

The political communication of the Algerian parties through the new media.

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Abstract:

In Algeria, political parties have also begun to use new media services (e.g., Facebook pages or groups) for the purpose of entering into direct dialogs with citizens and encouraging more political discussions. Our research particularly addresses the following facts: the new media, their influence on political communication of the Algerian parties, in what extent they use new media, the characteristics of the content of communication, and the impact of this type of political communication on the Algerian society.

الملخص:

في الجزائر، بدأت الأحزاب السياسية في استخدام وسائل الاعلام الجديد (على سبيل المثال، صفحات الفيسبوك) لغرض الدخول في حوارات مباشرة مع المواطنين وتشجيع المزيد من المناقشات السياسية. يتناول بحثنا توضيح و تحليل الحقائق التالية: التطرق إلى وسائل الإعلام الجديد، و تأثيراتها على الممارسات السياسية للأحزاب الجزائرية، وإلى أي مدى استخدمت وسائل الإعلام الجديد من طرف الأحزاب، خصائص مضمون العمليات الاتصالية فيها، وتأثير هذا النوع من التواصل السياسي على المجتمع الجزائري.

Introduction :

New invisible roads are being built at tremendous speed and yet we hardly notice. These roads are for information and communication. Contemporary literature abounds with expressions such as ‘we live in a connected world’, ‘a connected age’, a ‘human web’ and a ‘web society’.

New media technologies and new linkages and alliances across older media are generating profound changes in our political, social, and aesthetic experience. But the media systems of our own era are unique neither in their instability nor in their complex, ongoing transformations.

New Media has rapidly grown in importance as a forum for political communication in its different forms. New media platforms, such as Twitter Facebook and YouTube provide new ways to stimulate citizen engagement in political life, where elections and electoral campaigns have a central role.

Political campaigns have always seized upon new modes of communication to reach voters. This was especially the case in the Algerian presidential elections with the candidates embracing Internet technologies to market their campaigns. today’s new media is arguably very different from those of earlier periods because of the scope and speed with which communicated.

Using this new media for political purposes is a tool to reach voters, especially the youth who are not typically turning out to vote. However, as new media specialist,

Jessica Vitak states, “little is known about the impact that sites such as Facebook have on the political behavior of young people.”

In reality, little is known about the impact this new media has on the political behavior of the Algerian voters in general. Many experts in politics have suggested that social media will play a major role in all future campaigns. This paper will explore the impact of new media on the electoral process in Algeria and it addresses several types of new media and it has very recent information.

I.New Media: definitions and characteristics

The new media are defined by three characteristics simultaneously: they are media which are both integrated and interactive and also use digital code at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. It follows that their most common alternative names are multimedia, interactive media and digital media .

Integration: the most important structural new media characteristic is the integration of telecommunications, data communications and mass communications in a single medium. It is the process of convergence. For this reason, new media are often called multimedia. Integration can take place at one of the following levels:

1- infrastructure – for example combining the different transmission links and equipment for telephone and computer (data) communications;

2-transportation – for example Internet telephony and web TV riding on cable and satellite television;

3-management – for example a cable company that exploits telephone lines and a telephone company that exploits cable television;

4-services – for example the combination of information and communication services on the Internet;

5-types of data – putting together sounds, data, text and images. Figure 1 shows the process of integration.

The process of integration is enabled by two revolutionary techniques⁽¹⁾.

1-full digitalization of all media (the general use of digital code);

2- broadband transmission through all connections by cables, optical fibers, and by air.

Interactive media: The second structural new media characteristic of the current communications revolution is the rise of interactive media. In a very general definition, interactivity is a sequence of action and reaction.

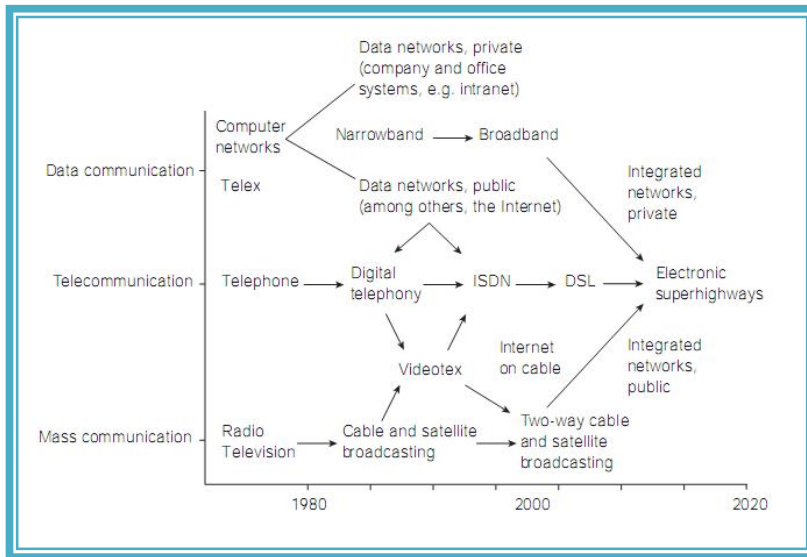


Figure 1: The integration of transmission in communications.

The most elementary level of interactivity is the possibility of establishing two-sided or multilateral communication. This is what we call it the space dimension. The second level of interactivity is the degree of synchronicity. This is what's called the time dimension. The uninterrupted sequence of action and reaction usually improves the quality of interaction.

When multilateral and synchronous communication are available, a higher level of control by the interacting parties is possible. So, the third level of inter-activity is the extent of control exercised by the interacting parties. This behavioural dimension is defined as the ability of the sender and the receiver to switch roles at any moment. At this level, the user is able to intervene into the program or representation itself and to make a difference.

The fourth and highest level of interactivity is acting and reacting with an understanding of meanings and contexts by all interactors involved. This mental dimension is a necessary condition for full interactivity⁽²⁾.

Digital code: is a technical media characteristic only defining the form of new media operations. Digital code means that in using computer technology, every item of information and communication can be transformed and transmitted in the form of strings of ones and zeros called bytes, with every single 1 or 0 being a bit⁽³⁾.

Comparison between Mass society and network society

The comparison between mass society and network society is shown in the following table:

Characteristics	Mass Society	Network Society
Main components	Collectivities (Groups, Organizations, Communities)	Individuals (linked by networks)
Nature of components	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
Scale	Extended	Extended and Reduced
Scope	Local	'Glocal' (global and local)
Connectivity and Connectedness	High within components	High between components
Density	High	Lower
Centralization	High (few centres)	Lower (polycentric)
Inclusiveness	High	Lower
Type of community	Physical and unitary	Virtual and diverse
Type of organization	Bureaucracy Vertically integrated	Infocracy Horizontally differentiated
Type of household	Large with extended family	Small with diversity of family relations
Main type of communication	Face-to-face	Increasingly mediated
Kind of media	Broadcast mass media	Narrowcast interactive media
Number of media	Low	High

Table 1: comparison between mass society and the network society⁽⁴⁾

Due to the ease of access, interactive quality, large number of users, and speed, new media has the potential to be used as a political tool and therefore can impact the electoral process. “New Media” for the purpose of this paper is defined as Internet technologies such as campaign websites, blogging, Internet fundraising tools, and social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube ⁽⁵⁾.

A social network is a set of people, organizations, or other social entities connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships. When a computer network connects people, it is a social network. Online social networking allows users to contribute and control content as well as to initiate contact with other users.⁽⁶⁾ In general; young adults dominate social media usage. Online advertising through social networks and other new media channels is appealing to political campaigns because it is low-cost and targeted to their candidate. ⁽⁷⁾

Additionally, it is a tool campaigns can use to reach these young voters. The most prevalent social networking site is Facebook and there are a number of ways in which it can and has been used for political ends. Founded in 2004, Facebook is a social utility that connects people with others and allows them to post photos, videos, and links. Its membership encompasses more than 500 million active users and more than 18 million young people between

the ages of 18 and 29.⁽⁸⁾ Additionally, Facebook has facilitated political mobilization by including a link to Rock the Vote, which provides voter registration and other election information targeted at the youth⁽⁹⁾.

As Political Scientists Julia Woolley and Anthony Limperos remark, “Even though there has been little empirical work published thus far that assesses if this widespread use of Facebook was effective, anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that using Facebook is beneficial in the campaign process.”⁽¹⁰⁾ In other words, campaigning on Facebook can add to or give a boost to one’s electoral success.

A blog is a type of website that is usually maintained by an individual who uses this outlet to publish editorials, commentary, or descriptions of events.⁽¹¹⁾ They also are interactive in that they allow visitors to leave comments on the postings and often the author of the blog will respond. In recent years, blogging has been used for political purposes, broken news stories, and shaped the news cycle. They can enter new issues into discussion and amplify news stories. Specifically, political blogs have helped to shape the media agenda and have therefore affected political campaigns.

The rise of political sites such as blogs with their ‘supersonic speed’ has tested many traditional news outlets, “which must grapple with whether to pursue this kind of micro-scoops and quick-hit articles that political sites specialize in, or ignore this and risk losing

readers.”⁽¹²⁾ The political blog has the ability to impact the news cycle by publicizing a story that may then get picked up by the mainstream media. As Professor Richard Davis points out, “the blog’s attention to the issue offers some form of legitimacy for the press that might move the story beyond the blogosphere and out into the mainstream media and the public sphere.”⁽¹³⁾

Another social network site that has been used as a tool for political campaigns is YouTube. Founded in 2005, YouTube now attracts over 190 million visitors a month.⁽¹⁴⁾ It is a leader in online video and also in the sharing of original videos worldwide via the Web. It has played major roles in political elections by serving as a platform for political videos. Political Scientist Vassia Gueorguieva identifies how it can impact the election cycle, “YouTube impacts several critical areas in the planning and execution of election campaigns: access to voters, advertising, fund-raising, and budget. The ability of campaigns to access voters through YouTube is potentially unlimited.”⁽¹⁵⁾

Twitter is a free website that also has been used for political and electoral purposes. It blends social networking with the ability to post short messages – also known as micro-blogs or ‘tweets.’⁽¹⁶⁾

Reporter Kali Schmuitz remarks, “whenever someone ‘likes’ a candidate on Facebook, follows him or her on Twitter or signs up for an e-mail newsletter, that gives a campaign more opportunities to turn a voter into a donor or volunteer, local campaign staffers say. It

also makes it easier for supporters to voice their support of a candidate with friends.”⁽¹⁷⁾

In this way, online political participation through this new media can translate to offline political participation.⁽¹⁸⁾

II. The Role of Internet in Politics

There are three schools of thought emerging from the literature regarding the role of the Internet in politics. These are the ‘optimism or mobilization theorists’, the ‘pessimism or reinforcement theorists’, and the ‘skepticism theorists’¹. Optimism or Mobilization Theorists as defined by Political Scientists Hun Park and James Perry (2009) are theorists who believe the role of the Internet is positive. They hold a “utopian view” that the Internet will get people more involved in public life, reduce the cost of information and communication, and increase voter turnout.⁽¹⁹⁾

The opposing school of thought is the pessimism or reinforcement theorists. As defined by Park and Perry (2009) the pessimism or reinforcement theorists are those who believe that the role of the Internet is negative in that the Internet reinforces the existing power relationships and patterns of political participation.

Finally, a third school of thought, skepticism is identified by Park and Perry. Skepticism is the belief that the role of the Internet is reflective and socially constructed.¹ The Internet does not facilitate or destroy civic engagement but instead reflects ‘politics as usual’.⁽²⁰⁾

III. **The political communication structure have changed through the new media**

Different scholars and experts defined political communication in different ways. For example, Robert E. Denton and Gary C. Woodward describe political communication in the form of intentions of its senders to influence the political environment(21) In their words "the crucial factor that makes communication 'political' is not the source of a message, but its content and purpose"(22).

Brian McNair provides a similar definition by saying that political communication is "purposeful communication about politics"(23). This means that this not only covers verbal or written statements, but also visual representations such as dress, make-up, hairstyle or logo design. In other words, it also includes all those aspects that develop a "political identity" or "image".

The traditional political communication is made by three players in a triangular structure as shown in figure 2.

The political parties (headed by the governing ones)

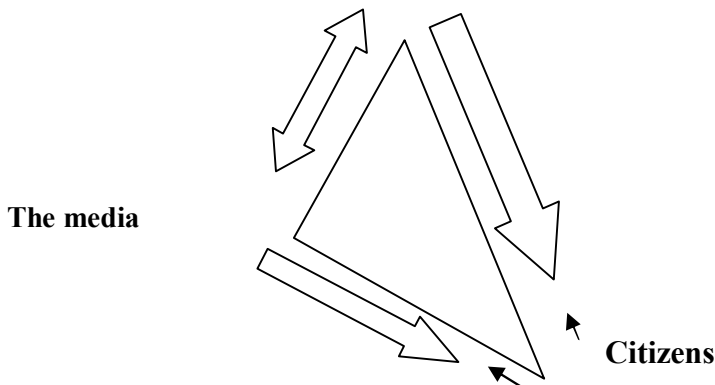


Figure 2: The triangular structure of the traditional political communication

The political parties are in one corner and it is mostly headed by the governing parties. The media represent the second cornerstone in the political communication triangle. They act as intermediaries between the parties and their message on the one hand, and the electorate as the recipients on the other.⁽²⁴⁾

In addition to this mediating role, they also communicate in their own right, either through active communication, e.g. in the form of political commentary or editorials, or through targeted questioning in interviews with representatives of political parties and representatives of the government, with whose help they control the quality of the communication.

The citizens themselves complete the triangle of political communication, in the first instance merely as passive recipients. Their communication occurs only on the micro-level, when discussing politics and attempting to convincingly convey specific opinions.

The introduction of the New Media has significantly altered this communication structure. The original structures have shifted from a “top-down approach” to a polycentric communications system. Thus, it can be said that political communication by the population is greater today than the mere expression of will in polls.

The new technologies have promoted citizens' position to that of equal partners in the communications structure ⁽²⁵⁾.

IV. Internet users in Algeria

Table 2: ALGERIA 2014 POPULATION AND INTERNET USERS STATISTICS FOR 2013 ⁽²⁶⁾					
<u>Population</u> <u>(2014 Est)</u>	<u>Internet</u> <u>Users</u> <u>31-</u> <u>Dec-</u> <u>2000</u>	<u>Internet</u> <u>Users</u> <u>31-Dec-</u> <u>2013</u>	<u>Penetration</u> <u>(% of</u> <u>population)</u>	<u>Internet</u> <u>(% of</u> <u>Africa)</u>	<u>Facebook</u> <u>31-Dec-</u> <u>2012</u>
<u>38,813,722</u>	<u>50,000</u>	<u>6,404,264</u>	<u>16,5%</u>	<u>2.7%</u>	<u>4,111,320</u>

This table 2 indicates the huge number of internet users and Facebookers in Algeria (may be more than 4.5 millions of users). Hence Facebook can be regarded as **"the Republic of Facebook."** which makes an important platform for many types political communications.

V. Algerian political parties

Algeria has a multi-party system with numerous political parties, in which no one party often has a chance of gaining power alone, and parties must work with each other to form coalition government. The Algerian Constitution (as of 1996) allows the formation of any party not "founded on a religious, linguistic, racial, sex, corporatist or regional basis" or violating "the fundamental

liberties, the fundamental values and components of the national identity, the national unity, the security and integrity of the national territory, the independence of the country and the People's sovereignty as well as the democratic and republican nature of the State."

<u>Short name</u>	<u>English name</u>	<u>Arabic name</u>	<u>French name</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Site</u>
<u>FLN</u>	<u>National Liberati on Front</u>	<u>جبهة التحرير الوطني</u>	<u>Front de Libération Nationale</u>	<u>Amar Saâdani</u>	<u>http://www.pfln.dz/</u>
<u>PT</u>	<u>Workers ' Party</u>	<u>حزب العمال</u>	<u>Parti des Travailleur s</u>	<u>Louisa Hanoune</u>	<u>p://www.ptalgerie.com/</u>
<u>RND</u>	<u>National Rally for Democr acy</u>	<u>التجمع الوطني الديمقراطي</u>	<u>Rassemble ment National Démocratique</u>	<u>Abdelkader Bensalh</u>	<u>http://rnd-dz.com/index_ar.php</u>
<u>RCD</u>	<u>Rally for Culture and Democr acy</u>	<u>التجمع من أجل الثقافة والديمقراطية</u>	<u>Rassemble ment pour la Culture et la Démocratie</u>	<u>Saïd Sadi</u>	<u>http://www.rcd-algerie.org/</u>
<u>El Islah/</u>	<u>Movem ent for</u>	<u>حركة الإصلاح</u>	<u>Mouvemen t El</u>	<u>Abdallah Djaballah</u>	<u>http://www.elislah.net/</u>

<u>MRN/</u> <u>MI</u>	<u>National</u> <u>Reform</u>	<u>الوطني</u>	<u>Islah/Mouv</u> <u>ement du</u> <u>Rénouveau</u> <u>National</u>		
<u>Hamas</u> <u>/HMS/</u> <u>MSP</u>	<u>Movem</u> <u>ent of</u> <u>Society</u> <u>for</u> <u>Peace</u>	<u>حركة مجتمع</u> <u>السلم</u>	<u>Mouvemen</u> <u>t de la</u> <u>Société</u> <u>pour la</u> <u>Paix</u>	<u>Bouguerra</u> <u>Soltani</u>	<u>http://www.hmsalgeria.net/</u>
<u>FNA</u>	<u>Algerian</u> <u>National</u> <u>Front</u>	<u>الجهة</u> <u>الوطنية</u> <u>الجزائرية</u>	<u>Front</u> <u>National</u> <u>Algérien</u>	<u>Moussa</u> <u>Touati</u>	<u>http://www.fna.dz/</u>
<u>Ennah</u> <u>da</u> <u>(MN)</u>	<u>Islamic</u> <u>Renaiss</u> <u>ance</u> <u>Movem</u> <u>ent</u>	<u>حركة</u> <u>النهضة</u>	<u>Mouvemen</u> <u>t</u> <u>Ennahda/M</u> <u>ouvement</u> <u>de la</u> <u>Renaissanc</u> <u>e Islamique</u>	<u>Lahbib</u> <u>Adami</u>	
<u>PRA</u>	<u>Party of</u> <u>Algerian</u> <u>Renewal</u>	<u>حزب التجديد</u> <u>الجزائري</u>	<u>Parti du</u> <u>Rénouveau</u> <u>Algérien</u>	<u>Yacine</u> <u>Terkmane</u>	
<u>MEN</u>	<u>Movem</u> <u>ent of</u> <u>National</u> <u>Underst</u>	<u>حركة الوفاق</u> <u>الوطني</u>	<u>Mouvemen</u> <u>t de</u> <u>l'Entente</u> <u>Nationale</u>	<u>Ali</u> <u>Boukhazna</u>	

	<u>anding</u>				
<u>MNJA</u>	<u>El-Infatah Movement</u>	-	-	<u>Naima Farhi</u>	
<u>MPA</u>	<u>Algerian Popular Movement</u>	<u>الحركة الشعبية الجزائرية</u>	<u>Mouvement Populaire Algérien</u>	<u>Amara Benyounes</u>	<u>http://www.mpa-dz.org/</u>

Parties that boycotted the last elections

<u>Short name</u>	<u>English name</u>	<u>Arabic name</u>	<u>French name</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Site</u>
<u>FFS</u>	<u>Front of Socialist Forces</u>	<u>جبهة القوى الاشتراكية</u>	<u>Front des Forces Socialistes</u>	<u>Hocine Aït Ahmed</u>	<u>http://www.ffa-dz.com/</u>

Other parties

Ahd 54

Algerian Party for Democracy and Socialism (Parti Algérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme)

The Cause (Essabil)

National Republican Alliance (ANR)

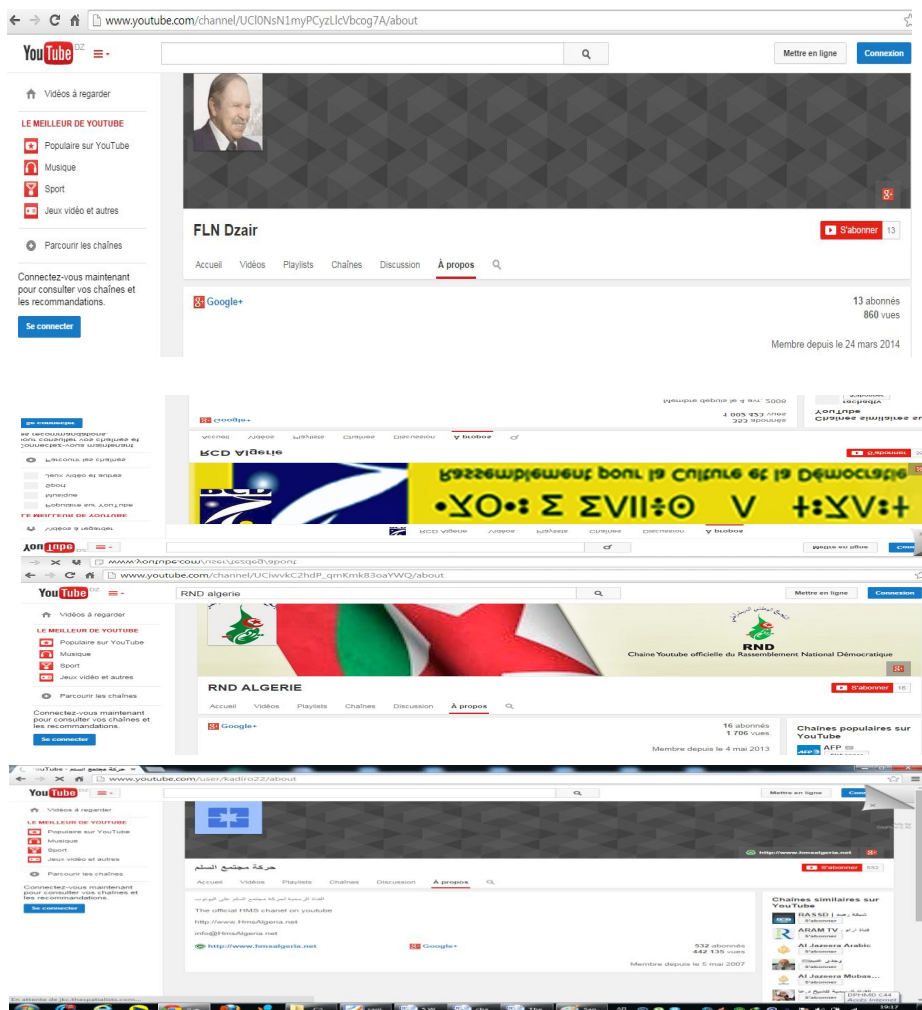
Natural Law Party (Parti de la Loi Naturelle)

Socialist Workers' Party (Algeria)

National Party for Solidarity and Development, PNSD.

- According to the given table, we notice that only some Algerian political parties have official websites.

Some examples for Political parties youtube channels:



VI. Algerian presidential elections campaign April 2014

Presidential elections were held in Algeria on 17 April 2014 and the candidates for elections are presented in the following table:

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Party</u>
<u>1</u> <u>Abdelaziz Bouteflika</u>	<u>National Liberation Front</u>
<u>2</u> <u>Ali Benflis</u>	<u>Independent</u>
<u>3</u> <u>Abdelaziz Belaid</u>	<u>Front for the Future</u>
<u>4</u> <u>Louisa Hanoune</u>	<u>Workers' Party</u>
<u>5</u> <u>Ali Fawzi Rebaine</u>	<u>Ahd 54</u>
<u>6</u> <u>Moussa Touati</u>	<u>Algerian National Front</u>

Newspapers can be banned, radio and TV can be banned, but internet cannot be banned, blogs, youtube, twitter and Facebook cannot be abandoned, mobile phone messages cannot be stopped by the governments.

The new media have Lived the rhythm of the election campaign since around two months before the elections. Algerian internet users continued following the progress of the campaign and shared the most significant events and statements.

Algerian internet users played a remarkable role in the events of the presidential elections compaign, where they were taking photos, vedeos...etc. Regardless of the means used: laptops, cameras, smart phones and some other internet users do not miss anything happened. In all events (marches, clashes), there is always one or more users to

take a photo or a video to share them on Facebook and Twitter. The images are usually posted online. Some other Facebookers and Twitters do not take photos by themselves, but they used to cut passages newscasts and programs broadcasted on Algerian and foreign channels. The selected passages are often taken from the statements of politicians and their supporters, or the testimony of ordinary citizens.

In the majority of Facebook pages, Algerians were so interested in the election on April 17 (there were some pages focus fully on the campaign from its beginning and they followed closely all the events that characterize it).

Candidates furnish blogosphere: Social Networks especially facebook are a great hunting ground for the presidential elections condidates, where they play their last cards before the big ⁽²⁷⁾.day, and also a good way to test their popularity and have a the maximum number of voters. The presidential election Compaigh was between traditional communication based and the new media political communication based.

While traditional meetings, public meetings and distributing leaflets and posters in the streets are far from over, the Facebook posts, youtube vedeos were added to the range available to the candidates.

For candidates, facebook was kind of Virtual Kalashnikov because of the strong advantages in creating Facebook campaign: First, it can increase the visibility of a candidate and the project in just

a few moments and at a low cost. Also the show on Facebook guarantees access of candidates to the millennial generation: in Algeria, the age group that uses the most of this social network is usually less than 30 years. Many experts said "Facebook is a strategic and essential tool for an election campaign, if you take it seriously."

In addition to that "Facebook can also manage his campaign: the number of users page, photos and videos of meetings. "It's also an occasion to know about other candidates programs and loopholes." an example: the problem of unemployment: a candidate can see what the others propose to solve the problem, then he improves to his supporters to avoid this candidate.

The two "majors" candidates, namely Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Ali Benflis, have understood the influence of the social networks to attract voters. In terms of activities and the dynamic generated by each candidate, a ride on the official Facebook pages of the six candidates enough to measure their "facebookian" activity.

In this sense, we have seen only about one hundred jobs during the period from April 1 to 7, the candidate Ali Benflis remains the most active on the network, while Abdelaziz Bouteflika has posted a Just over fifty in the same period. However, in terms "like" and "followers", Abdelaziz Bouteflika is far ahead with 327,763 fans, about Ali Benflis, it reached 179,717 fans. The "youngest" of the candidates, Abdelaziz Belaid, also did not miss this deal, creating her Facebook page well fed, which includes 17,281 fans. These three

candidates are most active on the social network. Photos, videos, press releases, information is instantly posted.⁽²⁸⁾ The three other candidates campaigns were based on the "old school," their pages seem deserted and less attractive. The page of the PT candidate, Louisa Hanoune, has no relation to the presidential election. Her page is "undernourished" and the little that is shared was processed. Even finding the candidate with the FNA, Moussa Touati, his page is empty and no activity since October 2012, except for the posts of some of his fans who are just 258, meanwhile, no publication. For his part, Ali Fawzi Rebaine, no trace of a Facebook page. The profile name of Ali Fawzi Rebaine is sometimes fed.

Conclusion and Further research

This paper has addressed the role of New media in the apolitical communication (Algeria). Hence, we conclude the following:

- Most of the Algerian youth are digitally connected generation.
- The New Media are playing an important role in promoting the structure of the political communication in Algeria from a “top-down approach” old communication where the citizen plays only a micro-level role to a polycentric communications system where the citizen’s position to that of equal partners in the communications structure. So citizens are given more opportunity to communicate, deliver their feedbacks, share photos, videos...etc.
- The new media technologies have given a new dimension to the political campaign in Algeria. Many Algerian political parties have created their own websites, blogs and Facebook/twitter accounts. They are regularly watching and reading their new media content where they will be able to deliver their political projects, meetings, post their last news far from some manipulated mass media. Hence, the new media indeed is changing the political attitudes and behaviors in Algeria.
- Studies on the role of new media in the Algerian political communication should definitely continue considering more

results. Hence In the future, we plan to address how to improve the positive impact of the new media in the political communication.

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