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Revolt at the Age of Web 2.0: Jasmin Revolution “A Case in Point”

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ABSTRACT

Social networking is a currently one of the most powerful new levers of political change. This study discusses the role of a number of factors related to social networking tools on the digital revolution of Tunisia “revolution 2.0” in months 2011 and its impact on changing policy environment. Social network-related factors appear to have a positive impact on Tunisians’ attitudes toward social change, which, in turn, supported their individual and aggregate behavior, leading to the revolution.

Key words: Tunisia, revolution 2.0, Facebook, Web 2.0, native digital, social networking tools

INTRODUCTION

The social networking omnipresence seems from now on to have impacts on the political and social outlook of our society. Their role was noted before hand in political marketing in different countries such as the United-States (Cook, 2010), China (Yang, 2009), but their mission within the Tunisian revolution reveals the depth of the paradigm’s change. Indeed, during 2011 months, none can deny the role of social networks in general and Facebook and Twitter in particular, during the revolution in Tunisian, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, the latter were the weapon against censorship, the ideas flood acceptance that germinated within the Arab countries youth. In this vein, the latter offer an opportunity to create an authentic interactivity between the different Internet users and consequently lead to strong social relations creation.

The impact of these digital social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as well as others (Gajendra *et al.*, 2011) are also interesting in other countries than revolution 2.0 Tunisian. Taking the significant novelty of the digital social networks devices upon the recent political changes, few researchers explain their role in the uprising and revolutions.

In fact, we are discussing the major impacts of digital social networking devices upon the Tunisian revolution. We expose, first, a general idea on Tunisia. Then, we discuss pre-revolution and post-revolution chronological events by emphasizing the role of digital social networks which largely contribute to the virtual demonstrations’ preparation most attended by youth.

TUNISIAN REVOLUTION

General data of Tunisia: Tunisia is a North Africa Mediterranean country face to Sicile. This Maghreb country is bordered by Algeria on the west and Libya to the east. Its area is 163,610

square kilometers, 14 times less than Algeria and 4.3 times less than Morocco, but roughly five times the size of Belgium (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2011), with an estimated population of more than 10.544 million in 2010 to reach 11.108 million in 2015. Approximately 98% of Tunisians are Arab or Berbers. Tunisia is the most septentrional African country.

The capital city is Tunis. Local government, limited in a centralized country and less extended, it is held by governors who are appointed by the President at the head of the 24 governorship (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2011).

The official language is Arabic, although other languages are used, including French and English. The unemployment rate, literacy and life expectancy are respectively 14.3, 76.2% and 75.3 years.

Since the adoption of structural adjustment, the Tunisian economy is quite diversified. The country moved from an agricultural economy (wine, wheat, oil) and mining (phosphates) to a more diversified production and more industrialized. Despite a dynamic recovery growth, coastal regions are more developed and there are differences to the detriment of South and West regions and between urban and rural areas. The government's priorities are education, health and environment.

As for Tunisia's policy, it is part of a republican presidential regime where the president should be elected every five years as the Deputies Chamber that consists of 189 members.

If Tunisia seems to lag behind the most dynamic European countries, yet it is in the best position of the Maghreb and African countries in regard to technology skills. Tunisia has been involved in Information Technology and Communication (ICT) and especially the software industry, services and multimedia, one of the key pillars of its development strategy. Indeed, the field of communication technologies is a priority sector in Tunisia. It is one of the most dynamic sectors and among those whose growth rate is the highest (17.5% in 2007-2011).

The Tunisian model, based on an economic and social combination balance, records a satisfactory performance both in terms of the country's development as well as in terms of its political stability. In terms of governance, Tunisia is placed in a good position, before the middle of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and well before the sub-Saharan average.

Tunisia occupies the 5th place at the top of the best indicators of governance in Africa (World Bank, 2009). Tunisia was ranked the 32nd in the world among 165 countries of the of political stability indicator, according to the "The Economist Intelligence Unit" team.

Thanks to this ranking, Tunisia occupies the second place at the African level and the fifth in the Arab world. The index of corruption's perception in 2009 that has just been published by "Transparency International" ranked Tunisia 65th in the world in terms of transparency in the public sector out of 180 countries and territories. Tunisia is ranked first in Africa and the Maghreb and 66th out of 192 listed countries, according to the United Nations (UN) index on the "e-government", winning 58 seats compared to 2009.

FROM WEB 2.0 TO REVOLUTION 2.0

The Web 2.0 era began in 2004 by O'Reilly (2004). It is a new paradigm Web revolution. The 2.0 does not express a technological revolution but a use evolution, an informational and cultural evolution (Ryan and Jones, 2009). Indeed, behind this novel web version lies a wide variety of active tools that allows a real interactivity between users based on individual knowledge and information sharing.

These Web 2.0 technologies cover a dynamic and interactive content's aspect and combine both technical and social aspects (Poynter and Lawrence, 2008). Hence, the term "social Web" (Weber, 2007). This relationship empowers the social, emotional, intellectual and of belonging circles, reference groups, virtual community context established links. This is the bi-directional information that overrides the uni-direction (Poynter and Lawrence, 2008), symbolized through key applications or tools like blogs, collaborative platforms for Wiki type, providing increased opportunities for production, distribution and content consumption.

This new Web version is based on social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) whose main feature is the User Generated Content (UGC), "user - centered design" (Ooi *et al.*, 2011) or "generated content by the user" (Ye *et al.*, 2011), the media provided by the user "user Generated Media" (UGM) (Poynter and Lawrence, 2008). These media generate a new continuous and interactive dialogue between users become true collaborators and producers of goods and services.

The user is then also known as consum'actor, prosumer or post-consumer (Cova and Dalli, 2009). In this case, the user is playing a proactive role in developing the offer via the digital social network (DSN). It publishes information online (Blogs), sharing content, videos and snaps (e.g., YouTube, Flickr), discusses real-time instant (e.g., Forums, Yahoo Messenger Skype, Google Talk) critical issues (Facebook, Twitter).

The growth of the Web 2.0 technologies such as social networking have the capacity to change the relationship between the Internet and its users and can change power structures and increase the opportunity for users to engage in greater online community participation (Gajendra *et al.*, 2010).

This phenomenon is based on collaboration and participation between different users promoting exchange, creativity, responsiveness, innovation and flexibility. It is through these individual actions that collective intelligence "IC" (Levy, 1997) mushroomed.

REVOLUTION 2.0 IN TUNISIAN "JASMIN REVOLUTION"

The revolution in Tunisia, also known by Tunisians as dignity revolution and by the West as "Jasmin revolution" and the fall of the Tunisian President Ben Ali are similar to the political upheaval witnessed in the past, except in one point: the key role played by social networks.

In particular, Facebook which once considered as a hi-tech hobby for the idle teenagers, has emerged as a political tool of the highest order. This brings us to the following questions: Why were social networks been so useful to Tunisian protesters? How will these tools be used later? Will they really change the world?

Since, the beginning of the Tunisian revolution, the snowball effect produced by the sharing of key information on Facebook and/or Twitter has allowed the most fantastic rumors to spread so widely to the point that it was often difficult to deny them later. The dissemination of non proved facts not in evidence to a wider audience led to the severe disruption of the country's security situation by causing major events in early May 2011 which were behind the sudden outburst of police and the fact that the case of opportunistic relics of the previous regime?

The uprising of the Tunisian people is the continuation of the meeting of society with democracy expressed in the demands of people. In Zarzis, a bloggers manifestation and Facebook leaders pages was held to ask for the release of political prisoners and freedom of expression, after the riots of Gafsa, two years ago, protesting against unemployment.

The current uprising is focalized upon young unemployed graduates, an uprising that is striking for its narrow mix of social and democratic demands. The sensitivity of the protesters on

employment appears to be related to their sensitivity concerning justice (the so-called "Tunisian miracle" concerning Tunis and the northern coastal cities but neither the north nor the South), dignity and freedom: freedom to join political parties, freedom of expression, freedom of religious practice and freedom to expose government's corruption or the family of Ben Ali or Trabelsi (the family of Ben Ali's wife).

A population of 10 million, Tunisia has 2.5 million Facebook accounts. Before the revolution, there were only 800 000. Facebook phenomenon has become very quickly a part of the daily lives of those who were used to navigate the web, as well as more casual users. When the revolt began, Facebook has to convey information through messages, chat, pages, videos and shared images. Thus, the Tunisian revolution, enabled to understand the importance the importance of social networks as essential tool for the opponent in a country where information is locked. Some Chronology events before and after January 14, 2011 has been presented in Table 1.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING FACTORS ON THE CHANGING POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Role of the digital native: The emergence of social networking sites is accompanied by generational mutations (Williams and Buttle, 2011; Mastorakis, 2011). Each generation has its own specific way of approaching media. The term "digital native" is introduced in 2001 by Prensky. This generation is also called Internet generation, "Millenials," "Generation Tech", "Generation Y" (from Generation X preceded it), "Generation Z" and "Echo Boomers Generation (that their parents were mostly baby Boomers) (Constantine, 2010), it is marked by a certain affinity with the use of technology. Faced with such an audience, the era of mass marketing is now gone to give way to targeted marketing towards circles and consumer communities.

This new generation is called precocious, flexible, imaginative and creative demonstrated higher self-esteem, narcissism, anxiety and depression lower need for social approval more external locus of control (Srivastava, 2012). They are the representatives of this generation who are now more present and more active in the Jasmin revolution. They have consumption patterns in terms of Internet usage completely different than older ones: These young people prefer to create blogs and content delivery, the connection continues and enrolling on the Internet, a strong communicative use.

Observers who had felt vaguely informed on Jasmin Tunisian revolution, found in social networks the real "flowers" of such a revolution. For them, it is these "cyberspace" that made the greatness of the revolution. These media that served as cyber news agency, were primarily a capital of popular speech which disfigured some pictures of martyrs had finished scared of the most cowardly of us. The more media, social networks represent a new space where public opinion is shaped, where the "admin" replaced the tribune, a stumbled youngster becomes a page" moderator.

THE DIGITAL SOCIAL NETWORKING EXCITING FACTORS

Literature on social networking has shown the involvement of different factors that affect the behavior of individuals connected by increasing civic participation such as shown in Fig. 1.

Electronic "word of mouth" (eWOM): Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) deserves the serious attention of marketing researchers and managers (Jalilvand *et al.*, 2011). Given the conceptual closeness of eWOM and traditional WOM communication, researchers considers eWOM as having a powerful influence on behavior, especially on consumers' information search, evaluation and subsequent decision making (Sharma *et al.*, 2012). It provides information that aim to influence

Table 1: Revolution 2.0 Chronology events before and after January 14, 2011

Date	Actions	Impacts
17 December 2010	A young street seller who protested against the seizure of his goods by immolating himself in front of the municipal police prefecture in Sidi Bouzid (Central West).	Beginning of the revolution facilitated by social networks: video broadcast, Word of mouth mail
22 December 2010	Another young man committed suicide by electrocution for the same reasons.	More than 2 million of Tunisians are registered on Facebook have confirmed their participation in the demonstrations
24 December 2010	A virtual curfew was then imposed on city by the police.	Strong participation led to a call on social networks for other mass demonstrations for December 27
27 December 2010	Thousand of citizens expressed their solidarity with the protesters inside the country expressing their discontent.	The protests have caused the uprising of the Revolution 2.0 in Tunisia
28 December 2010	Ben Ali denounces a live political discourse on the national television. He announced that severe sanctions will be taken and attacked the foreign television channels, accused of disseminating false allegations and to be responsible for trouble	His speech has no impact and other provincial cities ablaze Gathering of protesters from different parts quickly through Facebook, blogs, radio and some web Twitter
29-31 December 2010	The protests continue and the movement gradually strengthens the various components of the Tunisian company (especially the mobilization of thousands of lawyers and students)	Government reshuffled by dismissing the heads of departments. Broadcast special programs on a private TV channel operating from North African Tunisia corruption issues
3-8 January 2011	Fighting continues in "Kasserine-Thala-Regueb" triangle	Massacres Videos run on cyber dissident's sites, as Nawaat
10 January 2011	Second speech of Ben Ali. He denounced the "terrorist acts" perpetrated by "rogue hooded." He promised to create 300.000 jobs by 2012.	The ads do not appease demonstrations, a mix of blogs YouTube and Facebook have quickly transmitted events. The posting of images and words order, discontent slogans
13 January 2011	In another speech to the nation, Ben Ali agrees to step down in the late 2014 and ordered fire against demonstrators. He promised the "complete freedom" of information and Internet access and announced lower prices. Activists and supporters flooded the web with spontaneous political messages	Thousands of people continue their protests to call for the departure of Ben Ali The dissidents were flooding the web with political messages through the spontaneous Facebook
14 January 2011	Ben Ali took seek shelter in Saudi Arabia	The objectives of the Tunisian Revolution 2.0 have been achieved
Post Jasmin revolution 2.0: The country has entered a new phase		
15 January 2011	Ben Ali is finally removed from power by virtue of a decision of the Constitutional Council declared a "power vacuum". The Council proclaimed in the wake of the appointment of the head of the Deputies Chamber as President of the Republic on a temporary basis. An expected interim lasting up to 60 days, the needed time to organize early elections	
17 January 011	The outgoing Prime Minister announced the composition of a national unity government. Three opposition leaders to make their entry while six members of the former government, including Prime Minister, shall be renewed	
18 January 2011	Less than 24 h after its formation, the government's unity sways. Several ministers, including some from the opposition, announced their resignations considering that the firm does not respect "the will of the people"	
15 Friday July 2011 (Friday's return)	Tunisian Internet users have called to return to the Place de la Kasbah, Tunis, for a "Sit-in return," Friday, July 15 called "Return Day" on the Facebook group page Sit-in 3 of the Kasbah. In the early hours of the day, mobilization was low in this high place revolution, despite the call for citizen broadcasted on the Internet and streets	
Sunday 23 October	Final date for the elections for the Constituent Assembly marked by mass participation. Turnout at the first free election exceeds 90%	

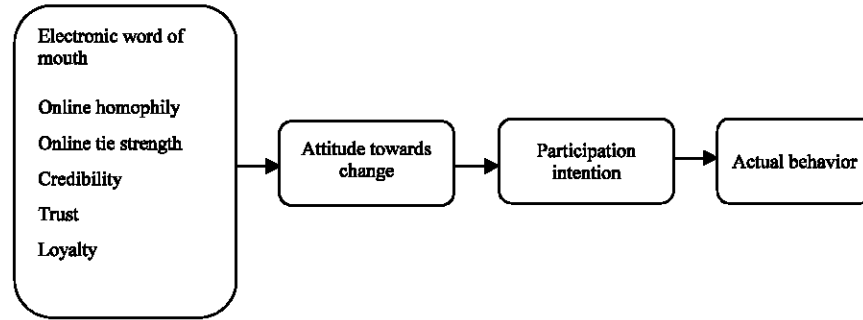


Fig. 1: The factors of social network sites that facilitate political change

the decision of the individual in their own interest (De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008). It really takes its scale in marketing buzz. Unlike the traditional word of mouth, electronic word of mouth leaves an impression on the content of text messages and easily printable by other users (Park and Kim, 2008) involving bloggers (online opinion leaders) to their network. eWOM becomes much more powerful in a country when its citizens lose their trust in the official statements and pronouncements of the government.

Bloggers act as opinion leaders; they are a credible and considerable source of information that influences consumer's behavior (Trusov *et al.*, 2009). In the Tunisian case, bloggers fulfill the mission of spreading relevant information and to diversify their sources to counter the disinformation and therefore influence the event and receiving messages. Information is exchanged through social networking sites such as MySpace, YouTube, Facebook and Wikipedia (Gajendra *et al.*, 2011). Thus, spheres of interaction and influence become more and more virtual. Virtual communities can be considered word-of-mouth networks (Gajendra *et al.*, 2011). The impact of eWOM communication within virtual communities depends on both the structural and the interactional characteristics of the network (Gajendra *et al.*, 2011). The structural characteristics include factors such as the size of the network, number of connections between one person and all others and the number of actual relationships relative to the potential number, whereas the interactional characteristics include tie strength and degree of homophily among members of the network.

Online homophily: Homophily is a crucial concept in marketing. It is explained by the composition of groups based on the similarity of the characteristics of its members, its attributes such as age, gender education or lifestyle (Rogers, 1983). It allows individuals to build relationships and share more by interacting in a similar situation (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987). The homophily between individuals appears to be one of the determinants of interpersonal attraction, trust and understanding of individual difference (Ruef *et al.*, 2003). Individuals adapt strategically their affiliation behavior regards to context (Schacter, 1959).

The important role played by Facebook in the Jasmin revolution promotes homophily on age scale in younger generations. Cyber-dissidents belong to the same company and the same network. They access to the same information and evaluate the same way the resources. The Facebookeurs are then able to maintain constant contacts with them and as well to maintain what Bourdieu (1984) calls social capital.

Online tie strength: The "tie strength" is widespread in literature in marketing and consumer behavior (Shi *et al.*, 2009; Mittal *et al.*, 2008). It is the French concept of "tie". It represents the strength of the relationship, that is to say, the high frequency of exchanges between people and social networking (Mittal *et al.*, 2008). It builds loyalty (Mattila, 2001) and influences Internet users' behavior (Brown and Reingen, 1987). It describes a combination of emotional intensity, temporal and intimate intensity and communication tools that establish the shared relationship (Yang and Mattila, 2011).

Credibility: Credibility was treated in marketing literature as a key concept in quality signs research (Jeddi and Zaiem, 2010). These authors add to this respect that attraction to the source is an antecedent to credibility. Equally, Credibility is a very significant area of research explored in media studies (Flanagin *et al.*, 2003). Previous researches argue that the perceived credibility to the information is based on the types of media (Westerman *et al.*, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2007). For example, Johnson and Kaye (2000) have shown that the perceived credibility delivered via content depends on the overall perception of media platforms. Indeed, by the relay of digital social networks, the connectors are looking for answers to their questions and meet their needs by the comments of peers seen as more credible than other traditional methods (Harris and Rae, 2009). Trust between individuals depends on the recommendation of other individuals and credibility of referrer determines the trust level in the social network (Zhong *et al.*, 2011). Users of social media may utilize specific components of a source's profile which are unavailable in traditional media, in order to make such credibility judgments.

Trust: Trust is the most researched construct in marketing relationship literature (Dewani and Sinha, 2012). Trust is then an information source, a quality gauge and a guarantee tool for consumers (Najar and Zaiem, 2010). On a daily basis as the web, trust remains the key to success and the basis of a solid business relationship with your long-term customers.

Trust contributes to the relation development between exchanging partners (Najjar *et al.*, 2011; Najjar and Zaiem, 2011). Having trust in someone is to believe that he/she can and want to act positively. This trust is based on two arguments: 1) a technical argument that links trust to partners' skills (i.e., belief in the other abilities to fulfill the task-partner's credibility), 2) moral argument that stresses honesty and willingness for partners (i.e., belief in the moral commitment of the other and to act positively in case of the partner's unexpectedness kindness). Since then, trust is based on partners' reputation and on their past experiences (Ben Naoui and Zaiem, 2010).

Luo (2002) captures the trust as a belief of the customer to bonds, corporate actions to reduce uncertainties and risks. Trust is involved in relationships with others. In the online environment, trust is a determinant of consumer decisions (Urban *et al.*, 2000). For an online exchange, trust promotes cooperation and reduces stress.

By examining the Tunisian revolution case, this trust must also be able to extend generated content aggregators, bloggers and opinion leaders. The underlying idea is to increase confidence within community and its quality gradually as the number of members' increases. Social networks create trust between agents because they allow their members to learn about each other through repeated interaction (Gajendra *et al.*, 2010). Trust creates positive attitude.

Loyalty: The customer loyalty concept can be marked as a primary goal of relationship marketing (Sudhahar, 2010). Research on client's loyalty in the field of marketing has been at the centre of

many studies. A review of the literature revealed that the concept of loyalty is manifested by an act of repetitive purchase over an extended period of time (Ben Naoui and Zaiem, 2010).

As Dewani and Sinha (2012) state, loyalty is customer's demonstration of faithful adherence to an organization. Loyalty is an expression of commitment, a loyalty to the group (Sindjoun, 2001). In the Web case, loyalty connectors stood by their adherence to a community and their interests. Indeed, the creation of this sense of community reinforces the loyalty of members and therefore increases their engagement (Heding *et al.*, 2009). During the Tunisian revolution, people have changed easily and dynamically their attitudes because they were never loyal to Ben Ali's regime. Equally, a strong attitude towards the change of political system is built to overcome the repressive regime of the fallen president.

Behavioral intentions are indicators that express the evaluation's degree (favorable/unfavorable) of citizens (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996) to adopt a behavior (Triandis, 1980). Najar and Zaiem (2010) based upon the reasoned action theory, they considered the intention as the most important factor and the immediate preacher of purchasing behavior. In technology usage, Erragcha and Zaiem (2011) based upon The Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM) to consider the continuance intention. According, to them, the intention to use a web system is defined as the intensity degree with which a user is ready to carry on the use of a product or service in the future.

Indeed, in the engagement process, intention is the variable that predicted the actual act (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Specifically, the intention to participate means the individual propensity to engage actively with the various people (Yang *et al.*, 2007) to rise up against Ben Ali. Therefore, citizen's participation intention affects actual behavior.

CONCLUSION

The digital social networking rising popularity, rushed the Arab political system. In the Tunisian revolution 2.0 case, the immediate character of digital networking devices implies a dynamic and fast acceleration of the revolution process and the personalized character reinforces collaborative relations. The networks represent a window to bring credibility notably taken of one's fidelity partners. The social networking economic models are essentially built on the possibility that the novel generation generated the content upon the interface; this will drive them to devotedness. All these factors facilitate the formation of a positive attitude of Tunisian young demonstrators towards the political mutation which consequently motivates them to take part in the uprising and the revolution.

Despite the Tunisian revolution 2.0 that weakened the economic, social and political stability in the short term. Firms were touched and demonstrations heightened the unemployment rate consequences prove encouraging in long term and citizens' expectations were increasing against the government services. In this respect, revolution as a marvelous opportunity to accelerate reforms and the governance amelioration, competitiveness and human rights respect. Equally, it paves the way to an effective control over corruption and the creation of a favorable economic environment as well as the encouragement of foreign investments.

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