How Scoop Affect the Credibility of News through Social Media? An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Background: There is a ground shift happening in media industry, not just in news, because of the widening reach of social media. The use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in journalistic work has been a core concern for journalists. Scoop is a sophisticated phenomena in media, which is associated with credibility. Objective: To verify empirically of this phenomenon, this study examined how scoop affect the credibility of the news on SNSs. This quantitative study presents and discusses empirical findings from a survey of 242 Jordanian journalists by questionnaire. Results: The results indicate that scoop always pushes journalists to communicate with sources that have a high level of quality and honesty to get real information. In addition, the results of this study provide positive evidence about the importance of scoop in maintaining the credibility of the news, journalist, and media, due to the ongoing verification of the sources that provide news to journalists. Therefore, the application of credibility criteria in dealing with news on social media contribute to the organization of this media phenomenon to become more useful to journalists and society. Conclusion: The competition among journalists to get the news before others, and the increased use of social networking sites as a source of news, will contribute to maintaining the use of scoop among journalists, especially given that citizens needing to know everything in the fastest time and from credible sources. Journalists and media organizations in Jordan should pay attention to new phenomena associated with the rapid developments in media work.

INTRODUCTION

Today, many stories are received third hand (sometimes even fourth or fifth hand) through Facebook posts or Tweets so that by the time a story is assigned to the reporter, the story in some form or another is already out there in the social media universe (Adeyanju, 2015). The reporter now has to take that into consideration and find some angle to the story that is not yet been talked about. Recently, journalists have received as much attention as the use of SNSs (Safori, Abdul Rahman, & Mohammed, 2016a). SNSs have become an important source for the journalist to assist in the process of obtaining information for the planning of new press topics, in addition to their use in the publish of news and articles, and review comments and reactions can explain other parts of news (Safori et al., 2016a). From here raised the credibility of the new media - especially SNSs - a
sensation among academic, professional and on the public level, and that the scope of the different Arab societies (Meeds, 2015), especially, with the adoption of a growing public on these networks in providing information about the different events, which are sometimes contradictory (Abbasi & Liu, 2013).

Many journalists are still reliant on the news published on the Internet in building their reports (Greenwood, 2013; Hampton et al., 2011; Heikki-liä et al., 2012). The Internet has encouraged journalists to change roles in the communication process, and shift news style, as well as to support people in using other news platforms to access information (Cassidy, 2007; Goode, 2009). Today, journalists cannot do without the review of events by social networking sites to learn the most prominent issues of concern to the public.

Credibility of media has been an area of research and discussions over the last two decades. Researchers have focus on various dimensions. These include dimensions such as media, message and the source, etc. (Metzger et al., 2003). The early focus of the credibility studies was limited to checking the accuracy of reports in the news in order to determine the credibility of the source (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Safori, Abdul Rahman, & Mohammed, 2016b). Scoop is sophisticated phenomena in media, which is associated with many aspects such as technology, fame, competition, ... etc, which have an impact on the work of journalists and the credibility of news (Alejandro, 2010; Deuze, 2005). The ability to obtain exclusive information and published it as a scoop is an advantage contributing to the spread of news and information between citizens, and make the journalist an important source of knowledge of the latest information and current events (Phillips, Couldry, & Freedman, 2010). The publication of scoop or breaking news that contains incorrect information will reduce the credibility of journalist, in addition to raise the doubts about the future News published by him (Butler, 2009).

Providing information to audiences about the credibility of online content has been very beneficial and significant to them (Castillo et al., 2013; Chung, Nam, & Stefanone, 2012; Schwarz & Morris, 2011). For example, in Jordan, a large amount of news about security events and demonstrations, at the moment they occur, appears to be less credible because of the weakness in the quality of the source, and as a result of the misuse of technology and interactive media, as well as because of the need to get fame and the scoop. The news posted on social networking sites becomes a prime point used by websites news to attract readers, without verifying the source, accuracy and truth, and this has led to many social and political problems in Jordan (Hermida et al., 2014; UNESCO’s, 2015).

Here, emerged the importance of the study of factors affecting the credibility of SNSs, especially, under the intense competition between traditional media and new media content in news, where considered these networks (Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp) of the leading SNs that have increased the proportion of communication media between journalists and citizens, whether who is profession of journalism or other, where it formed these networks are also a major source for reporters to get direct information about current events as they happen, as a result of the numerous advantages it enjoys. As a result, current research is interested in determining the effect of using the scoop on the credibility of news published through social media?

**Review of Literature:**

In the news industry, Bourdieu (2005) suggests that the fierce competition for differentiation is “usually judged by access to news, the ‘scoop’, exclusive information and also distinctive rarity, ‘big names’ and so on” (p.44). As to the notion of scoops and breaking news, many tips or leads these days are from the web or what’s “trending” in social networks such as Twitter, Facebook or based on search volume patterns in search engines like Google or Bing. This radically changes the industry’s concept of what a scoop or breaking news is. Journalists are forced to accelerate the traditional journalistic process, since people now want real time information (Choi et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2013; Price, 2015). According to the research of Sweis and Baslan (2013), People want information as soon as journalists or media outlet receives it. So, to sit on a story until it is complete is to risk being out-scooped by competitors, or even worse to be dubbed slow by the public. Traditionally, media outlets compete to out-scoop each other, but today if they hold on to a story too long, they run the risk of being out-scooped by amateurs such as bloggers, citizen journalists (Gunter et al., 2009; Paulussen & Harder, 2014). Nowadays, it is necessary to give the audience small pieces of information at a time, as soon as the information is available.

The scoop is an exclusive information obtained by the journalist or team work via private sources (Iggers, 1998). Good scoops will attract a great deal from the journalists and media involved to get private information and the most media encourage their staffs to collect as many scoops as possible to increase the prestige, power, and perceived value for their organization (Adeyanju, 2015; Alejandro, 2010; Deuze, 2005). One of the characteristics of the relationship between scoop and the credibility of the news is that journalist who is known for the speed of receiving a scoop, it is possible to increase the degree of his credibility among the public, especially if the proportion of correct news was more than wrong, so, the proportion of follow-up be higher than his peers, according to Alejandro (2010) and Mateus (2015).

The intensity of competition on the Internet, coupled with the lack of technical or temporal barriers to making use of information lifted from elsewhere, means that it is difficult for any news organization to retain exclusive news (scoop) for more than a few minutes (Butler, 2009). When a journalist is thinking to get scoop
ahead of other journalists, he or she is said to have “scooped” the competition. The scoops can take a lot of types and forms such as scandals and hidden information, which by their very nature tend to be greeted with interest when his followers are exposed to the news (Pearson, 2007). The story may also simply be significant or particularly exciting; breaking news is often a scoop.

Several scholars mentioned that the motivation for getting exclusive news leads to increase the attention of journalists about the level of credibility to this news so as not exposed to the wrath of followers, in the case turned out to be wrong (Shay, 2014). In 2015, Mateus concluded that journalist seeks to get news immediately and publish scoop before others, through the newspaper or television or SNSs, and this is an evidence of ability of journalist and his organization to obtain any news or information about a major issues, and a strong indicator of the credibility of the news published by them.

The journalist aims through scoop to deliver a message to the public or other journalists about his power to get the information, or to get the most amount of Likes and comments (Alejandro, 2010). If a journalist becomes known, locally or globally, for getting high-quality scoops, he or she will get a great offer from the largest media. The scoop must contain accurate, objective, honest, and citing by sources related to events to be acceptable (Pjesivac & Rui, 2014). The publication of scoop or breaking news that contains incorrect information will reduce the credibility of journalist, in addition to raise the doubts about the future News published by him (Hayes et al., 2007). The attention of journalists to pursue Labs issues and get the scoop before the other is an incentive for them to search for exclusive information with the highest standards of credibility.

However, some journalists doubt the credibility of the scoop, because the journalist wishes to post information quickly, and then he discovers that he or she has false or incorrect information, or gets a press release to clarify these information (Mitchell et al., 2013). The rumor is one of the most important cons of scoops, and can lead to the publication of false news or incomplete stories that are rapidly spread between the public (masquerading as) correct news. Although such a rumor may be exciting for the public, it usually lacks a reliable source which holds valid evidence about news (Goode, 2009). Because of the spread of social networking sites in every place and at any time, without linking specific country, it may lead to strained relations between individuals and between nations (Alejandro, 2010), because of the publication of journalists for news or information like a scoop.

Moreover, to get the scoop before others, the journalist is working to increase the number of private sources (Hayes et al., 2007; Iggers, 1998). This action leads to the evolution of the relationship between the journalist and the source of the official relationship to the personal relationship (Shirky, 2011), which could lead to exploiting the journalist to promote rumors, or for transferring false information in order to discredit some people, or stir up public opinion about a specific topic. Economic pressures have helped to push journalists to extreme limits to obtain exclusive scoops, especially salacious information about individuals that would increase newspaper sales (Christians et al., 2015; Ongowo, 2011). The scoop has become an important element in the work of journalists in the light of technological development and widespread use of social networking for the dissemination of news and information sites. Therefore, the journalist during his search for the news must be able to judge the sincerity of the news and is then written and published.

Method:

A questionnaire is the most popular data collection technique in social science studies (Sekaran & Roger, 2003). The questionnaire distributed to registered journalists in the Jordan Press Association, employees of the journalism and media organizations. In this survey, Five Likert scale used to know the views of respondents. The measurements used in the survey were adapted from related studies and articles with some modifications to suit the sample. Measurements that have been used in this research are: (SC1) The scoop is an evidence of credibility of published news; (SC2) The scoop is an evidence of the journalist’s activity at the event site; (SC3) Scoop aims to publish news quickly, even if the news is incomplete; (SC4) Scoop containing incorrect information reduces the credibility of the journalist; (SC5) The journalist aims through scoop is to deliver a message to the public or journalists about his ability to get the information; and (SC6) The journalist aims through scoop is to get the most amount of Likes.

In the process of conducting the study, 300 questionnaires were distributed to Jordanian Journalists in July 2016. Out of this number, 58 were excluded because it is not returned. Thus, a total of 242 responses were usable for subsequent analysis, giving a response rate of 80.6 %. This rate was due to the fact that the questionnaires were personally distributed by hand. In order to test for non-response bias, respondents can be divided in half (two groups): early respondents and late respondents. In this study, the researcher made use of t-test to verify if there is a significant difference between early respondents and late respondents. The results were free from data bias, and there were no significant differences between behavioral intention response groups. Thus, the data is free from response bias.

Furthermore, a data analysis was applied using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) software to examine the internal consistency (reliability) of the instrument items (survey variables) by
using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient ($\alpha$), Composite Reliability, and Average variance extracted (AVE). The Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient for all variables were above 0.70 (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). Therefore, the reliability analysis revealed an acceptable level of reliability values and the appropriateness of the instrument.

Table 1: Result of the Measurement Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
<th>Composite Reliability (CR)</th>
<th>Average variance extracted (AVE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scoop</td>
<td>SC2</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>0.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SC3</td>
<td>0.784</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SC4</td>
<td>0.842</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SC5</td>
<td>0.755</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SC6</td>
<td>0.824</td>
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher developed the hypothesis of this research in order to achieve the objective of the study, which states “There is an association between the use of scoop in media and the credibility of the news on SNSs”. Statistical result of the PLS-SEM bootstrapping approach shows that there is positive association between Scoop and Credibility of the News ($t = 5.835, p = 0.000$).

This accepted association between use of scoop in journalism and the credibility of the news on SNSs is in line with previous research (Adeyanju, 2015; Alejandro, 2010; Deuze, 2005; Phillips, et al., 2010; Price, 2015; Butler, 2009). Despite opposition from some researchers and journalists to use the scoop (e.g. Goode, 2009; Ongowo, 2011; Shirky, 2011), the competition among journalists to get the news before others, and the increased use of social networking sites as a source of news, will contribute to maintaining the use of scoop among journalists, especially given that citizens needing to know everything in the fastest time and from credible sources.

The attention of Jordanian journalists to exposure to social networking sites in order to obtain multiple views of news across more than one source increases the level of trust and credibility among the public, as described in the previous section. The findings of this study confirm that social media are the main source to find new angles to stories published on these sites. The scoop is one of the manifestations of evolution in the press and media, especially with the desire of citizens and readers to obtain information as soon as possible and by the best means. The findings are also theoretically consistent with those Choi et al. (2015), Price (2015), and Sweis and Baslan (2013) who found that the scoop forces journalists positively to change their ways of dealing with the spread of information on social networking sites for the traditional methods in media, in order to exploit the technological and digital revolution in media.

The intensity of competition on the Internet, coupled with the lack of technical or temporal barriers to making use of information lifted from elsewhere, means that it is difficult for any news organization to retain a scoop (exclusive news) for more than a few minutes. The results are consistent with the findings of Adeyanju (2015) and Alejandro (2010), who found that good scoops will attract a great deal from the journalists and media involved to get private information and publish it before others. Thus, media organizations in Jordan encourage their journalists, especially those who are working in news sites, to collect as many scoops as possible to increase the prestige, power, and perceived value for their organization. Journalists in this study believe that this encouragement will contribute to the selection of distinctive stories and issues that are different from others.

Competition environment among Jordanians journalists is considered an incentive for them to find different and unexpected stories. Journalists generally seek, when they get a scoop or breaking news, to publish it quickly after verification, to submit proof of their strength and ability to obtain any news or information about a major issue. In addition, the scoop is an indicator of the effectiveness of the journalists at the scene, and the evidence of the credibility of the news published by them, especially if the breaking news is based on information from credible sources. This finding supports the idea of Price (2015), Alejandro (2010), and Mateus (2015).

As a result of the difficulty in obtaining objective scoop that require a great effort to communicate with the different sources, the findings support the recommendations of Igers (1998) and Hayes et al. (2007) on this issue. Also, the findings indicate that the news must contain accurate, objective, honest, and citing by sources related to events. Description measurements of this issue confirms that the publication of scoop or breaking news that contains incorrect information will reduce the credibility of journalist, in addition to raise the doubts about the future news published by him.

Some studies have questioned the credibility of the scoop (e.g. Mitchell et al. (2013), Goode (2009), and Shirky (2011) because of journalist wants post information quickly then he discovers that he has false or incorrect information, or gets a press release to clarify this information. In addition, this study indicates that the scoop could lead to exploitation of journalists by some sources to promote rumours, or for the transfer the false
information in order to discredit some of the people, or by government officials to stir up the public opinion about a specific topic.

**Conclusion:**

Theoretically, the fears of the spread of information through social media is the controversial subject at the present time among scholars and journalists. The majority of scholars, who discussed the credibility of the source, they are interested in studying issues related to the sources in terms of accuracy of the information (Self, 2009), and standards that must be adhered to by the journalist (Lowry et al., 2014; Metzger et al., 2003). Scoop is one of the most prominent issues associated with technological development, and the debate about its credibility has increased due to the spread of social media among citizens.

The results of this study provide positive evidence to support previous studies that established the importance of scoop in maintaining the credibility of the news, journalist, and media, due to the ongoing verification of the sources that provide news to journalists. In addition, the results confirm the importance of communication and dissemination of news via social media, which means that most of the information is under investigation and comparison by the citizens and colleagues. Scoop always pushes journalists to communicate with sources that have a high level of quality and honesty to get real information, because the publication of an exclusive false news will affect the status of the journalist among the citizens, and reduce the consumption of news provided by him.

In addition, the scoop is a new phenomenon that affect the credibility of the news. Competition among journalists to get the news is an incentive for them to disseminate correct news only that has credibility standards in order to maintain their reputation and confidence among the public, in light of the widespread use of social platforms in publishing news without checking the credibility of the information or the source. Therefore, journalists and media organizations in Jordan should pay attention to new phenomena associated with the rapid developments in media work. The application of credibility criteria in dealing with news on social media contribute to the organization of this media phenomenon to become more useful to journalists and society.

For future work, the study of phenomena which are constantly changing according to the evolution of media still needs to be applied to studies from various environments and practices in order to determine the impact of these phenomena on journalistic work and credibility. Therefore, the results of this study provide positive support on the study of the scoop in the social media time, and its impact on the credibility of the news, which confirms that the use of the scoop and get exclusive news has become an important factor pushing journalists to greater accuracy and objectivity, in addition to the ongoing verification of the sources that provide news, especially given that the majority of information it is available to citizens through social media. Therefore, a new approach was achieved in this relationship, which constituted a contribution to this research.

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