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How Can the Government Utilize Elites & Celebrities to manage Global Public Opinion on Egypt? An Exploratory Study of Mo Salah & Egypt

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to manage Global Public Opinion on Egypt?

An Exploratory Study of Mo Salah & Egypt

A Thesis Submitted to the

Public Policy and Administration Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Public Policy

By

Sara S Ibrahim

Fall 22

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Chapter 6: Conclusion & Discussion

Declaration of Authorship

I, Sara S Ibrahim, declare this thesis titled, "How Can the Egyptian Government Utilize Elites & Celebrities for building better public Opinion globally on Egypt? The Case of Mo Salah & Egypt," and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.

- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.

- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.

- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. Except for such quotations, this thesis is entirely my work.

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have clarifiedwhat was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signed: *Sara S*

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Date:

26/12/2022

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has been approved by

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Abstract

With Egypt's latest global reputation index, nation brand, and soft power indices scoring low, such rankings have left room for finding new ways of enhancing Egypt's global public opinion and reputation. This study showcases an untapped potential for enhancing a nation's reputation and public opinion. This untapped potential lies in the power of elite commentary and celebrity activity. Such commentary and activity influence public opinion of the celebrity but also subsequently affect the public opinion of their country-of-origin nations.

With a global phenomenon such as football player Mo Salah, it has always been suggested that his performance positively affected Egypt's public opinion. Such a hypothesis has been suggested by Egyptians but has never been tested. This study is testing existing hypotheses through the commentary of the elites and how public opinion is shaped through such commentary around Mo Salah. This developed public opinion about Mo Salah assessed how the public opinion of Egypt could be affected too.

As a result, elite commentary leading to public opinion on Mo Salah indeed enhanced the public opinion of Egypt. It led to an awareness of 35 times more in 2022 in the UK than before his joining Liverpool F.C. The sentiment of how public opinion through the lens of elites' social media commentary and celebrity activity, was the main measurement of the impact on the public opinion of Egypt.

The study showed that elite commentary on Mo Salah is highly significant in the development of public opinion about Mo Salah. There has been also a significant correlation between the public opinion on Mo Salah and the public opinion on Egypt accordingly.

Subsequently, the study develops policy recommendations around how social media, elite commentary, and public opinion/reputation activities could be developed for enhancing the public opinion of Egypt. The policy recommendation based on such a finding is the

development of the Egyptian Council of Public Opinion & Nation Branding. Such initiation of

this council has its core around integrating the elite's commentary around events in Egypt.

Another recommendation is for nurturing more talents like Mo Salah locally and globally,

ensuring their exposure through the lens of the elites on social media, media outlets, and beyond.

Acknowledgments

I would love to acknowledge and give my warmest regards and thanks to my supervisor Dr. Ahmed Taher who made this work possible. His guidance, advice, and mentorship carried me through all the stages of writing this study.

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I would also love to thank my beautiful family for their continuous support.

Your prayers were what sustained me this far.

I would love to thank *Acumen Intelligence* for their support in this research. Acumen Media Intelligence contributed access to their archives and AI capabilities in addition to the time and dedication of their expert staff to support this research. Without their support, this research would not have been possible.

Finally, I would love to thank Mo Salah, for being an inspiration to not only 100 million Egyptians, but the entire globe. For, I couldn't have imagined myself wrapping my master's degree, by a study that is anything else than studying how such a global phenomenon has such an impact on Egypt and the globe.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Social media usage has a significant impact on and influencing the public's behavior toward relevant matters across decades (Jackson, 2008). Scholars in media and politics have also noted the dominance and influence of "elites" or "celebrities" through the media (Soley, 1992) as they influence public opinion across all topics and issues (Page et al., 1987).

Accordingly, since the role of celebrities and elite communications influence public opinion, it was worthy of exploring such influence on the perception of nations and countries.

The impact of celebrity and elite communications has been previously explored academically in commercial endorsements and political causes. Yet, none of the existing studies explored how public opinion is shaped through elite communications on such celebrity activity.

Whereas elite commentary affects public opinion on a certain topic, such public opinion could further affect public opinion on other issues too. Public opinion on certain topics could affect the public opinion of nations as an extended influence as well.

Developing positive public opinion of nations is a minimally discussed topic in academic literature. Therefore, this study aims at exploring the potential of developing a national strategy for enhancing Egypt's public opinion globally. Assessing the influence of elite communication on social media by elites around celebrity performance (The Case of Mo Salah) is the purpose behind this study.

Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed:

What is the influence of Online Elite Communication on Public Opinion about Mo Salah?

What is the influence of Mo Salah on Public Opinion about Egypt?

Subsequently, the main question would be: *How can governments utilize such Elite communications and global celebrity efforts to shape the public opinion of Egypt?*

To bridge the above-mentioned gaps, the first objective is to assess the impact of elite communications around public opinion on Mo Salah in the UK.

The second objective is to assess how elite communications on Mo Salah's activity (before and after existence and presence) have impacted the UK public's opinion of Egypt.

This thesis is based on a quantitative research method. This study used a digital archival method. By using a media listening tool developed for analyzing online media sentiment, the *Acumen Media Intelligence* software was the main tool used. Such a tool analyzed the sentiment of elite communications on social media, discussing *Mo Salah* as their topic, during both timeframes September 2021-End of February 2022 and Football season 2016-2017, comparing the public sentiment around Egypt then and now.

The significance of this study is informed by Egypt's low ranking in the Global Reputation & Nation Brand Index. Egypt's Nation Brand index ranks 46/100 for the year 2022 (Brand Directory, 2022). As for the global reputation index (discontinued after 2020, Egypt also ranked 39/55 (Reptrak - Global Reputation Institute, 2020). Consequently, an extra dimension to the existing global public opinion enhancement activities needed to take place.

Discussing the activities developed for shaping the global public opinion of Egypt, the Egyptian Government has developed mega-events as a soft power tool in the past two years. Events such as the Golden Parade, Luxor's Opet Festival, and the World Youth Forum with extensive international coverage took place. Such events were an activity of shaping global

public opinion, in addition to other governmental efforts by the Ministry of Tourism and State Ministry of Information.

The State Information Ministry of Egypt has also launched in 2020 a digital platform called "New Media Ambassadors,". This initiative targeted young influencers on various social media platforms with the idea of including them in the government's efforts to develop an alternative media platform. Its purpose was to bridge the gap between traditional and new media tools (Fekri, 2020).

One of the main study findings this study found, was that the Public Opinion about Mo Salah is directly shaped by Elite Commentary about him. Subsequently, the Public Opinion about Mo Salah, affects the Public Opinion about Egypt.

Another integral finding this study found, was that the commentary by the public in the U.K about Egypt increased 15 times from 2017 till 2022.

Exploring all existing public opinion enhancement efforts by the Egyptian government, to online global elite communications on celebrity activity (Mo Salah), is what this study aims to examine. Measuring the impact of elite communications and celebrity activity (Mo Salah) in the UK, and how this affects the public opinion of Egypt. Accordingly, a suggestion of introducing a national strategy integrating this new approach for Egypt will be proposed.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature review entails multiple themes, exploring the agenda setting effect on forming

public opinion and priming, followed by how elite commentary shapes public opinion.

Furthermore, the literature explores how public opinion is framed through social media and the

indirect roles of celebrities in forming public opinion. Finally, it discusses Mo Salah as a

celebrity that frames public opinion.

Agenda Setting and Public Opinion

          Agenda-setting is about the media setting an agenda, focusing the public's

attention on certain issues. As the Political Journalist and Scholar Walter Lipmann noted in his

book *Public Opinion* that the media is the main source of the "pictures in our heads" about issues

and events, a world that for most citizens is "out of reach, out of sight, out of mind" (Lippmann,

W. 1922). Not only does the public then get their information from the news media, but the

public also learns how important an event is, based on how much the media sheds light on it.

This means that the media sets the agenda around which forms public opinion (McCombs, M.

2002).

    Based on that, a person's attitude is usually directed by what he thinks (Shaw, E. 1979).

One result of agenda-setting through salience of issues, is the priming of people's perspectives

that then guides public opinion. Subsequently, the media influences the standards by which

events, or public affairs generally are judged (Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. 1987).

Priming is the selective light shed on certain topics for the public. In other words, the public relies on the agenda created by agenda-setters of certain events; accordingly, public opinion is shaped, with a priming effect.

In agenda-setting, first comes the salience of public issues, where the salience of public issues often is the basis for public opinion. As a result, the salience of the same event in the news depends on whether a person holds an opinion (Weaver, D. 1991).
The second level of agenda setting intertwines the salience of attributes with the public's thoughts and images built and formed in the public's heads for forming opinion (Weaver, D. 1991).

The essence on which agenda-setting is based is for orientation. Orientation is about that individuals want to know more about the events in the world around them and need a direction regarding it, which has two building blocks: relevance and uncertainty (Chernov, Valenzuela, & McCombs, 2011). Relevance is what determines the level of how everyone needs orientation.

If the topic is very relevant, the uncertainty degree about a specific topic determines the level needed for orientation. If there is low uncertainty, the need for orientation becomes lower. These people will proceed in consuming the news in the media for fresh topics, but most likely will not be eager to consume news about the same topic. Lastly, for people with high relevance and uncertainty about an event, their orientation need is high. These people are usually the main news, and agenda-setting effects strongly impact them.

This agenda-setting influence on the public is a by-product of priming certain topics in the media (McCombs, M. 2002). Focusing on certain topics, and repeating them in the media, reflects a strong message to the public about what the important topics are and what are not.

Elites Shaping Public Opinion

In terms of the elites influencing public opinion, highlighting an event or an issue in an elite context may result in making it polarized. It is always important to ensure that information on public opinion stays strongly effective through balancing and a contradictory act (Guisinger & Saunders, 2017). This is what makes the theory of the Elite. According to Mariotti (2020, p.1), the Elite theory "envisions society as divided between the mass of people and a ruling minority, where the political power – the power to take and impose decisions valid to the whole society – always belongs to the latter. From a communications perspective, it means that the elites of the society, which are the ruling class, are those who direct decisions of the society".

Firstly, it is quite important to differentiate between elites and non-elites. According to Milner (2015), The first difference between elites and non-elites, is that elites are in top positions in powerful organizations. The economic status is not the only determinant. Most people, even if they belong to the high-income class, they may have low levels of political, economic, and status power; where that makes them are non-elites.

According to Milner (2015), there are political, economic, and status elites. Political elites are not limited to military officials, but what makes them elites, is the force of power they have politically. They are politicians, military officials, and beyond that as well. On the other hand, economic elites are usually the people who control the means of production. This could take place in the form of owning property, human capital, or other capital forms.

Lastly, status elites are highly approved by society. They could be, but are not limited to celebrities, religious elites, and intellectuals who played a key role in forming the public's ideologies (Milner, 2015).

Accordingly, as Zaller (1992), states:

"Every opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition".

Another study developed by Guisinger & Saunders in 2017 explored this topic through extensive studies leading to the conclusion that: when a message comes from an elite to the public, the public will interact with previous conceptions and effects from exposure to prior information. If a topic is not polarized by the public, the content of the message then dominates, and any communicator in that case, would be effective. Contrastingly, If public opinion is strongly polarized, only biased communications will result in shifts in opinion.

Another study developed by Rogowski & Stone (2020), stated the following regarding political elite communications:

> *"Officeholders use agenda-setting powers when communicating with voters and emphasize some parts of their records over others. The dissemination of these messages' shapes voters' impressions of an official's performance in office. Specifically, the content of elite communications affects the saliency of the consideration's voters draw upon when evaluating political officials. The greater emphasis from officeholders on some feature of their record is likely to result in a higher level of focus on this consideration, for instance, campaign advertisements, franked mail, and media reports, thus these considerations have greater cognitive accessibility for voters".*

Belknap and Campbell (1951), also developed the "party-follower" model, which states:

> *"That the less informed public are not less willing than the better informed to follow along and follow the party line but are simply less able to develop a clear understanding of what the party line is, whereas an individual's party identification functions as a kind of lens through which the individual views the political world. When*

the individual is kept in the dark (i.e., poorly informed), the lens has little effect on his

attitudes, but as light (information) increases, the effect of the perceptual screen becomes

pronounced: well-informed partisans begin to perceive a political world in which the

policies of their reference group leaders seem wise and virtuous and in which the policies

of the opposing party seem ill-considered and foolish. This information interacts with

*partisan orientation to shape individual attitudes" (*Zaller J. R., 1984).

This "Party-Follower" Model of Belknap and Campbell shows that with increased

information, awareness, and political involvement, there is a higher percentage of the public

supporting policies and information aligning with their opinion leaders, who they follow the

same ideology and beliefs as.

To sum this up, summarizing the above with what Bullock (2011) stated that the elites are

leading the public. Bullock noted that scholars had two findings about that statement. The first

finding is that people are "awash in ignorance" (Kinder, 1998). The second finding is that most

people follow elites' directions (Milgram, 1974). Nevertheless, Bullock also highlights that one

consequence of elite influence on public opinion , is that it makes people neglect what they

already know about relevant topics and issues. Nevertheless, this supports the fact that the elite

theory is right in place, where it indeed shapes public opinion drastically.

Social Media Shaping Public Opinion

For the new media and online media world, Bennett and Manheim (2006) questioned the one-model flow theory in digital media. They stated that sharing mass media through opinion leaders happens less in today's world. They also suggested that the increase of social isolation, increases the happening of the one-step flow of information: which is news and media producers to news consumers.

A study by the Pew Research Center done in 2016, concluded that 66 percent of social media users, receive news content from Facebook and that 62 percent find news by chance while doing other things online (Gottfried and Shearer, 2016). Regarding the different social media platforms, topics that are popular in mass media are shared and liked more on Facebook than on other platforms such as Twitter, indicating that "sharing on Facebook centers more around a few dominant issues, whereas on Twitter, there is more variation" (Trilling, Tolochko, and Burscher, 2016, p.16). But, if people get their news from social media, then social media becomes the source of information to people, therefore, this has an agenda-setting effect reflecting the content of mass media (Feezell, 2017). Therefore, the choice of social media platform is an important component of the making of public opinion.

The architecture of social media networks allows the public to quickly find other people with similar views and opinions. By people joining groups, they join agendas and form group identities (Grzywińska, I., & Batorski, D. B., 2016). This leads to formulating public opinions based on like-minded communities. To sum up, As Sayre et al. pointed out, "if new media are following the cues of traditional media, then agenda-setting power has not diminished but has instead gained another channel" (2010).

Public Opinion-Shaping Narratives of Social Media

Based on the above, the reverse of agenda-setting takes place, where the public, through social media, telling the press what to write about and communicate. Social Media Users then take the role of the media in communicating an issue to the public (Grzywińska, I., & Batorski, D. B., 2016).

As McGregor (2019), claimed in her study on "Social Media as Public Opinion":

"I suggest that social media allow for more public, relational, and temporally sensitive representation of public opinion. Political opinions expressed on social media are inherently public and relational in that they are expressed publicly to or for an audience. Given their conversational nature, social media represent a public and collective arena in which public opinion manifests, similar to public meetings or citizen groups".

McGregor then proceeds to explain further that metrics such as "Likes", "Replies", and "Comments" can be quantifiable in analyzing public opinion as well as the opinions expressed on social media "expand the temporal boundaries of socially constructed public opinion" (McGregor, S. C., 2019). Social media has the ability to amplify and spread what the public expresses in real-time and their reaction to certain events hence, shaping public opinion.

According to one of the studies quantifying social media sentiment developed by Ben Thamite, through the regression of 20,000 of content on social media. The study concluded that the weight of likes to comments to shares have a ratio of 1:2:3 with a weight of 2,4,6 points respectively (Thamite, B. 2020)

Accordingly, news journalists now have access to public opinion in real time while measuring social media posts and sentiments. It is more accessible than polls, where reporters can report on real-time from the public opinion online as it unfolds.

Editors also ask journalists to use public social media posts in public opinion storytelling. With the use of software that has automatic alerts on chosen and timely topics, journalists gather public opinion instantly and integrate it in the news. Accordingly, journalists and news media reporters create shape and form to "momentums" on social media and use such forms of public opinion in their reporting (Karpf, 2016).

Social Media companies such as Twitter and Facebook are those who spread such public opinion, and journalists use those social media feeds to reflect such public opinion. This newly introduced hybrid model of social media and public opinion, shape how public opinion affects traditional media through social media (Armstrong and Gao, 2010). Using individuals' public posts as a powerful tool for public opinion measurement makes the relationship between elites and the public a complex one.

Social media made the public have a means to communicate their opinion to the elites. Should social media be the force to shape public opinion narratives, one could fairly state that a lot of people do *not* feel comfortable or even safe expressing their views on events and matters online or offline (Van Duyn, 2018).

Indirect Role of Elites in shaping public opinion

Research presented by Jackson in 2008 indicates that celebrities may have the ability to influence certain beliefs of their fans, and followers hence, this implies that there is a growing mixture of entertainment politics and the shaping of public opinion through celebrity communication and endorsement (Jackson, 2008).

This study states that celebrities may be able to persuade their followers and fans to take stances like theirs in certain events. Contrastingly, celebrities do paid advertising with multinational corporates may not be able to influence public opinion about that company (Jackson. D, 2008). This study also showed that young celebrity fans, were more likely to agree with beliefs promoted by a celebrity than those same beliefs when endorsed by an someone anonymous.

Scholars have done much research on the impact of celebrity endorsements on products, more than research on celebrities and public opinion influence. Agrawal and Kamakura (1995) studied the impact of how the announcement of 110 celebrity-endorsement influenced the companies' stock values. The results were positive, leading to stock-market approval for signing celebrity endorsers. Another example is Butler et al. (2004) study showed that Oprah Winfrey's endorsement of a book made it go to the best-sellers list.

In a study by Hovland and Weiss (1952) examining the influence of source credibility, the study concluded that "high-credibility" sources were more impactful than "low-credibility" sources.

Case of Football Star: Mo Salah

Mo Salah, an Egyptian Football player in Liverpool F.C, is a figure and personal brand that has a lot of commercial attachments, but more importantly, is claimed to be a "moral" figure and model for a lot of people, in Egypt and across the globe (Ali, 2021).

This song's interpretation is that Salah has been praised for combating Islamophobia (Ali, 2021), or simply "The Salah effect." A Stanford University study noted that Salah has decreased Islamophobic hate crimes to drop by 18.9 percent and half of anti-Muslim tweets to fall. "Positive exposure to outgroup role models can reveal new information that humanizes the outgroup writ large," the study noted (Alrababa'h et al., 2019).

This study outcome highlights how exposure to celebrities has become impactful through online or traditional media channels. In practice, research has concluded that the exposure to public figures through the media is impactful.

In Salah's case, the Stanford study quantified the effect of such exposure by testing Muslim celebrity on Islamophobia. It concluded that that positive exposure to public figures from stigmatized groups can decrease hate crimes (Alrababa'h et al., 2019).

Studies have also shown that how media portrays minority groups in the U.S, can shift people's evaluations of political issues in general (Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000). This Stanford study on Mo Salah adds to such literature that the exposure to minority groups, can also influence attitudes and behavior (Alrababa'h et al., 2019).

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework, Conceptual Framework & Model

Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical framework this study will follow is the elite theory by Mariotti (2020, p.1). The theory states, "Elite theory envisions society as divided between the mass of people and a ruling minority, where the political power – the power to take and impose decisions valid to the whole society – always belongs to the latter" (page number and citation after the quote) From a communications perspective, it means that the elites of the society set the public opinion agenda for the masses. An additional theory to intertwine with the elite theory would be the agenda-setting theory. McCombs' (2014) recent agenda-setting theory explores how news media rely on the importance of connections among issues or events to the public, shaping their collective opinion.

The researcher developed a conceptual model called *The Process Model of Elite Communication Influence on Public Opinion.* The model tests the relationship between three constructs while measuring the impact of each construct on the other. The model has three constructs with 2 RQs measured.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model

Research Questions

Based on the conceptual model, these main research questions explore the impact and influence of Elite Communication on Public Opinion.

Elite Communication and Public Opinion

Much research and scholarly work have been developed on how society's elites shape the public's preferences and opinions. According to Mariotti (2020, p.1), the Elite theory "envisions society as divided between the mass of people and a ruling minority, where the political power – the power to take and impose decisions valid to the whole society – always belongs to the latter." The elites of the society, from a communication perspective, use their influence to shape the collective opinion and behavior of the masses.

The question is, when can an elite or expert message shift and shape public opinion If so, how does the communication of the elite impact the public opinion of Mo Salah in the UK?

RQ1: What is the influence of Elite Communications on the Public Opinion of Mo Salah?

Hypothesis 1: Public Opinion of Mo Salah is influenced by Elite Communications.

Public Opinion on Mo Salah, Celebrity Activity (Mo Salah), Public Opinion about Egypt

Based on the above question, to understand and study the influence of such

RQ2: *What is the relationship between Public Opinion about Mo Salah, and its impact on Public Opinion about Egypt?*

Hypothesis 2: Public Opinion on Egypt is influenced by the public opinion about Mo Salah based on the elite communications on Mo Salah.

Hypothesis 3: Elite Commentary has no direct relationship or significant correlation with the creation of public opinion about Egypt.

Construct Name	Definition	Operationalization & Measurement of Construct	Representative studies
Public Opinion	"The social climate, technological milieu, and communication environment in any democratic state together determine the way we think about public opinion and the ways we try to measure it" (Herbst, 1998, p.1).	Four main factors: - the shared democratic model of a community or nation - the methodologies or technologies available to assess opinion - the rhetoric of political leaders - the evaluation of public opinion by journalists (Herbst, 1998) Public Opinion (Social Media) is measured through Likes, Replies, Shares, and Comments.	Lasswell, H. (1931). The Measurement of Public Opinion. *American Political Science Review, 25*(2), 311-326. doi:10.2307/1947659 O'Doherty, Kieran. (2017). Deliberative public opinion: Development of a social construct. History of the Human Sciences. 30. 124-145. 10.1177/0952695117722718. Krippendorff, K. (2005). The Social Construction of Public Opinion. *Kommunikation über Kommunikation. Theorie, Methoden und Praxis. Festschrift für Klaus Merten,* 129-149. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/75 Herbst, S. (1998). Reading public opinion: How political actors view the democratic process. University of Chicago Press.
Elite Communication	"The Highest elite person or persons are likely to speak at the points in	- Elite Polarization - Public Political Awareness	Amsalem, E. (2019). How Informative and Persuasive is Simple Elite Communication? Effects on Like-Minded and Polarized Audiences. Public Opinion Quarterly. 83. 10.1093/poq/nfz001.

	a discussion where their statements, with their priority weighting, will have a maximum effect" Goodenough, W. H. (1957, p. 424).	- Information Integration and Differentiation (Amsalem, E. (2019). Information publicity degree Response speed degree Network interaction level Understanding the demands level The authority of the spokesperson Law enforcement level Standardization level - Measured by: **Time-series analyses** attempt to solve ambiguity about the direction of causation by looking at the timing of changes in elite messages and public opinion.	Gabel, M., & Scheve, K. (2007). Estimating the Effect of Elite Communications on Public Opinion Using Instrumental Variables. *American Journal of Political Science*, *51*(4), 1013–1028. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4620113 Goodenough, W. H. (1957). [Review of *Elite Communication in Samoa: A Study of Leadership*, by F. M. Keesing & M. M. Keesing]. *Language*, *33*(3), 424–429. https://doi.org/10.2307/411164 McGregor, S. (2018). Social (Media) Construction of Public Opinion by Elites. The University of Texas Libraries. Retrieved from: http://hdl.handle.net/2152/67619 Milner, M. (2015). *Elites: A general model*. Cambridge: Polity

Table 1. Operalisation of Constructs

Operationalization of Constructs

This section showcases the three constructs used in the research questions.   The constructs are

broken down into variables.

Measurement Model
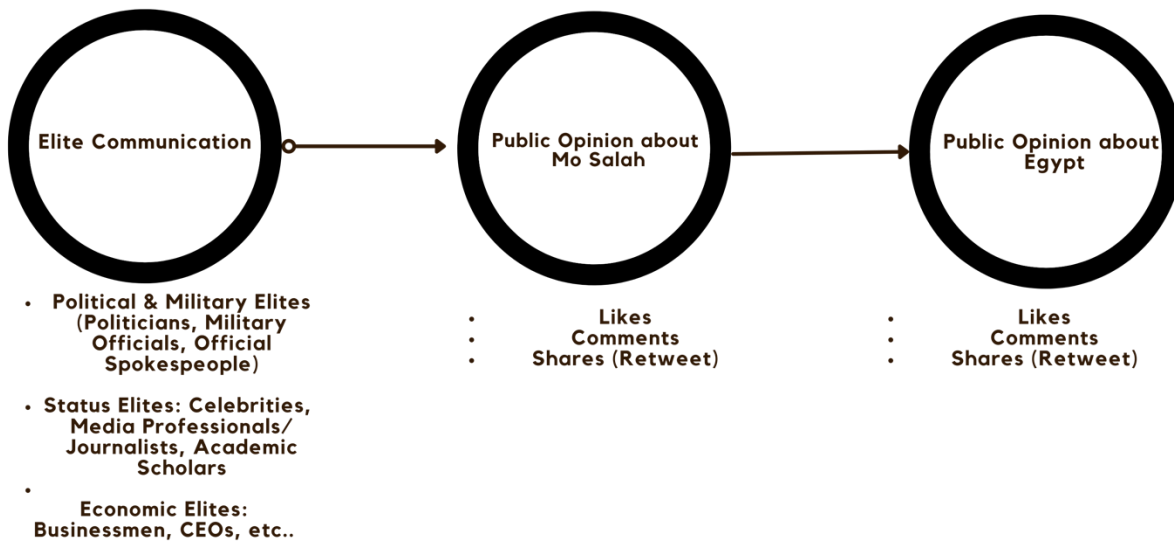
Figure 2. Conceptual Framework Measurement Model

Elaboration of Conceptual & Measurement Model

Based on previous research and literature, the conceptual model's first construct is Elite

Communication, which is claimed to "shape" **Public Opinion.**

While the elite's communication influences the public's opinion on matters. Elites

communicating are three categories which are: **Status, Political, and Economic Elites.**

The second and third constructs are about **Public Opinion.**

Public Opinion about Mo Salah is based on **Elite Communication.** It is measured by three

main measuring variables: **Likes, Shares, and Comments.**

Public Opinion of Egypt is based on **Public Opinion about Mo Salah.** It is measured by three

main indicators: **Likes, Shares, and Comments.**

Intended Contributions of the Study

The study has academic and practical contributions. The study aims at developing a model for elite communication's relationship with public opinion. Assessing how elite communication affects the public opinion of specific issues (e.g., celebrity activity) affects other related topics, such as the public opinion about their country of origin. Another contribution is intertwining the agenda-setting theory with elite communication theory on social media.

A policy contribution is also to be proposed, where the influence of elite communication on public opinion extends to other issues not mentioned in elite communication. The thesis will recommend strategies for selecting the right elites to propagate the right influence. This approach for policy propositions is applicable within and beyond national boundaries. Our case of Mo Salah demonstrates this approach in the UK.

Chapter 4

Methodology

The methodology of this study adopted a quantitative approach to data acquisition. This method ensures the quantification of data into measurable variables or indicators. This leads to a more comprehensive understanding of how communication by the Elites shapes public opinion on Mo Salah and eventually affects public opinion about Egypt in the U. K.

Figure 3. Study Methodology

STUDY METHODOLOGY

1 — LITERATURE REVIEW

2 — TIME FRAME OF STUDY

3 — CHOICE OF PLATFORM (TWITTER)

4 — DATA ACQUISITION PARTNER (ACUMEN)

5 — DATA CLEANING & PROCESSING USING AI

6 — DATA ANALYSIS BASED ON CONCEPTUAL MODEL

7 — FINDINGS & CONCLUSION
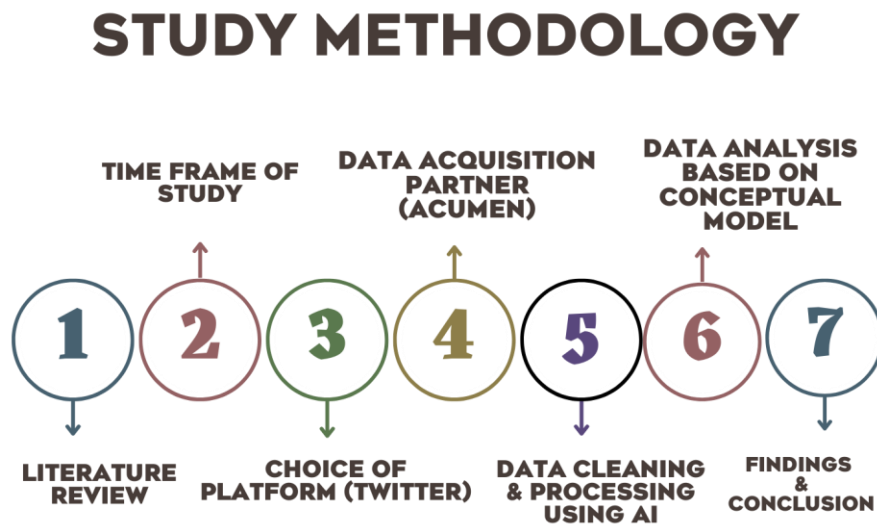
Social Media Sentiment

For this study, digital archival research (Kim, 2022) was used to listen to, interpret, and analyze the spontaneous opinions, sentiments, expectations, and experiences around Mo Salah as an Egyptian celebrity in the UK. The sampling frame of this study is the active real-time database of Acumen Media Intelligence (https://acumen.me/) which monitors 2,350 global Newspapers and Media Channels, 58,000 social media and news sites, and 2,500 publications, 60% of which are print-only. The study timeframe was six months, from the 1st of September 2021 to the 31st of February 2022 as well as comparing the sentiment of public opinion on Egypt in the timeframe September 2016, to August 2017. A large random sample representing the media and public opinion was drawn over six months and one year respectively days across two-time frames from public social media posts by Elite Communicators in the UK.

Sample Frame

This random sample produced 2500 Elite Communications commentary items with 332 posts on Twitter covering topics over eighteen main events around Mo Salah for the chosen timeframe which is first half of the 2021-2022 football season. The sampling frame of this study is the active real-time database of Acumen Media Intelligence (https://acumen.me/) which monitors 2,500 TV and radio channels in the middle east and another 2,350 globally, 58,000 social media and news sites, and 2,500 publications, 60% of which are print-only.

A large random sample representing the social media and public opinion was drawn over 185 days from twitter public social media posts by Elite communicators such as Status Elites, Political Elites and Economic Elites.

Sampling Procedure

Following Stryker et al. (2006), the researcher used the recall and precision test for our search string. For our recall, the term "Mo Salah" was used as the broad search criterion likely to capture all relevant items in the database. A built-in artificial intelligence protocol was used to assess the relevance of the captured items.

The database had a feature that allowed us to randomly select 20% of the opinions of elite communications and 15% of the posts on social media in the given time frame. The repercussions of remote stakeholders in the global media were also monitored.

The sample size was 5000 posts and comments, where 331 opinions were the randomly chosen sample.

As the second step of this data analysis, social media commentary and public opinion were analyzed by the public over the elite communicator's posts, for gaining insight into how elite commentary affects public opinion on celebrity Mo Salah.

The final step was cross-checking the comments by the same public who replied to elite communicators' posts on Mo Salah, but cross-checking it with the same time frame and the same sample visiting their commentary on Egypt and how those results in building a perception around Egypt as a nation brand in the UK
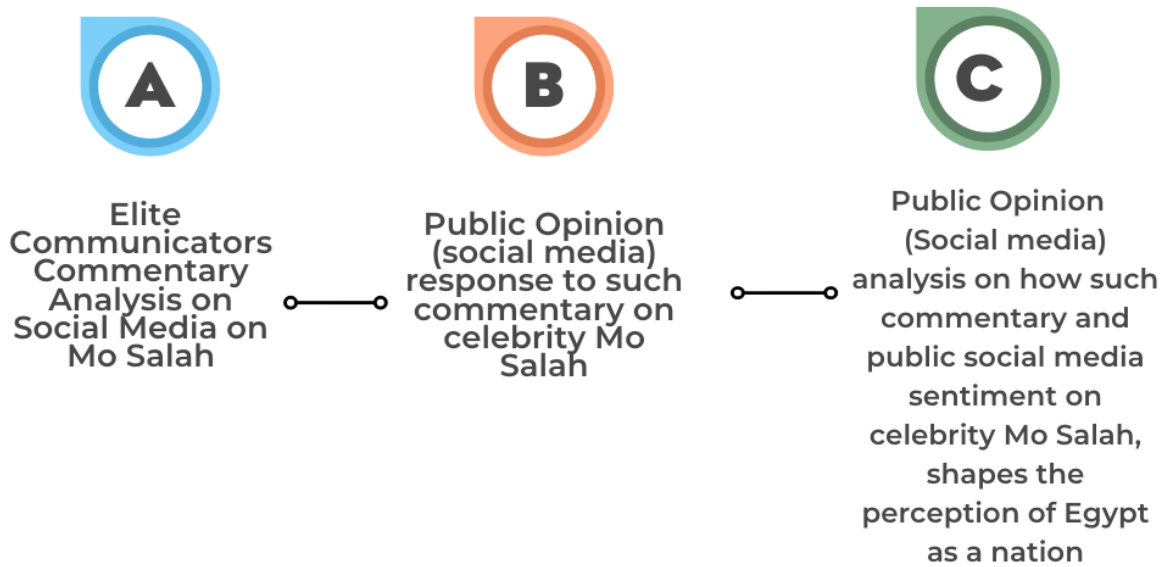
Figure 4. Process of Media Sentiment Analysis

For step one, the media intelligence tool was set up to detect elite commentaries on social media (Twitter Platform) with keywords: **Mo Salah.**

The tool would also be set up on the geographical location of such sentiment only limited to the UK, and the entire study was limited to Twitter social media platforms.

Secondly, the tool would analyze public opinion based on replies to the elite commentary. Such public opinion was measured through likes, comments, and shares. Moreover, the keywords and geographical location used here would be like step one.

The final step is another layer of social media sentiment analysis that was developed. An analysis of social media sentiment for assessing the public opinion of Egypt. By adding **Egypt** as a set of keywords to examine the above, comparing two time periods. One of which Mo Salah wasn't playing for F.C Liverpool yet (September 2016- February 2017) season, and his last and peak season (September 2021- February 2022). The sample size was 2500 posts and comments of which only 67 opinions were randomly selected. Four for the year 2016-2017 and 63 for the year 2021-2022.

Statistical Methods

Based on the above, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) linear regression took place for the analysis of the data. There was also no path model for this study due to the limited size of sample size. One-way ANOVA consists of the analysis of only one way of data classification with one independent variable.

ANOVA was conducted twice. Once for testing the public opinion on Mo Salah as the dependent variable in the 18 events of significance for Mo Salah in the given time frame against the Elite Commentary on Mo Salah as the independent variable. The second ANOVA was used to measure the same public opinion on Mo Salah as the independent variable this time against the Public Opinion in Egypt for the same 18 events and their corresponding time frames for public opinion in Egypt.

Chapter 5 – Analysis & Findings

Analysis

Social Media Sentiment Analysis

As for the social media analysis, a two-step process took place.

The following variables were measured against each other:

1) **Elite commentary on Mo Salah & the public opinion on him**

2) **Public opinion on Mo Salah & Public opinion about Egypt**

For each of the above constructs, there were also the following variables:

1- **The Elite Commentary on Mo Salah against Public Opinion on Mo Salah**

Elite Commentary on Mo Salah						Public Opinion on Mo Salah					
Positive Sentiment			Negative Sentiment			Positive Sentiment			Negative Sentiment		
Likes	Comments	Shares	Likes	Comments	Shares	Likes	Comments	Shares	Likes	Comments	Shares

For calculating the weight and quantifying the sentiment, the following formula was used based on Thamite's (2020) social media sentiment quantification across 18 various significant events for Mo Salah:

a) **Elite Commentary on Mo Salah Index:**

(Positive Sentiment = Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3) **-** (Negative Sentiment = Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3)

b) **Public Opinion on Mo Salah Index**

(Positive Sentiment = Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3) **-** (Negative Sentiment = Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3)

Based on the above formulas the correlation of both indices across all 18 events took place through the ANOVA statistical regression.

2- Public Opinion on Mo Salah against Public Opinion on Egypt

Public Opinion on Mo Salah						Public Opinion on Egypt					
Positive Sentiment			Negative Sentiment			Positive Sentiment			Negative Sentiment		
Likes	Comments	Shares	Likes	Comments	Shares	Likes	Comments	Shares	Likes	Comments	Shares

a) Public Opinion on Mo Salah Index:

(Positive Sentiment **MS** = Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3) **-** (Negative Sentiment **MS**= Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3)

b) Public Opinion on Egypt Index

(Positive Sentiment **EGY**= Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3) **-** (Negative Sentiment **EGY** = Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3)

Based on the above formulas, the correlation of both indices across all 18 events took place through the ANOVA statistical regression.

A one-way ANOVA was performed twice to compare the influence and correlation of:

1) [Elite Commentary on Mo Salah] on [Public Opinion on Mo Salah].

2) [Public Opinion on Mo Salah] on [Public Opinion on Egypt].

Findings

Analysis of Variance (Public Opinion on Mo Salah against The Elite Commentary on Mo Salah)

Table 2. Analysis of Variance (1)

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F	p-values signification codes
Model	1	371418.2	371418.2	4.969	**0.040**	*
Error	16	1196044.99	74752.807			
Corrected Total	17	1567463.111				

Computed against model Y=Mean(Y)

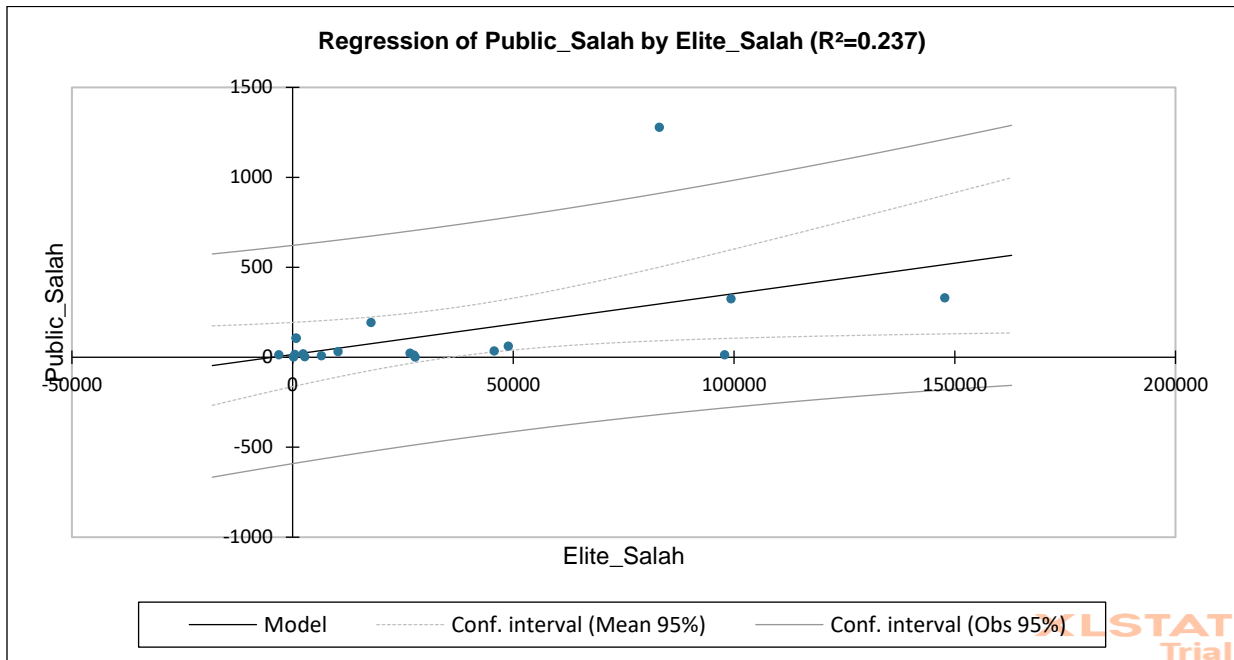*Signification codes: < * < 0.05 <. < 0.1 < ° < 1*

Figure. 5 – Regression of Public Opinion on Mo Salah by Elite Commentary on Mo Salah

There was a statistically significant difference between The Elite Commentary on Mo Salah &
Public Opinion on Mo Salah. Regarding the co-relation between both variables, it has been
shown high significance with a value of **0.487**

Correlation matrix (Pearson):

Table 3. Correlation Matrix (1)

Variables	Elite_Salah	Public_Salah
Elite_Salah	**1**	**0.487**
Public_Salah	**0.487**	**1**

Values in bold are different from 0 with a significance level of alpha=0.05

p-values (Pearson):

Table 4. P-values (1)

Variables	Elite_Salah	Public_Salah
Elite_Salah	**0**	**0.040**
Public_Salah	**0.040**	**0**

- **Public Opinion on Egypt against Public Opinion on Mo Salah**

A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in [Public Opinion on Egypt] between the two groups Public Opinion on Mo Salah and Public Opinion on Egypt = [F- 8.552], Pr>F =0.010

Analysis of variance

(Public_Egypt):

Table 5. Analysis of Variance (2)

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F	p-values signification codes
Model	1.000	42.671	42.671	8.552	**0.010**	**
Error	16.000	79.829	4.989			
Corrected Total	17.000	122.500				

Computed against model Y=Mean(Y)

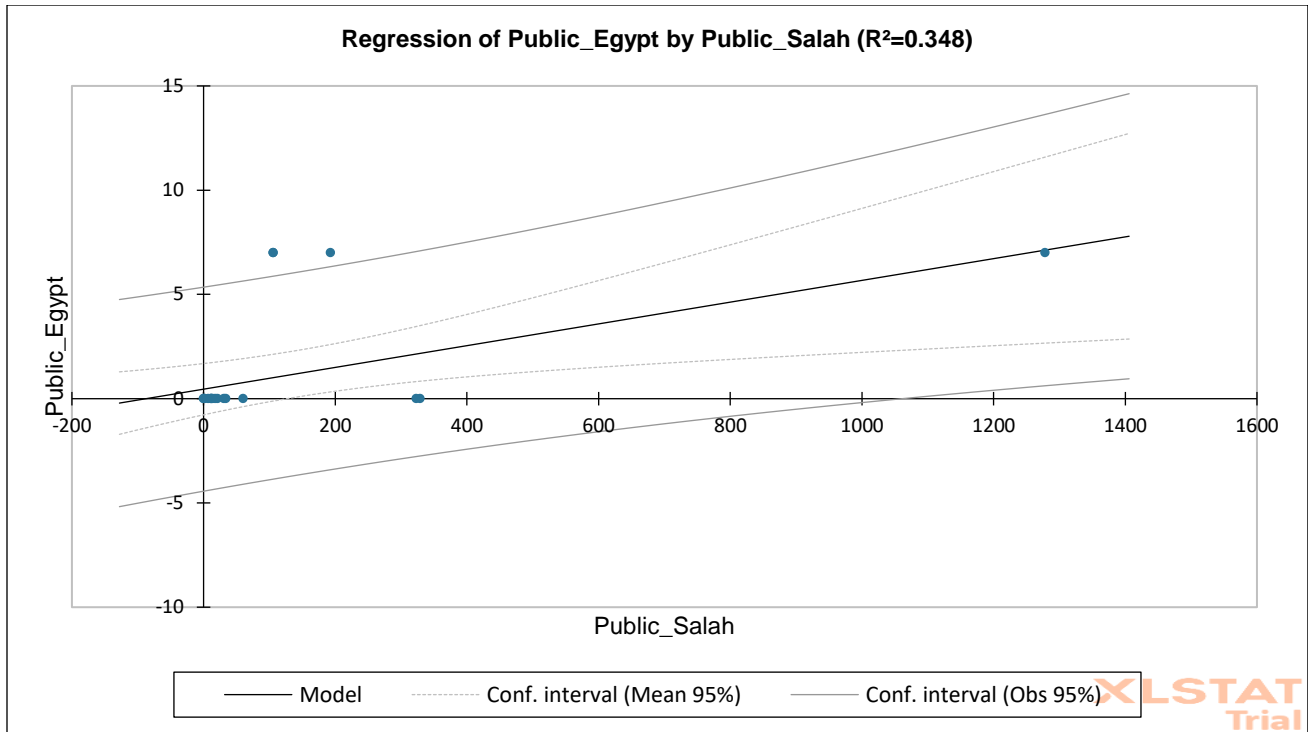*Signification codes: 0 < *** < 0.001 < ** < 0.01 < * < 0.05 < . < 0.1 < ° < 1*

Figure 6. Regression of Public Opinion on Mo Salah against Public Opinion on Egypt

There was a statistically significant difference between public opinion on Egypt & public

opinion on Mo Salah.

Regarding the co-relation between both variables, it has been shown high significance with a

value of **0.586**

Correlation matrix (Pearson):

Table 6. Correlation Matrix (2)

Variables	Public_Salah	Public_Egypt
Public_Salah	1	0.586
Public_Egypt	0.586	1

p-values (Pearson):

Table 7. p-values (2)

Variables	Public_Salah	Public_Egypt
Public_Salah	0	0.014
Public_Egypt	0.014	0

- **Negative Correlation between Elite Communication & Public Opinion about Egypt**

A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was no statistical significance between the two groups Elite Communication on Mo Salah and Public Opinion on Egypt = [F= 0.006], Pr>F =0.940

Analysis of Valiance (Elite_Egypt)

Table. 8 Analysis of Variance (3)

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F	p-values signification codes
Model	1.000	0.045	0.045	0.006	0.940	∞
Error	16.000	122.455	7.653			
Corrected Total	17.000	122.500				

Computed against model Y=Mean(Y)

Signification codes: 0 < *** < 0.001 < ** < 0.01 < * < 0.05 < . < 0.1 < ° < 1
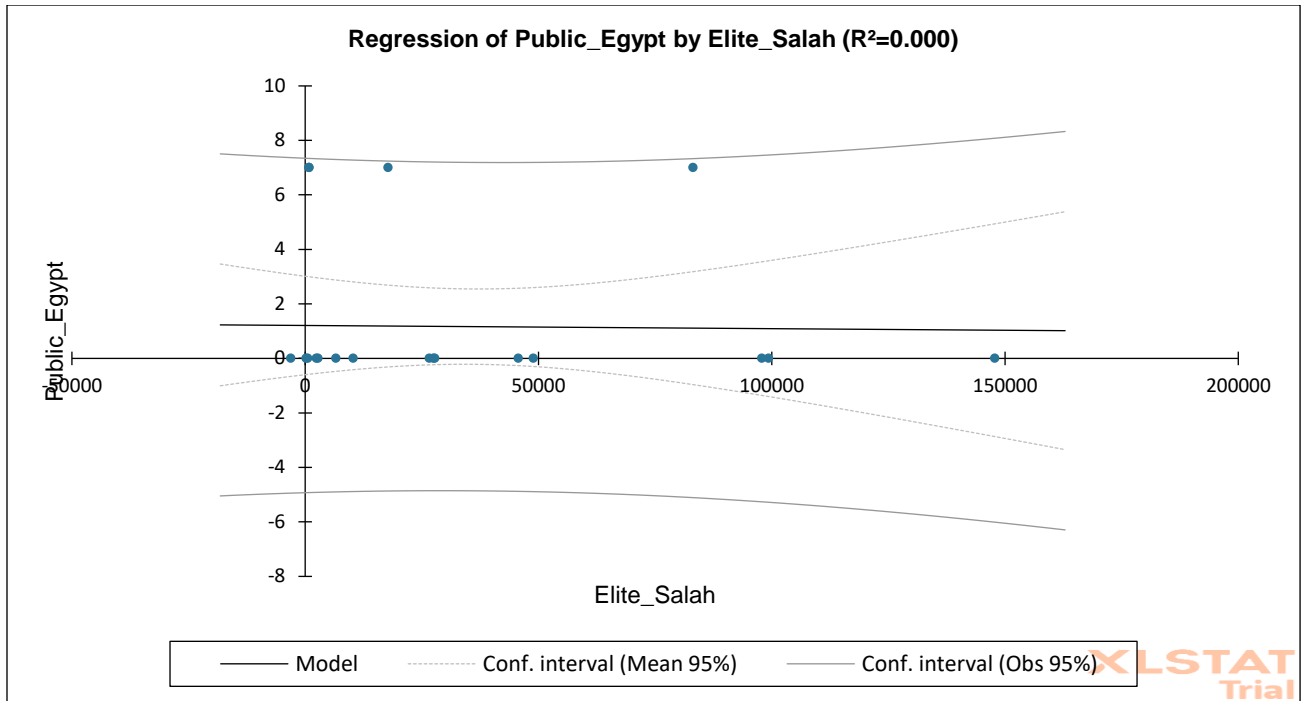
Figure 7. Regression Between Elite Communication & Public Opinion about Egypt

There was a statistically non-significant difference between elite communications on Mo Salah
& the public opinion created about Egypt.

Regarding the co-relation between both variables, it has been shown high significance with a

value of -**0.019**

Correlation matrix (Pearson):

Table 9. Correlation Matrix (3)

Variables	Elite_Salah	Public_Egypt
Elite_Salah	**1**	-0.019
Public_Egypt	-0.019	**1**

Values in bold are different from 0 with a significance level of alpha=0.05

p-values (Pearson):

Table 10. p-values (3)

Variables	Elite_Salah	Public_Egypt
Elite_Salah	**0**	0.940
Public_Egypt	0.940	**0**

Elite Communications about Mo Salah & Public Opinion about Egypt Negative

Correlation

There has been no positive significance or direct correlation between points A & C (Figure 4).
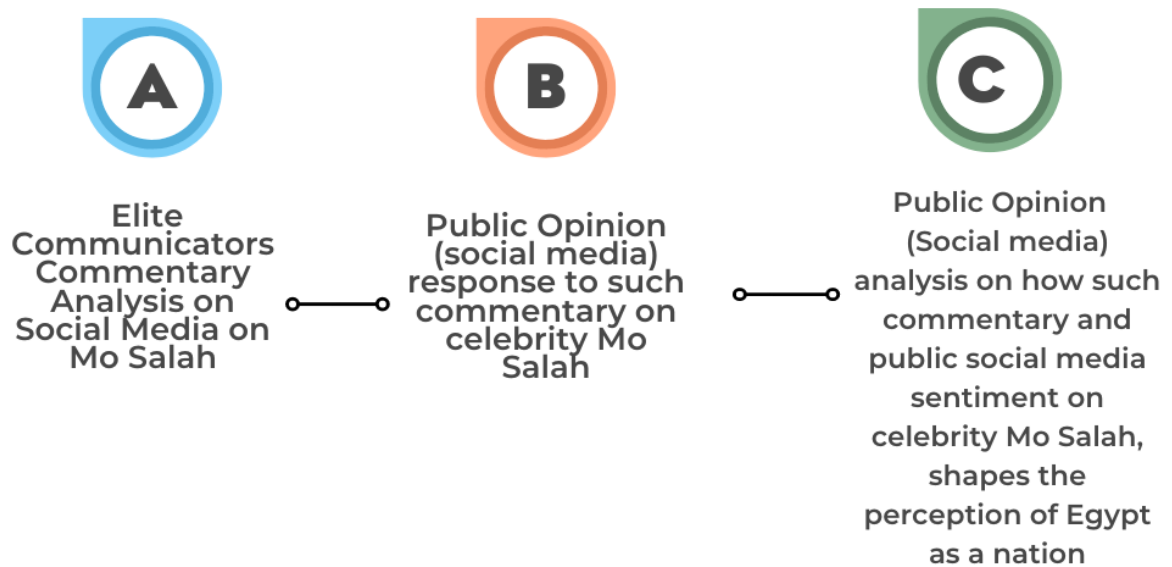

Figure 4. Process of Media Sentiment Analysis

The researcher wanted to ensure that there is no correlation between Elite Commentary & Public opinion about Egypt, ensuring that the main determining variable of the public opinion about Egypt, is the Public Opinion about Mo Salah. Hence, this final ANOVA regression for reassurance of the Hypothesis.

Influence of Mo Salah on Public Opinion about Egypt Comparison between 2016-2017 season and season 2021-2022

As an additional metric to measuring the impact of Mo Salah's influence on Egypt's public opinion in the UK Through a comparison between the first six months of both seasons 2016 and 2021, comparing both years was crucial to measure the impact. 2016-2017 was the year right before Mo Salah joined Liverpool there were only four comments and posts around Egypt, versus 63 posts and comments written during his last season 2021-2022.

This is only the given sample of the public that had existing commentary on Mo Salah as well as commentary on the public opinion on Egypt.

This concludes that the impact Mo Salah after joining Liverpool after the five-year duration of his presence made an impact of a ratio of 4:63, equivalent to 15 times the awareness and interest was shown by the public in the UK after Mo Salah's presence.

Table 11. Public Opinion Posts about Egypt Topics (2016-2017)

Topic	# of Posts
Crises and Accidents	2
Egyptian Exports	1
Egyptian Heritage and History	1

Table 12. Public Opinion Posts about Egypt Topics (2021-2022)

Topic	# of Posts
Egyptian National Team	55
Tourism In Egypt	1
Egyptian Heritage and History	6
Crises and Accidents	1

This not only shows that there has been a significant increase of interest to the Egyptian National team, due to Mo Salah playing in it, but also an increase in interest in Egyptian Heritage and History.

Conclusion

Five years later, with Mo Salah charming Liverpool with his extraordinary performance & being named "The Egyptian King", Mo Salah resulted in 15 times increase in awareness and interest about Egypt by the British Public. Before Mo Salah joined Liverpool, Egypt was hardly a topic of interest for the British Public. With only four mentions of Egypt in the 2016 season before Mo Salah joined Liverpool, to 63 mentions in posts and commentary by the public in year 2021. This was for the first six months of both football seasons. This led to 15 times increase in awareness and interest in Egypt, five years later, after Mo Salah joined Liverpool F.C.

Not only by the presence of a celebrity performing well as Mo Salah but, also by the commentary of the elite around the celebrity's performance. Both have a very significant impact on public opinion about Egypt.

A — Elite Communicators Commentary Analysis on Social Media on Mo Salah

B — Public Opinion (social media) response to such commentary on celebrity Mo Salah

C — Public Opinion (Social media) analysis on how such commentary and public social media sentiment on celebrity Mo Salah, shapes the perception of Egypt as a nation
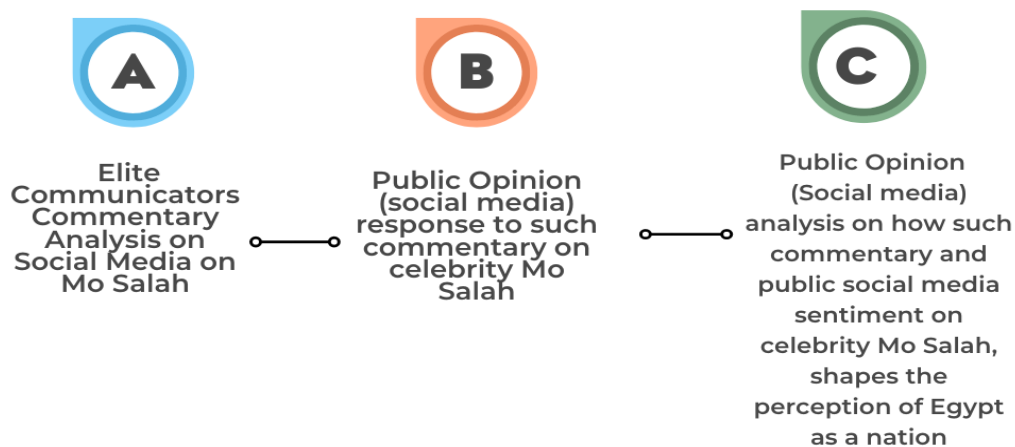
Figure 4. Process of Media Sentiment Analysis

The Influence of Elite Commentary on Mo Salah (A), led to the creation of public opinion about Mo Salah subsequently (B). Testing this correlation has been proved to be positively correlated with a high significance. Point (B) – The Public Opinion about Mo Salah, led to Point (C) – Public Opinion about Egypt accordingly.

Therefore, summing up the research questions

RQ1: What is the influence of Elite Communications on the Public Opinion of Mo Salah? It is to positively conclude testing

And **RQ2** on assessing: *What is the relationship between Public Opinion about Mo Salah, and its impact on Public Opinion in Egypt?*

Both research questions test the correlation between firstly the elite communications and public opinion on Mo Salah and secondly, Public Opinion on Mo Salah & its influence on Public Opinion on Egypt.

This leads to the following Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1- Public opinion of Mo Salah is influenced by elite communications.

Hypothesis 2 - Public opinion on Egypt is influenced by the public opinion of Mo Salah based on the elite commentary on Mo Salah.

It is indeed a positive correlation for all the research questions whereas the elite commentary on Mo Salah influences public opinion on Mo Salah, and the public opinion on Mo Salah influences the public opinion about Egypt.

For reassurance of that, there is no positive correlation between Elite Commentary & Public Opinion about Egypt directly, another additional hypothesis was tested:

Hypothesis 3: Elite Commentary has no direct relationship or correlation with the creation of public opinion about Egypt.

This hypothesis was positive as well. Concluding that the Public Opinion about Mo Salah from Elite Commentary is the main variable that leads to the development of the public opinion about Egypt.

The discussion of both "Nation Brand" & "Country Reputation" indices and rankings as another comparison dimension to both time frames 2017 vs. 2022 is integral for comparing Egypt's position then and now.

 In 2017 , Egypt was non-existent in the Global Country reputation ranking index; meaning it was not listed amongst the top 55 global best reputation countries. And it ranked 55 in the Nation Brand Index.

As for 2022, the Global Country Reputation index has been discontinued in 2020, leaving Egypt with a rank of 39/55, meaning an increase of more than 16 ranks across those three years. As for the Nation brand Index, Egypt moved up 9 ranks from 55 to 46 in those five years.

The data clarifying the reasons for such increase in the rankings was not publicly available, nevertheless, it only indicates that Egypt as a country, and its government's effort has been led to positive progress for Egypt's reputation and nation brand. However, such a rank increase in those years could be faster, leaping more by adding more solidified strategies and effective policies.

Discussion

        As per the findings, the main conclusion for this study is two main statements. Firstly, a new model of agenda setting through elite communication on social media turns out to be impactful in the shaping of public opinion. Whether about Mo Salah or Egypt (events, people or even nations). Relating that to the study, this concludes the direct three-step model on creating a public opinion about nations, as in the case study of Mo Salah & Egypt.

The Elite Commentary on Mo Salah affected Public Opinion about Mo Salah, and subsequently the Public Opinion about his origin nation, Egypt.

Secondly, the other main concluding point is that global celebrities do have a direct impact on the public opinion about their nations. In that case, Mo Salah & Egypt.

        Unlike Mo Salah, not many celebrities or talents across any discipline are usually associated with their nations. Nevertheless "The Egyptian King", the name associated with Mo Salah, may be one of the main untested variables that led to such awareness about his homeland, Egypt.

        This concludes that having a national strategy, that is well developed and that does not happen by coincidence on associating global talents to their nation (Egypt), as well as having a directed strategy of social media elite commentary about Egypt is a very powerful public opinion tool and activity that Egypt should take into consideration.

        For this study Elite commentary was retrieved from the Twitter platform, and only twitter, whereas it has been found that most "Elite" communicators, post the most on this platform. It also had the main three sentiment measuring variables (Likes, Comments, Retweets= Shares) (Gottfried and Shearer, 2016).

Relating the findings to the literature described and discussed above, starting with Iyengar et. al's (1987) theory on agenda setting that one result of agenda-setting through issue salience is the priming of beliefs, and perspectives that accordinly guide the public's opinions (Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. 1987). That it is a positive theory whereas, in the case of Mo Salah and Elite Commentary, the elites primed Mo Salah as the subject of most importance. This concluded in the development and increase of public opinion and salience about such a topic.

Beyond agenda setting, exploring the Elite theory, the study developed by Guisinger & Saunders in 2017 explored this topic leading to the conclusion that:

"when a message comes from an elite and interacts with the public, there will be some interaction with predispositions or effects from prior exposure to information. If an issue is not polarized in a certain direction already, the informational content of the message is expected to dominate, and any messenger would be effective. If public opinion is strongly already polarized, only biased or partisan endorsements of a message will result in shifts in opinion."

Putting such a theory into this study's context about the public opinion about Egypt, the informational content about Mo Salah (Egyptian King) dominated the public's opinion and the public opinion about Mo Salah was effective in creating an increased public opinion about Egypt subsequently.

Another integral component of the literature this study was based upon was the architecture of social media networks and how it allows the public to quickly find other users and communities with similar views and opinions. Such a concept by Grzywińska et. al (2016) of that joining groups, these users join agendas, allows the public to remove social dissonance, strengthen pre-existing opinions, and form group identities, was particularly what happened in the formation of

public opinion about Mo Salah. The pre-existing opinions about Salah, formed group identities positive opinion groups or negative opinion groups about Mo Salah accordingly.

McGregor then in the literature proceeds to explain further that metrics such as "Likes", "Replies", and "Comments" can be quantifiable in analyzing public opinion as well as the opinions expressed on social media "expand the temporal boundaries of socially constructed public opinion" (McGregor, S. C., 2019). Such metrics were indeed tested and used in this study exactly the way McGregor stated whereas the newly developed social media sentiment formula was proposed.

Lastly, another research conducted by Thrall et al. in 2008 argued that although celebrities are more active advocates than in the past for causes and public affairs, they are ineffective in shaping the mainstream political news flow. This statement and theory contrasted what this study presented. Whereas celebrity Mo Salah had an indirect and strong effect on shaping public opinion about his nation (an indirect correlation), with a strong effect.

In Salah's case, with the Stanford study quantifying the effect of assessing the effect of exposure to a successful Muslim celebrity on Islamophobia; The idea then of a celebrity affecting and influencing opinion or even behavior is a true conclusion. Whereas the public opinion created around Mo Salah's performance in the UK led to a 15-time increase in the behavior of people pro-actively writing commentary about Egypt on their social media hence, the creation of an increased public opinion.

To conclude, Mo Salah, is indeed a "global icon", as named by FIFA's latest documentary about Mo Salah (FIFA+, 2022). But not only for his performance in the field or personal attributes, but also, for national public opinion shaping too.

Theoretical Implications

Relating the research findings to the theoretical framework of the Elite Communication Theory by Mariotti (2020). The elite theory states:

"Envisions society as divided between the mass of people and a ruling minority, where the political power – the power to take and impose decisions valid to the whole society – always belongs to the latter. From a communications perspective, it means that the elites of the society, which are the ruling class, are those who direct decisions of the society".

Applying such a theory, public opinion on Mo Salah is indeed shaped by the commentary of the opinion leaders known as the elites.

Intertwining such an application of the elite theory with the agenda-setting theory on social media based on McCombs' theory in 2014:

"it's the exploration of the extent to which the news media can transfer the salience of relationships among a set of elements to the public focused on the transfer of the salience of the relationships among a set of attributes in the media to the public" (McCombs, 2014).

This only concludes that elite communications on social media have a priming effect with the transfer of salience among a set of topics from social media to the public.

This proposed evolution to a new agenda-setting theory: The Elite Agenda-Setting Theory. This is applied to social media commentary by the elites.

This theory implies that: Elite commentary and communications, albeit on social media platforms, transfer the salience of beliefs, values, and influence from their commentary to the public.

One of the main themes of public opinion and social media discussed in the literature is sentiment analysis. McGregor (2019) discusses in her research that metrics such as "Likes", "Replies", and "Comments" can be quantifiable in analyzing public opinion. The opinions expressed on social media "expand the temporal boundaries of socially constructed public opinion" (McGregor, S. C., 2019). As well as "Social media offers a more temporal sensitivity in gauging public sentiment due to its ability to capture what the public expresses in real-time and their reaction to certain events as they happen, thus shaping public opinion".

With such a study that has been conducted on measuring public opinion through social media sentiment, the main literature contribution of this study is in developing a formula for measuring public opinion through social media with the following equation:

Topic					
Positive Sentiment			**Negative Sentiment**		
Likes	Comments	Shares	Likes	Comments	Shares

Followed by calculating the public opinion index through the following formula:

(Positive Sentiment = Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3) − (Negative Sentiment = Likes*1 + Comments*2 + Shares*3) = Public Opinion Index

Policy Implications for Egypt's Government

There has been previous history of the Egyptian government continuously to lift the public opinion about Egypt globally. Throughout the journey, there has been minor successes and major drops. But overall, this has always been an issue and will continue to be.

Ministry of Tourism Initiatives

The Ministry of Tourism has always had three main strategies for promoting Egypt globally. These fronts are celebrity invitations & news/social media coverage around such visits. Secondly, partnerships with global television channels such as CNN (Samir, 2019) and beyond to cover Egyptian events, news about Egypt (Osama, 2017) as well as advertisements such as the #ThisIsEgypt campaign. Lastly and most recently, inviting travel influencers from across the globe as well as Egypt to post stories on their social media platforms to reach global audiences (Reda, 2018).

The latest initiative that the newly appointed Ministry of Tourism Dr. Ahmed Issa announced, was that a new promotion campaign would launch soon, particularly in the British Market (Samir, 2022). With such a study, perhaps the integration of Mo Salah in their campaign would be of maximum effect.

Ministry of Information Initiative

The State Information Ministry in Egypt in 2020, has also launched a digital platform called "New Media Ambassadors,". This initiative targeted young influencers on various social media platforms with the idea of including them in the government's efforts to develop an alternative media platform. Its purpose was to bridge the gap between traditional and new media tools (Fekri, 2020).

Therefore, this study presents a new door to public opinion enhancement through the lens of the global elite commentary. Which is less costly than celebrity endorsements for covering social media stories about Egypt. Elite commentary about Egypt might even be more impactful over celebrity endorsement to Egypt in nation branding. This is because celebrities are not necessarily opinion leaders, even if they do have millions of social media followers that might be aware of their visit to Egypt.

Based on this study and comparing previous initiatives by the Egyptian government to enhance Egypt's public opinion globally by "New Media Ambassadors" initiative & travel and photography influencer campaigns by the Ministry of Tourism, one can argue that a more effective and sustainable model for developing a positive public opinion on Egypt can take place through the following:

1) **Agenda setting and priming** for Egyptian and International elite communicators on social media, highlighting Egyptian events.

2) **Talent Building and International Exposure for Egyptian Talents in Egypt & Abroad:** There are hundreds if not thousands of talents across all fields that are as good in their performance as Mo Salah. The challenge is not in their talent growth but rather in the exposure they get in opportunity or media exposure.

Policy Recommendations

    1- Developing "The Egyptian Nation Brand & Public Opinion Council" by the Egyptian Prime Ministry

Unlike highly ranked countries in the global reputation and nation branding index such as the UK & the UAE, Egypt has no unified entity that works on coordinating and communicating governmental communication efforts globally. There is also minimal integration to private initiatives or efforts where one body works strategically with one unified vision to grow Egypt strategically in its global public opinion or brand globally.

Therefore, the initiation of the "Egyptian Nation Brand & Public Opinion Council" is an integral addition and priority to the Egyptian Government agenda.

Objectives of Council

Unify and initiate one unified strategy to grow Egypt's Nation Brand and Public Opinion Globally.

Scope of Work

- Develop a committee with the public-private sector cooperation to unify efforts in direction and strategy.

- Develop a unified strategy for Egypt to build its reputation, national brand, and public opinion.

- Create projects and programs nationally with international exposure to showcase Egyptian efforts globally across all disciplines through the media, influencers, and elite communicators for alignment of agenda, media briefs, etc.

- Create a government communication service locally and internationally that communicates with relevant stakeholders in Egypt and globally.

- Media Monitoring service and media policy recommendations for Egypt's Global

  reputation.

Structure of The Egyptian Nation Brand & Public Opinion Council:

Strategic Communications Unit	Governmental Communications & Branding Unit	Media Monitoring & Media Policy Unit	Media & External Relations Unit
- The objective of this unit is to unify strategic communications of Egypt locally in the Media & Globally across media/social channels, with an emphasis on Elite Communicators' integration to strategy - Strategize Egypt's Communications and branding Plan + ensure its implementation across all parties (Private-Public-Independent).	- The objective is to align and unify the governmental communications and efforts for nation branding locally for its international exposure through the media. - This includes the collaboration of: • Official spokespeople & Governmental Media Offices - Development of a unified Brand for Egypt and the Egyptian Government across all communication touchpoints.	- A unified national media monitoring service that monitors all media, social media, elite communicators, and public sentiment around Egypt. - Analyze media and sentiments and recommend media policies + inform all relevant stakeholders in the media crisis that affects Egypt's reputation.	- Develop a centralized global media, influencer, elite communicator touchpoint, and focal point with Egypt for media briefings, events, and inclusion for all relevant events for coverage and commentary, and opinions/reviews. - Ensure and maintain good relations with all media/social media stakeholders that affect the global public opinion of Egypt.

2- Creating the "Egyptian Uprising Talent Council" by the Ministry of Youth & Sports in coordination with the Egyptian Nation Brand and Public Opinion Council

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has multiple initiatives for the nurturing of young talents in sports and culture and recently media as well (Ministry of Youth & Sports, 2022), nevertheless, such talents lack the exposure of media and sponsorship opportunities due to the lack of light shed on them to the public locally and internationally. Therefore, this unit aims at collaborating with the newly introduced Council of Nation Brand and Public Opinion council with its media relations unit for the exposure needed to shed light on the talents involved in the ministry's activities.

Limitations & Future Directions of Research

One limitation of this study was the choice of one social media platform for sentiment analysis (Twitter). For future research conducting the same research across multiple social media platforms could be a good representation of how different social media platforms, vary in sentiment, direct influence on public opinion about the celebrity and, indirectly influence in national public opinion sentiment.

Another limitation of the study was the choice of one celebrity (Mo Salah) as a public opinion influencer to Egypt, while there are a lot of other global celebrities that might have a similar effect or a different outcome. For future research, the choice of collective celebrities across the globe or a comparative study of the effect of various celebrities on Egypt's public opinion may be a good future area of research, especially across various disciplines such as entertainment, sports, politics, and beyond.

A third limitation of the study is the limitation of elite commentary and public opinion analysis from one geographical region, which is the UK. A future area of research could be the comparison between the different countries or regions across the globe, measuring and comparing the elite commentary and public opinion effect directly on the celebrity and indirectly on their country of origin.

A fourth limitation of the study is the choice of only evaluating six months, the equivalent of half a football season. For future research, extending the timeframe of data collected to a year or more. With an opportunity to test, the damping effect and to use time series analysis given the larger number of events.

Another limitation of this study was the absence of exploring the confounding effects that might have led to this increase of interest to Egypt, or perhaps a dampening to such an effect. Future research may explore such confounding factors for clearer visibility.

Concluding Statement

Mo Salah has been a phenomenon that captured the hearts and minds of Egyptians and Arabs over the past five years. His tenure at Liverpool has had a positive influence on public opinion about Egypt and Islam. All the above has been observed and narrated in the UK and the Arab Region. But without solid validation and a profound understanding of the causality, this would have always remained an unquantifiable and untested hypothesis in the public opinion sphere. But, since this study put such a hypothesis into testing, with positive outcomes, one could confidently state that celebrities do have an effect directly and indirectly not only about themselves, but their affiliations too, such as their origin country and beyond.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Case# 2022-2023-015

To: Sara Seifallah Abdelrahman Ibrahim
   Ahmed Taher
   Menna Youssef

From: Heba Kotb Chair of the IRB
Date 1st October 2022

Re: IRB approval

_____

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled

"How Can the Government Utilize Elites & Celebrities to Manage Global Public Opinion on Egypt? An Exploratory Study of Mo Salah & Egypt"

 It required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" category. As you are aware, there were minor revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. Your proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

H. Kotb

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