



**INTERMEDIA AGENDA-SETTING BETWEEN  
MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND BLOGS: A STUDY OF  
THE 2010 SUDANESE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes intermedia agenda-setting during the 2010 Sudanese presidential elections to determine the intermedia agenda-setting role of socio-political blogs, mainstream news media and citizen journalism. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of new media agendas on traditional news media agendas within the theoretical framework of intermedia agenda-setting. Accordingly, this study examines the influence of socio-political blogs on newspaper coverage of the 2010 presidential elections in Sudan at both first and second levels of intermedia agenda-setting through content analyses of major national newspapers and socio-political blogs before the Election Day. The study was guided by the following research question: What role do blogs and mainstream media play in intermedia agenda-setting? This study applies content analysis, cross-lagged correlation analysis, and Rozelle-Campbell Baseline analysis to explore the causal relationship among newspapers, blogs, and citizen journalism on issues related to the 2010 Sudanese presidential elections. The findings demonstrate proof for intermedia agenda-setting role in Sudanese media across a number of dependent variables. The Sudanese newspapers influenced the agenda of Sudanese blogs; blogs are also gaining a growing influence on the agenda of newspapers. The content analysis found that socio-political blog issue agendas were strongly correlated with the agendas of the newspapers. Results show a lack of intermedia agenda-setting for specific issues examined: the constitution review, economic recovery, the foreign policy, and leadership. The findings also present evidence of intermedia agenda-setting between socio-political blogs and citizen journalism. Results of cross-lagged correlation analyses show that socio-political blogs influenced newspapers at the first level of intermedia agenda-setting. Nonetheless, proof for intermedia agenda-setting did not show up at the second level. Results are discussed in terms of their implications on the field of agenda-setting research as well as limitations and directions for future research.

## خلاصة البحث

تحلل هذه الدراسة تأثير وضع الأجندة (وضع جدول الأعمال) المتبادلة بين وسائل الإعلام بعضها بعضاً، أثناء الانتخابات الرئاسية في السودان عام 2010م لتحديد دور وضع الأجندة المتبادلة بين وسائل الإعلام بين كل من المدونات الاجتماعية، والسياسية، والصحف القومية، وصحافة المواطن. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على تأثير أجندة وسائل الإعلام الجديدة في أجندة وسائل الإعلام التقليدية على ضوء الإطار المنهجي لنظرية وضع الأجندة المتبادلة بين وسائل الإعلام. وفقاً لذلك فإن هذه الدراسة تفحص تأثير المدونات الاجتماعية، والسياسية في تغطية الصحف للانتخابات الرئاسية لعام 2010م في السودان على كلا المستويين الأول، والثاني لوضع الأجندة المتبادلة من خلال تحليل مضمون الصحف القومية الرئيسية والمدونات الاجتماعية، والسياسية. الدراسة قد استرشدت بالسؤال الآتي: ما الدور الذي تؤديه كلا من المدونات ووسائل الإعلام التقليدية في إطار وضع الأجندة المتبادلة؟ الدراسة استخدمت منهج تحليل المضمون، وتحليل الارتباط التقاطعي، وتحليل الخط الأساس لروزيل، وكامبل للكشف عن العلاقات السببية بين موضوعات الانتخابات الرئاسية السودانية لعام 2010م في الصحف القومية والمدونات وصحافة المواطن. برهنت النتائج على وجود دليل على دور لوضع الأجندة المتبادلة بين وسائل الإعلام السودانية من خلال عدد من المتغيرات التابعة. فالصحف السودانية أحدثت تأثيراً في أجندة المدونات السودانية، كما أن المدونات تُحدث تأثيراً متنامياً في أجندة الصحف التقليدية، تحليل المضمون أظهر أن موضوعات أجندة المدونات الاجتماعية والسياسية لديها ارتباط قوي مع أجندة الصحف التقليدية. نتائج البحث أظهرت أن هناك ضعفاً في وضع الأجندة المتبادلة لعدد محدد من الموضوعات المختارة التي تم اختبارها وهي: المراجعات الدستورية، والانعاش الاقتصادي، والسياسة الخارجية والقيادة. كما قدمت نتائج الدراسة أدلة على التأثير المتبادل لوضع الأجندة بين المدونات وصحافة المواطن. أظهرت نتائج تحليل الارتباط ذي الفجوات الزمنية تأثير المدونات الاجتماعية والسياسية في الصحف على المستوى الأول لوضع الأجندة. وبالمقابل لم تثبت نتائج الدراسة أي تأثير لوضع الأجندة المتبادلة في المستوى الثاني بين المدونات والصحف. نوقشت نتائج الدراسة من حيث أثارها في مجال بحوث نظرية وضع الأجندة، فضلاً عن القيود والاتجاهات للبحوث المستقبلية.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Saifeldin Hassan Elawad Abdalla

Signature .....

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*This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of  
my father  
Hassan Elawad Abdalla;  
&  
my mother  
Mardhia Ibrahim;  
and my entire family,  
for their encouragement for me to further knowledge*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Circ:	Circulation.
CJ:	Citizen Journalism
CPA:	Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement.
CPP:	the Sudan's Council of the Press and Publications
Constitutional R.:	Constitutional Review
Creating employ:	Creating employment
E-democracy:	Electronic democracy
ICC:	International Criminal Court
NCPP:	National Council for Press and Publications
NCP:	National Congress Party
NEC:	the Sudan National Electoral Commission
NP:	Newspaper
OHCHR:	the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights
PR:	Proportional Representation
SPB:	Socio-Political Blogs
SPLM:	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SUNA:	Sudan News Agency
TV:	Television.
T1:	Time 1
T2:	Time 2
UJ:	Union of Journalists
USA:	United States of America

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study examines the extent to which, as new media, socio-political blogs and citizen journalism influenced the issues and news agenda of major national newspapers during the 2010 Sudanese presidential elections. Many researches in mass communication focus on the transmission of salience within media (agenda-setting function), the process whereby the mass media determine what we think and worry about.

The agenda-setting process is used to remodel all the events occurring in our environment into a simpler model. Researchers Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw introduced this concept. Agenda-setting scholars have proposed numerous agenda-setting theories including, among others, the first-level agenda-setting (crucial topic salience transmit), second-level agenda-setting (attribute salience transmit), and requirement for orientation (the emotional clarification of the theory). Meanwhile, works on intermedia agenda-setting that examine how content of specific media influences other media content (fourth-stage agenda-setting) are under presented. This study analyzes this possible influence based on intermedia agenda-setting theory on theoretical and operational political communication.

Chapter One is divided into five related sections. Section One introduces the research, while Section Two explains with the background of the study. Section Three presents the research problem and Section Four outlines the research questions and

objectives. Section Five concludes the chapter and highlights the significance of the study.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The Internet is rapidly becoming an integral part of human life and constitutes among the newest forward-looking media. Craig (2005) points out that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Internet went from a specialized medium used regularly by university personnel and computer experts to a true mass medium (Craig, 2005, p.7). Garrison (1996) elaborates that, “the arrival of New Communication Technology such as Mobile Phones, the Internet, and so forth, has created opportunities and challenges for traditional media professions” (Garrison, 1996).

Kalathil (2008) argues that across the world, mainstream media and journalists recognized that new media such as social networking sites, cell phone messaging, blogs, and other new technology applications have a deep impact on their job. He adds, “The appearance of new media has transformed the language of politics and the logic of democracy. New media have not only changed public attitudes toward politics but have also fundamentally restructured the way politics is practiced and the way power is distributed” (Kalathil, 2008, p. 15).

Nowadays, blogs exert a direct effect on the traditional media agenda. Blogs as defined by Blood (2002), “are Web pages with frequently composed entries arranged in reverse chronological order” (p. 19). Blogs have been materializing since the mid-1990s, and became more well-known during the 2000s, with an increasing number of people using blogs for political news. This number grows substantially during election periods.

A blog is a Website commonly consisting of short, regularly simplified articles organized in inverse chronological order, and as such all new posts always appear on peak. Weblogs or blogs can be similar to personal diaries in some ways. The aim and topic of blogs greatly differ from other Websites and include commentary, to companies, people and ideas, news about individuals, parties, photos, poetry, mini-essays, project updates to diaries, and even fiction, but the researcher in this study is interested in those devoted to political news and social issues rather than individual news and views.

Blogs and other new media including social-networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and video-sharing sites together known as Web 2.0 have become cultural phenomenon in many parts of the world. Many of these blogs are filled with fun, lighthearted or whimsical jottings of everyday life. However, many have been used for socio-political commentaries, to break news that big media could not break, to disseminate contentious messages and to mobilize the grassroots to demonstrate in the streets.

As is often the case with new media technologies in their early years, blogs have been the subject of a fast-moving, fluid body of research since first coming to prominence at the beginning of the 1990s. Blogs through its genres, focus on particular areas such as entertainment blogs, health care blogs, personal blogs, and political blogs (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Wallsten, 2007). Drezner & Farrell (2004) state that, “the vast array of topics covered by blogs creates a complicating factor in comparing them to other news media, and research has shown that blogs, their readers and their content are not the same across all genres” (p. 32).

The unique component of blogs makes them an important new media outlet. As Internet users increase rapidly, blogging has become one of the most popular

online activities nowadays. According to the website of Sudanese bloggers without borders network (<http://sdunlimitedbloggers.blogspot.com/>, 2012), the integration of blogs as a source of information during the 2010 Sudanese presidential elections proved to be hypothetically important to study the agenda-setting role of the media. This study specifically investigates the occurrence of intermedia agenda-setting by examining two sets of new media (socio-political blogs and citizen journalism) along with the mainstream media agenda of major national newspapers. This research focuses on the relationship between new media and old media to ascertain if socio-political blogs and citizen journalism posts impacted on the mainstream media during the 2010 Sudanese presidential elections.

Blogs have emerged during the last decade as a new journalistic platform that has influenced political discourse. Lim (2009) has shown that, “this influence stems mainly from attention given to blogs by traditional news media” (p. 45). The digit of these blogs has developed into millions. As a sole blog is slightly unimportant in its effect on open dialogue, the group impact of hundred thousands of blogs on definite issues cannot be unseen. Drezner and Farrell, 2004 state:

Blogs are becoming more influential because they affect the content of international media coverage ... increasingly, journalists and pundits take their cues about 'what matters' in the world from weblogs (p. 34).

This study analyzes the socio-political blogs that surfaced during the 2010 Sudanese presidential elections. In addition, three major newspapers and three citizen journalism sites are examined to determine the ranking of issues on the news agenda. Similarly, national news agency stories are examined to determine the national economic, political and social conditions that have influenced the news media agenda. The study examines the changes that occurred between two periods during the general

election season. The research uses content analysis on a sample of socio-political blogs, a sample of newspaper stories and a sample of citizen journalism news stories to analyze how each medium gave credence to various issues during the 2010 Sudan's presidential elections. Descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyze the characteristics and relationship between the media agendas.

The content of socio-political blogs and national news in the newspapers are coded to determine the issues. Since socio-political blogs began early in the 2010 Sudanese presidential elections. The messages in the coverage were well-defined during the later phases of the general elections and provided a good opportunity to investigate the influence of blogs, newspapers and citizen journalism.

Thus, this study attempts to explore the influence of socio-political blogs and the news agenda of newspapers based on intermedia agenda-setting theory. Sample data is derived from socio-political blogs' news stories posted on the Internet and from three Sudanese major national newspapers.

The current dissertation potentially offers new facets in the association within socio-political blogs and mainstream media. It contributes to the existing agenda-setting literature by broadening the scope of research to include the field of blogs and news media.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In the past 10 years, Sudan has seen rapid growth of new information sources and online media (e.g. blogs, citizen journalism, social media, YouTube...etc.). These online media suppliers contest with traditional media (for example, TV, radio, and newspapers) to distribute news to audience. The online news sources also compete in setting the agenda of the media by providing up-to-date news and reporting.

Constructively, traditional media with their large staff of reporters, writers and editors possibly have the power to cover the event first, and the new media will follow the agendas of traditional media.

A great deal of prior researches examined the intermedia agenda-setting process in countries with democratic political styles where media flow is free. However, this research chooses intermedia agenda-setting in Sudanese media where freedom of the press is relatively restricted and the authority has the right to control traditional media.

Sudan makes for a worthy research because Sudanese Internet users as well as bloggers are in large numbers. According to the Internet World Stats (2012) “Sudan with more than 6 million people approximately 6,499,275 using the Internet on a regular basis is in sixth place in Africa. The Internet penetration rate in Sudan is 19.0% slightly lower than the 21.1% average Internet penetration rate in the world”. In addition, blogs are a part of the journalistic landscape. Davis et al. (2009) state that:

We are living in a world where information floods our senses more than ever. The advances of new technologies including online services make this deluge swell faster and fiercer (p. 13).

Moreover, because of the censorship of private newspapers and other traditional media by governments, fair coverage of a major national event such as a presidential election is seldom seen in traditional media and newspapers. Moreover, fair coverage is more likely to exist in new media such as blogs and citizen journalism. Journalists are gaining easier access to online sources and are trying to give credit to new media than to mainstream media for source coverage. In addition to this particular instance of blog influence, there is growing evidence that journalists take their cues for what to cover from blogs.

In this study, intermedia agenda-setting influences of new media and mainstream media will be studied. By examining how, as traditional media, newspapers counter the rising of new media, this research might demonstrate new facets in the link among new media and national newspapers in Sudan. Furthermore, this research will add to current agenda-setting theory by intensifying the research about agenda-setting to other countries.

The influence of socio-political blogs has only recently been explored. One study examines how socio-political blogs contribute to the development of democracy (Lim, 2009). Consequently, by considering the agenda influence of blogs and newspapers, this research seeks to discover the function of new media coverage in Sudanese elections. Nowadays, oppositions and political parties engage the new media as the new media play a vital task in transmitting information linked with the elections.

The current study examines intermedia agenda-setting effects of 10 socio-political blogs, four publications (*Alintibaha*, a private newspaper; *Akhirlahza*, a privately owned newspaper; *Alwatan*, a privately owned newspaper; and the Sudan News Agency (SUNA), a government controlled solely online publication) and three citizen journalism (*Sudanile.com*, *Sudaneseonline.com*, and *Albrakal.com*) all of which are privately owned online websites.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2005) explain that the research questions serve as the core purpose of research. McCombs and Shaw (1972) assert that, “both hypotheses and research questions give guidance to the study because those who start out to look at everything in general and nothing in particular seldom find anything at all” ( p.5).

Therefore, based on the previous studies and perceptives of socio-political blogs and traditional media, the researcher considers this question:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: What role do blogs and mainstream media play in intermedia agenda-setting?

#### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In line with the above stated research question, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1- To discover the relationship of intermedia agenda-setting among mainstream media and new media (socio-political blogs and citizen journalism)
- 2- To test a hypothesis that socio-political blogs set the agenda of mainstream media.
- 3- To explore the source of interaction between traditional news media and socio-political blogs during the 2010 presidential elections in Sudan.

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study on intermedia agenda-setting focuses on the intermedia agenda-setting effects between blogs and newspapers. While there is an increase focus on online activism and the impact of the Internet on politics, little has been done that addresses how socio-political blogs and newspapers fit into the agenda-setting perspective.

Agenda-setting research has developed over the last four decades and scholars have recently moved towards the inquiry of how specific media play a role in agenda-setting for other media. Previous research has determined that the new media agenda is powerfully affected by traditional media and the new media such as blogs have grown to be part of the regular news gathering procedure of mainstream media. In line

with this, developments in journalistic professionalism research and credit actions will be discussed because the media rely on each other as sources.

Differences in the amount of news coverage, in the amount of sources, issues, and tone will be discussed. Blogs and newspaper content will be analyzed to determine the extent of the relationship of agenda-setting among mainstream media and socio-political blogs.

Blogs in Sudan have become so popular that the public are exploring socio-political blogs on an ordinary basis. The blogs are yet to compete with mainstream media. Although the number of Internet users is growing, they are yet to identify blogs as reliable media, while professional journalists are paying increasing attention to these blogs.

This dissertation is conducted in Sudan as few studies of intermedia agenda-setting have been studied in the African continent. Sudan is an outstanding country for such a study, as Sudan has vigorous mass media especially newspapers and because its online environment is flourishing and its political system is stable.

To date, there have been very few studies focusing on the coverage of presidential elections in Africa. The impetus of this study lies in its ability to compare presidential elections coverage between several news media's impact on African and Arab media. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a knowledge base that may eventually include all of Africa and the Arab world.

This research is valuable for the scholars in the field of communication, bloggers and professional journalists; it examines insight into connection among socio-political blogs and mainstream media. It might be the first research that clearly analyzes socio-political blogs and newspapers through intermedia agenda-setting process. Many scholars have criticized that new media such as blogs have an agenda-