When a Facebook Page Becomes an Actual Newsroom, What Can Journalists Learn?

The Case of Rassd News Network - Egypt

Noha Atef

Simon Fraser University, Canada

Noha.ali.atef@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0540-0631

Twitter: @NohaAtef

Abstract

This article investigates the transformation of collaborative journalism on social media into an actual newsroom setting, with the objective of proposing the aspects of innovation in such an experiment and forwarding them on to journalists. The article provides a microscopic presentation to the Rassd, a news network that was set up in 2010 on Facebook to communicate about political events in Egypt, before being turned into a stakeholder media company in 2012— and which continues to be a highly popular service today. The primary methodology of this paper is in-depth interviews with a number of Rassd team, including co-founders, head of departments, staff members and collaborators. The paper starts by explaining how Rassd's institutionalization happened and how it functioned, finally, I focus on the practices that the mainstream media should reflect on. Through a microscopic view of the foundation and operation of Rassd to argue that: Firstly, the possibility of using social media beyond content marketing and engagement with readers. At Rassd, social media was effectively deployed in administrative as well as editorial work. Secondly, the more unusual sources of fundraising could support a newsroom financially. Lastly, supporting readers to contribute news in their communities is essential to gain more readers and expand the coverage scale of a newsroom.

Keywords: Social Media, Facebook, Citizen Journalism, Egypt, Journalism, Media Convergence.

The spread of social networking sites has made them a very convenient source of news, and Facebook in this regard is one of the most popular news source platforms for both journalists and other users (Ahmed 2016; Carlson 2016; Rony et al. 2018). Many studies have examined how mass media outlets join and then perform on social media (e.g. Lysak et al. 2012; Jordaan 2013; Ju et al., 2014; Almenesi 2017), but there are very few looking at the reverse situation, i.e. a social media account being turned into a newsroom where video and textual journalistic content is produced and distributed. This article provides a macro image of the work carried out by a news network that was originally set up as a Facebook group, and it identifies what media practices are found in such newsrooms. The objective of answering this question is to highlight the experience of an alternative media platform, thus making it visible to the mass media.

The researcher uses the case of Rassd, previously a Facebook page that became popular in Egypt during 2010 and 2011 and then became a media stakeholder in 2012. Rassd continued to run successfully until the military coup d'état in 2013, when many of its co-founders were arrested for their affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood. Thereafter, and after losing most of its staff, it continued to operate underground, and in some way it became 'virtual' again through its websites and social media accounts. In February 2019, it had over 12 million fans on Facebook alone. The author neither encourage nor discourage journalists to simulate the Rassd experiment, simply because every media outlet has its own calculations and capabilities, but only aims at encouraging journalists to reflect on it.

Rassd's transformation came in the wake of a historical uprising against former president Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power for 29 years. On 25th January 2011, protests started in the capital and other large cities, and these metropolitan protests were quickly galvanized into nationwide demonstrations and sit-ins calling for the removal of Mubarak, who eventually left his position on 11th February of the same year. From that point onwards, Egypt went through a fast-paced change in political terms. In the following three years, three regimes governed the country: The Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) (February 2011 to June 2012), Mohammed Morsi (June 2012 to July 2013), and Adly Mansour (July 2013 to 8 June 2014). in fact, the institutionalization of Rassd after the 2011 Revolution in Egypt gave citizen journalism a 'revolutionary' role as the tool of citizens to build alternative narratives to events, different to what the mass media were broadcasting, and experimenting with new models of ownership, fundraising, and administration, again different from mainstream media.

Additionally, the organization of citizen journalism created work opportunities for early-career journalists, who enjoyed a set of advantages which would have been hard to secure in the wider mass media.

The transformation from a virtual community to a real one is presented herein from the perspectives of citizen journalists, derived from extensive engagement with a number of key Rassd staff, as the primary research methods were observation and in-depth interviews. The objective in observing Rassd was to see how citizen journalists ran their media organization, thus deepening the researcher's understanding of the data provided by the interviewees. Most of the interviews with Rassd's co-founders and staff members were carried out in 2013, with additional, shorter meetings taking place with a few of them in 2019. Interviewing all of the 2013 cohort was impossible from a practical point of view, since many of them had left the organization, some were in jail, and others had scattered abroad on the run. The affiliation of Rassd with the Muslim Brotherhood led to it going undercover in 2013, after the ousting of the former president Mohammed Morsi. Communicating with Rassd board members in 2019 would have involved a good deal of risk for the researcher, and so she reconnected only with former participants who were readily reachable. In addition, a focus group with a group of journalists was arranged. The researcher's choice of participants was random as a result of arranging a date and time with an editor and then choosing participants from whomever was in attendance at that time. The random choice of participants was representative of a good cross-section of workers in Rassd.

A common problem for the researcher participant is the conception that individuals' behavior may change if they know they are being studied—what is known as the "observer effect," "researcher effects," "reactivity," or the "Hawthorne effect." Generally, the participants were spontaneous, and only on very few occasions the researcher had a sense a staged performance or exaggeration. The reason for this could have been them feeling empowered; empowerment here denotes the feeling of being appreciated by audiences and therefore being influential. At the time of collecting the data, citizen journalists were highly recognized by the international mainstream media as the architects of political change in 2011. Besides, the increase in social media users, on a local scale, in 2011 and 2012 contributed to their popularity.

All of the 2013 participants were offered anonymity in this article, but none of them requested for the researcher to do so. Nonetheless, she decided to give them pseudonyms, as revealing their name might compromise their safety, especially since Rassd is no longer a recognized

media outlet by local authorities, and some of the participants had already been arrested; hence, identification would not be the best option.

Before proceeding to the experience of Rassd, I introduce the participants and their backgrounds: Back in 2013, Karim Mohy was a Medicine student with a scholarship to study media and political science in France, and he planned to start this course after graduation. However, he was arrested in 2013 and sentenced to five years in jail. Upon his release, Mohy distanced himself from Rassd, and when the researcher interviewed him in 2019, he was not aware of key events that had happened to staff members. The remaining co-founders were said to be living abroad. The researcher knew a few of their names, but in 2013, Mohy requested that he should be the only point of contact with his fellow co-founders, because they wished to remain in the shadows. As well as Mohy and the group of journalists whose names I am withholding, the researcher had personal communications with two unit/departmental heads in 2013. Tamer Farouk, head of video production, who is from Alexandria, he worked for the online community radio *Amwaj,* before moving to Cairo and develop his media production skills. Another participant was Khaled Mohsen, editor-in-chief of the newsroom, were sources of most of the information on staff and the company structure. After June 2013, information was acquired from personal communications with AbdelRahman X, a video journalist at Rassd, who studied cinema production at Cairo's French school in 2018—in the same year, he was arrested. The National Security accused X, among others, of holding membership of the Muslim Brotherhood and spreading false news (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2018). At the time of writing this article, he remains in custody. The researcher deliberately did not give X any voice it this article, just in case the information he provided would affect his legal situation.

The article starts by explaining how Rassd's institutionalization happened and how it functioned, finally, I focus on the practices that the mainstream media should reflect on.

Rassd: From Facebook to Real Life

Rassd (translation: 'Monitoring') is a media production company operating under the official name Rassd News Network (RNN). Between 2012 and 2013, Rassd provided coverage of current events in Egypt, mainly through video reports, short message services (SMSs) for updates (available in Egypt and Saudi Arabia), and training materials on media literacy, as well

as advanced levels of training for professionals. It also had a news portal that provided photo coverage, video reports, news stories, features, and commentary. When the former president Mohammed Morsi was removed from power in July 2013, most of Rassd's co-founders were arrested and summoned to court, side by side with Muslim Brotherhood leaders, which was, for some people on social media, proof of the linkage between Rassd and the political group. Thereafter, the heads and managers of the organization decided to take the company undercover, and so its offices were shut down and operations moved to an undisclosed location.

There were several structural transformations at Rassd, even before the start of this research. The organization started in 2010 as a group on Facebook, run by a handful of young people from around the country. The group encouraged citizens all across Egypt to create a record of any violations or forgery in the parliamentary elections planned in October 2010. These co-founders, according to Karim Mohy, were "motivated by the corruption of the Hosni Mubarak regime" (personal interview, 2013). This Facebook group proved very popular, and the number of members following it rose consistently. According to an introductory account emailed to the researcher by Mohy:

> "During the 2010 election campaign, a total of 1,500 videos and pictures were uploaded, and the Facebook page's membership rose to 80,000. On average, RNN [Rassd News Network] received 700 reports daily, and it published an average of 400 items from all over Egypt. During this time, RNN grew to 30 members and expanded its contributor base to almost all governorates in Egypt."

For many events, the Rassd Facebook group achieved news immediacy, even outperforming mainstream media on some occasions. For instance, in December 2010, the group published a video from inside the Two Saints Church in Alexandria, after it had been bombed on New Year's Eve. The video was sent in by an inhabitant of the neighborhood near the church and was subsequently screened on many local and foreign television channels. This led to the fast growth of the portal's popularity, and by January 2011, in Karim Mohy's account, the Rassd page had "reached 80,000 members [making] it the second-most popular Egyptian page on

Facebook after *We are All Khaled Said*[1] [with roughly 100,000 members]. In addition, the number of regular contributors reached 30 people and now covers all the Egyptian provinces."

During the 2011 uprising, Rassd's co-founders decided to cover the nationwide protests and operated a hotline for updates from protesters and regular contributors. Even at the time of the internet blackout in Egypt (from 27th January to 2nd February 2011), Rassd managed to keep its Facebook page updated, "by using landline phones to make hourly calls to members of the group who were based abroad, and these members then published updates to the page" (Karim Mohy, 2013, personal communication). At this point, the co-founders of Rassd wanted their Facebook page not to lose what Mohy called its "biggest advantage," i.e. its immediacy. Therefore, they sacrificed the verification of news to maintain their updates in real time. He explained:

> "We used three bi-lines: 'Confirmed' for updates sent by us [the administrators of the Facebook group] and trusted circle, 'Semi-Confirmed' for updates received from active members of the groups, who have a certain level of credibility but might miss important details when fact-checking, and 'Unconfirmed' for updates received from anybody outside the founders, our trusted circles and the page's active members."

The institutionalization of Rassd was motivated by the success of the Facebook group during a number of protests and when Mubarak eventually stepped down, which reflected in the growth of its popularity. In just 18 days, Rassd's audience grew to 500,000, with an average of 6,500 visits daily, and its Facebook page attracted an average of 40,000 new followers every day (Karim Mohy, 2013, personal communication). In addition, administrators of the Facebook group became reliable sources for flagship mainstream media outlets such as Al Jazeera, which conducted telephone conversations with them several times a day and provided them with satellite mobile phones so that they could stay in touch, even when the internet connection was disconnected, according to Mohy.

After Mubarak left his position in February 2011, Rassd had 50 reporters in place across Egypt. At this point, the administrators of the Facebook group had the ambition to become a news

---

[1] A prominent Facebook page created in July 2010 to cover the story of the death of Khaled Said, a man from Alexandria who was beaten to death by police inspectors. The page became very popular and contributed to growing discontent in the weeks leading up to the 2011 uprising.

network, which would combine the characteristics of a traditional media service alongside the use of social media tools. They took a step towards this aspiration in March 2011, by registering Rassd as a joint-stock company, and in order to become fully institutionalized, they rented an office in downtown Cairo. During its expansion, Rassd's co-founders were conscious of maintaining the advantage of its wide outreach, by having correspondents nationwide. Therefore, in 2012, the Rassd Centre for Training and Development was established to provide regular volunteers with free workshops on making content. Also, some learning resources were made available for downloading from the center's website upon request. These learning resources targeted an audience from different provinces of Egypt, who were seen as potential contributors.

More structural changes were made at Rassd thereafter for the foundation of new services; the video news reports unit, for example, was established in August 2012 to specialize in video-making (Tamer Farouk, 2013, personal communication). Rassd hired full-time journalists to head-up its social media, website, multimedia, and correspondent departments. Also, a group of young journalists were hired in the newsroom and the video reports unit (Khaled Mohsen, 2013, personal communication).

After the coup d'état in 2013, most of the staff at Rassd started to work from home, and some quit altogether. A general description of the management system after Rassd went underground is that it was led for the first time by people who were not co-founders. The people who stepped forward were required to perform multiple roles, due to the high number of staff who had left the organization. The researcher was not able to visit the new office of Rassd, the address of which has never been made public; hence, she did not get a sense of their working practices, and, more importantly, she could not get detailed answers to all the questions she had, because, according to her source, all data not shared publicly were deemed sensitive and could not be shared.

Prior to writing this article in 2019, Rassd was running a Facebook page with over 3 million fans (June 2019). Furthermore, the website Rassdd.com still updates, but Mohy in a personal communication with the researcher told her:

> "I do not know what they [the staff of Rassd] are up to, but for me, Rassd is now circulating content, not making it. Rassd is no longer what it used to be"

Overall, the political economy of communication has stronger agency in the sustainability of citizen journalism, or certainly more than the political affiliation of citizen journalists or their positions towards the regime. Strict media regulation is the most effective way to stop citizen media, as it criminalizes the circulation of information and legalizes the arrest of citizen journalists. In 2018, Law 180 was ratified, and its articles give the Supreme Council for Media Regulation the authority to impose sanctions on every personal website, personal blog, or personal electronic account, once its numbers of followers amount to 5,000 people or more. Rights groups see this law as:

> "[an] attempt to establish a system of comprehensive control of accounts, blogs and personal sites, and enable the Supreme Media Council - whose regulation does not provide for this authority - to prosecute citizens who express their views online."
>
> (Freedom of Though and Expression Law Firm, 2018)

Alternative Media, or Mainstream Media-like?

We can see explicit assimilations between citizen media in Rassd and the traditional mass media. Bandura (1996) sees behavior as one's response to the conduct we observe, and so applying this notion to the case of Rassd, we find that citizen journalists at Rassd did not *have to* copy mainstream media, it was their cognitive choice to do so, based on mental and environmental factors. For instance, the Rassd team used the bi-line "Breaking" for some news stories, which is a convention exported from mass media. They opted to do this because when they made up the audience of these media outlets, this particular bi-line succeeded in grabbing their attention on specific stories. Plus, due to the environment in which they worked, where many incidents would happen consecutively, there was a need to highlight some events more than others. Thus, they simulated mainstream media.

In the case of Rassd, this copying was explicit in terms of job titles, in that active contributors were called "reporters" (if they were in Cairo) and "correspondents" (if they resided outside Cairo). Organically, a traditional hierarchical structure for management was set. There was, for instance, an openness to experiment with management organization, as the structure would often change, sometimes twice a month, which Mohy admitted was a threat to company stability. Thus, he and other co-founders attempted to enhance the system by creating a management board in 2013. The new board, however, made the hierarchical structure even

more complex, consisting of: (1) Management Board, including Cairo-based co-founders, but those abroad would be consulted on the big issues, such as new partnerships or investors; (2) Editorial Board: The co-founders plus the heads of units/departments; (3) Heads of Departments and correspondent chiefs, some of whom were hired, and some volunteers; (4) Staff, namely hired journalists who work for Rassd; and (5) Correspondents, i.e. citizen journalists contributing to Rassd without being paid.

The work system of the Video News Reports unit simulated television news, so the managerial structure was hierarchical: Head of Department, Cameramen Chief, Chief Video Editor, Chief Reporter, and various researchers. The video news report unit made clear rules and guidelines for production, which made sense (Tamer Farouk, 2013, personal communication).

As for content management, there were no written editorial policies, only generic news values. Thus, the shift managers ran news stories according to their personal assessment of whether they maintained these values or not (Khaled Mohsen, 2013, personal communication). Such flexibility on both editorial and managerial issues was expected by the co-founders to be a solution to the weak management. But it was not so. On the contrary, it caused confusion for some new staff members, who did not know according to what rules they should be performing their work tasks. Generally, the Rassd's managers paid more attention to structure and managerial development than to editorial development, which can be explained by the relevant stability of Rassd in terms of having a legal status and a growing audience.

At Rassd, though, almost everybody agreed they were a 'journalist' and did not like being described as 'citizen journalists'. This made sense in the case of Khaled Mohsen, editor-in-chief of the newsroom, as he had worked as a traditional journalist for more than two decades, and so being referred to as a 'citizen journalist' was, for him, a downgrade from the group of content-makers in the participating audience. Mohsen agreed to call the audience who sent reports, photos and video materials to Rassd 'citizen journalists', but his team were, "Journalists, because they intervene in the content they receive, by editing and verification, or they make content themselves." In fact, Mohsen hardly used the terms 'citizen media' and 'citizen journalists' in my communication with him, and he instead referred to the network of citizen journalists affiliated with Rassd by titles used in mainstream media, such as 'correspondents' and 'reporters', which could be an indicator of a lack of integration into the culture of collaborative media.

Mohsen's team consisted of eight people who saw themselves as journalists, too. Two of them told the researcher in a collective interview that they hoped to work for the BBC one day. These media graduates disagreed with me calling Rassd a 'citizen media institution', and one participant distinguished between the work of Rassd before and after institutionalization, noting that "[It] started as a citizen journalism network, but gradually it was turned into a traditional newsroom, with employees who are specialized by study and expertise" (Focus group, Anonymous, 2013). Another participant believed that any component of Rassd would fit into different media types:

> "For instance, its popular social media accounts could be citizen journalism platforms, especially since they have been used for engagement with audiences. The Rassd news website is an online journalism platform, because its content is made by journalists, not citizens, and the video reports are professional journalism, as they are done by trained journalists."
>
> (Focus group, Anonymous, 2013)

The rejection of these media degree holders calling Rassd a 'citizen media institution' relates to their self-regard as qualified journalists. For most of them, working for the organization was a starting point, a stepping-stone to a media career. Thus, calling their workplace anything that sounded deviant was translated by them as diverging away from their career plans.

Furthermore, the institutionalization of citizen media may create an atmosphere of competition with mainstream media, as it stimulates citizen journalists to boost their success to the level of being a counterpart to the mass media. This is especially the case when citizen media plays a role not executed by mainstream media, such as offering a voice to the victims of political oppression, being a form of resistance against state control over the mass media and becoming a domain of innovation in terms of structures and conventions.

Mohsen, editor-in-chief of the newsroom at Rassd, once told the researcher, "We are a headache for Aljazeera," (Khaled Mohsen, 2013, personal communication), claiming that Rassd's output to every province in Egypt had forced mainstream media to recruit more correspondents, in order to put them on an equal footing. Such a belief in being a competitor to the mainstream media explains why Karim Mohy, co-founder, was keen to upgrade his staff members' core journalistic skills (reporting, investigation, and writing). He had already

approached Germany's international broadcaster Deutsche Welle, and the Egyptian state-run the Middle East News Agency, and had Rassd staff and reporters trained by them.

However, the fact that mass media entities needed to hire more members of staff was made clear to me a few months later when I interviewed Abeer Sa'di, (now former) board member of the Egyptians Journalists' Syndicate. Sa'di explained to me that mainstream media had already searched for correspondents across the country, "Because, during the years 2011, 2012, and 2013, Egypt witnessed nearly 10 elections and referendums, so more members of staff were needed in the broadcast media in particular" (Abeer Sa'di, 2013, personal communication).

Therefore, Mohsen's statement about Aljazeera almost doubling the number of its reporters in Egypt, in parallel with the institutionalization of Rassd, was right, and yet his interpretation of the reason for doing so was not very accurate. I find this inaccuracy originated in the success and excellence experienced by the members and co-founders of citizen media institutions, which I referred to in the previous section. Obviously, this influenced not only their self-confidence, but also their perception of events. I would argue that the phenomenon did not create any rivalry between the two media types, but the immediate reports of citizen media institutions, and the breadth of their media coverage, did stimulate mass media outlets to provide media literacy workshops for citizen journalists and to associate them with the institution. This is the meeting point of the two phenomena covered in this research, namely the employment of citizen journalists in the mass media and the institutionalization of citizen media.

However, if competition was rather dubious at the editorial level, it certainly emerged in the employment market, as this institutionalization made it a new domain for early-career professional journalists.

What can the Mass Media learn from Rassd?

The Rassd experiment illustrates multiple aspects of innovation that should be considered by journalists, especially those in societies that are a threat to the mass media industry. The first lesson Rassd provides to journalism is the possibility of using social media beyond content marketing and engagement with readers. At Rassd, social media was effectively deployed in administrative as well as editorial work, such as in communications between staff members. The Facebook Messenger platform replaced the meeting room on many occasions; for instance,

a meeting would be scheduled as an event on Facebook, and then all attendees would gather online at the allotted time. The fact that the Facebook app can be installed on all smartphones makes it easier for members to participate in a timely manner, especially those not based in Cairo. The small problems that can emerge in an online discussion (such as more than one person typing at the same time, or a flood of messages being sent at once) have already been solved on the internet, and many techniques for moderating online conversations have been addressed. Moreover, Facetime and Skype were handy tools for Rassd board members to communicate, especially with some of them being based abroad. Plus, Facebook was a recruitment platform for Rassd—one of the perks in this regard is that among students and early-career people, it is more popular than other specialized recruitment networks such as LinkedIn. In addition, to some extent, hiring through Facebook would guarantee that the applicants were familiar with Rassd (Karim Mohy, 2013, personal communication).

Second, Rassd proved that the more unusual sources of fundraising could support a newsroom financially. In fact, at the point of its institutionalization, its co-founders began looking for funders and backers to provide them with money and other resources, on the understanding that these donors would not interfere in editorial policies, thus preserving the autonomy of their media format and protecting their content from affiliations with media owners. Furthermore, the co-founders insisted that their company should not be owned completely by a businessman or an investor, and they therefore allocated no more than 49% of the shares to investors. They also rejected offers of co-ownership from people affiliated with any political regime, for the sake of keeping Rassd independent (Karim Mohy, 2013, personal communication). Alternatively, the co-founders were keen to generate revenue from the content provided via the news network, in order to guard its autonomy. Thus, in 2011, they set up a contract with a mobile phone service provider and launched a news short message service (SMS), which generated a monthly revenue of 70,000 EGP (around 10,000 U.S.D at the time). Also, they received quarterly revenue from YouTube for every view of their channel and by hosting advertisements. Although the co-founders were looking for greater long-term financial support to achieve their dreams of expansion, these revenue sources helped sustain the company initially.

Third, Rassd supported its readers to contribute news in their communities in a productive way. As an example, a 23-year-old Social Science student from Beni Suef (south of Cairo), Magdy Yousri, during one of his visits to Rassd in 2013, introduced himself to me as the director of

Rassd correspondents in the north of Upper Egypt, i.e. "linking between Rassd and the correspondents, double-verifying their news reports." Yousri was in Rassd's office to attend a monthly meeting. He was not paid for his work; however, he was rewarded with material and moral incentives, such as receiving media literacy training, a Sony camera as equipment for his work, and his prestigious job title. Furthermore, publishing through Rassd and getting his reports placed on its popular social media page helped him influence his local community.

Fourth, the newsroom would include different types of content makers other than professional journalists, thereby enriching the working environment. At Rassd, a number of established journalists had worked for the print media (such as Khaled Mohsen, editor-in-chief of the newsroom), but there were also citizen journalists who reported the news in their communities (like Madgy Yousri) as well as journalism students and early-career journalists. Normally, the more experienced personnel would take leading positions, and so a journalism degree or membership of the Egyptians Journalists' Syndicate would not count when a member was promoted.

Fifth, effectively, the organization of citizen journalism offers employment opportunities for graduates fresh out of media schools, and a place where they can pursue their journalism career in less time than the traditional mainstream media. For instance, the work of a journalist at Rassd was published online shortly after they started working, which would have taken much more time to happen in a mass media setting. In addition, the phenomenon supports better investigations, because it makes citizen journalists' ideas more concrete by quickening the pace of the evolution of citizen media. In other words, it prompts them to revise and assess their practices, and subsequently structure them and define their ethical frames.

At Rassd, the researcher conducted a group interview with four full-time journalists, all fresh graduates and only two of them with fewer than three years' work experience before joining Rassd. As explained in the introduction, the group was chosen randomly. I arranged the date and time of the collective interview with Khaled Mohsen, the editor-in-chief, and met those who were around at the scheduled time.

These young journalists said that Rassd provided them with career development and financial advantages which were hard to find elsewhere. For instance, "In the print media it can take a long time to become an established journalist, while in the online media you can quickly become a team leader" (Focus Group, Anonymous, 2013). In addition, "Working for a news website means that one's name will appear on the news reports as soon as they start to create

content, whereas in print media there is a very long wait before getting your work published" (Focus Group, Anonymous, 2013). This point in particular seemed to mean a lot to the group, because they were in the early stages of their career and needed to feel fulfilled in the quickest way possible. In addition, not publishing content may result in family pressure. One of the journalists mentioned that her parents would not be convinced that a website was a media outlet until they saw her name on an online news report. Another journalist told the researcher that given the unstable conditions in Egypt at the time, her parents may have pushed her to quit journalism if she had spent a lot of time at work without payment or moral recognition, which was the case in the print media.

One of the reasons that made it a workplace for early-career journalists was that, "At Rassd, there was more room to learn from mistakes and from peer learning" (Focus Group, Anonymous, 2013). In addition, "There were training opportunities provided by flagship media outlets on journalistic skills and workshops, while most of the local print and broadcast media would not offer such training to their staff members" (Focus Group, Anonymous, 2013). Moreover, Rassd offered to these journalists higher salaries in comparison to the print media, as working for a print newspaper would often not come with a salary but rather a small payment for every published story. Also, for them it was less difficult for them to find work at Rassd than searching for a job within a big media market, especially considering their limited work experience.

Conclusion

Effectively, the popularity of some Facebook pages attracts citizen journalists to run actual newsrooms, which involves setting up a newsroom complete with editorial and administrative policies. Facebook can be utilized for many things beyond increasing content visibility, such as recruitment and the coordination of work. In addition, the inclusion of professional, even inexperienced, journalists in citizen journalists' newsrooms helps in terms of better operation, and it stimulates these newsrooms to shape hybrid editorial policies.

References

Ahmed, S. The Use of the Social Networking Sites and Its implications on the Arab Electronic Media. *Journal of the Social Sciences* . 2017, Vol. 45 Issue 2, p167-193. 27p.

Carlson, M., 2016. Sources as news producers. *The SAGE handbook of digital journalism*, pp.236-249.

Farid, D. (2013). *Egypt has the largest number of Facebook users in the Arab world: report- Daily News Egypt.* [Online] Available at: http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/09/25/egypt-has-the-largest-number-of-facebook-users-in-the-arab-world-report/ (Accessed 27 June 2019).

Freedom of Thought and Expression Law Firm, New Laws.. The thick stick of the state to control the internet (Press Release) 4th September 2018, Cairo.

Jordaan, M., 2013. Poke me, I'm a journalist: The impact of Facebook and Twitter on newsroom routines and cultures at two South African weeklies. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, *34*(1), pp.21-35.

Ju, A., Jeong, S.H. and Chyi, H.I., 2014. Will social media save newspapers? Examining the effectiveness of Facebook and Twitter as news platforms. *Journalism Practice*, *8*(1), pp.1-17.

Lysak, S., Cremedas, M. and Wolf, J., 2012. Facebook and Twitter in the newsroom: How and why local television news is getting social with viewers?. *Electronic News*, *6*(4), pp.187-207.

Rony, M.M.U., Yousuf, M. and Hassan, N., 2018. A Large-scale Study of Social Media Sources in News Articles. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1810.13078*.