

## Chapter 79

# Social Media as Political Participation Tool Among Millennials: An Applied Research on Egyptian Social Media Users

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The current article is an applied study that conducted on 480 Egyptian Millennials who randomly volunteered as participants. The main objective of the research is to test the effect of social media usage on the level of political expression and consequently on online and offline participation. A self-administered questionnaire has been used to collect responses to be analyzed and the results show that there is no significance of relation between social media and political expression and participation for the sample units of the study. Also, findings confirmed the significant correlation between expression and participation in its two forms; online and offline.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays because of the electronic revolution all over the world, social media became the most important mean of communication, not only used to communicate people together all over the world, but we find that political marketers and political parties are taking social media platforms into consideration for their advertising and marketing purposes. The first call for change was over the social media, demanding the change and the democracy. Many Arabic Facebook pages had played important role to mobilize Egyptians toward contributing in the civic peaceful calls for change and in mobilizing people towards

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participating in protests, reaching millions of Egyptians. Also because of the increasing usage of internet and smartphone and tablets, common people became having great opportunity to access social media platforms and to show high level of political engagement. Such engagements could be either by expressing themselves over the social media or by showing higher level of engagement in form of online and offline participation. Consequently, political market researchers started to show high interest in studying nations and their interest in politics online and to how extent such interest and engagement online could lead to high level of engagement in form of participation. Despite of the relatively low interest of the Arab library with political marketing, which represents a defect in the area of scientific research for political marketing In Egypt and the Arab world, we can find that some studies have been conducted favoring formulation of the relation between social media and political engagement in its different forms and studying the factors that may affect the participatory intentions and actions of the targeted voters. This paper is intended to conduct an applied research on Egypt to test the relation between social media usage and political expression over social media and their effect on online and offline (real life action) participation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Political Marketing**

For the last three decades, the field “political marketing”, despite being relatively new, has fast grown (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008), and became an extensive and widespread phenomenon. However, most of the political marketing researches have been conducted in 1<sup>st</sup> world developed countries but after the euphoria of the Arab spring started by the revolution of Tunisia in 2010 (Ali, 2011), political marketing became a contemporary and hot discipline to be studied, as becoming a growing area of academia and business era originating from various disciplines of commercial marketing, non-commercial marketing and from political science (O’Shaughnessy & Hennebeg, 2009). Today, it is very tempting for researchers from diversified disciplines outside the conventional marketing field to go through all the topics of marketing favoring applying the common marketing fundamentals on the political level. Even for political parties, they started to use the common marketing instruments as part of the activities of their election campaigns (Scammell, 1999). As for the relation between the political marketing principles and the rates of political participation in the new democracies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> world developing countries, Allam (2008) has conducted an applied research on Egypt. The study has supported Allam proposition that there is a direct positive relationship between applying effective principles of political marketing and the rate of participation in the political process. In general, political marketing is designed to influence citizens and to mobilize them towards voting in elections. According to Lock and Harris (1996, p. 21), political marketing is concerned with communicating with party members, media, and potential sources of funding as well as the people entitled to vote. In this narrower viewpoint, political marketing is considered to be the process of communicating the value of a product or service (policies, political programs, and politician’s images) to customers, whether being voters or non-voters, in order to sell that good or service, so political marketing is much more than political advertising. Emmer et al. (2012) argue that the right design of the marketing strategy not only will help a candidate to win an election, but can also help all the stakeholders to mobilize, get engaged and actively participate in the political processes.

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