

## ***Utilizing the Interactivity of Social Media in Political Communication of the Iraqi Government and Parliament Websites***

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### **Abstract:**

The present study aims to explore the extent to which the government discourse interacts with the public within the political communication environment in Iraq, which has witnessed democratic transformations in its communication and political systems. The degree of interaction involved in the political communication process, in light of modern technology, was examined through a selected sample representing the websites of the largest government institutions concerned with communication in Iraq: the central government's website and the Iraqi parliament's website. For the purpose of the study, the focus was exclusively on the interactive response shown by political communicators to user comments, given the importance of providing indicators of interest and positive interaction by government institutions in their relationships with society and in achieving the effectiveness of political communication in emerging democracies. The analytical sample was limited to three social networking sites available on the websites of the Iraqi government and parliament: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Interactions were monitored during the period of April 2022. The quantitative method of content analysis was employed to reveal the level of interactions by the political communicator, complemented by a thematic analysis of the users' comments. The results showed a lack of interest and interaction on the part of those government websites in responding to comments or opinions published by the public, revealing that the pattern of the top-down communication model still dominates the mentality of political communicators in new democracies.

**Keywords:** interactivity, Iraq government, political communication, parliament, social media.

## **1. Introduction**

Political communication is a domain defined and elaborated by many academic experts. It is defined by Norris as an interactive process in which information is exchanged between political actors, the media; and the public (Mihálik et al., 2022) , or it is the communicative activity of citizens, individual political figures, public and governmental institutions, the media, political campaigns, advocacy groups and social movements.(Toft, 2014). Political communication refers to the totality of techniques, messages, and the coordination of relations used by politicians and those who control the mode of communication in the field of political communication for the purpose of communicating with voters and the governed through the use of all means, including modern technologies such as automated media, audio-visual messages and advanced electronic means in the field of politics.(Khalil, 1995; Nabila, 2014).The concept of political communication has expanded since its theoretical beginnings in the middle of the last century from being a field related to the study of the communication of power to the public and the circulation of political discourse between the opposition and the ruling parties to include the study of the role of communication in political life in the broad sense, by integrating the media, public opinion measurements, marketing, political media, and so on. (Fadloun, 2016)

Political and government communication is generally understood as a set of activities directed to the public that fulfil political and civil purposes. This type of communication is usually realized by executive politicians and officials in a managed way to provide information, explain and promote public policy, build a reputation, maintain social links, and so on.(Johansson, 2019a)

The Internet and interactive social media provide new opportunities to make political processes public. They provide citizens with autonomous platforms of communication. Digital devices allow populations to perform as proactive agents in political communication (Sampedro, 2011). The main advantage of the current digital development is that the services are interactive. New media facilitate direct exchange between all participants in the triangle of political communication.(Windeck, 2010). It represents a major development in communication technology, and it has provided the possibility of positive interaction in the field of political communication (Rbia, 2003). Also, Political representation has become available to all by working on the Internet(Agiza, 2010; Claudary, 2014)

In democratic countries, political actors feel responsible to canalize and participate in public political discussion. Politicians and journalists bring up and moderate those political discourses.(Stieglitz et al., 2012). So, the Internet has transformed the way political communication has been conducted in most parts of the world.

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have provided politicians with a wealth of opportunities to campaign and communicate with their electorate in novel and creative ways (Deželan & Vobič, n.d.). It has played a vital role in supporting the political discourse of states, parties and political symbols and has become an effective means to revitalize the essence of democracy represented in transparency in procedures, participation in the decision-making process, the selection of political leaders, and freedom Full expression of opinion (Abdel-Sadiq, 2007; Dijk, n.d.; Gil de Zúñiga & Chen, 2019) , providing an opportunity to the population for political discussion through various online groups, pages, and accounts(Ahmad et al., 2019). Monitoring social media by governments can facilitate

more responsive policymaking. It can be performed in a top-down fashion by fine-tuning interactional messages and policy content to the desires of the populace. However, it is also used to enhance governance practices in which individuals and government servants engage on a somewhat equal terms, and in which public institutions consider the importance of citizens' ideas and plans. Because they can facilitate bottom-up participation and self-organization, social media present a fresh challenge to the traditional government paradigm (Bekkers et al., 2013). However, government organizations are subject to some official constraints and regulations in their engagement with citizens because, in representative democracies, they must consider the primacy of politics. Politicians make decisions in a politically driven enviro (Seigler, 2017). Public officials must always ensure that their statements are aligned with the policies supported by political decision-makers (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2013). In this context, there's been a set of significant changes of political communication sphere during the last years: firstly, the continuous complication of communication component of political realities; secondly, the growth of horizontal level of political communication in modern political process; thirdly, the enhancement of dependency between the legitimacy of the decisions made and the intensity of the power-society interaction (Chekunova, 2016). The transformed nature of communication has reshaped the media system as well. As new media forms and channels of communication have arisen, their popularity has increased and they have become an equal and important element in the media system.(Johansson, 2019b).

In Iraq, the changes in political communication witnessed a great change since 2003. When a shift in the nature of the political system had transformed the country into a new arena, from a closed circle to an open one where citizens and political actors become interactive in policy matters. The transitions from authoritarian rule to democratic governance require radical new role orientations and rules of interaction within the political communication system, although in many cases the actors involved are the same organizations—even the same individuals—as under the old regime (Votmer, 2005),

Social networks represent a new revolution in human communication, as they have enabled, perhaps for the first time in human history, instantaneous and interactive communication between people connected to the Internet through classified groups with common interests and without an intermediary, as it was before in the traditional media or even in websites and electronic newspapers that It has also become traditional by the standard of these new networks(Muhammad Nasr, 2016). Politicians realized the importance of social networking sites, and used them in their election campaigns, especially by US President Barack Obama, who used YouTube and MySpace extensively in electoral campaigns, which led him to the White House in 2008.(Downey, 2014; Muhammad Nasr, 2013). Therefore, social networks are today the most appropriate and most popular in the process of political communication, and they are distinguished from other traditional political communication tools by the increasing social base used for them in light of easing political control over their content.. It may also be used by political gatherings and organizations as a means of political motivation and creating supporters and supporters.(Bakheet, 2012)

### **1.1. Research problem**

The effectiveness of political communication in modern democracies, such as Iraq, which has undergone a fundamental transformation in its political system since 2003, is determined by taking advantage of the new communicative environment provided by communication and information technology. This fundamental transformation presupposes

a reconsideration of the structure of the political actor's relationship with society. According to this viewpoint, the research issue is the effectiveness of communication between Iraqi, government, and parliament institutions as political actors and the general public via their social media sites. Using modern communication technology's communicative features to revitalize its relationship with the public has become an important matter in political communication, as well as an ideological necessity for achieving its goals and programs. As a result, the research seeks to examine three major indicators that the study was limited to in order to measure this, namely:

- Indicators of user interaction via social media links on the government and parliament websites.
- The levels of interactive responsiveness given by the political communicator to user comments on social media.
- Identifying the main themes in user comments in order to understand their trends and the subsequent interaction required by the political communicator.

## **2. Literature review**

In the study of the service quality of government websites, scholars attempt to evaluate how well government websites fulfill citizens' needs and evaluate the quality of services offered. From a user's point of view, the quality of government websites can be measured by the extent to which they involve effective and efficient information search, online services, and government-to-citizen communication.(Li & Shang, 2020).

Siar (2005) conducted an evaluation of the content of government websites in the field of applying information and communication technology to improve the role of government in providing services, public administration and strengthening participatory democracy. The results showed a clear absence of information and essential resources that could enhance the quality and speed of service delivery, and make government more transparent to facilitate public participation in decision-making (Siar, 2005). Silva & Proksch studied Twitter as a prominent communication tool for politicians of European Parliament. Using a new data set containing parliamentary tweets and speeches by members of parliament in seven countries, the study reached a key conclusion that social media can free politicians from the grip of their party. The research findings also indicate that most MPs amplify the partisan message, but MPs who participate less in parliamentary debate tend to have greater differences with their party on Twitter(Silva & Proksch, n.d.). A comparative study of public parliamentary communication as one of the components of political discourse was conducted and focused on the importance of the parliamentary discourse today. It concluded through this theoretical approach that the parliamentary discourse is affected by the historical, social and cultural progress of all mankind. The study dealt with the main areas of theoretical and applied research for parliamentary communication, among them paying special attention to the theory of political discourse and political linguistics (Konstantinova et al., 2019). In this context, Kondratenko et al, addressed the concept of parliamentary discourse as one of the types of political discourse within the framework of institutional communication and monitoring of communicative interactions, in addition to identifying the most prominent modern communication strategies. The sample of analysis consisted of the minutes of the meetings of the Ukrainian Parliament in the period 2004-

2019. It concluded that organizational, media and unifying communication strategies were identified as an important factors in the communication framework(Kondratenko et al., 2020).

Taking advantage of new technology and its aspects of interactivity to create a positive atmosphere of democracy in societies was taken huge consideration in many states. it is appropriate here to note that US Department of Justice suggested many instructions for state and local governments that are using the web to offer citizens a host of services including: "corresponding online with local officials and allow programs and services to be offered in a more dynamic, interactive way, increasing citizen participation".(US Department of Justice, 2003).Sitokdana (2019) conducted a study to assess the quality of information on the e-government websites of provincial governments in eastern Indonesia, and each of these websites was measured using dimensions of information quality, i.e. accuracy, consistency, timeliness, completeness, reliability, availability, relevance, credibility, efficiency and value added. It was found that all the e-government websites in the East Indonesia region were not enough to provide good information to the public (Sitokdana, 2019). Also, in this respect, Lely (2018) focused on defining the political communication model in the Indonesian parliament through the development of interactive theory and constructive and symbolic interaction in the political field. The results found that political communication in the Indonesian parliament cannot be considered as direct communication because the communication is interactive and transactional (Lely Arrianie, 2018). Lee (2019) studied the application of democratic communication principles by governments by opening their websites to disseminate information more efficiently and provide public services more effectively. Considering the government website is an important place for citizens to participate in public affairs and decision-making processes, the study explored the multidimensional features that enable government websites to deliver on their promises. It found that a comprehensive model for public authorities is needed to improve their websites to facilitate democratic interaction that helps create results in more effective way (Lee-Geiller, 2019).

Tan et al. conceptualize e-government service quality as a synthesis of service content and service delivery elements in an effort to develop citizen-centric, quality-driven principles. The quality of service content suggests that government website service functions, while the quality of service delivery reflects the underlying technology. Measures of service delivery quality include ease of access, navigability, user interaction, interoperability, adaptability, responsiveness and security.(Li & Shang, 2020). Moon (2002), cited by Abdel-Fattah and Galal-Edeen (2008), presented different stages of government websites that reflect technical sophistication and user interaction, one of which is two-way communication, namely request and response, which reflects the interactive aspect of government website quality in democratic states.

Also, most researches have investigated the role social media play in the strengthening of political communication of parties in the frame of progressing communication technology. Pippa Norris used two theoretical perceptions regarding the functions of parties on the Internet, the first: pluralism: where the study considers that the Internet is a public forum for the expression of all political spectrums; It increases the role of small and fragile parties in expressing their programs and attracting supporters for their views. The second is that the Internet is a channel for political participation between citizens and parties.(Norris, 2005). Daniel Seigler (2015) outlines four environmental factors to determine if they affect

public administrators' social media use. He suggested four categories for public administrators' social media use. No social media, Emerging, Advanced, and Collaborative. No response category the administrator sees no social media influence. Emerging social media utilization occurs when a platform is executed but manipulated in a manner that only allows it to function like the earlier Web 1.0 systems in which information was controlled by one side. In advanced social media adoption, the platform is used to its full interactive potential, but not for collaboration. The government determines what social media interactions to have. Final stage: collaborative social media use. Administrators prioritize using social media to boost public participation in a collaborative response. At this level, public administrators encourage citizens to give feedback on policies, matters, services, government initiatives, service operations, and new concepts (Seigler, 2017). Matthew Conway & Don Dorner (2004) examined the evaluation of the effectiveness of political party websites in New Zealand for the purpose of evaluating the communicative characteristics between users and those sites. The study concluded that political parties are interested in providing information through their websites, and that they have not actively exploited the potential of the Internet, and that the characteristics provided by the elements of accessibility to that information are not available in a way that facilitates the user's access to information.(Conway, Matthew and Dorner, 2004). Andrea Römmele (2003) examined the use of information and communication technology on political parties and presented a theoretical vision about the parties' position on the new democracy through the use of the Internet to reform some party functions and roles such as: public opinion formation, party organization, and party programs. The main idea of the study focused on how political parties employ information and communication technology to disseminate their party ideas, and the study concluded that some parties prefer to disseminate their information through modern information and communication technology, and others prefer to disseminate it through direct interaction with the masses.(Römmele, 2003). The study of Mahmoud Helmy (2009) examined the use of Arab political parties' websites in disseminating political reform programs via the Internet to examine the relationship between the size of Arab parties and the extent to which they benefit from the progress in the arts of communication and interaction offered by the Internet. Its main results were that the political websites present its reform programs in general, and political reform programs in particular, and determine the extent to which Arab parties benefit from communicating with citizens, considering the Internet as an alternative environment for traditional media, and monitor the mechanisms and interactive forms that parties resort to attract citizens to it.(Mahmoud Mohamed, 2009)

As was indicated in the introduction, the technology variable imposed its presence on the nature of political communication in various recent studies. the previous studies of political parties focused on the effects of modern communication technology, and its importance for political parties in their communication with the public and ways to provide the communication elements that embody political participation for them. The benefit of the current study from this type of studies above is embodied in two aspects, the first relates to defining the interaction patterns that embody the greatest degree of user participation, and the second is to identify the communicative characteristics that express the effectiveness of political communication through the sites of political institutions and their relationship with the public.

### 3. Method and data collection

Combining quantitative content analysis and thematic analysis, this study identifies the various aspects of interactive social media use in the Iraqi political communication process, as represented by links on the websites of the Iraqi parliament and government. It is important to note that this study is not concerned with the general communicative features of the two websites; rather, it is limited to the availability of social media links on the studied websites and their interactive responsiveness, which refers to the response indicators that appear on the website in response to users' comments. As stated by Daniel Seigler (2015), responsiveness can be viewed in the political science context as a politician's response to citizens' demands, it is the readiness of officials to utilize social media tools that encourage collaborative citizen engagement. So, in the broad sense of this definition, the current study deals with responses given by political communicators of the two studied websites as a utilization of social media and a motivation to meet citizens' demands.

Based on studies that provided criteria for measuring interactivity, such as Tad et al (cited in Li, Y., & Shang, H. (2020), Norris (2005), the current study employed criteria that reveal interactive responsiveness, as this is the primary objective of the study. Quantitative content analysis was used to determine the number of user engagement responses, including comments, likes, retweets, and shares, as well as the political communicator responses to user engagement forms. This is intended to reveal the extent to which social technology is utilized on government and parliament websites, whether according to the interactive model in political communication or the top-bottom communication model that emphasizes providing information in a unilateral direction. In the subsequent step, a thematic analysis was conducted on a subsample of 5% of the total user comments in order to reveal the contents used in addressing of political actors and to comprehend the method of intellectual engagement with them and assess the moral obligation of political actors in this respect. Thematic analysis is a technique for revealing, analyzing, and presenting patterns in the data (themes). It organizes and captures a data set with minimal specificity (Aguinaldo, 2012). It can be utilized within various theoretical frameworks and for various purposes within them. It is the most essential aspect of conducting thematic analysis (Deželan & Vobič, n.d.). For this purpose, the themes in this study served as the basis for evaluating the content revealed by user comments. It was extracted and coded according to three primary categories: claims or appeals, inquiries, and opinions. (Table No 2) The interactive responsiveness has been adopted to identify the effectiveness of interactive communication between the political communicator and users, especially since the responsiveness represents the essence of interactive communication. It is how effectively a government website reacts to comments, opinions, and needs and according to the Modern Management theoretical model, governments must use advanced technologies to better respond to community issues and needs (Grimsley & Meehan, 2017). Citizens expect fast and effective responses from governmental bodies when they use government websites and the extent to which government websites make it much easier for citizens to communicate their civic needs and desires and get a response will significantly influence their service quality. (Li & Shang, 2020)

The research community represented the websites of the Iraqi parliament (<https://iq.parliament.iq/>), and the federal government (<https://gds.gov.iq/ar/>). The month period was taken throughout May 2022, which represents the time sample of the study

through which the crisis of government formation is still present. The website of each political institution was examined for the purpose of noticing if it had links to their pages on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube. It was confined to these social media for they represent widely used platforms.

Data collection was mainly done by using Keyhole.co website, which analyzes social networking sites and provides statistics and features about them. It is a social media data monitoring platform that collects both real and historical data and offers downloads in a variety of file formats. This paper made use of one of its features, which analyzes site profiles and collects information on social media accounts. Consequently, six projects for the social media tools of the websites of the Iraqi government and parliament (Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook) were added to gather statistics and data for each website (Table No. 2).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Interactive indicators by the political communicator with user feedback

The availability of social media links on the websites of the political communicator represented by Iraq Parliament and government websites shows that the both sites were keen to strengthen their political image through links to social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube).

**Table (1) Shows the extent of the websites' interaction**

Institution	Social media	Pos ts	User engagement			Interactive responsiveness
			Like	Retweet/s hare/views	commen t	Comment/reply
Par.	Twitter	167	3616	181	2950	31
	Facebook	241	23572	154	21133	55
	YouTube	29	96	3215	disabled	0
	Total	701	29131	9802	31104	129
Gov.	Twitter	53	588	83	6003	24
	Facebook	198	1025	71	988	15
	YouTube	13	234	6098	30	4
	Total	701	29131	9802	31104	129

The above table shows the extent of the two websites' interaction with users through the presence of their comments and the website's responses to them. The month period, which represents the time sample of the study, was measured in calculating the number of the political communicators and calculating the number of comments on them by users. Here, the response criterion was used through the responses that the official website makes in reply to users' comments, or preference (favorite) or (likes) as an indicator of the communicator's interest and positive interaction with its followers, This procedure applies to all social networking sites, and the interactive response rate was adopted based on the total Responses by replying with a comment, preference or liking compared to the total number of comments by users, regardless of the type of content that the site publishes.

The results of the table reveal two contradictory levels of the political communication interactive environment: The number of interactive activities by the public on the websites of the Iraqi government and parliament demonstrates the first positive aspect, which relates

to the interaction of users according to bottom-up communication. Low numbers of interactive responses from the Iraqi government and parliament reveal a traditional top-down communication information model. The following table (2) displays the percentages revealing these levels in both sites.

**Table 2: Interactive Activity Indicators for Iraqi Government and Parliament Websites**

Social media	Posts	%	Website's interactive comments	%	User's interactive comments	%	User's comments vs. website's comments
Twitter	220	31.3	55	42.6	8953	0.28	0.6
Facebook	439	62.6	70	54.2	22121	71.1	0.3
you tube	42	5.9	4	3.1	30	0.09	13.3
Total	701	100%	129	100%	31104	100%	0.4

#### 4.2. Indicators of user interaction:

In general, it can be seen that the interaction of users reveals a level of public interest in political participation on a variety of issues covered in the publications shown by the Iraqi government and parliament websites. The number of likes indicates public interest in the publications of the two sites reached (29131), along with other interactive activities such as retweets, shares and comments (9802). (31104) respectively.

-Twitter: The proportion of tweets on the government and parliament websites reached 31,3% of the total number of tweets (701) during the study period. Their user comments (8953) represented 0.28 percent of the total number of user comments on both websites.

-Facebook: The Iraqi government and parliament are most interested in the Facebook platform, which has the highest percentage of uploaded posts (62,6 percent). The number of user comments was also the highest (71,1 percent) of all user comments.

-YouTube: During the study period, the websites of the Iraqi government and parliament uploaded 42 videos, or 5.9 percent, the lowest percentage among social media platforms. The interaction percentage was also the lowest, with 30 comments and 0.09 percent. The Iraqi parliament's YouTube channel has disabled this feature. It is a negative indicator of the public-political interaction environment.

#### 4.3. Indicators of government and parliament websites interactions

Overall, government and parliament sites have less user interaction, according to the data. The total number of comments they interacted with users was 129, compared to the number in the user interaction indicators.

-Twitter: The two sites posted (220) tweets during the study month, this can be regarded a small number compared to government and political activities, but important in this study is measuring the reaction size based on the quantitative analysis. So, the results show that the two websites barely interacted. The Twitter response in both sites was only (55) comments as compared to user interaction shown above. It came at only (0.06%) percent as compared to user comments.

-Facebook: The two websites published 439 times, the most among social networking sites,

showing their interest in publishing. (71.1%) percent of users (22121) comments, commented. As can be seen from the data related to Facebook, the interactive responsiveness rate of the Iraq Parliament and government websites were very low. So, the interest of the two websites in its response to users' comments and the interaction revealed by the sites with their users, came at a rate of (0.3%), which is low interactive response to users' comments on their posts.

- YouTube: The two websites had only (42) videos posted, which was the lowest number among Iraqi parliament and government websites posts on social media during the time sample of the study. It was (5.6 % ). The interactive responsiveness with users represented by only four comments, or (13.3 %).

#### **4.4. Thematic construction of user comments**

To determine the moral and social responsibility of addressing public issues by political actors, a qualitative study was conducted of the comments made by the Iraqi public while interacting with publications on the Iraqi government and parliament websites. A sample of 5% of the social media posts published by each website during the study period totaled 350% of all social media sites studied. Comments are sorted based on a thematic analysis of extracting themes that summarize the annotation text. The data is encoded based on three main threads: claim or appeal, which means anything that the users ask for services or amend laws or government appointments, etc.; enquiry, which means asking questions about a particular event or issue, etc.; and opinion, which means the public gives a point of view, a proposal, or a correction to a particular political issue or track. It should be noted that the analysis excluded offensive comments from the sample.

**Table 3. Themes developed from user comments**

Social media tools	Posts	User engagement sample	User content themes					
			Claim and appeal	%	Enquiry	%	Opinion	%
twitter	220	110	85	77.2	19	17.2	6	5.4
Facebook	439	219	145	66.2	63	28.7	11	5.0
YouTube	42	21	12	57.1	7	33.3	2	9.5
Total	701	350	242	69.1	89	25.4	19	5.4

The “claim and appeal” theme was repeated more than other subjects: (242) in a percentage of (69.1%) of the total sample. Twitter had the highest percentage in this theme. This can be linked to the general social context in Iraq, which is witnessing political unrest, insecurity, and youth unemployment that have already caused continuous demonstrations. Examples include requests for changes to the law, the appointing of college graduates, the enforcement of grants, the reduction of school fees, the provision of public security, the punishment of corrupt people, and the amendment of the retirement law.( 25.4% ) of the sample repeated a query theme. Facebook has the highest rate of social media. This theme drew questions about specific policies, events, and issue development. This shows the Iraqis' interest in politics. It requires politicians' attention and interaction. Last, the least repeated opinion (19) had a ratio of (5.4%.) This topic revealed user opinions on government and parliament publications, tweets, and videos.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Political communication in countries undergoing democratic transition is influenced by a variety of factors in the consolidation of democratic practices. The new communication technology is an important factor in the success of this practice. Most experiments in established democracies tend to use communication technology characteristics to increase and improve the types of interaction with the public. The most prominent communication innovation that reinforced the dimensions of political communication with the public was the emergence of social media, which prompted governments around the world to find ways of monitoring social media in order to interact with the public's needs and set appropriate policies for the community.

Iraq experienced an important democratic transition in 2003, which was accompanied by an openness to modern communication technology and the use of political entities to create websites that allow public communication in the field of political communication. Two important websites in this field were studied: the central government and the Iraqi parliament, in order to determine the extent to which the important dimensions related to interaction with public opinions and ideas in the field of political communication have been achieved through the possibilities provided by social networking sites in this field.

The transition to democracy in Iraq necessitates a shift in the manner in which citizens are communicated with, as this is regarded as an essential element in democratic nations (Stieglitz, S., Brockmann, T., & Xuan, L. D. (2012)). According to this concept, the traditional model of political communication based on information transmission from the top to the bottom still exists in Iraq. Bekkers (2013)) refers to an important theory in explaining the process of political communication in countries with new democracies, which is that modern technology and social media pose a challenge to the traditional model of political government communication because they allow for the hegemony of the communication model from the bottom up. This challenge appears to have demonstrated that political websites in Iraq, the Iraqi government and parliament, are incapable of meeting such a challenge effectively and efficiently. While there are many interactive tools in the field of social communication on the two websites, the interactive value at the level of interactive communication practice is revealed by the few interactions with the audience in the study results. This practice can be explained according to the second and third categories of Daniel Seigler's model (Seigler, 2017), namely emerging social media adoption when a platform is executed but manipulated to function like Web 1.0, where information was controlled by public administrators, and "Advanced social media use," which maximizes interactivity but not collaboration and in which the government decides social media interactions. Another possible explanation is that the ideological system in the Iraqi political system still bears or is affected by the characteristics of the old political system in the field of political communication with citizens when forms of interaction, dialogue, and information exchange are absent. In this regard, Voltmer (2005) emphasizes that the transition from a dictatorial regime to a democratic one necessitates a new role and a radical transformation of the political communication system in the countries undergoing such a transition. According to this perspective, the democratic transition and openness to the modern communication technology environment in Iraq can therefore be understood in light of the following two hypotheses: The first is that the democratic transition is more theoretical than practical to achieve the principles of electronic democracy that are assumed and realized through electronic communication in the Internet environment. The second is

the potential impact of the old dictatorial regime's mentality on the state apparatus. In such arena, the category of Citizens' interaction with what is presented on political websites helps to improve the performance of political actors, and any ignoring or absence of interactive response by governments to this interaction indicates that the flow of information only represents the viewpoint of political actors. This seems to be consistent with the nature of electronic political communication in certain countries, particularly in East Asia and the Middle East, of which Iraq is a part, which does not achieve the required informational interaction patterns with the public, whether at the level of local government websites or political party websites. (Lee-Geiller, 2019; Lely Arrianie, 2018; Siar, 2005). The author addressed the research objective of this study related to the thematic content of user comments using a combination of research methods, quantitative content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. The objective is to shed light on the political content of the users comments, which can serve as a guide for the government and parliament in addressing community issues. According to the results of the thematic analysis, the majority of the content of the comments fell under the theme of claim and appeal or enquiry, and all of these constitute a moral obligation to pay attention to it and engage with it within the framework of the social responsibility of the government and parliament in its address to the public.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the aforementioned findings, it can be concluded that both the Iraqi government and parliament websites demonstrate a limited interest in enhancing their message and image through social media. In the context of these data, the indicators of Parliament and the Iraqi government's interest in including links to social networking sites reveal the low communicative value to which official government websites are expected to devote a great deal of attention in terms of the significance of their response/interaction with citizens, which indicates the values of participation and dialogue in new democracies. There were scant indications of interaction on both websites, as the absence of active interactive features between the two websites and their users was almost entirely apparent. Taking into account that the site's complete interaction with all comments is not a realistic expectation, its extremely low rate, as shown in the analysis, is not a good sign for any democracy in progress, such as in Iraq. It indicates disregard for the interactive communication process with the public and disregard for its content. This can be explained by the themes of user interaction, which represent legitimate demands and assume a level of interactive responsiveness, whether on the level of an ethical obligation or at the very least to monitor the public mode as it is implemented in democratic nations. In a broad perspective, despite the interactive nature of social media, the Iraqi government and parliament websites seem to be short of ideas to boost political dialogue and citizen participation through logical and constructive argumentation with the citizens. It could be argued that politicians' failure towards using social media is linked to the larger political context. The New Democracy in Iraq is still progressing and the complexity of society and audience partisanship affect the interactivity of political communication.

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