

DİJİTAL HİKAYE ANLATIMI: ARAP DÜNYASI PERSPEKTİFİNDEN BİR DENEYİM: AJ+ NASIL YENİ BİR HİKAYE ANLATIMI BİÇİMİ YARATIYOR?

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DIGITAL STORYTELLING: AN EXPERIENCE FROM THE ARAB WORLD PERSPECTIVE: HOW AJ+ CREATES A NEW FORM OF STORYTELLING

ABSTRACT

This analytical study aims to explore how AJ⁺ employs digital storytelling to report on various events and issues, as well as to identify both new and traditional elements of news reporting used in this narrative form. The study utilizes a comprehensive sample, analyzing all forms of digital stories (DSs) published during June 2022. Quantitative content analysis serves as the primary tool, while qualitative methods are used to interpret the results. The findings reveal that AJ⁺ published multiple stories daily, with an average of 6.8 stories per day — a relatively high number. The DSs cover more than 15 topics and issues; however, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict receives particular attention. These stories employ a variety of news headlines and leads, with many borrowed from traditional media narratives. Videos are the most frequently used multimedia element in DSs, and they garner significant user interaction. It is noteworthy that writing remains the most crucial element of storytelling. The sample of the study covers only one month of AJ⁺'s published content, which

may be considered a limitation of the study. However, the study does not aim to generalize its findings; rather, it seeks to present an important example of digital storytelling as represented by AJ+.

Keywords: *Digital Storytelling, Digital Stories, AJ+, Mediamorphosis, Interactivity.*

DİJİTAL HİKAYE ANLATICILIĞI: ARAP DÜNYASI PERSPEKTİFİNDEN BİR DENEYİM: AJ+ YENİ BİR HİKAYE ANLATICILIĞI BİÇİMİNİ NASIL YARATIYOR?

ÖZ

Bu analitik çalışma, AJ+'ın farklı olayları ve sorunları bildirmek için dijital hikaye anlatımını nasıl kullandığını bulmayı ve bu tür anlatılarda kullanılan haber raporlamasının yeni ve eski unsurlarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Haziran 2022'de yayınlanan tüm dijital hikaye (DH) biçimlerini analiz eden kapsamlı bir örneklem kullanılmıştır. Ana araç olarak nicel içerik analizi kullanılırken, sonuçları yorumlamak için nitel yöntemler kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, AJ+'ın günlük olarak birkaç hikaye yayınladığını göstermektedir. Her gün yayımlanan hikaye sayısının ortalaması 6.8 olarak kaydedilmiş olup, bu oldukça yüksek bir sayıdır. Dijital hikayeler 15'ten fazla konu ve sorunu ele almaktadır. Ancak, Filistin-İsrail çatışma konusuna bu hikayelerde özel bir ilgi gösterilmiştir. Bu hikayelerde, çoğunluğu geleneksel medya anlatısından ödünç alınan birkaç haber başlığı ve girişi kullanılmıştır. Videolar DH'ler tarafından en çok kullanılan multimedya temsil etmektedir ve kullanıcılar bunlarla önemli ölçüde etkileşimde bulunmaktadır. Yazmanın hala hikaye anlatımının en önemli unsuru olduğunu da belirtmekte fayda var. Çalışmanın örneği, AJ+'ın yayınlanmış içeriğinin yalnızca bir ayını kapsamakta ve bu, çalışmanın bir sınırlaması olarak değerlendirilebilmektedir. Ancak, çalışma bulgularını genelleştirmeyi amaçlamamakta; bunun yerine, AJ+ tarafından temsil edilen dijital hikaye anlatımının önemli bir örneğini sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Dijital Hikaye Anlatımı, Dijital Hikayeler, AJ+, Mediamorphosis, Etkileşim.*

INTRODUCTION

Digital storytelling is a new phenomenon in delivering messages and reporting news stories to online users. It is a factor that has evidently contributed to public engagement in digital journalism since at least 2020. Digital news storytelling increasingly features unique qualities that can engage users, including interactivity, multi-sensory content, mobile access, and immersion — particularly through augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) (Pavlik, 2021). These stories cover a wide range of events and issues, including political, social, educational, economic, sports, health, human interest, and more, across various journalistic forms. This type of storytelling is primarily designed for digital platforms and is specifically targeted at the younger generation, often described as technologically savvy.

The roots of visual storytelling extend back hundreds of years, evolving from images created on glass plates to still images, rolls of film, and, more recently, digital images and videos captured with various types of mobile phones (Gitner, 2016, p. 3). However, digital storytelling as a co-creative media practice emerged in California in the early 1990s, where 'ordinary' people were taught to create short, often autobiographical digital stories (McWilliam, 2016, p. 706).

Digital storytelling has since been used to describe a wide range of diverse media forms and practices (McWilliam, 2016, p. 707). These so-called "e-stories" or digital narratives employ emerging technologies to craft narratives through digital media platforms. They represent a fusion of digital technologies and storytelling, producing media texts that can be distributed openly on the internet to reach a broad and diverse global audience (Gladwin, 2020, p. 276). In essence, digital storytelling involves using digital technologies to tell various stories in engaging and innovative ways (Alexander, 2017, p. 3).

Digital storytelling is an effective technique for communicating important information and issues to diverse audiences. It does not rely on a single method for telling stories but instead offers multiple ways of delivering and learning. These methods include, but are not limited to, visuals, spoken word, and music, which can work both independently and collectively to convey messages to audiences (Graya, Youg, & Blomfield, 2015, p. 638). Visual imagery, in particular, allows for more effective storytelling (Mohamed, 2019, p. 83). Moreover, combining education and entertainment in storytelling creates an innovative narrative (Ayub, Omar, Ahmad, Murad, & Faizal, 2022).

Digital storytelling has become mainstream for online media platforms, becoming more accessible, widely used, and versatile (Alexnder, 2017, p. xx), in addition to being highly appealing.

The technological environment for digital storytelling has advanced rapidly since the start of the 21st century (Alexnder, 2017, p. 29). The ways in which stories are told, messages are delivered, and narratives are navigated have changed dramatically in recent years. Stories are now conveyed through still images, videos, video games, interactive books, static and interactive infographics, social media, and other forms. They are presented across various platforms and accessible through a wide range of devices. These stories are immersive, allowing users to interact with the content and others, as well as enabling users to enter and shape the story themselves (Miller, 2014).

Digital storytelling has developed and flourished mainly due to the revolution in mobile technology. The advancement of mobile phone technology, combined with the rapid growth of apps, has made digital storytelling primarily a mobile-based industry. With the convergence of mobile connectivity, portable multimedia, continuous innovation, and widespread usage, it is unsurprising that digital storytelling has already migrated to the mobile phone universe (Alexnder, 2017, p. 144).

Digital storytelling plays a vital role in human communication. It remains essential for people to perceive and respond to the world, particularly through digital forms of storytelling that address various concerns and promote more sustainable ways of living (Gladwin, 2020, p. 276). The structure of digital storytelling or multimedia storytelling allows users to choose their own navigation path, combining a single story with multiple media forms and integrating these with established classifications (Planer & Godulla, 2021, p. 569). New approaches in digital storytelling, with interdisciplinary and multimodal applications to both fiction and non-fiction representations in digital media, have a greater impact on potential audiences due to their ability to generate knowledge through multisensory tools and experiences (Gladwin, 2020, p. 278).

An effective digital storytelling project requires a combination of journalistic and technical skills. According to Planer & Godulla (2021), a successful digital story can only be produced when different departments within a newsroom — described as a converged newsroom — work collaboratively. Producing a digital story involves at least four phases:

1. Pitching an idea.
2. A group of people working on the story, considering the content, multimedia elements, and a timeline.
3. Journalists conducting field research, including reporting, interviewing, and filming.
4. Editing and assembling all the gathered materials into the final multimedia story format, a step that involves the entire production team, from editors and developers to graphic designers, each contributing their unique skills (p. 577).

One of the major changes in the media environment is that photographs are no longer viewed solely in printed or projected form; they are now shared via email, internet sites, and social media networks. Audiences that were once reached through print media are now being engaged on an even wider and faster scale through platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and other applications using still images, motion pictures (Gitner, 2016, p. 3), animation, professional design, and other visual elements.

Facebook is a highly popular social media network in the Middle East. By the end of July 2022, the number of users in this region had reached 156,984,100. In Arab countries, Facebook users totaled 77,352,200. Iraq ranked first in the number of users, with a total of 40 million, followed by Saudi Arabia (26,453,500), the United Arab Emirates (12,176,400), Syria (8,500,000), Jordan (7,367,000), Lebanon (4,502,900), Kuwait (4,138,700), Yemen (4,016,500), Palestine (3,692,400), Oman (3,325,400), and Qatar (3,179,499) (Internet World Stats, 2022). Due to its popularity, the AJ⁺ account on this social network has been chosen for the study. All news stories published on the AJ⁺ Facebook account during June 2022 were analyzed in terms of content and form.

Most young people spend significant time online daily, not only consuming content on social networks but also producing it (Rubio-Hurtado, Fuertes-Alpiste, Martínez-Olmo, & Quintana, 2022, p. 96). This production includes creating content from scratch, commenting on existing content, and interacting with other users and their content. The use of this narrative form has rapidly increased over the last decade. Many media institutions, including those in the Arab world, have adopted this new form of narrative for news stories. However, very few studies have explored this narrative form in the Arab world.

This study investigates how AJ⁺ invests significant resources in employing digital storytelling in various formats to report on events and convey messages

daily. To achieve this, it analyzes all stories published in June 2022 to identify the types of stories covered and their formats. The study also examines the similarities and differences between the elements of stories produced for traditional broadcast media and those created for online platforms.

Despite the many differences between traditional and new media, studies have highlighted both similarities and differences in storytelling techniques across both mediums in the Arab world. Both media aim to inform and engage audiences. They utilize similar techniques to engage their audiences, such as compelling leads, human interest stories, and narrative structures that build tension and resolution. Traditional TV broadcasters and online news platforms often focus on visual and emotional elements to create engaging narratives (Miladi, 2013). However, while both mediums use visual storytelling, online platforms in the Arab world have greater flexibility to integrate multimedia and interactive elements, such as infographics, clickable maps, videos, and photo galleries. Platforms like AJ+ have pioneered innovative visual storytelling formats specifically tailored for social media consumption, offering a more engaging experience compared to traditional TV news segments (Figenschou, 2019). Additionally, platforms like Al Jazeera have developed unique approaches to digital storytelling, combining elements of both traditional and new media to reach broader audiences (Zayani & Sahraoui, 2007).

AJ+ defines itself as a community that creates and publishes interactive, impactful, and inspiring stories in collaboration with its audiences. It is a digital platform focused on presenting real-time events and topics related to contemporary Arab realities in a unique, distinctive, and influential way, using an innovative journalistic form that fosters dialogue and constructive interaction in society. According to the AJ+ Facebook account, by the end of August 2024, the platform had reached 8.9 million likes, with 13.3 million followers (AJ+, n.d.).

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study aims to investigate how AJ⁺ has employed digital storytelling (DS) to report on various issues and events around the world. Based on this main question, the following sub-questions have been developed to be answered:

Q1: How many stories did AJ⁺ publish during the study period?

Q2: What types of events and issues did the DSs cover and address during the study period?

Q3: What types of news headlines and leads did the DSs use to introduce stories published during the study period?

Q3.1: To what extent were the news headlines and leads of the DSs different from those written for traditional media news stories?

Q4: What types of multimedia did the DSs use to report on various events and issues during the study period?

Q4.1: What is the duration of digital video stories that were developed and published during the study period?

Q5: What level of the Arabic language did the digital video stories use to report on events and issues?

Q6: How did users interact with the DSs published on the AJ⁺ Facebook account?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Technological developments have led to tremendous changes in the media industry and landscape, including the creation of new forms of innovative content and new ways of delivering it to a wide range of diverse audiences. This study relies on the Mediamorphosis theory, coined and developed by Roger Fidler. Mediamorphosis is a term used to describe how media forms evolve and adapt with one another (Nwammuo, 2011). According to this theory, the transformation of communication media is “usually brought about by the complex interplay of perceived needs, competitive and political pressures, and social and technological innovation” (Fidler, 1997, p. xvi). New media do not arise spontaneously and independently; rather, they morph from existing forms or emerge gradually through metamorphosis, while older forms of media tend

to adapt and evolve continuously rather than becoming obsolete (Huwebes, 2016, p. 115).

According to Fidler, there are six principles of Mediamorphosis (p. 29):

1. **Coevolution and coexistence:** All forms of communication media coexist and coevolve within an expanding, complex adaptive system.
2. **Metamorphosis:** New media do not arise spontaneously and independently; they emerge gradually from the metamorphosis of older media.
3. **Propagation:** Emerging forms of communication media propagate dominant traits from earlier forms.
4. **Survival:** All forms of communication media, as well as media enterprises, must adapt and evolve to survive in a changing environment.
5. **Opportunity and need:** New media are not widely adopted based on the merits of technology alone. There must be an opportunity, as well as a social, political, and/or economic reason, for a new media technology to be developed.
6. **Delayed adoption:** New media technologies always take longer than expected to achieve commercial success.

Mediamorphosis theory provides a better understanding of the continuous changes in the media landscape and their impact on how stories are told, perceived, and interacted with by audiences in the digital era.

Remediation theory also offers an explanation for this phenomenon. According to this theory, one medium incorporates elements of another, with new digital media continually remediating their predecessors. The existence of media is inherently comparative, as it is always related to other media forms. This theory suggests that media do not possess an autonomous formal or technical specificity; rather, they exist only in relation to other media forms and practices. However, new media do not represent a historical break or rupture from the past. Instead, they define their newness by refashioning existing media forms (Bolter & Grusin, 1999).

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a comprehensive sample, including all DSs published on the AJ⁺ platform during June 2022. All stories were downloaded from the platform and analyzed offline. Content analysis serves as the primary tool for the study. Quantitative analysis is used to determine what was said and how it was said, while qualitative methods are utilized to interpret the results.

The units of analysis include the digital story itself, with each story representing a unit of analysis. Additional units of analysis encompass the news headline, news lead, and multimedia used in the DSs. The categories of analysis, or "what was said," include the events, topics, or issues covered by the DSs, the type of news headlines used, the type of news leads employed, and the level of interactivity. "How it was said" involves the type of multimedia used, the level of language used by communicators in the DSs, and the graphics used to represent content (e.g., written text on the screen, pictures, and animation). The unit of time is represented by the length of the video in minutes and seconds.

RESULTS

Table 1

Number of analyzed DSs published during jun 2022

Date	No	%
2	11	22.3
15	10	20.3
13	9	18.3
20	9	18.3
23	9	18.3
1	8	16.2
19	8	16.2
21	8	16.2
22	8	16.2
11	7	14.2
17	7	14.2
25	7	14.2
26	7	14.2
29	7	14.2
5	6	12.2
6	6	12.2
7	6	12.2
8	6	12.2
9	6	12.2
12	6	12.2
16	6	12.2
24	6	12.2
27	6	12.2
28	6	12.2
10	5	10.2
14	5	10.2
18	5	10.2
30	5	10.2
3	4	8.1
4	4	8.1
Total	203	100

Note. Mean: 6.7667

Table 1 includes the total number of DSs published during June 2022 and analyzed in this study. According to these data, the highest number of stories was published on the 2nd and 15th of June 2022. However, the differences were very limited. Eleven stories were published on June 2nd, and ten on June 15th. The number of stories published on other dates was quite similar. Nine stories were published on June 12th, 20th, and 23rd. Eight DSs were published on the 1st, 19th, 21st, and 22nd of June. Seven stories were published on June 11th, 17th, 25th, 26th, and 29th. Six stories were published on ten days in June, making this the highest frequency of published DSs during the month, followed by five stories on four dates, and finally four stories on two dates. The mean number of DSs published daily was 6.77.

Table 2

Type of topics & issues covered in the analyzed DSs

Type	No	%
Social Topics	26	13.1
Palestinian-Israeli Conflict Issue	26	13.1
Political Topics	24	12.1
Economic Topics	21	10.6
Health Topics	14	7.1
Artistic Topics	12	6.1
Religious Topics	12	6.1
Sport Topics	12	6.1
Crime Topics	11	5.6
War & Conflict Topics	7	3.5
Historical Topics	7	3.5
Illegal Immigration Issue	5	2.5
Environmental Issues	5	2.5
Security Topics	4	2.0
Other Topics	12	6.1
Total	198	100

Digital stories have addressed more than 14 topics and issues, ranging from social matters to security concerns. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has received particular attention from these DSs. According to the results in Table 2, social topics and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were the most frequently addressed issues, each representing 13.1% of the total. These were followed by political topics in second place (12.1%), economic topics in third place (10.6%), and

health topics in fourth place (7.1%). Artistic, religious, and sports topics were ranked fifth, each accounting for 6.1%. Crime-related topics followed with 5.6%.

War and conflict topics, as well as historical topics, were in seventh place. These were followed by issues related to illegal immigration and the environment, which shared the same rank. Security topics were the least frequently addressed. Other topics included archaeology and subjects that were scientific, military, astronomical, educational, legal, or technical in nature, as well as content promoting one of Al-Jazeera's podcasts.

Table 3

Types of news headlines used in the analyzed DSs

Type of headline	No	%
Sidebar Headline	44	22.4
Featured Headline	32	16.3
Question Headline	24	12.2
Conversational-Questioning Headlines	22	11.2
Descriptive Headline	21	10.7
Informative Headline	19	9.7
Quotation Headline	15	7.7
Explanatory Headline	11	5.6
Tessier Headline	3	1.5
Novelty Headline	3	1.5
Proverb Headline	2	1.0
Total	196	100

Table 3 shows that DSs have employed several types of news headlines, encompassing all the headline types used in these stories. In total, eleven different types of news headlines were utilized in the DSs. Sidebar news headlines ranked first, accounting for 22.4%, followed by featured headlines at 16.3%. Question headlines came in third place (12.2%), while conversational-question headlines ranked fourth (11.2%). This type of headline was written in the form of a sentence or paragraph that included one or more questions in a conversational style.

Descriptive headlines were in fifth place, followed by informative, quotation, and explanatory headlines. Tessier and novelty headlines were both ranked ninth, and finally, proverb headlines were in the last place.

Table 4

Types of news leads used in the analyzed DSs

Type of lead	No	%
Summary Lead	42	30.2
Descriptive Lead	24	17.3
Dialog Statement	19	13.7
Declarative Lead	18	12.9
Question Lead	12	8.6
Dialog Lead	7	5.0
Human Interest Lead	6	4.3
Quotation Lead	5	3.6
Tessier Lead	2	1.4
Astonished Lead	2	1.4
Novelty Lead	2	1.4
Total	139	100

According to the data in Table 4, eleven types of news leads were utilized by the DSs analyzed in this study, with a total of 139 occurrences. The summary lead was the most frequently used, ranking first at 30.2%, followed by the descriptive lead at 17.3%. A dialog statement, a new type of news lead used in the DSs, occupied third place at 13.7%, followed by the declarative lead at 12.9%. The question lead ranked fifth, followed by the dialog lead. The human-interest lead came in seventh place, followed by the quotation lead. Tessier, astonished, and novelty leads all ranked ninth, each accounting for 1.4%.

It is worth noting that 7 DSs out of the total stories analyzed in this study were complete news stories. These stories included all the essential elements of any news story: a headline, lead, body, and tail. The body varied among supporting paragraphs, background paragraphs, and explanatory paragraphs. The total number of words for news headlines and leads included in the analyzed sample of the DSs reached 7,640 words.

Table 5

Type of multimedia used in the analyzed DSs

Type	No	%
Video	115	45.3
Infographic	50	19.7
# Hashtag	38	15.0
Photos	21	8.3
Slideshow	11	4.3
Tag	9	3.5
Emoji	9	3.5
Screenshot	1	0.4
Total	254	100

The results in Table 5 show that DSs employ various types of multimedia. Videos ranked first, making up a significant 45.3%, which is close to half of all multimedia used in these stories. This was followed by infographics at 19.7% and hashtags at 15%. The remaining multimedia types each accounted for less than 10% of the total used by the DSs. These include photos, slideshows, tags, emojis, and screenshots.

Table 6

Time of videos used in the analyzed DSs

Time (Minute)	No	%
1:00-1:59	47	42.7
< 1 minute	15	13.6
10:00-14:59	10	9.1
2:00-2:59	8	7.3
3:00-3:59	7	6.4
20:00 m & more	5	4.5
15:00-19:59	4	3.6
5:00-5:59	3	2.7
6:00-6:59	3	2.7
8:00-8:59	3	2.7
4:00-4:59	2	1.8
9:00-9:59	2	1.8
7:00-7:59	1	0.9
Total	110	100

Table 6 presents the duration of videos used in the DSs. Videos of varying lengths were employed in these stories, which can be classified into three categories:

1. Short videos (less than three minutes): These occupied the first, second, and fourth ranks, with percentages of 42.7%, 13.6%, and 7.3%, respectively. Together, they accounted for 63.6% of the total video duration included in the DSs.

2. Long videos (10 minutes or more): These occupied the third, sixth, and seventh ranks, with percentages of 9.1%, 4.5%, and 3.6%, respectively. Together, they accounted for 17.2% of the total video duration included in the DSs.

3. Medium-length videos (between 3 and 8 minutes): These occupied the fifth rank and ranks 8 to 13, with percentages ranging from 6.4% to 0.9%. Together, they accounted for 19% of the total video duration included in the DSs.

Table 7

Level of arabic language used in the digital videos stories

Language Level	H-M	%
Levantine Dialect	03:44	48.28
Egyptian Dialect	02:03	26.51
Classical Arabic	01:19	17.03
Modern Standard Arabic	00:38	8.19
Total	7:44	100

According to the results in Table 7, the Levantine dialect, which includes Lebanese, Syrian, and Jordanian varieties, dominated the Arabic language levels used in the digital video stories, accounting for nearly 50% of the total. This may be attributed to the majority of employees in the Innovative Department at AJ⁺ being from these nationalities. Stories using this level of Arabic include "*ālslyt alekhbary*" [sharp-tongued reporter], "*ālwtr ālhas*" [sensitive chord], and "*āljbz*" [adept]. The Egyptian dialect ranked second, with 26.51%, followed by classical Arabic, and finally modern standard Arabic. The Egyptian dialect appeared in "*ālmkhhbr ālaqtsady*" [economic reporter] and other episodes that were not part of a regular program. The programs *Ma'a Tameem* [With Tameem], *qst ensan* [The Human Story, or human-interest story], and *that mrh* [Once Upon a Time] were presented in classical Arabic.

Table 8

Type of users' interactivity in the analyzed DSs

Interactivity	No	%	Mean
Share	70484	9.0	347.2
Comment	88409	11.3	435.5
Reaction	621028	79.6	3059.3
Total	779921	100	-

Table 6 shows users' interactions with DSs published in June 2022. According to the data, *reactions* to these stories were very significant, ranking first with a percentage close to 80% of the total user interactions. This was followed by sharing stories with others on their Facebook accounts, or other types of sharing, which accounted for 11.3%, and commenting, which made up 9%.

DISCUSSION

Digital stories are a new form of digital media derived from the long and well-established journalistic traditions of traditional media. This form has been reconstructed, reshaped, and revamped in an innovative way to suit and attract social media users. Unlike traditional media, new media content, including DSs, tends to engage in conversation with people rather than simply talking to them. AJ⁺ develops and distributes its content through its social media platforms on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube and plans to launch an account on TikTok soon.

Content categories of the AJ⁺ include (Omar, 2022):

1. Real-time videos: These videos resemble television news reports but are adapted to suit online platforms and social media users. They aim to present current events to a social media audience. Real-time videos typically incorporate most elements of traditional TV reports. The digital format primarily consists of a collection of images, usually displayed with written text (subtitles) on the screen and accompanied by sounds, including music. Subtitles serve as an assistive tool, making the videos more accessible to a broader audience, such as individuals with hearing impairments or users in social settings where sound needs to be muted (e.g., being around other people or family members).

2. Long-format contextual videos: These videos are typically lengthy, lasting from five to ten minutes. They address complex current issues, including political, economic, social, educational, environmental, and other contexts. These videos are usually delivered in simple language that is comprehensible to a wide audience. The content format often relies on the use of maps, photographs, animation, archival footage, a narrator, and, in many cases, subtitles.

3. Raw videos: This type of video is self-explanatory and does not require extensive editing or treatment. It is typically presented with one or more catchy sentences to attract users' attention. Examples of this format include footage of natural disasters (such as earthquakes and volcanoes), demonstrations, protests, and other events. It may also include entertaining material. While raw videos can be engaging for users, they generally provide less information compared to other video formats.

4. Human-interest stories: These stories highlight people's suffering and struggles, as well as inspiring success stories, for online platform users. Sharing such stories via social media networks can sometimes positively impact the lives of the individuals featured. An example of such an impactful story is “The

Old Baby” (Fawzi & Busalam, 2018). In 2016, AJ⁺ produced a story about a Syrian child with Progeria, or Hutchinson-Gilford syndrome. Due to his condition, he faced bullying both on the street and at school, which eventually led him to drop out of school. The story was published in several languages and drew the attention of people who were able to help the child and his family move to Spain, where he could receive treatment and start a new life. In 2018, AJ⁺ produced an updated story about the child's new and improved life.

5. Programs: These belong to the long-format category. They focus on specific current topics or issues and are presented on a weekly basis. Examples of these programs include *ālwttr ālhasas* [Sensitive Chord], *āljhbz* [Adept], *ālmkhhbr ālaqtsady* [Economic Reporter], and other previously mentioned programs.

6. 360-Degree Videos: This type of video is not yet very common on AJ⁺, but a few stories in this format have been produced. These videos allow users to control their perspective, enabling them to navigate within the story and view it from different angles.

The analysis shows that AJ⁺ significantly invests in DSs as a new form of narrative. The average number of stories published daily reached almost eight. Short-format videos are particularly significant in terms of the type of DSs being produced, representing the most common type of stories. These short-format DSs cover a wide range of current affairs and issues, including political, economic, social, educational, sports, environmental, security, human-interest topics, and more. Like any other mass medium, AJ⁺ identifies newsworthy events and issues, reports on them, and tracks their developments. As with other forms of journalism, DSs rely primarily on journalistic sources. This includes, but is not limited to, published reports, official statements, numbers and statistics, and attributions of statements to their sources.

From a writing and editing perspective, writing is the core element of news reporting and remains an important aspect of digital storytelling. The fundamental principles of journalistic writing are clearly present in this type of narrative. This applies to both the news leads and headlines of DSs, as well as the photos and videos developed for AJ⁺ and published on its online platform. Various types of news headlines and leads were found in the introductory paragraphs that typically accompany each published story. However, in many cases, these were written in forms that have been adapted from the traditional styles of news headlines and leads. Digital stories include all essential news elements, yet the news lead and headlines play a particularly vital role. They are among the main elements of DSs.

An introductory paragraph always precedes DSs published on any online platform, including Facebook, which this study focuses on. This paragraph is neither a pure news headline nor a lead; rather, it is a combination of both, representing a somewhat new writing style for the introduction of DSs on the AJ⁺ online platform. This introduction may appear as a news headline only, a news lead only, a combination of both, or sometimes as a group of sentences formulated with several headlines. Another type of introduction includes a question headline followed by a summary lead and ends with one or more conversational questions. In some cases, though only a few, the paragraph accompanying a digital story may take the form of a complete news story. This could include a headline, lead, and background information; a headline, lead, body, and tail; or a headline, lead, supporting paragraph, and background information.

News headlines can take various forms. They may be independent, incorporated into the news lead, or, at times, provide a summary of the story. Additionally, a sidebar headline may be integrated with the introduction, becoming part of it. In many cases, headlines are crafted to engage in dialogue with online users.

For example: *"In your opinion, does this study apply to your country?"*

For the news leads, the following observations can be highlighted:

- The lead may include different types of news headlines, such as descriptive, informative, and conversational headlines.
- In some stories, there is more than one lead (e.g., a summary lead, a quotation lead, etc.).
- A long lead can make the text resemble a complete news story, consisting of a headline, lead, and a supporting, explanatory, or expansion paragraph. Unlike the inverted pyramid style of writing, where the supporting paragraph typically follows immediately after the lead, explanatory paragraphs sometimes appear immediately after the lead.
- Occasionally, the lead begins with a noun phrase [jomlh esmyh], which is unusual since leads typically begin with a verb.
- Question leads may contain more than one question.
- Like news headlines, news leads often aim to create a dialogue with users by using conversational sentences or interrogative questions with a dialogical nature. These questions are not purely meant to seek information but are intended to engage in dialogue with users.

Mediamorphosis provides insight into how traditional forms of storytelling evolve and integrate with digital platforms and technologies. Traditional narratives adapt to the digital environment, leading to new forms, structures, and uses of stories. Yet, traditional journalistic genres are converging with digital media, creating new storytelling methods. We might even describe this phenomenon as a form of '*genresmorphosis*,' akin to mediamorphosis.

On-screen text is extremely important to DSs. This type of writing is short, clear, and concise. The number of words on the screen does not exceed five in most cases. This is because digital viewers prefer brief text.

Visualization is an essential part of DSs, and infographics are among the most important elements of visualization. Information graphics, or infographics, are visual representations of data or other information. A well-designed infographic can present complex information quickly and clearly (Bull, 2016). Link, Henke, and Möhring (2021) found that the interactivity of a graphic significantly impacts the reading experience (Link, Henke, & Möhring, 2021, p. 575).

Despite the variety of multimedia elements employed in DSs, video remains the most prominent form, highlighting the importance of this medium. Data show that DSs favor short video formats of less than three minutes, which account for 63.6% of the total videos in the analyzed sample. This preference aligns with the nature of the online audience, especially young people, who prefer shorter video formats.

Videos can take several forms: they may be short or long news reports (sometimes reaching 9 minutes or more) or feature a single-person performance (e.g., *ālmkhhbr ālaqtsady*, *ālwtr ālhasas*, *Ma'a Tameem*, and *that mrh*). Other formats involve dialogue between two or more presenters (e.g., *ālslyt alekhbary* and *āljhbz*). It is also worth noting that some reports resemble in-house television news reports but are presented with on-screen text accompanied by images. Some human-interest stories are presented in the form of a first-person narrative, a format that is very common in television news reporting.

Interactivity is a key factor when it comes to new media, including DSs. Unlike traditional broadcast media, which typically offer one-way communication, online platforms allow audiences to interact with content through comments, shares, likes, and direct feedback (Al-Rawi, 2017). Users engage with DSs in different ways. This includes, but is not limited to, sharing, commenting, and various interactions that express individual emotions related to the story. These communication behaviors confirm that audiences are active, according to the uses and gratifications theory. This participatory element is a key aspect of the

mediamorphosis of storytelling, where the role of the audience transforms from passive consumers to active participants.

CONCLUSION

Digital stories represent a significant evolution in media, blending traditional journalistic practices with the dynamic interactivity of digital platforms. As demonstrated by AJ+, digital stories have been adapted and innovated to engage a modern audience on social media. Through various formats—such as real-time videos, long-form contextual videos, raw footage, human-interest stories, and more—AJ+ effectively caters to diverse audience preferences and consumption habits. The platform's emphasis on brevity, clarity, and visual appeal, particularly through short videos and infographics, aligns with the preferences of younger, digitally native audiences who favor concise and visually stimulating content.

Moreover, the rise of digital storytelling showcases the transformation of storytelling techniques, where digital formats are enriched by interactivity and audience engagement, creating a more participatory media environment. Traditional news elements, such as leads and headlines, have been adapted to stimulate conversation and interaction, demonstrating a shift from passive consumption to active participation by the audience. This convergence of old and new media forms, described as a process of "*Genresmorphism*," highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of digital storytelling in today's media landscape.

As digital stories continue to evolve, they hold the potential to further reshape journalism and audience interaction, reinforcing the significance of adaptable and interactive narratives in the digital age. AJ+ plays a vital role in the media ecosystem of the Arab world. While it shares core journalistic standards and storytelling techniques, differences in content format, production speed, interactivity, and regulatory contexts highlight the distinct ways it engages with audiences. As digital transformation continues to reshape the media landscape in the Arab world, understanding the rules of digital storytelling becomes increasingly important.

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APPENDIX

Table 7

Digital stories published during Jun 2022

Date	Topic
	Harassment and violence against women. Egyptian singer Amal Maher reappears after a long period of disappearance.
30	Settlers break into the "Joseph's Tomb" area. British Prime Minister stirs controversy. The appearance of the crescent moon for the month of Dhul-Hijjah confirmed. Bullying in movies and the spread of violence. Malika El Fassi. Victims of the war in Syria.
29	The end of the era of petrol and diesel cars in Europe. An Iraqi performs Hajj on foot. The body of Egyptian anchor Shaima Gamal found. Findings from the Gallup 2022 Poll on Happiness and Pleasure. Japan's economic experience. A poison gas tank falls in the port of Aqaba.
28	Health of a Palestinian prisoner deteriorates. Israeli occupation forces demolish a Palestinian house. The bodies of 46 immigrants found in a truck trailer in Texas. Iraqi activists engage with a #IraqDiesOfThirst hashtag. Taiwan Island and the possibility of sparking a war between China and America. An exciting journey for a Croatian couple on one of the world's longest and heaviest trucks.
27	The killer of Naira appears in court. The average age of politicians in high-income countries. Roman tombs discovered by accident in the Gaza Strip. The killer of #Iman_Irsheed in Jordan commits suicide. The bee: an amazing creature. Influencers and extravagance in spending on goods and clothing.
26	Palestine Martyrs... Palestine. A grieving father punches the accused of killing his son and his partner in an American court.

- Morocco announces an increase in the number of victims among irregular migrants.
40 million pounds... Egyptians support the child Rokaya.
"Free alcohol for everyone named Muhammad or Maryam."
El Salvador and the specter of bankruptcy.
"Take your son: feed him, give him water, and wait for his death."
The herb that relieves sore throats.
The rate of settlement in Palestine has increased.
- 25 The United Nations confirms the killing of Shereen Abu Aqla by Israeli forces.
He left his wife a few days after she gave birth, only to return to her and their child with the largest international prize! But what happened?
Orientalists' views on Arab women in the nineteenth century.
The anniversary of Ibn Sina's death.
A humanitarian initiative.
The Economist report on the best cities for quality of life.
- 24 Bacteria as large as can be seen with the unaided eye.
The story of a Syrian shawarma maker.
An unprecedented decision in the World Cup in Qatar: 26 players per team.
Once upon a time.
How Israel used meme pages to promote Zionism.
Bullying against veiled women in France.
Victims of the earthquake in Afghanistan.
- 23 "Ruqayya" ... an Egyptian girl who dreams of running like her peers.
Violence against children.
Jordanian student shot.
More than half of Qatar World Cup tickets sold out.
The pioneer of the feminist movement in Egypt, Hoda Shaarawy.
How Israel used meme pages to promote Zionism.
The story of the grazer.
"Women must wear a veil in order to live and wear loose clothing so as not to tempt."
- 22 "Abuse of a position."
Putin threatens to wipe out Britain.
Tunisian Constitution amendment.
Ban on importing goods from Xinjiang province in China.

- Palestinian young man dies from his wounds.
How did the Russian ruble recover its value after collapsing at the start of the war?
Years lost in Israel?
Half an hour with Khaled.
- 21 In Egypt, a student kills a girl classmate.
Breaking records.
Tensions between Algeria and Spain.
From a cleaner to the French parliament.
Translating the sermon [khtbt] of the Day of Arafat into 10 languages.
Events that changed the history of Syria forever.
Gazelles are victims of climate change in Iraq.
Moroccan young women sue a French businessman for harassment.
Results of the French legislative elections.
- 20 Congo recovers remains of a militant.
Colombia elects its first Black female vice president.
Teaching English in primary education in Algeria endorsed.
Tunisian female tennis player wins third place.
Canadian police visit an Egyptian girl who won a drawing prize.
An 80-year-old Turkish woman takes the secondary school exam.
A player on the Manchester team files a case against an Egyptian student.
Activists on social media networks are skeptical about a Tunisian swimmer.
- 19 A famous goalkeeper is running for president.
Monkey wearing an anti-vest found dead.
The economic situation in Gaza deteriorates.
Morocco goes "car-free" for one day.
Digging under Al-Aqsa Mosque and preventing Palestinians from entering it.
Rice crisis follows the wheat crisis.
A human story.
- 18 A Tunisian start-up company attempts to solve the water scarcity problem.
Coca-Cola addiction.
Poetic recitation.
- 17 Sandstorms in some Arab countries.

- A painting of a veiled girl wins the Congressional Art Contest.
Mosquitoes and summer.
A Palestinian suffers a head injury for the second time.
Names of the host cities for the 2026 World Cup announced.
3 Palestinians killed by Israeli occupation forces.
A Syrian weaves the Qur'an and prophetic hadiths on cloth.
Take care of your neighbor.
Japan's parliament approves strict punishments for cyberbullies.
Manager of a radio station in Egypt assaults a female anchor.
- 16 Agreement to export Israeli gas through Egypt reached.
Qatari Ministry of Labor issues decisions regarding domestic workers.
Muqtada al-Sadr bids farewell to politics.
Who killed the legend of Rai music, Cheb Hosni?
Thought release.
Avoiding reading online news.
Alopecia areata and baldness.
Macrosomia is a rare medical condition.
- 15 Egyptian facilities will convert Israeli natural gas into liquid form to transport it to Europe.
European Court of Human Rights cancels trip to deport refugees.
Palestinian university security forces attack students.
Strawberry moon.
Netflix to produce a reality show based on "The Squid Game."
Airlines and high fuel prices.
Discoverer of the blood transfusion strain.
- 14 Cheating in exams in Tunisia.
Narcotic amphetamine [Chabo].
Al-Azhar's initiative, "That you may dwell in tranquility with them."
Putin's last piece to restore the Russian Empire: "Transnistria," the country not on the map!
Algerian player burned inside his car.
- 13 Miss Palestine wears the clothes of prisoners in occupation prisons.
Netflix announces the return of the series "The Squid Game."
Changes in the rules of football matches.
Google fires an employee who revealed "scary" secrets about a robot.

- Inhabitants of “Masafar Yatta” hamlets face a new catastrophe.
Victims of gun possession in America.
Google reaches a settlement over gender pay equity.
From working in film and television to selling in a grocery store.
65% of Gaza beaches are devoid of sanitation.
- 12 A mercenary or a prisoner of war?
Pierre, a Canadian pop singer, has Ramsay Hunt Syndrome.
Pioneer [sheikh] of sports commentators in Iraq dies.
Marking: "Made in Israel."
Germany and the oil and gas game with Russia.
Friendship of a special kind.
Canada discusses putting smoke alerts on every cigarette.
- 11 A woman who loves camping as her family.
Europe moves to electric cars.
Refugees in Britain deported.
Reassurance is cause for concern.
In memory of the fall of Mosul.
Muslim Crimean Tatar military battalion finds mass graves of
Ukrainian civilians buried by Russian troops.
- 10 Two turtles born with different characteristics.
How do Palestinians resist with art?
Sons give their mother the expenses for Hajj.
Potato crisis.
Robot's equipment to participate in the World Cup referee
completed.
A scandal inside a women's bathroom in a restaurant on the North
Coast in Egypt. How did the Ministry of Interior comment on this
issue?
All cancer patients participating in a clinical trial cured.
Golan Heights.
Algeria suspends friendship treaty with Spain.
How will Amber Heard's settlement with Johnny Depp affect
domestic violence victims?
Alia Muhammad Baqer.
- 8 United Nations report on violence in the Arab region.
British Muslims protest against the movie "Lord of Heaven."
Charges against 3 women judges dismissed by the Tunisian
President.

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
Europe bans Russian oil.
Documents reveal French President's handling of the 1961 massacre in Algeria in Paris.
- 7 Tunisian woman sets a world record in tennis.
Controversy over the Egyptian squash champion.
Lebanon warns against violating its territorial waters.
A Palestinian woman confronts an Israeli soldier at a rally.
NATO series.
Except the Prophet Muhammad.
- 6 Queen Elizabeth celebrates Platinum Jubilee.
The Sumerian sect celebrates the harvest festival.
The woman in the most famous infant picture in the world dies.
Israeli occupation forces a Palestinian child to take off his shirt.
A 3,400-year-old city appears after the receding of the Tigris River.
A university professor harasses his students.
Sentenced to 67 life imprisonments plus 5,200 years.
- 5 Israeli occupation forces close Al-Quibble prayer hall with chains.
65 years since the setback [alnaksh].
Saudi Arabia receives the first batch of pilgrims from outside the country.
Japanese yen on a hot tin!
- 4 "I am one of 7 billion, why do I exist?"
The story of the Moroccan lane.
Al-Mutanabbi and the rebellion against the kings of his time.
Threats between America and China.
- 3 From flying to junk.
Work experience: 4 days a week.
A Palestinian in Ramallah martyred.
Jerusalem is a Palestinian town.
What is the secret of Adel Imam's closeness to the presidents of Egypt?
"Once Upon a Time" program returns.
- 2 WHO monitors more than 550 cases of smallpox.
Discontent and anger due to high prices in the Arab world.
Knesset passes bill banning Palestinian flags.
Johnny Depp wins a case against his wife.
Israeli occupation forces arrest Palestinian children.

- Palestinian journalists Ghufran and Rasna killed by Israeli soldier.
Arab League endorses a Day of Global Solidarity with Palestinian Journalists.
Tunisian President dismisses a group of judges.
Adel Imam and authority censorship.
Britain sets the date for the deportation of the first batch of immigrants.
Social media users react to a young woman's tweet about her father.
- 1 Russia conducts nuclear exercises.
Hate speech against Syrians in Turkey.
Obtaining a gun license in Israel.
Swedish woman skydives.
Israeli forces shoot a Palestinian.

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