

Impact of Facebook on News Media in Five Nations

JOUR 4240.201 Group 5 Final Paper

Vivica J, Alexis F, Bryce Crego, Spencer K.

April 25, 2021

What began in a college dorm in 2004 has transitioned into one of the biggest social networking websites ever created. Facebook is a website that allows users to connect with their friends, family, work colleagues, and complete strangers from all over the world. This platform permits users to post pictures and videos, share articles, or provide their personal thoughts with one another. Facebook has changed the way of living for everyone with its grasp on the idea of social media, but journalists have had to adapt and change everything they once knew about the industry into something completely new with the onset of Facebook and other social media networks. With the world's population standing at 7.83 billion at the start of 2021, there are now 4.20 billion social media users around the world, (Ourworldindata.com, 2020). People look to their apps for updates on the world, rather than turning on the news on the TV now. By analyzing how Facebook has impacted news media in five selected countries that range in rank on the World Press Freedom Index, we will better understand how censorship or lack thereof affects their use of Facebook in the news media industry.

Being that we are journalists in the United States, we do not fully understand the practices of other countries unless we go to these countries or study them extensively, which can be easier said than done. However, as journalists we must remain up to date on all forms of journalism, both domestic and international, as well as keeping up with the modern times, as most journalism has recently transitioned into social media heavy news reporting as social media is the ultimate tool to get news out fast and efficiently. Through our research, we will explore the new wave of reporting through social media from not only the perspective of the United States but five other nations. Our group chose to focus on countries that range from the higher and lower ranks on the 2020 World Press Freedom Index. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calculates the World Press Freedom Index based on the level of freedom journalists have in that

particular country. Countries are evaluated based on categories such as independence of media to safety of journalists. To ensure a more accurate representation, RSF also utilizes global and regional indicators. In order to get a fair representation of how Facebook has impacted the news media of our world, we selected five particular countries. We have chosen Finland, France, Italy, Kenya and Venezuela. Finland is ranked 2nd, France is ranked 34th, Italy is ranked 41st, Kenya is ranked 103rd, and Venezuela is ranked at 147th in the index.

The range of countries on the World Press Freedom Index will demonstrate their use of Facebook. While some may have more freedom and use it for keeping up with their friends, others utilize it as their only news source. Finland, ranked at number 2 out of 180 countries, still feels threatened by the social media platforms due to the rise of fake news. While Venezuela lives under authoritarian ruling, where no independent media exists. Journalists face danger for doing their job here. The key variable that influences this interest is their rank on the World Press Freedom Index, which directly aligns with censorship and their relationship with the media. Although there may be people in the lower ranked countries who use Facebook to maintain a social life, most rely on the platform to stay informed of current events. There is no denying that the current environment is a troubling and stressful time for journalists, but it only makes them want to do their job even more. In regards to France, according to the World Press Freedom Index, they are ranked at 34. France has not increased or decreased in ranking at all since 2020. In fact, their overall global score has decreased by -0.32 due to recent protests.

When researching Facebook's presence within media in Italy, I found it rather negative. The reason being is because the hot topic about Facebook at the moment is how they are being sued by many social media apps. However, I found multiple websites that reported Facebook tendencies in media as well as polls taken. This gives solid information based on the public's

opinion of the app versus one person's opinion. Giving opinions, statistics and facts illustrates clear examples and information to write about. Though it is difficult to find major headlines I still manage to find articles about Facebook in Italy's media. Digging deeper into articles that mention social media in the headline versus headlines that contained Facebook's name brought more successful research. However when researching these articles I found more quotes from individuals that gave me a much clearer understanding of people's views towards Facebook and the media. Most topics regarded people's distrust towards the app as well as news in general. Though these articles mostly consisted of negative opinions on Italian news, it also showed change to come. Many of my sources focused on how much success Facebook could if the app focused on credible sources versus non credible sources. Making the app a much more reliable source of news for individuals throughout the country. In all, most of the articles I read seem to focus on the potential of Facebook's news versus the impact on the news.

In Italy, trust is the biggest issue when it comes to the news and social media. Infact, only 34 percent of adults find the news important in everyday life according to the Pew Research Center. 29 percent also admit they feel as if the news they are receiving is untrustworthy. This being said, it raises many questions we have for the presence Facebook has in the media. Why is the news so untrustworthy in Italy? The clearest answer seems to be simply bad journalism. Lorenzo Pregliasco, the co-founder of polling and communications consultancies Quorum and YouTrend said the reason being is because "unverified stories, fabricated quotes and fabricated interviews," (Perrone 2019). However, why are journalists criticised so much in Italy? issues regarding journalism in Italy are media safety in the country and play a big part in this. Journalists and social media apps are extremely monitored in Italy by the mafia bringing fear into many lives. This fear brings extremely biased news to the headlines in Italy which is just bad

journalism. Blaming the journalist seems like the easiest direction to point fingers at but in reality they're playing hostage.

Media outlets also use Facebook unverified videos or information to publish as information for the news as well. Making people seemingly careless of media that is being broadcasted to citizens because no one knows if it's true. Perrone also mentions that if journalists want to gain the public's trust and attention back they have to go back to the basics. Simple, verified and legit sources that people can trust when accessing the news. Using information found on Facebook as a source is never ideal. However, in Italy Facebook is one of the leading apps per user in the country. Though the app may influence negatively in the country's media, people are definitely interacting with it online.

Venezuela has faced a presidential crisis since the 2018 election. Juan Guaidó was appointed acting president in January of 2019, after the National Assembly declared Nicolás Maduro's re-election as invalid. From political issues to economic suffrage, Venezuelans are in distress. Under Maduro's authoritarian rulings, the war on the press began. Venezuelan journalists and citizens are fighting to report and consume the truth.

From constant control to silence, the struggle for media remains prominent. "The National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) strips overly critical radio and TV stations of their broadcast frequencies, and coordinates ad hoc Internet cuts, social media blocking and confiscation of equipment," (RSF, 2020). Print media, especially those opposing the government, have not continued. Social and online media is the new wave for many, but has become essential for Venezuela.

According to NapoleonCat stats, there were 13,840,000 Facebook users in Venezuela in January 2021, which accounted for 41.8% of its entire population. While some may use it for

personal reasons, journalists also utilize their profiles to share stories or news updates. However, with the new stream of journalism the level of censorship rises with it. Back in 2017, Venezuela “unanimously passed a law that mandates punishment including a prison sentence of up to 20 years for anyone who instigates hate or violence on the radio, television or via social media.” (CPJ, 2017). This law was referred to as the Anti-Hate Law for Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence. After this was established the Venezuelan media was no longer able to seek and report the truth. If one was brave enough to, they would face consequences.

Venezuelan journalist Wilmer Quintana Garcia was an example of a brave one. After taking to his personal Facebook account to criticize Governor Jose Manuel Vasquez and corruption dealing with the CLAP program, a government-run social program, Quintana was arrested. “Wilmer Quintana’s detention under Venezuela’s anti-hate law confirms the concern we expressed when it passed: the law is really a tool to censor information and punish critics,” said CPJ Central and South America Program Coordinator Natalie Southwick in New York. “Allegations of corruption against public officials are not hate speech. Venezuelans must be free to question the government without facing years in prison,” (CPJ, 2019).

By using his voice through his personal social media account on Facebook, he would disclose information regarding political and social events. He would utilize the hashtag #LAVERDAD to reach his audience in his posts. La Verdad was one of the many newspapers to be shut down. Other newspapers such as El Regional del Zulia, Que Pasa, and Version Final faced the same fate. With the discontinuation of print editions of newspapers, many turned to digital platforms and social media.

The media that was still reporting the news in Venezuela was heavily politicized and filled with propaganda. Citizens wanted unbiased reports. Social media turned into the outlet

they could trust, something they needed. “In some ways, social media has been a lifeline for common Venezuelan citizens who don't have access to the normal newspapers or radio or television that they had been accustomed to when Venezuela was a democracy,” (NPR, 2018). Besides the fact that the news was deliberately censored, we must remember the economic and social struggles that factored into this. Some did not have the resources to receive the paper or television, but had the app Facebook downloaded on their phone or knew someone who did.

With the intense disparities from economic and social struggles, citizens should be able to trust their news stations. However, that is not true for Venezuela. By following journalist's personal accounts they could stay in touch, or have friends who could share posts with them. It was not downloaded as much for a social aspect, but that does not mean everyone receives their news digest from Facebook in Venezuela.

Similar to Venezuela, censorship is happening through politicians influencing state and privately-owned media in Kenya. However, we see that Facebook is utilized as a news media there also. “Facebook (NASDAQ:FB) (<http://www.facebook.com>) has shared new statistics revealing that 2.2 million Kenyans use Facebook every day and 4.5 million each month, while 7.1 million Nigerians use Facebook daily and 15 million are active every month,” (Presswire, 2015). Facebook has had such an affect on Kenya, that they had to open its first office in Africa. 12 African community leaders came together to join Facebook's Community Accelerator. It is a training to guide them through the social media platform and the funding to expand it. This proves that the ruling in Kenya is open to the idea of Facebook and willing to elaborate on the platform. However, we must recognize that Facebook may not be used to the full potential of media in Kenya compared to Venezuela because Kenya still allows for independent media.

Social media, generally speaking, is widely used in France. Reports have been done about screen time along with analyzing how many people are actively on the internet. Facebook is one of the sites that businesses are beginning to use to increase their markets. France has the fourth largest amount of internet users in Europe reaching almost 56.4 million users back in 2017. (TranslateMedia) Facebook is ranked as the fourth most popular internet site in France. Now with Facebook being able to reach so many people, does the French government apply restrictions on posts or news media?

Back in May 2020, the French government passed a new law that companies may have to remove certain posts within an hour or else they can suffer from a large fine. These new regulations force platforms like Facebook and Twitter to remove posts that include hate speech or any other “illegal content.” However a new order was proposed to extend the time frame from one hour to 24 hours to remove any unlawful content. A member of the European Parliament , Sophie in’t Veld, expressed her concern that one hour was not an adequate amount of time to remove posts that didn’t qualify under the new law. (Independent Co)

The overall agenda with this new law is to tackle hateful speech and get rid of the negative that circles around through the media. At first glance, there seems to be no issue with this law but does this limit their freedom of speech? In the 1789 Declaration of Human and Civic Rights, freedom of speech is considered an “essential freedom” (LOC.gov) but they also prohibit hate speech and speech denying or justifying the holocaust. Putting two and two together, this new law is just exercising their essential freedoms on social media.

Finland is a strange paradox of trust, misinformation and hate speech when it comes to the media and journalists there. On one hand, the journalists fear social media and Facebook since it is such a high profile place for misinformation and harmful rhetoric aimed at journalists

to take place in. However, there is still inherent trust in the media and journalists there despite some viritiol on social media for them. There also seems to be more trust in the media than here in the United States, even though there are similarities in relation to users on Facebook here and there in their spreading of misinformation and conspiracy theories on the platform as well as attempting to discredit journalists and spew hate speech towards them. So my question is why is there still so much trust in the media when citizens of Finland are so quick to throw hate speech to journalists and their inherent need apparently to share false information on Facebook?

There seems to be an apparent disconnect between the media itself and how they operate on Facebook. On Facebook, these newspapers and news outlets will post their stories on the respective pages for these institutions and comments range from mere acknowledgement of the story to disdain for the story and the journalist who wrote it. This takes place in the comments or in the shares of the article, so I believe simply because it is on Facebook, there are people in Finland who automatically want to spread hate speech to the journalists and the media simply because they saw it on Facebook and they apparently want to question it simply because it is on Facebook and not somewhere else. In addition to these questions, with so many Finnish people using Facebook daily, how can they become a part of stopping hate speech and the spreading of misinformation on the platform? Furthermore, what can be done at higher levels or at government levels to put a stop to hate speech on Facebook and to further stop the spread of misinformation that could be potentially dangerous?

For Finland, the methods used to obtain research for Facebook's impact on the news media in Finland was acquired by following and checking in on newspapers in and for Finland and news stations on Facebook itself and on the websites of these newspapers and stations. The newspapers and stations that were looked at, followed and analyzed were the Helsinki Times, the

Finland Times and Daily Finland. While there were stories that periodically popped up on these websites' homepages, we would search the term Facebook into their search bar to pull up any relevant stories about Facebook and the news and see what was being reported on in terms of Facebook. Because of this, the websites of these newspapers were frequently used more than their respective Facebook pages as it was easier to search for data and relevant stories about Facebook on the websites rather than on their respective Facebook pages where stories would be posted.

In addition to this, the Finland page on the 2020 World Press Freedom Index was also used to gather some information and data regarding Facebook and the news media, although the newspaper websites warranted more information. We were able to find and follow specific Finnish journalists who had Facebook accounts that either shared news stories or posted updates regarding stories or full stories about things going on around Finland. This did not warrant much information regarding stories with Facebook, but it did open up an avenue to see how Finnish journalists approach Facebook and how they share information on the platform. In relation to doing this, finding journalists who live and work in Finland was also something that was done to ensure gathering data was kept local and trustworthy, there were a number of Finnish journalists that were able to be found on Twitter and Facebook. While they did not have much information specifically regarding Facebook and its impact on news media, it was good to find their accounts and see what they share and post about in relation to news media in Finland as it gave somewhat of an idea in how news media runs and operated in Finland and how people reply and react to it when they see it on their social media timelines. Some of the journalist's accounts that were looked at on Twitter include: @SaminFinland, @NewsNowFinland, @davidmacdougall and @GoodNewsFromFinland. These accounts helped guide the exploration and analysis of how

citizens in Finland view and interact with their country's new media, even though they were primarily on Twitter.

In addition to this, I was also able to find sources about Facebook and the Finland news media on the UNT database regarding Facebook's impact and reach on the news media along with stories I found from the websites of newspapers in Finland as mentioned above. These sources from the UNT database either linked to a website of a newspaper in Finland or had information on Facebook and its impact on Finland news media from another area. There is also some information taken from YouTube videos regarding Facebook and the news media in Finland from the official YouTube channels of newspapers in Finland.

Given that Venezuela was ranked the lowest of the five selected countries to analyze, the methods used to obtain research for Facebook's impact on the news were a bit surface-level. Independent press and media in Venezuela does not really exist, so there were not as many testimonies of people living it firsthand. We used our resources through scholarly articles and videos to capture the journalism industry in Venezuela. By giving ourselves background of the hostility, it explained why there was a lack of coverage. Groups on Facebook such as 'Freelance Journalists' and 'LatAm Journalism Review' prove that there are routes for journalists to take in such harsh countries, but do not show their fear. Numerous Venezuelan journalists, protestors, citizens, even United States' journalists have been beaten, jailed, or killed. A simple post or share could land them in any of those situations. The Committee to Protect Journalists was one of the biggest resources when analyzing the journalism production in Venezuela.

Kenya is very close in rank to Venezuela, so the obstacles were often the same for the research approach. We utilized scholarly reports pulled from ProQuest with the access from the University of North Texas. Pages such as Kenya News Feed proved their ability to share the

news through the platform. Multiple contributors to the pages allowed for constant feed with diverse readings. From clips of broadcast news reports, to celebrities, to opinions on the coronavirus vaccinations, they had it all. However, Facebook is not as dire a need compared to Venezuela. People still have access to news from multiple platforms, though some may still have propaganda or “fake news.”

France is one of the higher ranked countries in our research paper. The methods used to obtain information on how Facebook is used and its effects on the French were mainly through Google Scholar, a trusted portal of scholarly databases. Another method of research includes gathering information through the UNT library. This is another trusted portal that gives students access to trustworthy and informative content. Electronic resources have broadened the opportunities to reach a copious amount of information, similar to social media platforms. Through both portals, two articles were shown about how people are very quick to display very personal information on social media platforms. Another key reference in methods to obtain information is using Reporters Without Borders. This source of information is extremely helpful when looking at how media works around the world. Most people have absolutely no idea how news media differs around the world. It's truly eye-opening to see how dangerous the journalism industry can be in different places. Even with France ranking in the upper thirty's out of 180 countries, their journalists still face life-threatening situations that occur mainly during protests.

This research was based on residents and fellows displaying too much of their personal life that can then affect the relationships they have with their patients. They conducted a survey at Rouen University Hospital in France to find any sort of correlation between facebook and trust with patients. Now this can relate to news media and journalists. Anything posted on social media can be linked to you if you're involved. News stations have to employ people that have a

trusted background to back up the idea of trusted news. Trusting the news is an issue across the globe and specifically it's affecting doctors and health care workers in France. These trust issues can easily affect the trust that people have in news media. People often forget that anyone can see what is on social media and this can affect those writing about news along with the people who are being written about. This study just goes to show that the media can have a lasting impression. Even though there is a delete button, that doesn't mean it will be gone forever.

Based on the extreme circumstances in Venezuela, social media has become essential for their news digest. No one wants to hear propaganda, but what is truly happening in their communities. By using hashtags or friending fellow citizens on Facebook, Venezuelans have reached a better understanding of the current economic, social, and physical struggles happening. One share could send it to another citizen who continues to pass it along. In the newspapers where there is no criticism of what the government is doing, it is not accurately representing the world. People have taken to Facebook to reach out to one another and have conversations about these injustices. Open dialogue about the corruption and lack of support from the government is occurring. However, with the new technology comes new rules. By limiting the number of independent media outlets in Venezuela, they stayed in control. Just when we thought they could speak their mind, now citizens are facing consequences for speaking out on social media. Like the example we spoke about earlier involving Venezuelan journalist Wilmer Quintana Garcia, we know that they will find any way to stay in power. While social media has been a tool for Venezuelan citizens, the government has realized and continued their suppression.

Related to Venezuela, Kenya has similar economic issues which affects their use of social media. In rural areas of Kenya, Facebook is considered a privilege. With limited access to technology such as computers or phones, the Internet is the least of their concern. These are key

reasons why they may be less active on these social media platforms. Even for people in Kenya who are lucky enough to have access, they still are limited to their viewing. “The USSD version of Facebook is entirely text-based and does not support the site’s most popular features, including the News Feed and photosharing,” (Wyche, Schoenebeck, & Forte, 2013). For some, this is prominent in receiving and understanding the news. This will limit an impactful tool through photos and “news feed” where a list of stories are constantly being updated. Since we are analyzing how Facebook has impacted the news media on a country, we must recognize what it is like for those who are not able to receive it.

Currently in Italy, Facebook is in deep water. Multiple social media platforms are currently filing lawsuits against the US company for copyright. Making Facebook a more frowned upon app in Italy compared to others. “Facebook had not informed users properly about the collection and use, for commercial reasons, of the data they released,” (Reuters, 2020). Leaving citizens of Italy unsure about the loyalty Facebook provides. Being said, the news it provides is taken with a grain of salt. In Italy there are also similar apps that are just as popular if not more popular than Facebook. Facebook penetration in Italy is 38.42% compared to the number of Internet users which is 71.33%. Resulting in less impact of information versus other outlets or apps. Also making it harder to find information on the apps impact when researching. Though having multiple lawsuits against them Facebook is growing in some key areas. The popularity is growing within the youth communities in hopes to have a bigger impact on the news media in the future. In fact, over the last four years Facebook has grown tremendously. Percentages growing up to 20% since 2017. The youth is the voice in Italy, speaking out against issues that occur in modern media. Having the future of the country leading in the right path is a sign of relief for the country.

In hopes for a better future, Facebook is in fact aiming to gain success in Italy. Journalists in Italy are severely criticized and manipulated. The reason being is from the mafia some believe. Many journalists in Italy are forced to write a certain way and with a certain opinion. If a journalist is to criticize the mafia on social media they are to be taken out. This is why the journalism in Italy is so frowned upon by the public. They know it's tampered with by the mafia to lean a certain direction. Many of these journalists are to be escorted by police officers everywhere they go for safety precautions. However, many cops in Italy also have ties to the mob. "The number of journalists being targeted, and in many cases silenced, by criminal organizations keeps growing" (Torrise, 2016). This is where Facebook and many other social media outlets come into play. Citizens being able to voice their opinions in groups, communities and simple posts to spread truth or things that are being censored on major news networks. What comes with one's opinions comes uncertainty. Thus the reason for unverified news sources also being a major issue from Facebook. It's a revolving door with the media in Italy and it will not be fixed until journalists have freedom as well.

You would think Italy being the 41st ranked country in the World Press Freedom rankings things wouldn't be so troublesome in the country. Sadly, that is not the case with the current standing of journalist safety. Mafia manipulation, riots over covid and being extremely criticized by the public are just a few things these journalists are dealing with. The United States is currently ranked 44th in the World Press Freedom rankings, three behind Italy. The US has issues but media manipulation from a gang is not one of them. That just shows how much crime and control against journalists is hidden in Italy due to the mafia. This results in a domino effect all the way to the social media platforms.

Facebook in France is very popular, as it is in most places around the world. According to Reuters, in Paris, they are allowed to give identification data to France's minister of Digital Affairs, Cedric O. (Reuters, 2020) This discussion was made by partnering with Zuckerberg and Macron to stop hate speech and prevent false news from spreading. However, this is not meant to limit what those can say, it's meant to better the information that is released to the internet. I personally believe that these laws being passed in France truly have good intentions. You can't help but think that the people deciding what is hateful and false news have a large role in regulating the media. There hasn't been any up roar or protests on this subject which illustrated the French citizens aren't too concerned about these laws. Their citizens still have their necessary freedoms at the end of the day. In comparison to the United States, any restrictions on the media causes some sort of talk amongst citizens. Looking at the law in France, some might question whether or not the Minister of Digital Affairs will remove any hate about the government. This can be deemed as controlling if people are simply trying to express their opinions. On the other hand, they are trying to make Facebook a better and happier place regardless of what subjects are being taken down. There is always some sort of gray area when it comes to freedom of speech. Also considering the fact that France is ranked higher on the scale, their citizens probably don't have secret information to expose the government.

Facebook is also a very popular app in Finland, with "81 percent of its people using Facebook, with 39% of people using it and checking it several times a day, as well as 80% of those Facebook users using Facebook as a way to keep in contact with friends and family, (Statista, 2020). The app "WhatsApp is still the most popular social media app and platform in Finland, but Facebook trails behind in a close second with 81% of daily users spending their time on Facebook and checking it several times throughout the day. Typical daily time spent on

Facebook is less than two hours, while other social media platforms have an average of less than one hour spent on their platforms,” (Statista, 2020). As evident in some of the research and other resources examining Facebook usage in Finland, the citizens of Finland attest to first downloading Facebook and keeping the platform to keep up with friends and family. It is only in the ensuing years that Finnish people begin to see and subsequently share conspiracy theories, targeted hate speech at journalists and a bevy of misinformation.

It seems as if Facebook in Finland has a very strong misinformation problem, much like the U.S., as its citizens will see things on the platform they believe to be true and blindly share it and spread without looking into it further to decide if the information presented is true or not. Citizens of Finland seem to recognize that just because information is presented on Facebook, there are only two options of looking at it upon seeing it on their feed. Either they understand and notice where it was posted and by who, so if this is a professional, verified news page sharing a story, they can realize this and instinctively believe it and trust it as trust in the media is still high in Finland for some citizens, (Mackintosh, 2020).

On the other hand, there are still some citizens who believe that just because it is on Facebook and a real, verified, professional news outlet is sharing a story, it is apparently “fake news” and must be questioned as they feel the need to search for verification even though the outlet who is publishing the story is the verification that they are looking for in the first place.

With some additional research done, other social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram do not have the same issues as Facebook regarding misinformation and hate speech directed towards journalists. I believe this is an internal issue with Facebook that should be addressed by appropriate parties as to how misinformation and hate speech is able to be so freely expressed on the platform. However, Finland is certainly not the only country that deals with

similar things such as this on Facebook. However, Finland and hate speech on Facebook is a major problem that is not as frequent in other countries. While it does still apply to some places, the intense usage of hate speech against journalists is a major problem in the country, so much so that in 2020, it got so bad that the Finland government “proposed legislation intended to protect media and journalists from the consequences of online hate speech, yet the impact remains unclear as to what impact it could have really done,” (RSF, 2020).

If there is legislation being proposed by a government because hate speech is becoming too harsh and so frequent against the media and media professionals, there needs to be something set in place to protect the journalists and media professionals to prevent any actual harm being done to them which extends past hate speech, but as we have seen, overuse of hate speech has the potential to lead to violent acts. And as mentioned above, Facebook seems to be the main spot of hate speech being directed towards journalists, so there should be some precedents and regulations set in place specifically at Facebook to help prevent this.

By knowing not only the functions of the United States media systems but other countries as well, we are broadening our understanding of how they intertwine. For our group to analyze the impact of Facebook on news media in five selected countries, we explored how social media has changed the world of journalism. Since numerous social media platforms have been introduced, the way of seeking and reporting the truth have adjusted. Facebook was created in February of 2004 and has continuously progressed. With the world’s population standing at 7.83 billion at the start of 2021, there are now 4.20 billion social media users around the world. It is essential in the industry to adapt to these changes and utilize them to the best of our abilities. We specifically chose five countries that ranged in rank on the World Press Freedom Index. Once

one is able to understand the limitations or obstacles in certain countries, it would better explain how social media has impacted them specifically.

For example, we have Italy ranked as 41st and our lowest ranked country was Venezuela as 147th in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index. In a country that is more open to discussions and not threatened if they were to such as Italy, Facebook is a different tool in the news media realm. They face a war on fake news, similar to the United States. Facebook is considered a disfavored app to Italy, while it is crucial for Venezuelans. In a country where censorship is normal, a simple share on Facebook could give a citizen a more accurate portrayal of their country.

For Finland, it is ranked at number two on the 2020 World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2020) for a relatively very safe place and environment for journalists. There were no reported murders for journalists in the year 2020 (RSF, 2020) and no reported journalists jailed, imprisoned or murdered in jail, either which further helps to show that Finland is safe for working journalists. Beyond this though, professional media and media members in Finland are wary and do not trust, or are scared, of social media and social media users due to citizens prone to sharing false information. In addition to the sharing of false information, Finnish users are keen on spreading and sharing conspiracy theories on Facebook and further discrediting journalists on these posts of conspiracy theory sharing. Even with the journalists' fear of social media as a ground for sharing conspiracy theories, misinformation, and citizen's predisposition for hate speech against journalists, there is still trust in the media and journalists even if the hate speech against them is frequent on Facebook.

We investigated five different countries in ranks and recognized that this played a major role in how social media, specifically Facebook, impacted their news media. While we may not

be living in these countries, the news media and the reception to these stories and media can speak for itself. Almost everyone is on social media, but uses it range for a number of different reasons. While people in Italy may be hesitant to use it in their media digest, they don't mind connecting with friends and family on the platform. However, Venezuela looks to different pages or journalists on Facebook for their daily news. While fake news may still exist on this social media platform for them, the heavily censored content from their 'reliable news' is not any better. And while France is ranked number 33 on the World Press Freedom Index, (RSF) their reporters still face threats when trying to cover certain events. Protests are popular in that area putting many journalists and reports at a risk when doing their job. And while trust might be high for media and journalists in Finland, there is a terrible problem there with the spreading of misinformation and hate speech still being directed at journalists every day on Facebook simply for them just doing their jobs.

All of these countries are certainly very different, but there are also similarities that bind them together in the realm of social media and Facebook and how their citizens use and view this platform when it comes to consuming and oftentimes, dissecting the news media that is shared on these social media platforms, and most notably, Facebook.

Our key theoretical framework our group planned to use is the higher the country is ranked on the World Press Freedom Index the less inclined the people would be to use Facebook for news, but as a more social aspect. Considering if they are ranked higher, the more freedoms they have compared to the lower countries. With countries lower in the rank such as Venezuela, they are heavily censored and have less news stations to gather information from. Facebook could be seen as an extremely, almost essential, news source for countries like that. The key variable that influences this interest is their rank on the World Press Freedom Index, which

directly aligns with censorship and their relationship with the media. Although there may be people in the lower ranked countries who use Facebook to maintain a social life, most rely on the platform to stay informed of current events. After thoroughly researching the topic, we basically stayed aligned with our key theoretical framework.

Facebook is just one of many social media platforms employed to connect people and share content. It may not be the end all be all for news media for these countries, but it has influenced how the industry works today. In the United States, journalists apply information, pictures, and videos they receive from average users on social media daily. It is important to understand that while this may be a tool to create content or socialize, it is greatly needed for other countries.

Our group learned that just from the five selected countries, Facebook had a strong grasp on how news media in our countries is examined, viewed and consumed. This is research and analysis of five countries, so there are numerous ways Facebook can be viewed or used as. However, by determining countries that ranged in rank on the World Press Freedom Index, we got a decent representation of the ways Facebook is operated in the world of news media. We saw that Facebook is the only form of assumed accurate communication for some and is read as simply just “fake news” for others. Facebook is also just one of many social media platforms that has millions of daily users that spend a range of hours daily on the platform, scrolling through, ‘liking’ posts, commenting on posts and sharing as well as connecting with people from all over. With Facebook being considered in its “prime” in the early 2000’s, this could have also affected our research, as some view it as past its prime. While it may not be as big as some other social media platforms today across many different countries and nations, that does not deter the impact it has made across several years and how much it will continue to do in the future.

Reference List:

- Braulio Polanco & Gustavo Hernández Maracucho and guaro journalists., Hernández, B., & Journalists., M. (2019, May 16). Venezuela's second city has ZERO NEWSPAPERS. Retrieved April 23, 2021, from <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2019/05/16/venezuelas-second-city-has-zero-newspapers/>
- Facebook users in Venezuela - January 2021. (n.d.). Retrieved February 11, 2021, from <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-venezuela/2021/01>
- For many in Venezuela, social media is A matter of life and death* (2018). . Washington, D.C.: NPR. Retrieved from <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.library.unt.edu/other-sources/many-venezuela-social-media-is-matter-life-death/docview/2102029008/se-2?accountid=7113>
- Venezuelan authorities detain Wilmer Quintana for Facebook posts under anti-hate law. (2019, August 12). Retrieved April 23, 2021, from <https://cpj.org/2019/08/venezuelan-authorities-detain-wilmer-quintana-for/>
- Venezuela's new "anti-hate" law seeks to Silence media. (2017, November 09). Retrieved April 23, 2021, from <https://cpj.org/2017/11/venezuelas-new-anti-hate-law-seeks-to-silence-medi/>
- Haaramo, E. (2015, January 05). Finland gets tough on privacy, with new law to give Apple, Facebook messages total security. Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://www.zdnet.com/article/finland-gets-tough-on-privacy-with-new-law-to-give-apple-facebook-messages-total-security/>

Strandberg, K. (n.d.). A social media revolution or just a case of history repeating itself? The use of social media in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary elections - kim Strandberg, 2013.

Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444812470612>

Journalists experience a multitude of pressures in Finland – growing threat from public is a special concern. Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://www.tuni.fi/en/news/journalists-experience-multipitude-of-pressure-in-finland-growing-threat-from-public-special-concern>

Henley, J. (2020, January 29). How Finland starts its fight against fake news in primary schools.

Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/fact-from-fiction-finlands-new-lessons-in-combating-fake-news>

Mackintosh, E. (2019). Finland is winning the war on fake NEWS. other nations want the blueprint. Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2019/05/europe/finland-fake-news-intl/>

RSF. (2020). Finland : Online Hate Speech, but More Trust in the Media: Reporters without Borders. *RSF*, 2020, rsf.org/en/finland.

Sharma, B. (2020, April 30). Finland enlists social media influencers to fight Covid-19 misinformation. Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://www.wionews.com/world/finland-enlists-social-media-influencers-to-fight-covid-19-misinformation-290275>

Staff, E. (2017, April 12). 'Hybrid threat' centre to be built in Finland to COUNTER fake news.

Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2017/04/hybrid-threat-centre-to-be-built-in-finland-to-counter-fake-news/>

Statista. (2020). 'Finland: Facebook usage by frequency 2020.. Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/560842/share-of-facebook-users-in-finland-by-usage-frequency/>

Italy watchdog threatens Facebook with another fine over improper use of data. (2020, January 24). Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-italy-antitrust/italy-watchdog-threatens-facebook-with-another-fine-over-improper-use-of-data-idUSKBN1ZN0LX>

Social media guide for Italy. (2019, August 31) Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://businessculture.org/southern-europe/business-culture-in-italy/social-media-guide-for-italy/#:~:text=Facebook%20penetration%20in%20Italy%20is,Internet%20users%20which%20is%2071.33%25.>

News Media and Political Attitudes in Italy. (2018, May 17) Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/fact-sheet/news-media-and-political-attitudes-in-italy/>

Perrone, A. (2019, December 17) Salvini exploits “lack of trust” in Italian media: The reputation of Italian media is poor, which plays straight into the hands of the far-right politician.

Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0306422019895724>

Moubarak, G., Guiot, A., Benhamou, Y., Benhamou, A., & Hariri, S. (2011). Facebook activity of residents and fellows and its impact on the doctor—patient relationship. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 37(2), 101-104. Retrieved April 25, 2021, from

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23034648>

France Social Media: Social Media Monitoring in France. TranslateMedia. (n.d.).

<https://www.translatemedia.com/translation-services/social-media/france-social-media/>.

Independent Digital News and Media. (2020, May 15). *France orders social media firms to delete certain content within one hour or face fines*. The Independent.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/france-facebook-fine-social-media-a9514081.html>

France : Des violences récurrentes contre les journalistes pendant les manifestations: Reporters without borders. RSF. (n.d.). <https://rsf.org/en/france>

Rosemain, M. (2019, June 25). *Exclusive: In a world first, Facebook to give data on hate speech suspects to French courts*. Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-tech-exclusive-idUSKCN1TQ1TJ>

Torrise, C. (2016, March 15) How the mafia intimidates and controls the Italian Media. Retrieved on April 25, 2021.

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/exqy8j/reporters-without-borders-world-press-freedom-index-italy-mafia-876>

Wyche, S. P., Schoenebeck, S. Y., & Forte, A. (2013). "Facebook is a Luxury": An Exploratory Study of Social Media Use in Rural Kenya. Retrieved from <http://andreaforte.net/WycheFacebookCSCW13.pdf>

15.5 users join social every second (and other key stats to know). (2021, January 27). Retrieved April 25, 2021, from <https://blog.hootsuite.com/simon-kemp-social-media/#:~:text=Social%20media%3A%20there%20are%20now,of%20the%20world%27s%20total%20population.>

Twelve facebook leaders from nigeria, south africa and kenya selected as part of the facebook community accelerator programme. (2020, Jul 14). *M2 Presswire* Retrieved from <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.library.unt.edu/wire-feeds/twelve-facebook-leaders-nigeria-south-africa/docview/2423395894/se-2?accountid=7113>

Perez, S. (2020, June 09). Facebook news launches to all in us with addition of local news and video. Retrieved February 14, 2021, from <https://techcrunch.com/2020/06/09/facebook-news-launches-to-all-in-u-s-with-addition-of-local-news-and-video/>

Reuters Staff, (2021, January 5th) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-facebook-court/italy-court-orders-facebook-to-pay-5-million-in-damages-for-copying-app-idUSKBN29A1YW>

Facebook shuts down more than 20 ‘Fake News’ pages in Italy. The Local.it (May 13th, 2019)

[https://www.thelocal.it/20190513/facebook-shuts-down-more-than-20-fake-news-pages-i
n-italy](https://www.thelocal.it/20190513/facebook-shuts-down-more-than-20-fake-news-pages-in-italy)