Media Trends
in Time of Change

Executive Summary

Introduction

With the transitional phase that Lebanon is going through, the role of means of information and communication increases, given that the public keeps abreast of developments and events. Their role also increases because they are the engine of ideas and suggestions by transmitting, analyzing and commenting, or by giving the floor to leaders or people who interact with the public opinion and who market ideas and beliefs that establish political, social, religious and other trends. In addition, the public needs someone to provide it with facts and data to form its opinion and take its decisions, especially in the stages of important entitlements or major national milestones.

Hence the importance of knowing the trends of the means of information and communication in a time of change and the importance of paying attention because they are in contact with the public and influence in one way or another their opinions and decisions, especially through democratic entitlements, particularly, all types of elections.

In order to observe the role of these multiple means when it comes to the important entitlements, they must be studied to understand their role in the media scene, the direction they take, how they keep up with the issues of people and society, their mechanism of action, the extent of their association with the various political, economic and partisan authorities, and their stance on the general situation. This matter also helps in understanding the general media mechanism: the launch of the news, its spread, its analyzes, the people who are affected by its release,

the interaction of various means of information and communication with it, the extent of interest in the validity of the information or the extent of responding to false news, the attention that the means of information and communication give to daily news and how to deal with it, etc.

Therefore, this study seeks to know the trends of means of information and communication in Lebanon at this stage, about a year after the start of the October 17 revolution, to know the extent of its follow-up of the demands of the revolution, especially the pursuit of the desired change, the fight against corruption, education on public affairs, including democratic change through elections. It includes specific time periods and specific milestones extending from October 17, 2019 until November 2020.

It also deals with the "alternative media" that has emerged with social media and contributed to the emergence of a group of influencers and opinion leaders who play a parallel role for the media, but it may be no less important and influential. It pays special attention to this new media, which has succeeded in imposing itself as an important source of information and opinion-building, as it has imposed itself on the traditional media that take it into consideration and adopt it as a news source and as an important indicator of people's pulse. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the influencers in social media and the alternative media's approach to events in comparison with the traditional media.

1 The reality of the Lebanese media today

In recent years, there has been a significant decline in the written press, as the number of its publications and readers decreased in exchange for the stability of television stations, which, although they are still creating the event, their political position weakened their national impact. As a result, each station became affiliated with a specific party, which made its discourse in general partial. This is also the case for political broadcasters, without this implying that their role has diminished.

In parallel to the traditional media, the digital media, represented by dozens of news websites, came along with the speed that they represented in broadcasting the news and the permanent timeliness of which they formed an important source, especially that they meet urgent needs of the Lebanese public, which is always eager to keep up with the accelerating political, health, economic, financial and other events. These websites are characterized by being held less accountable and responsible, and they compete with each other over the priority of news, and at times at the expense of credibility. However, they have succeeded in focusing they place and role in the public media scene.

2 Social media and digital platforms

Social networking sites entered the line of competition with traditional and digital media, especially through Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, which are distinguished by producing and publishing the news and allowing the public to comment on it and produce its own content. These platforms represent the public's first expression, in which it is freed from the journalist's control of the news and the "news agenda" as is the case in the traditional media. The news on the front page of the written newspaper or the first headline in the television newsletter may not be echoed by the audience, who themselves determines their interests, which is what they can do through communication platforms with what is available to them from defining their priorities to re-publishing the news or commenting on it.

Therefore, the communication sites have, in turn, turned into a media par excellence, to the point that they now impose their contents on the main headlines of traditional media, and at the same time they form an echo for the traditional media in many of their headlines and the issues they raise. The traditional media is also resorting to these platforms, whether as a source of news or to transmit the audience's interactions with them. Therefore, the overlap between traditional means and digital platforms has become challenging. This intertwining of traditional media and social platforms has also created an interaction, so that there is a mutual influence as well as an overt or implicit competition to monopolize the event and the audience. This approach deserves to be studied to define this relationship between different media and social platforms.

3 Alternative media

Alternative media is the media that provides alternative information to the mainstream or traditional media, whether this mainstream media is commercial, partisan, governmental or public. It differs from traditional media in terms of the content it provides to the public, the methods of presentation and production, as well as the independence and boldness in dealing with important and sensitive issues as it is closely related to blogging media or social media media while retaining its own features. Often, alternative media aims to be a voice of opposition in the face of the administering authorities, or to raise the voice of vulnerable and marginalized groups and strengthen ties between groups with common interests. Alternative media constitutes an alternative to the stereotypical or biased media in choosing and formulating news and information.

This media has taken the title "alternative" because it provides "alternative" views, information and different interpretations of issues of common interest that cannot be found in the mainstream media. This reality does not deny the alternative media the characteristic of bias or commitment. Its supporters speak out about their personal opinions and express them openly, but its bias differs greatly from the bias of traditional media, as it has a different set of values, goals and frameworks. In view of the increasing importance it occupies, political groups, despite their multiplicity, are seeking to reserve a place for themselves, be it overtly or in disguise.

One must also point out the new category of "media figures", who are the influencers on these communication sites, who are also creating the event and who have thousands of followers. They also greatly influence media trends through their tweets or through news, analyzes and positions they broadcast on these sites. Any study on the influence of the media and interaction with the public cannot ignore the role of these people.

4 Objectives of the study

The study seeks to discover the role of the means of information and communication in the democratic transition and to keep pace with the interactions of tweeters and public opinion makers with an event broadcast by the media, especially if it includes a catalyst for effective participation in public life, particularly the electoral process. It also seeks to know the interests of the main media at this stage, and to know whether the slogans and demands that were adopted and launched by the revolutionaries and protesters are still valid and constitute a pillar and a topic of interest in various media coverage.
What is constant, is the definite role of these means in influencing the public's decisions through their role in electoral education, creating an informed and effective public opinion, uncovering truths and facts and placing them at the disposal of the voters so that they can take a decision that is in line with the public interest of the people and the nation. These means can also do the opposite thing through overspending on the promotional and propaganda role that dictates to the voters' decisions based on information or news that is directed or in the interest of the parties behind the media.

It is known that the advocacy role of the media (propaganda) is a kind of control over the public and is driving it in the direction that the promoter or the political authority wants. This contradicts the national interest because it serves a specific party and often does not go in the direction of the public interest. Therefore, it is necessary to start from this principle to determine the extent of independence of the media in its coverage of issues related to the interests of political parties and personalities:

- Do traditional Lebanese media serve the public interest, or are they committed to political and personal trends?

- Are the Lebanese media leading and striving for the change process?

- Where do the alternative media stand in terms of events and do they agree with or contradict traditional media?

To discover the role of these media, the study tries to answer these and other questions through field case studies. Information gathering relied on monitoring and analyzing media content from television stations, written press websites and social media platforms, according to case studies and samples identified in this methodology, monitoring specific issues and keeping up with their coverage from the media and tweeters (opinion leaders). There are also interviews or questionnaires with media and media officials in order to understand the mechanisms of work of media institutions and how they approach events. Interviews were also held with the curators of alternative media sites and a number of investigative journalists, journalists and social media activists.

5 Study issues

This study includes specific issues and time stations that serve the specific problematic, and it extends from October 17, 2019 until November 2020, and includes:

- Bar Association elections on November 17, 2019,
- Student elections in some universities in November and December 2020,
- Voting on the proposal of a law to shorten the parliament's mandate, hold early elections, and propose the collective resignation of the deputies after the port explosion on August 4, 2020,
- Putting forth a proposal for a new election law based on considering Lebanon as a single electoral district.
- The interaction of the media with the arrival of 6 women to the Council of Ministers with the formation of the Government,
- The extent of women's participation in political dialogue programs, and defining their role through various media coverage.
- The issue of corruption in order to know how to keep pace with the media coverage of the topics that are raised about it, specifically the file of the cases of spoiled chicken and adulterated fuel.
- The media keeping up with the proposals of the revolution: Over a year after the October 17, 2019 revolution, what are the concerns and trends that traditional media give priority to today?

6 The emerging political and social situation

As of October 2019, the Lebanese protests overturned the priorities of the "agendas" of the media, which were forced to open the air and give voice to a list of the demands of the people who expressed them on the street, which were centered on fighting corruption and accountability (everyone means everyone). The Corona pandemic has also come to dominate the media agenda while people are still on the flurry of protests. The economic and political situation deteriorated without finding solutions and without the authority's response to the people's demands.

The alternative media kept pace with the events and increased the production of the content that they presented to their audience. They also developed new specialized media projects that seek to present new content that is different from the existing one. Social networking sites, especially Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, were used to express opinions, give feedback and present positions, as well as to organize protests, announce activities and broadcast activities directly from the event site.

Based on these data, keeping up with the media a year after the revolution allows us to know the extent to which these media have followed the revolution's slogans and the people's demands, and deduce what role they play today. Based on this media, political and social reality, the study revolves around 7 topics:

1 First: The media's concerns regarding the parliamentary elections

2 Second: The demands of the October 17 Movement in television coverage

3 Third: Monitoring women's representations in the media and their political participation

4 Fourth: Monitoring the priorities of traditional and alternative media

5 Fifth: The media's interest in corruption issues

6 Sixth: The union and student elections covered by traditional and alternative media

7 Seventh: New influencers and media figures through social platforms

First: The media's concerns regarding the parliamentary elections

Ever since the beginning of the October 17, 2019 revolution, and based on the principle that the parliament elected in May, 2018 no longer reflects the will of the street demanding change and accountability, the demand for "early parliamentary elections" has been a priority in the program of political reform, power reconfiguration and removal of the current political class accused of corruption.

Some political forces met the street's demand to shorten the term of the current parliament and hold early parliamentary elections. However, the bill proposal submitted by the Phalanges (Kataeb) Party on 11/18/2019 to shorten the Parliament's mandate and hold early parliamentary elections was dropped during the legislative session which included it on its agenda. The session was held at UNESCO, between April 21 and 23, 2020. Only 18 deputies voted in favor of the law, which revealed that the majority of political forces rejected early elections for various reasons. Also, following the resignation of 8 deputies in the wake of the Beirut port explosion and the acceptance of their resignations on August 13, the date of the by-elections to fill the vacancy still hasn't been announced, despite the legal provisions, specifically Article 41 of the constitution, which stipulates that by-elections should be held within a two-month period.

After the drop of the proposal for a law to hold early parliamentary elections and its response in the Parliament's General Assembly on April 22, 2020, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri sought to market a new electoral law that would adopt Lebanon as a single electoral district based on the proportional system. This proposal was discussed in the joint parliamentary committee session that was held on November 25, 2020, and the parliamentary blocs had different positions on this proposal. However, the demand for early elections remains one of the priorities of the popular movement's demands.

In this regard, the study sought to answer a basic question related to the work of the television media, which revolves around the attention it gives to the issues of the democratic formation of power by following up on current issues related to parliamentary elections, awareness and political education. Did it limit itself to conveying the positions of the main parties, or did it play its role in presenting the issue from the standpoint of influencing the positions and urging the need to adhere to the democratic path of forming power and governance, as well as electoral and political awareness and education?

The answer to this problem aims to:

- Determine the extent of TV news bulletins' interest on the issue of electoral education.
- Determine the extent of television media's interest in highlighting the issue of early parliamentary elections.
- Determine the topics of news coverage related to the resignation of MPs and the vacancy of 8 seats following the Beirut bombing and the early and by-elections.

Results of the media's concern regarding the parliamentary elections

The issue of the parliamentary elections was one of the main demands of the popular demonstrations and the revolutionaries, considering that it is a basic entry point for change and the restructuring of power. However, this was not translated in television news bulletins. The handling of election issues was different according to each station, its political affiliation, and its editorial line. A striking example of that position was the resignation of some MPs, which was the subject of ridicule on OTV, while MTV congratulated the Lebanese for these resignations.

● The issue of parliamentary elections was not a priority in the headlines and introductions of television news bulletins, as it appeared in 26 out of 65 bulletins, while it was absent in 39 bulletins; and that, at a time when the topic of the elections was a daily event that was possible to endorse in the bulletins.

● The interest in the election issue came in particular as a reaction to President Diab's call for early elections and to Speaker Berri's proposal for a new electoral law bill, which generated reactions to the two proposals, meaning that it was not an initiative from the media.

● The majority of coverage of the election issue, i.e. 84%, came in the form of a report, while the percentage of live broadcasts is about 9%, and that of interviews of about 7%. There was no investigation on the issue of the elections. This confirms the lack of interest in this topic.

● The absence of activists and representatives of the Movement from news bulletins. The speakers in news bulletins on election issues are the politicians, and only once did they host an expert, while the opinion of activists, representatives of civil society and the public was completely absent.

● News coverage of the main issues, in general, did not align with the demands of the revolutionaries. The same applies to the issue of elections, as their demands were only mentioned in six out of 58 coverages related to the elections.

● The absence of issues of electoral awareness and education in the news coverage of the news bulletins of the five stations.Out of 58 reports that appeared, only one seemed to include an explanation of the various law proposals submitted by the parliamentary blocs for discussion in the joint parliamentary committees.

● Given that the issue of early elections constitutes one of the Movement's demands, standing with this demand can be interpreted as standing with the opposition and the revolution movements. Therefore, the issue of the resignation of some MPs and the demand for early elections appeared marginally on Al-Manar and "OTV", while "MTV" and "Al-Jadeed" dealt with it in a pivotal way.

● The lack of interest of all the monitored TV channels in the issue of including the proposal for the law on early elections in the agenda of the parliamentary sessions between April 21 and 23, 2020, and their lack of interest in following the debate on it. The parliament rejected the urgency of this proposal and dropped the demand for early elections as an achievable priority.

- Neglecting the demands of the revolutionaries in news coverage throughout the monitoring period, as they were mentioned in only six out of 58 coverages related to the elections.

Second: The demands of the October 17 Movement in television coverage

The demonstrations of October 17 carried reform demands that expressed the aspirations of the Lebanese, and the majority of the political class was unanimous in their correctness. However, the spontaneous demonstrations that lasted for weeks in the streets in various Lebanese regions did not produce leaders or an emerging political movement that managed to attract the public around a unified and clear political project in the face of traditional parties or the ruling class. As a result, no leadership was formed for the revolution, and no reform work paper was drawn up based on these demands.

However, the demonstrators expressed their most prominent demands in the sit-in squares, in their posters and on their tents, as the media reported these demands based on the slogans of the demonstrators and the statements and positions of leaders in the revolution. Many of these demands – which constitute a consensus in terms of their eligibility – have spread on social media accounts. The most important of these slogans and demands are the following:
- The resignation of the government and the formation of a rescue government of independent specialists,
- Holding early parliamentary elections with the approval of a new electoral law,
- Recovering stolen money and lifting bank secrecy,
- Holding corrupt politicians accountable,
- Social benefits: social, health and old-age security.
- A sustainable energy and electricity solution,
- Protection of public and maritime property,
- Restructuring and rehabilitating the public sector (good governance),
- Establishing women's rights on an equal basis with men.

The reform paper presented by Prime Minister Saad Hariri to the government, and which was approved on October 21, 2019, came to confirm the eligibility of the demands of the revolution. These slogans and demands were raised by the protesters at the beginning of the revolution, and were then reflected in the coverage of most traditional media outlets.

Here, the question is related to the work of the television media and the extent of the attention they give in the news bulletins to the slogans and demands that the revolutionaries and protesters adopted and launched, a year after these protests have passed, and whether the slogans and demands are still present and constitute a pillar and a subject of interest for the various media coverage, and whether television stations still constitute a lever for these demands and slogans, as it did at the beginning of the revolution, or did the media agenda differ with the cooling of the protests and the uprising?

Results of the demands of the October 17 Movement in television coverage

- The October Revolution and its demands appear to be marginal in news bulletins. There was no explicit reference to the October Revolution except in 9 news coverage out of 123 news coverage.

- The total share of the demands raised by the revolution is about 8 percent of the total reports. They imposed themselves given their link to events and not as an editorial option in news bulletins. The reports dealt with some of the issues that feed into the demands of the revolution, such as issues of protests and demand movements, talks about early parliamentary elections and the issue of transparency and access to information, but, as a whole, they do not exceed 6 percent of the total reports.

- By analyzing the headlines and introductions, it seems clear that the demands that emerged with the start of the revolution and which occupied the headlines and introductions of news bulletins at the time, are no longer the topic of the hour, as only two basic demands were seen in two monitored news bulletins out of ten bulletins.

- The specialists and experts were the main spokesperson in 20 reports, and politicians landed the second place as the main speaker in 16 reports. The speech was given to the Movement's activists only once, which reflects the marginalization of their role and thus, of their demands.

- The topic of the revolution was mentioned in the headlines and introductions of bulletins, in three of the 10 monitored news bulletins. However, dealing with the topics of the revolution in headings and introductions did not come in a positive context. Rather, the tone varied between positive, neutral and negative. Even in the coverage that dealt with the demands of the revolution and its slogans, which amounted to 21 out of a total of 123 reports, the speakers about it were primarily politicians. As for the movement's activists, they appeared as the main speaker in only one news report.

- Reports on accountability of corrupt politicians and officials (3 reports) only constitute about 2.5% of the total recorded reports.

- In terms of gender balance, the share of women appears to be marginal. It constitutes 14% compared to the men who still rank first as the main spokesperson in news reports at 86%.

- There was no investigation in the bulletins, while it was possible to achieve this in one of the many issues raised by the revolution.

- As for the stations' positions on the revolution and its issues, every station had a different stance. OTV appears to be the most negative about the revolution, followed by AL MANAR, which ignores the revolution and its demands. On the other hand, MTV appears to be the most enthusiastic of its demands.

Third: Monitoring women's representations in the media and their political participation

What is the space given to women in the Lebanese media? How do the Lebanese media deal with the political role of women? What is the image of women in the political arena that television stations market in their news bulletins? What is the size of the role that women take on in the making of public opinion and in their societal role at the level of political leadership?

In order to answer this problematic, two case studies that deal with television stations dealing with women in political affairs were chosen:

The first case: How television stations cover the appointment of 6 women as ministers in Prime Minister Hassan Diab's Government. With the announcement of the formation of the Government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab on January 21, 2020, it was the first time in Lebanon that a Government was formed and where 30% of its members were women. It is a Government that is distinguished by the importance and the size of the tasks entrusted to it, given that it was formed as a result of the October 17 revolution, and its first task is to develop a comprehensive rescue plan that includes structural reforms and an economic and financial recovery.

It was also the first time in the history of Lebanon that a woman assumes the duties of the Ministry of Defense, as well as the Ministry of Justice. These are two portfolios that are considered two of the basic and important portfolios in the distribution of ministerial portfolios between the blocs and parties that form governments in Lebanon.

The second case: the role given to women in political dialogue programs on television stations. The political dialogue programs on television stations are considered one of the most prominent political platforms in most countries, given their impact and symbolism. Therefore, the guests of these episodes are considered opinion leaders, or influential and active persons, and their reception in these programs is an implicit recognition of their role and leading position. Therefore, this study was interested in knowing the extent of women's presence in these programs and the extent of their reception by these programs, because this shows the position of women in social leadership in general and political leadership in particular, and their image among the media and public opinion.

Results of monitoring women's representations in the media and their political participation

- Women are still vulnerable to marginalization in the Lebanese media, just as they are marginalized in political life. As if they're not taken seriously. The entry of 6 women ministers into the Government, despite its importance, was not given the importance it deserves by news bulletins on television stations, be it symbolic or social. This event, which was happening for the first time in Lebanon, did not appear in the headlines and introductions of television bulletins as it was supposed to. Al-Jadeed TV was the only station to mention this in the title and introduction of its bulletin.

- No report on women's political participation or the position of women in Lebanese political life was recorded in the bulletins.

- There was some sarcasm in the bulletins against women ministers, including comments about the women ministers, "that they will share their experiences over morning coffee," and "A man and six women - we will know the Government's news through gossiping."

- The presence of women is secondary in talk show programs, and the percentage of their appearance as guests, whether as politicians or as special guests, reached 16% of the total appearances compared to 84% for men.

Fourth: Between traditional and alternative media: What priorities?

With the development of digital technologies, new means of communication - which began to play a role similar to that of traditional media in terms of reporting news, covering events and expressing opinions on developments in various fields - appeared. Their role has expanded and imposed itself in what is sometimes called "citizenship journalism," or "alternative media," and its "legitimacy" has taken from the size of its followers and its freedom of opinion, as it deviates from the frameworks of the media close to the authority or the media linked to large institutions that have their political and material obligations and have their own editorial line that is often determined by those correlations.

The "alternative media" seemed to be closer to popular trends, free of connections, and shed light on issues from a different angle. Based on this role, the alternative media emerged as an important player in the media arena. Therefore, this study sought to know the difference between the traditional media, such as newspapers and television, and the alternative media embodied, especially, in digital platforms that play a media role in keeping up with the general situation. The study of this distinction is done by keeping these two types of media up to date with current events and through their interests in news coverage and how they address the issues raised since the October 17 revolution. Where do these two types of media meet and where are they different? What are their respective priorities? Therefore, the objectives of this chapter were defined as follows:

- Measuring the compatibility of news priorities between traditional and alternative media,
- Determining the topics and priorities that are concerned with the various media within the same period of time,
- Determining how the media approach this event itself: How do they choose it, treat it, and present it to the public?

Results of the priorities of both, traditional and alternative media

- The sections (local, international, economics …) presented by both traditional and alternative media are very close between them, and the difference appears to be weak if we take into account the technical specificities of each. However, the distinction appears in the choice of topics within each section and in the approach of coverage.

- In the interests of traditional media, the low percentage of women's issues (1%) and refugee and camp issues (1%) was remarkable in the press, along with corruption cases, which only got 2%. However, social and demand issues were given a high rate of 13%.

- In the interests of television, the percentage of demand issues was of 9%, corruption of 6%, and camps and refugees of 5%.

- In alternative media interests, the interest for women's affairs is highlighted (5%), as well as issues of camps and refugees (5%), and corruption (5%).

In a comparison of the type of coverage between traditional and alternative media, it becomes clear that there are differences that distinguish the alternative media:

- The absence of statements and advertisements for alternative media.
- The alternative media was distinguished by a very high rate of investigations compared to
- other media.
- The increase in the number of event in the alternative media compared to other media.
- The equalization of alternative media with television stations in terms of the amount of analysis.
- The balance of alternative media with other media in terms of spreading positions.

- It can be concluded from these differences that the alternative media is active and is not less important than the traditional means. Indeed, its richness in the field of investigation indicates that it seeks to highlight and explain events from its perspective. At the same time, it presents events and analyses in large proportions. It is also free from data and ads. This indicates the activity and dynamism of this media.

- In the total of the speakers in the monitored traditional media, it is found that politicians came out on top of the list of speakers with (32%). They were followed by specialists from the various academic and professional sectors, at a rate of 26%, the spokespersons of an official administration (20%), then the public (10.5%), representatives of the security forces (5%), the activists (3%), and finally the clerics (2.5%).

- Likewise, in the alternative media, politicians also came first, with 40%, followed by experts with 23%, then the public with 16%, activists with 12%, and finally representatives of the public administration with 9%.

- However, the difference between the speakers between traditional and alternative media appears as follows:
  - The absence of activists in the traditional media, while they obtained 12% in the alternative media.
  - The absence of the army and security forces in the alternative media, compared to 5% in the traditional media.
  - The absence of clerics in the alternative media, compared to 2.5% in the traditional media.
  - The public got 10.56% in the traditional media compared to 16% in the alternative media.
  - Speakers for an official administration obtained 20% in the traditional media compared to 9% in the alternative media.

- It can be concluded that the alternative media does not give the floor to some groups, such as the clergies, the security forces, or the spokespersons of administrations, and it gives a great place to activists and the public.

- Despite the intensity of daily corruption news that the media can highlight, such news does not appear during the monitoring day in all traditional media. In terms of television stations, OTV and AL MANAR did not report such news while the other three stations dealt with issues of corruption. Likewise, in newspapers, the percentages vary. In addition, social and demand issues abound in the anti-government media, while they decrease in pro-government media.

- The attack on the Sultan Ahmed bin Adham Mosque in Jbeil came to form a forum for the majority of the media to discuss it and strongly denounce it, and to affirm the national unity despite its disagreement on other issues.

  Alternative media is characterized by the diversity of its topics and its freedom to approach topics. It also seems clear that the issues dealt with by alternative media platforms can be included in the framework of the demands of the October 17 Revolution. The alternative media is free from traditional journalistic rules, such as not repeating the news, not using "violent" expressions, or adhering to the rules of giving speech to all parties or with the courage of criticism and so on.

- Among the critical issues that these platforms have addressed are:
- A number of platforms, such as Janoubia, Legal Agenda, Megaphone, Maharat-news, Khamsmieh, boldly highlighted a group of corruption files, including those who took advanced positions such as Daraj Media about the status of the Banque du Liban over 4 consecutive days (between 8 and 13 November). Then, the platform launched a violent attack on the governor of the Banque du Liban, Riad Salameh, and described him as a "moneylender", "the big thief." The attached video showed that the ruler has exceptional power and is not subject to the decisions of the Prime Minister, Parliament, or the President of the Republic.

- Daraj Media also addressed the Minister of Interior for two consecutive days. On the first day, a video of him was shown in which he professes the stereotype of women and says, "Let women cook on Sunday," and repeats the same mistake in his media appearances, marginalizing women.

- Sawt Beirut International presented a report on the installation of large gas tanks in Burj Hammoud and "residents are terrified of the recurrence of the port incident."

- 961 accuses Hezbollah of being increasingly dependent on criminal enterprises, including drug smuggling to finance its operations.

- Politicalpen covered the first anniversary of "If they don't like the situation and there isn't any good person in power…let them leave", reminding people of the President's word, as if it has become a stain, attached to a picture of him.

- Janoubia published an article on Martyrs' Day and criticized Hezbollah for concealing the fate of thousands of young people in Syria and practicing a security blackout on the matter. "Why were they killed? (…) The father of the martyr Muhammad, who did not know how his son died, avoids meeting with party officials in the village."

Fifth: Monitoring the media's working mechanism: The media's interest in corruption issues is an example

The issue of corruption prevalent in Lebanon on a large scale, especially in everything related to the management of the public sector, was one of the main topics raised by the revolution. The demonstrators demanded to fight this scourge in view of its expansion and its threat to the various sectors of the State and its great repercussions on the daily life of the citizen. The positions of the major countries that accompany the Lebanese file have also demand the same thing, as corruption erodes official institutions and disrupts their functioning, thus disrupting the contributions of donor countries to development and squandering national income.

The Lebanese media have followed corruption cases with different degrees and approaches. Investigative journalism faced difficulties in accessing information, on the one hand, and on the other hand, journalists faced professional difficulties and judicial prosecutions as part of their efforts to uncover practices and actions that fell within the framework of corruption. The study seeks to find out the extent to which the media keeps abreast of corruption cases, how it sheds light on it, and the extent to which it keeps pace with the work of the judiciary who investigates these cases.

The study identified two issues dealing with corruption. The first: the adulterated fuel case, which constitutes a model of corruption in the public sector, which ranges from bribery to wasting public money and even harming the interests of the Lebanese. This is a case that embodies the theft of public money for many years, without anyone taking it seriously.

The second: the issue of spoiled chickens, which raises the issue of the absence of control or the failure of official institutions tasked with protecting the citizen's health and food security to fulfill their duties, whether due to negligence or collusion. This issue also raises the effectiveness of the deterrent legal framework for such crimes and violations that directly affect people's health. This is also an important issue that summarizes the prevailing corruption and neglect, especially since food corruption scandals are repeated from time to time and threaten the citizen's health.

So, the goal was to:

- Determine the extent of television media coverage of corruption cases that the judiciary places its hand on, that is, the extent of their interest in them.
- Determine the extent to which the television media follows up investigations of corruption cases and keeps abreast of them, informing the public opinion of developments, and thus the extent of highlighting them and the pressures they exert in this direction.
- Determine the type and extent of coverage.

Results of monitoring media interest in corruption issues

- This study shows that the Lebanese media does not exercise its role as a supervisory authority over matters of public affairs, nor does it play its role in accountability and responsibility. Indeed, the way it deals with these two issues of corruption gives the impression that it gives a platform for government officials to appear like stars in the fight against corruption, or so that they can defend themselves in the cases that are accused against them.

- TV stations did not follow up the two cases of corruption at all stages, but rather neglected the case of the spoiled chicken, and stopped following it.

  It gave the floor to ministers, so they had an opportunity to polish their image, and to reduce the popular resentment over the rampant corruption and its spread over the years. Meanwhile, the floor was not given to experts, specialists, activists, consumer advocacy associations, or the opposition parties accompanying these files.

- In all the reports, the floor was given once to a specialist expert, while politicians or government spokesmen spoke 11 times, and this matter allowed them either to defend themselves or to appear as corruption fighters. Thus, the stations were in the service of the political power to promote it.

- Investigative journalism was absent as it could have performed its role with distinction.

- During the four monitored days for the spoiled chicken incidents, the stations covered it once, with the exception of LBC, which covered it twice, while the event allowed wider coverage.

- From the type of coverage the stations used, it turns out that the investigation appeared 7 times out of 32 coverages, meaning about 22%, while the other percentage, 78%, came in the form of news reports. This means that the stations are often content with the data or news circulating without any effort or additional investigation to shed light on these issues.

- It was remarkable that during the bulletins, there was no investigation on food corruption, despite the importance of the issue and despite it being repeated in the daily lives of the Lebanese.

Sixth: The union and student elections covered by traditional and alternative media

The trade union elections, especially the Bar Association elections that took place on November 17, 2019, a month after the outbreak of the revolution, constituted a turning point in the electoral mood, which began to shrink from traditional political party candidates in the interest of independents.

The second surprise came in the student elections at the American University of Beirut (AUB) that took place on November 13, 2020, about a year after the start of the revolution, as the secular club lists and the independents won about 80% of the student council seats and the university's committee for professors and students.

The results of the American University elections, in which the political parties were absent from the arena, were reflected in the victory of independent students at Saint Joseph University (the Jesuit University), which took place on three consecutive days between November 30 and December 2, 2020. The results showed a decline in the representation of the parties that only won 25% of the total number of seats for the 240 student bodies, while the independent candidates won 95 seats and the Secular Club won 85 seats despite the campaigns they were exposed to by the parties. The Saint Joseph University elections also witnessed a sectarian and doctrinal conflict, which resulted in problems among the supporters of the parties in the vicinity of the Huvelin campus.

This chapter aims to monitor and analyze the media coverage related to the union and student elections that took place after the October 17, 2019 revolution, in order to clarify the following matters:

- The importance given by the media (TV stations) to cover these elections through the headlines and introductions of news bulletins and various news reports.
- The editorial framework adopted by the media institutions in which the events and results were presented: the context in which the events were set and the conclusions that led to the reading of the events and the results.
- The difference between traditional and alternative media in the perception of these elections.

Results of the union and student elections covered by traditional and alternative media

- The coverage of the union and student elections varied between traditional and alternative media. However, it also appeared different between traditional media institutions, (a sample of television stations) according to political trends. However, most of the stations did not give these elections the attention they deserved, especially as they carried a change in the attitudes of voters, both in the Bar Association and in the elections of the American and Saint Joseph universities. On another hand, the alternative media came to embrace these victories, after the road was paved for them and it was confirmed that they were a continuation of the October 17 revolution.

- There were 21 different news coverage on TV stations about the union and student elections, the majority of which were news reports. Only one investigation and one live broadcast were made. It is evidence that these elections have not been given the attention they deserve.

- The coverage differed according to the station's political affiliation. OTV and AL MANAR, affiliated with two parties in power, have been marked by obliterating the independents' victory in the Bar Association elections and in the American and Saint Joseph universities. The two stations did not cover the American University elections. They also dealt with the Saint Joseph University elections in a secondary way, as if they tried to cover up the fact that these elections constituted a defeat for the political parties.

- MTV, LBCI and AL-JADEED considered Melhem Khalaf's victory at the head of the Bar Association as a victory for the October 17 Revolution. AL MANAR considered that union leader, Khalaf's victory came as a result of the support of Hezbollah, Amal Movement, the Phalanges and the Independents, in the face of a candidate for the Lebanese Forces and another for the Independents. That is how it is trying to strip the title of "union leader of the revolution" that was given to Khalaf, and denies that his victory was a victory for the revolution. As for OTV, it was silent about the event.

- AL-JADEED is the station that highlighted the most the issue of the union and student elections, as it appeared 7 times in the introductions and headlines it published, compared to twice on LBC, once on MTV and AL MANAR, and a complete absence on OTV.
ing the spirit of defeat among the supporters of the parties.

- The alternative media fought the student election battle against political parties. Daraj Media prepared for the student elections at the American University with an investigation about the secular club, introducing it and spreading the spirit of victory: "As the votes of the clubs affiliated with the parties in power recede, the voices in support of the secular club, which is widely supported on social media by the activists of the uprising and its supportive pages, rise. On the other hand, the platform broadcasted the spirit of defeat among the parties of power: "… clubs controlled by "Hezbollah", "Free Patriotic Movement", "Future Movement"and "Lebanese Forces"announced their withdrawal from the student elections at the American University of Beirut Under the pretext of the errors that accompany it." Thus, it becomes clear that the platform formed an important base for secular students by preparing their campaign and spreading the spirit of victory to them, in exchange for spreading the spirit of defeat among the supporters of the parties.

- The alternative media gave the floor to the independent student representatives and allowed them to express their proposals, which was not available to them in the traditional media. The Legal Agenda platform gave the floor to the representatives of the secular students, linking them with the revolution: "Today's victory is the beginning of a true student uprising, and the result of a legacy of struggle for decades."

- The conclusions of the alternative media went far in considering these elections a defeat for political parties, promising a transformation in political life and in the upcoming elections. The platform MEGAPHONE wrote: "The recent results of the student elections at the American University have returned some of the hope that we have lost in recent months. This victory came to confirm that the" authority "and its party choice have lost their control over student life. The parties have lost their political viability.

Seventh: New influencers and media figures through social platforms

A new class of media professionals and influencers has appeared on the media scene. They are active from outside the traditional media, communicating directly with the public through various digital media. This phenomenon came with radical changes that occurred in the world of media and communication: the launch of "alternative media", the expansion of digital media, the success of communication platforms and the increasing role that social networking sites occupy.

These media professionals and influencers are active on social networking sites and have thousands of followers from various audiences, including media professionals. They are distinguished by the topics they present or the way they approach the events, so they play an influential role in public opinion as they now contribute to creating the event, publishing, analyzing and commenting on it and giving it new dimensions through their opinions, comments and tweets. Any study on the influence of the media and interaction with the public cannot ignore the role of these people. Therefore, they become influencers.

- The study sought to conduct interviews with a group of influencers and activists through the alternative media in order to understand their motives in view of the major role they are playing and the position they occupy on the media map. Therefore, the aim was to answer a set of questions about these influencers: Who are the influencers outside the traditional media? What are their interests? What issues do they raise? From what angle? What is the extent of their interaction with the traditional media and can they succeed in imposing their agenda on it? What is their relationship to traditional media and social networking sites? How do they choose the issues through which they are active? How do they see their role? What are their success criteria? What do they suggest to activate alternative media?

- Investigative journalism has also emerged as one of the tools for reforming public affairs by highlighting social problems and the officials' breach of their role in addressing the issues at hand, especially the spread of the phenomenon of corruption that has spread in both, the public and private sectors. Therefore, the study sought to capture the environment of investigative journalism: its mechanism of action, its effectiveness in fighting corruption, its impact on political power, its interaction with traditional media and its relationship with social media, how it accesses information sources, and how to activate it to become one of the tools for ensuring good governance.

Results of new influencers and media figures through social platforms

- The majority of social media influencers are young people between the ages of 25 and 35, and their educational level is postgraduate. They publish their subjects in Arabic, with a prominent presence of the English language (about 20%) and the number of males surpassing females.

- The majority of the followers who interact on social media are from the age group between 20 and 40 years old. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of active people on social media are young people.

- Topics that capture the interest of the majority of influential people are issues of corruption, public policy criticism, and hot and thorny topics that deal with economic, political and social issues.

- The economic issue is a top priority for followers, especially after the financial crisis that hit Lebanon. This is followed by publications on corruption and exposing the corrupt, then general political topics and publications related to banking and society. As for the issues of human rights, public freedoms and the environment, they seem marginal.

- The criteria for success in the eyes of publishers are: the volume of interaction with followers, the issue raised in news bulletins and the number of likes and shares. 94% of publishers believe that their role is important and that they contribute in one way or another to the process of social change.

- 64% are those who see them as influencing the union and student elections "in some way".

- Traditional media's interest in influencers' publications is based on their political agendas and not based on expert priority or the importance of the topic.

- Most of the influencers pursue their issues until they reach a level that they specify. However, 40% do not follow up on their cases, while there are a few who admit to being afraid to pursue their cases.

- The popularity of communication sites increased during and after the revolution stage, with the aim of obtaining information or searching for data that traditional media do not provide. The results showed that the October 17 Revolution contributed to increasing their spread, doubling the number of their followers, and creating a greater interaction with their posts by 64%.

- Investigative journalism has difficulty accessing information. Especially since the culture of corruption detectors in the administrations in Lebanon is not activated.

- Investigative programs contribute to moving public opinion and activating accountability by highlighting issues of concern to people and the areas of imbalance, but without having a real impact on accountability for the corrupt because of the rampant corruption system, and because of the political and sectarian dependence on the public.

- The influence of investigative journalism increases with the follow-up of traditional media and the acquisition of active accounts and follow-up on social media by TV stations active in this field. This is an affirmation of the link between traditional and alternative media, and how one can activate the role of the other.

- Social networking sites have formed an open and accessible "data bank", which is why they are an important source for investigative journalists, especially in light of the scarcity of accurate information from official sources.

- Despite their belief in the important role that investigative journalism plays, investigative journalists acknowledge its limited role. A journalist is neither a judge nor a policeman, and accountability for the corrupt is linked to the existing political system, especially the status of the judiciary.

- The Right to Information Act has remained a dead letter. It has no meaning, nor other similar laws, in light of a political system in crisis. It's just patches to suggest that there are modern transparency laws and the like. It's just "Prestige".

- Investigative journalists have suggested steps necessary to make their investigations more effective:

  - Activating the law on the right to access to information,
  - Forcing official institutions to publish their data and reports in full,
  - Giving media institutions more support, motivation and independent funding to carry out objective investigative investigations, and allowing more opportunities for journalists to work on thorny topics,
  - Improving tools for promoting the results of investigations,
  - Increasing training and workshops on investigative journalism, and including it in the university curricula of media colleges,
  - The availability of independent and fortified human right bodies specialized in holding the corrupt accountable, provided that the matter is kept up with the activation of the judiciary and the need for its independence to carry out its role until the end,
  - Establishing broad media coalitions that adopt investigations, contribute to protecting the rights of journalists, and prevent political and security attacks against them.

● This study shows that the Lebanese media does not exercise its role as a supervisory authority over matters of public affairs, nor does it play its role in accountability and responsibility. Also, its news coverage during the study period showed that the October Revolution and its demands have become marginal in its news dealings. It rather gives its platform mainly to traditional politicians. This means that the Lebanese media is not leading the process of change that the Lebanese people are waiting for.

● The demands of the reformist revolution, the recovery of stolen money, the fight against corruption, etc. do not appear except in a few news coverage. Even when it comes to the coverage that dealt with the demands of the revolution and its slogans, the speakers were politicians and not the movement's activists. This reflects the marginalization of the movement's representatives and thus the marginalization of their demands.

● The issue of the parliamentary elections and its laws was not a priority in television bulletins when it was on the discussion table, and the issues of electoral awareness and education were absent from these stations in news coverage when the issue of changing the electoral law was raised. The revolutionaries' electoral demands, especially early elections, were also absent even in election-related coverage.

● Women are still vulnerable to marginalization in the Lebanese media, just as they are marginalized in political life. It's as if they're not taken seriously. The entry of 6 women ministers into the government, despite its importance, was not given by the news bulletins on television stations the importance it deserves, and no report about women's political participation or the position of women in Lebanese political life was recorded in the bulletins, and it was even ridiculed on some occasions.

● The presence of women remains secondary in political dialogue programs, as well as in news reports, where the share of women appears to be marginal, as men still occupy the lead as the main speaker at 86%.

● The study showed that the traditional media does not give the corruption issues that plague the country the attention they deserve. In the two cases studied, television stations opened their screens to government officials in order to appear to be stardom in the fight against corruption, or to be able to defend themselves should they be accused of anything. They had a chance to polish their image, or to appear as corruption fighters.

● The "alternative media" has entered the media arena in Lebanon, and has gained its position, and the influencers on the media platforms now occupy a distinguished position in the Lebanese public sphere. It is no longer possible to study the reality of the Lebanese media without taking into account the reality of social media and digital platforms.

General Summaries

- The majority of social media influencers are young people between the ages of 25 and 35, and their educational level is postgraduate. They publish their subjects in Arabic, with a prominent presence of the English language (about 20%) and the number of males surpassing females. The majority of the followers who interact on social media are between the ages of 20 and 40 years. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of active people on social media are young people.

- The alternative media is distinguished from traditional media by its interests and by the angle through which it addresses issues. He highlighted women's issues, camp issues, refugees, and corruption. The alternative media was also distinguished by its freedom from giving speech to some groups such as clergies, security forces or spokesmen for the administration, while giving priority to activists and the public.

- The alternative media promoted the student elections, giving speech to the independent student representatives and allowing them to express their proposals, which was not available to them in the traditional media. Most of the television stations did not give these elections the attention they deserved. The alternative media claimed victory in these elections, after it had paved the way for them, and considered them a continuation of the October 17 revolution.

- The presence of investigative journalism declined and it was absent, for example, on the issue of the two cases of corruption (spoiled chicken and adulterated fuel) in the study, as it could have performed its role with distinction and would have been able to follow up on corruption cases until the end to reach the desired result. Investigative journalists have expressed the limited role of this press, as accountability for the corrupt is linked to the existing political system, especially the status of the judiciary. Moreover, the law on the right to access information has remained a dead letter. It has no meaning, nor other similar laws, in light of a political system in crisis.