interactive than chat rooms and email groups, inherited in the internet. (Nasr, Hosny, 2007)

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In assessing this trend, research results on blogging showed that active users tend to have high involvement rate in generating media content through blogging. The interactive feature of the internet created a platform of freedom of expression in Egypt in the areas of fighting corruption, political awareness and participation, and defending human rights. As for theoretical framework of blogging studies, only one study used the theory of diffusion of innovations (Fadel, 2008), while another study depended on the theory of public sphere (Rabie, 2008), and a third study used the experimental theory.

Fourth trend: Web integration with traditional media

The comparison of *new media* and traditional media has been the focus of numerous Egyptian researches. Their topics revolved around comparison of features, uses, gratifications and credibility. Web integration with other media has always been associated with a certain segment of users.

In recent researches, a clear trend appeared in mass communication and new media which is comparing new media to different forms of traditional media. One study focused on comparing new media as a source of news to other media forms. Results found that television was the major source of information, while the internet users were more concerned of following up emergency events. (Hamdy, Abeer, 2001)

A masters' thesis conducted a comparative study to assess the image of Egypt in the journalistic content of print and internet in three newspapers: the daily telegraph, the Washington post and Jerusalem Post. The researcher conducted a descriptive analysis of print and digital reports relevant to the image of Egypt. (El Seman, Ahmed Hassan, 2003)

Another thesis analyzed the relationship between the exposure of

youth to print and online newspapers and their attitudes towards terrorism. The researcher conducted a field study on a stratified sample of 400 respondents, and also an analytical study of opinion editorials in Ahram, Akhbar and Wafd newspapers, in addition to articles and news reports on Al Jazeera, Islam online, BBC Arabic websites. (Abdel Halim, Sohair, 2006)

The theory of media dependency has been used as theoretical framework to compare between traditional and new media as a source of information, specifically in the time of crisis. The researcher used descriptive analysis in form of survey method to study the dependence of Saudi adolescents on traditional and mass media to know local, regional and international news. The researcher operationally defined new media as the satellite channels and the internet, while the definition of traditional media included newspapers, radio and local television. Results pointed to the pervasive usage of Arab satellite channels as the most used source of information for Saudi adolescents, specifically for local and Arab news. The Saudi news satellite channel “Al Arabia” was found to be the most trusted channel for news when compared to MBC which is used as a source of entertainment. Newspapers had the lowest rank as a source of information for adolescents. (El Nimr, Amira, 2007)

Other studies took another perspective in studying new media characteristics when compared to traditional media, as one study focused on whether the internet is considered a real threat to the traditional mass media in Egypt. The research used uses and gratifications theory which focus on the sociological and psychological intensions of the audience. (Kilani, Hanan, 2007)

Comparative studies of traditional and new media also examined the credibility of news sources. The researcher used the survey method to examine the credibility of news sources among a sample of Emirati public. The results showed that traditional media – in the form of

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television-was the most credible medium and proved that traditional media has higher levels of credibility when compared to new media. (Mohamed, Azza Abdul Azim, 2006)

Media credibility has attracted researchers as a topic. Credibility of new media has been detected using a comparative approach with traditional media. One research used the constructive model of levels of credibility as a modern theory used in media credibility studies. Using both qualitative and quantitative analysis, results indicated that the Egyptian public considers traditional media as more credible when compared to *new media*, while news websites had more positive image in the mind of the public when compared to traditional media. (Ali, Khaled Salah El Din, 2006)

Within the framework of comparative studies between new and traditional media, one research aimed at detecting freedom of press in electronic journalism. The research used a historical perspective through historical content analysis of traditional and new press. The research concluded that electronic press offer freedom of expression to political and religious groups, while the most important restrictions on electronic press is economic in form of government monopoly of websites and also legal restrictions. (Nasr, Hosney, 2005)

Studying Arab electronic newspapers with application on Ilaf newspaper was the topic of research. Using content analysis, the research managed to describe the characteristics of the electronic newspaper, compared what the website presents to traditional Arab media. (Shouman, Mohamed, 2003)

Another study took a comparative approach to study social relationships of university students, comparing between traditional media users and internet users. (Abdel Fattah, Alia Samy, 2007)

One researcher used the experimental approach to study the cognitive effect of internet usage among university students. Results found that

the cognitive effect of internet as a source of information was higher in internet than in television. Results also found that the more the respondent trusts the internet as a source of information, the more he/she memorizes the information. (Mahgoub, Noha Samir, 2005)

In assessing the trend of integrating new media with traditional media, we can find that all studies reviewed in this section were descriptive studies except one study that was experimental (Mahgoub, 2005). The studies depended mainly on comparative and analytical approaches to compare new media with traditional media. Some studies used the theory of media dependency as theoretical framework. Other research studies depended on the uses and gratifications theory. One study used the constructive model of levels of credibility as a modern theory used in media credibility. Results of early Arab studies (2001, 2003) on web integration with other media showed that Television was the main credible source of information and news, not the internet, for certain segments of the Saudi and Emirati societies. But the results of another study found that the cognitive effect of internet as a source of information was higher in internet than in television.

The review of studies in the *new media*, its features, uses, users and effects in relation to traditional media, was a starting point of new media research in the region, as it paved the way for deeper analysis in *new media* studies.

Fifth trend: Internet Marketing and Advertising

In the last 15 years, marketers around the world realized the growing power of the *new media* as internet joined the TV and the radio as a tool of advertisement. Internet is the latest and most modern communication device of the new information age. At the beginning, internet was being used for education and research but in the following years it was began to use in the area of advertisement rapidly.

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Very few Egyptian research studies discussed the use of internet marketing and advertising by companies, public relations professionals and users of commercial websites. One of the early studies in internet marketing in Egypt focused on marketing techniques that are used across the internet between multinational organizations working in Egypt, and its effectiveness in achieving marketing goals. The study used the theory of information processing and was conducted on a purposive sample of 70 multinational organizations working in Egypt. Results indicated that e-mail was the most marketing tool used in communication, in addition to using other traditional marketing activities as print materials, exhibitions and conferences. The research highlighted the importance of integrating internet marketing activities with other traditional communication channels as press, radio and television to effectively achieve marketing goals. (El Awadly, Salwa, 2002)

Within the uses of new media, one study aimed at analyzing the relationship between exposure of university students to television advertising and their usage of internet and mobile phones. The study used content analysis of internet and mobile phones advertising, and also a survey among students in Minya and Ain Shams universities. Results analyzed the different approaches and advertising appeals used in internet and mobile advertising and compared it to their patterns of usage of internet and mobile phones after watching its ads on television. (Abdul Fattah, Nasser, 2005)

Uses and gratifications research was used to analyze the uses of the World Wide Web as an advertising medium. The researcher conducted a content analysis of 30 websites of organizations and also a field study on a purposeful sample of 104 national and international companies that use internet advertising. Results revealed that most target audience of internet advertising is business people-B2B

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advertising. The researcher also found that international organizations are keener to use internet advertising when compared to national organizations that consider this type of advertising as marginal. (El Batrawy, Soha, 2006)

One of the trends in studying *new media* and public relations practice was identifying the attitudes of public relations practitioners in service institutions towards using the internet as a channel of communication in public relations programs. The research used a survey directed towards a sample of PR practitioners, applying the standard models of Grunning and the theory of dialogue. The results showed that the lack of technical training in using the internet reduces the usage of practitioners to the internet as a medium of communication in their programs. Results also highlighted the importance of updating the company website to give more information about the organization which facilitates the process of using the information by journalists when writing about the organization. (Ayad, Khairat, 2006)

Recent trends focus on factors influencing techniques of direct marketing via the internet as well as other forms of media as television and home shopping channels in Egypt. Results found that direct marketing techniques do not form a threat to traditional marketing techniques. Content analysis of online shopping sites used by Egyptians revealed that only one site pointed out to the money back guarantee which is an important component for the success of internet shopping. Online marketing techniques were not applied in most sites as only two sites used testimonial statements of customers, besides, evidence on the safety of the site were not provided. (Hassan, Dalia Mohamed, 2008)

A single Egyptian study on the uses and gratification of online advertising was published in an International Journal. An online survey –with Arabic questionnaire– was conducted on 296 Egyptian

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users who visited commercial websites. Education level and type of job were found to be significant predictors of commercial website use. Social interaction and information gathering were found to be key predictors of how long a respondent stayed on a website. Positive attitudes about a commercial website were found to be correlated with gratifications sought from using the site as well as perceived gratifications obtained from the experience. (Mahmoud, Klimsa and Auter, 2010).

While Arab trends of research in internet marketing and advertising indicated more emphasis on studying senders and communicators' use of internet marketing and advertising, **Western** researches focused on studying the receivers of internet marketing. Reviews suggested six themes of studies concerning internet marketing and advertising: the Web as an advertising medium, Display advertising, Interactive media planning, Electronic word of mouth, The Web integration with other media, and new concepts and models of advertising (Hairong, 2011).

Internet advertising has been the focus of many Western studies since 1996, which explored the Web as an advertising medium. The studies in this area either focused on the features of websites in terms of design, organization and contents, or investigated the relationship between the web features such as ad size, copy length, use of incentives and the attitudes towards the websites.

The first group of studies included pioneer studies that provided guidelines for web-designers and websites' managers like the field experimental study that examined the impact of Web-site attributes on site effectiveness as measured by click streams. (Dreze and Zufryden, 1997)

Another significant study defined Web interactivity based on three dimensions; synchronicity, active control and two-way communication (Liu and Shrum,2002).

Another study created a scale of interactivity based on these three dimensions. Liu established the validity (and reliability) of a new scale of Web interactivity comprising of 15 items. This scale has facilitated more studies of Web characteristics (Liu, 2003)

The effect of ad position and ad type were examined in an experimental study, and the results showed that lower-page placement attracted more ad attention than upper-page placement and that medium rectangle ads generated better attention and more positive attitude than leader board ads (Goodrich, 2010).

The second group of studies in this field examines the relationship between interactive features and the popularity of Web sites. A study titled “Interactive Functions and Their Impacts on the Appeal of Internet Presence Sites, showed that the degree and nature of interactivity had a significant effect on the ranking of corporate Web sites. (Ghose and Dou, 1998)

The forms of advertising on the Web have been in constant change over the past 15 years. There were only four types of interactive advertising -banner ads, sponsorships, interstitials, and “others”. One study reviewed the effectiveness of seven forms of interactive advertising such as banners, sponsorships, interstitials, search ads, rich media, 3-D visualization, and advergames. (Li and Leckenby, 2007).

Recently, a journal paper analyzed a dataset of about 200 online advertising studies and found, among the 138 studies monitored users’ online behavior. This large scale analysis evidenced the common wisdom that display ads do play an important branding role regardless of click-through. (Fulgoni and Mörn, 2009)

A review article on Internet advertising, examined consumer attitudes towards advertising presented on social media by users of those media. Results indicated that advertising presented on online social

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networks can be effective, but a perception of excessive commercial exploitation of a social network can lead its members to abandon it. A mathematical model of consumer attitudes towards advertising on social media is created based on media uses and gratification theory and was tested. It found that consumers reacted most favorably to advertising which was perceived as offering entertainment or information value. (Friends, Fans, and Followers: Do Ads Work on Social Networks, 2011)

Another study presented research on interactive marketing, examining consumer reactions to Web site design. An online experiment was conducted in which subjects visited over 70 mock Web site pages. It was found that reactions to those sites divided consumers into seekers and surfers according to their reaction to complex designs and interactive features. (Stanaland and Tan, 2010)

A recent experimental study explored how search-engine marketing, sponsored-links services, and smart advertisements influence consumer attitudes based on the correlation between ad relevance and ad clutter variables. (Kim, Sandar, 2010).

In a study on the effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing on member growth at an Internet social networking site, the researchers compared it with traditional marketing vehicles. Because social network sites record the electronic invitations from existing members, outbound WOM can be precisely tracked. Along with traditional marketing, WOM can be linked to the number of new members subsequently joining the site (sign-ups). The authors employed a vector autoregressive modeling approach. Results show that WOM referrals have longer carryover effects than traditional marketing actions and produce higher response elasticity. Based on revenue from advertising impressions served to a new member, the monetary value of a WOM referral can be calculated. (Trusov,

Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009)

Researchers also explored the impacts of shoppers' trust, affect, and perceived site quality on the purchase intentions and loyalty to the site among a sample of online shoppers from 12 countries in three regions of the world. They found that the impact of trust and affect was significant for both low-and high-involvement products in all three regions, but site quality influenced only high-involvement products in some countries (Lynch, Kent, and Srinivasan, 2001)

Electronic word of mouth -EWOM is considered to be a new form of user-generated content in *new media* studies. One study used data from multiple sources about 35 brands in five categories over a 26-week period to examine whether advertising affected WOM both offline and online and whether WOM exerted any influence on the brands. The results showed that advertising can stimulate consumers to advocate products and that online WOM played a significant role in generating offline brand advocacy. That is, by disseminating brand messages in media, advertisers could stimulate consumers to talk about, and say good things about, their brands. Issues related to electronic WOM were also studied at the individual level. (Graham and Havlena, 2007).

Relevant to word of mouth, one study examined viral marketing. The authors concluded that only a small group of users read and forwarded a large number of pass-along e-mails, which they called "viral mavens." These mavens certainly were important for viral marketers. E-mail characteristics that stimulated forwarding behavior included humor, fear, sadness, or inspiration. (Phelps et als, 2004)

The accelerating growth in mobile internet communications is giving rise to a new form of interactive marketing. One research identified the factors that affect youth consumer participation in a word-of-mouth campaign. The study used a "real" brand promotion to

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stimulate interest and participation. Specifically, consumers were encouraged to spread the information via WOM and participate in a photo contest. An attitudinal model consisted of interpersonal connectivity, self-identification with the mobile device, affective commitment to the promoted brand, attitude toward the campaign, and willingness to make referrals was used. Results suggested that mobile-based WOM may be persuasive even when adolescents are less interested in the campaign content. (Okazaki, Shintaro, 2009)

Another research investigated word-of-mouth advertising through product recommendations and referrals by members of online social networks. The use by brand managers of so-called "influencers," who are persons whose recommendations are considered to have a strong effect on other network members, was discussed. It was found that user-generated recommendations were more likely to be passed on as word-of-mouth advertising by such influencers than were recommendations created by marketers of those products, but were not likely to generate more referrals. (Chatterjee, Patrali, 2011)

User profiles of commercial sites were developed in a major survey including 5000 respondents, which categorized Internet users into six types (Web generalists, down loaders, self-improvers, entertainment seekers, traders, and socializers) on the basis of the frequency they were engaged in each of 14 online activities. The results revealed a pattern that early adopters had more specialized purposes, including trading stocks, using chat rooms, playing video games, and downloading. By comparison, the later adopters tended to use the Web generally for emailing, seeking product information, and making purchases (Assael, 2005).

Understanding web users was the theme of a number of early western internet studies investigated the profiles of various segments of web users as to introduce a more comprehensive understanding of their

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motivations to prefer the *new media*. (Eighmey, 1997; Tsao and Steffen-hansen, 2008; Assael 2005). Such research trend was not evident in any of the Arab studies reviewed in this paper.

In spite of the enormous growth of Self-marketing on the internet, which is another face of user-generated content. Very few research studies were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness degree of feedback to the content and design of such web-sites. Yet, an interesting study was conducted on the self-marketing of free-lance translators that surveyed a sample of translators on the internet as how they make use of samples, photos in marketing networks platforms as a result of difficulty reaching personal contact with their clients. (Pieloth, Franziska, 2010)

Another study was conducted on American teenagers to measure their internet usage. This study surveyed 437 American teenagers in high and middle schools. Findings provide insight on effects of teen socialization needs on Internet motivations. It also sheds light on the methods for effectively reaching segments of the teen audience for marketing communications through interactive media.(Tsao & Steffen-hansen, 2008) Taking a comparative form, some Western studies examined whether the increased use of new media was cannibalizing traditional media. The authors found that— contrary to the popular view—there was no cross-media cannibalization between television and digital media. They also noticed that the size of the media universe should be growing as digital devices made media use possible throughout the day and in out-of-home locations. The authors termed this phenomenon as “new markets of time” (Enochand Johnson, 2010).

Western studies in the same focus analyzed media forms generated by web users like home videos and public service announcements. Western research examined the effect of consumer remarks on viral

marketing of brands.

Another article discusses the use of user-generated content in the context of marketing. Consumer-generated media (CGM), online social networks, blogs and virtual communities are addressed, and the importance of studying them for guiding brand strategy is emphasized. The ways in which market researchers can measure user-generated data are noted. (Blackshaw, Pete, 2011)

Comparing research trends in *new media* between Egypt and the West in this particular area of internet marketing, it was found that early Western internet studies investigated the profiles of various segments of web users as to introduce a more comprehensive understanding of their motivations to prefer the *new media*., while this trend was not evident in any of the Arab reviewed studies on the topic.

Conclusion:

-All Arab studies in internet marketing and advertising were descriptive studies, while 7 out of 21 western studies were experimental studies.

-Only one Arabic study used online surveys to study internet marketing implications, while the majority of western studies used the investigated new medium to study it and its users.

-The review of the descriptive Arab studies in internet marketing and advertising indicated more emphasis on studying senders and communicators' use of internet marketing and advertising than studying the receivers of that kind of communication.

-Arab studies failed to tackle certain topics in internet marketing and advertising like profiling internet users and shoppers, and EWOM despite of these themes' significance to the marketers.

-As the Web continues to innovate with the steady growth of broadband access, user-generated content, location-based services,

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and Internet-enabled mobile devices, more studies will be needed to address the many newly emerging issues -A considerable number of western studies focused on the relationship of the Web with other media, studies have addressed three major issues: Cross-media promotion of the Web, Comparison of the Web with the established media, Synergies between the Web and other media.

-Arab research on advertising has failed to keep pace with the innovations in advertising in both means of technological delivery of advertising such as Internet advertising and interactive marketing and in advertising content.

Limitations of Research:

Despite the fact that this research didn't compare between research trends found in Egyptian literature to trends in Western studies – except for the area of internet marketing and advertising-, however, it managed to explore the gap in certain topics of research as well as methodologies used. Most *new media* studies in the West used experimental research to accurately examine the audience while almost all Egyptian studies used descriptive approach to their studies.

New media and political participation was a clear trend of study tackled in Arab studies in general, due to lack of democracy and unstable political situation in most Arab countries. *New media* – and specifically social media-was the relief tool used by the public to express their point of view and practice democracy. Facebook and Tweeter became a style of life for almost all the new generation in the Arab world, that's why it is expected that young and new researchers in mass communication will heavily tackle this topic of research in more detail in the next decade.

However, Egyptian research in *new media* is in deep need of expanding new theories that match developments in communication,

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and also tackle experimental studies that would benefit communicators practically working in the field, especially in the area of internet marketing, use of social media networks for marketing purposes and electronic word of mouth studies.

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