

The Role of Digital Media in Enhancing the Performance of Saudi Diplomacy: The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a Model

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Abstract:

This study primarily aimed to identify the role of digital media, as one of the most important modern news tools, in developing the performance of Saudi diplomacy from the perspective of political and media elites. This was achieved by examining the factors that contribute to improving diplomatic performance and identifying the most significant obstacles preventing digital media from fulfilling its role as a tool for adopting a sophisticated Saudi foreign policy. The research also explored methods and means to enhance the effectiveness of digital media in its role within the diplomatic sphere. The researcher based her study on a group of media and political elites in Saudi Arabia, with a sample of (35) political and media figures. Data was collected through a questionnaire, then processed using the SPSS statistical analysis program, and the results were presented graphically using Excel. The results emphasized the importance of keeping pace with modern changes in diplomatic work through digital media, and that digital media has the ability to attract and persuade the public and followers regarding foreign affairs. Digital media can be used to establish a network of strong relationships that serve the interests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and it is capable of clarifying facts and countering what some countries publish regarding foreign affairs. Digital content can be relied upon to serve the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's objectives in the diplomatic field. Digital media is considered a tool for disseminating Saudi policy abroad, and it is necessary to rely on diplomatic personnel capable of dealing with digital media, especially in the field of digital diplomacy. Saudi diplomatic discourse should surpass its counterparts in terms of influence and impact. The ideology and intellectual framework of digital media discourse should influence diplomatic performance, and the diversity in the use of digital media prioritizes excellence in Saudi diplomatic performance. The importance of training and developing qualified diplomatic personnel is crucial for advancing Saudi Arabia's foreign diplomacy. Attention should be paid to trainers in sectors outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as this contributes to the development of digital media and its performance in relation to Saudi foreign diplomacy. Employing Saudi diplomatic personnel with the ability and skills to utilize modern technologies is essential.

This includes: enhancing soft power and public image; direct and effective communication; crisis management and information dissemination; information and awareness campaigns; developing work mechanisms; updating tools and strategies; understanding the role of digital media in Saudi diplomacy; raising awareness and shaping public image; shaping the national narrative; reaching youth; effective communication and crisis management; rapid response; building bridges of communication; activating public diplomacy; building virtual communities; enhancing transparency and participation; engaging the public; Countering cyberattacks; and creating a platform for dialogue.

Keywords: Digital Media - Saudi Diplomacy - Saudi Foreign Ministry.

Introduction:

With the onset of the technological revolution and the development of social media and communication, coupled with the increased volume of media messages, the world has become a global village. Individuals, communities, and organizations can now share their output in real time with others through social media, a phenomenon known as digital media.

This has led to an expansion of diplomatic influence, shifting diplomatic activities from the traditional sphere to a modern digital one.

The functions of social media, its networks, and applications have been enhanced, giving them a significant role as a contemporary diplomatic tool. States utilize this boundless digital arena to directly address the public, transforming traditional diplomacy into e-diplomacy. This has contributed to bridging distances and expanding the capabilities of modern diplomacy (Islah, 2020).

The internet, defined as a communication tool that allows for the dissemination, exchange, and storage of information, has become a hub for private and public communication, attracting millions of users to its open spaces (Khalifa, 2017).

Digital diplomacy is not merely about activating websites and social media platforms; it also involves recognizing the modern reality where governments are no longer the sole actors in international relations. In international activities, by eliminating spatial boundaries between local and international aspects, citizens, private sector stakeholders, and civil society have become active participants with an undeniable influence (Encyclopedia of Algerian Studies, 2018).

Digital diplomacy has also provided an opportunity to present a progressive and renewed image of the Kingdom internationally, enhancing its effectiveness in international forums. According to the study, Saudi digital diplomacy has faced challenges related to coordination and the distribution of roles among ministries and government agencies, necessitating greater integration and improved coordination to enhance overall effectiveness.

Based on the above, it can be said that while digital diplomacy offers unprecedented opportunities for effective diplomatic work, it also raises challenges related to building the capacities of its practitioners and protecting against technological risks.

It is also worth noting that Saudi Arabia is one of the countries in the region most committed to adopting new diplomacy in its digital form, without neglecting traditional diplomatic aspects.

This commitment has helped the Kingdom cultivate a stronger public image, aligning with the aspirations of Vision 2030.

Digital diplomacy is based on communication between visible and invisible active members of societies, and although the invisible members While these individuals may not have an official presence on social media, their vital diplomatic role has become effective and reliable in strategic and persuasive roles for diplomatic institutions (Islah, 2020).

Digital diplomacy is summarized as the synergy and integration of institutional efforts to achieve national interests, communicating with people in the virtual environment, employing various means to influence them, and utilizing information overload to shape policy, thus anticipating political and social events before they occur, such as the events of the "Arab Spring" (Gulf Studies Center, 2019).

Strengthening the integration between digital media and Saudi diplomacy, and developing the digital form of diplomacy, can be achieved as follows (Abed, 2012):

- Formulating clear visions for Saudi digital diplomacy that enable it to gain ground in international arenas and strengthen the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy.
- Appointing an honorary ambassador for Saudi electronic (digital) diplomacy relations, and learning from the experiences of other countries.
- Achieving harmony and consistency between traditional and digital diplomacy by unifying all aspects of the field and disseminating Saudi media discourse to other nations.
- Optimizing the use of digital tools in diplomacy to enhance dialogue between Different countries and using internationally recognized languages.

Theoretical Framework:

Arab research on digital diplomacy has shown that big data offers unique opportunities to analyze massive amounts of data efficiently and with great accuracy.

This enables decision-makers to delve into the depths of geopolitical circumstances and understand global challenges more comprehensively.

This type of analysis helps predict the developments of international crises and prepares governments to deal with emergencies more effectively. Furthermore, digital diplomacy plays a role in enhancing soft power.

Digital diplomacy constitutes a natural and effective extension of traditional diplomacy, leveraging social media platforms to extend state influence and strengthen diplomatic capabilities in the medium and long term.

These platforms open new channels for international influence and allow for the dissemination and promotion of national values and policies in a way that serves states' international objectives and orientations.

Through the use of digital diplomacy, states can achieve greater influence and develop soft power that enhances their position in the global system. Traditional Diplomacy:

The term "diplomacy" is derived from the Greek word "diploma," meaning a document or "official certificate folded upon itself," issued by the highest authority in the country.

It granted its holder certain privileges and provided details about the envoy's qualifications and the mission for which they were sent. Regarding the modern meaning of diplomacy, its definitions vary among writers and thinkers.

Some attribute it to foreign policy, while others link it to the field of negotiations. Some definitions can be summarized as follows: ¶ It is a set of concepts, protocols, procedures, organizations, institutions, and international traditions that regulate relations between states and their organizations, as well as relations between diplomatic representatives, in service of the greater good (Abu Abah, 2009).

¶ It is a political procedure used by states to implement their policies and manage their foreign relations with other states and international entities within the framework of the international system (Abdul Hamid, 2012).

λ Digital Diplomacy: As mentioned, digital diplomacy represents a shift in diplomacy from the traditional to the digital sphere. Based on the Chakraborty dictionary, it can be defined as a new form of public diplomacy that strengthens its relationships using the internet, communication and information technologies, and social media.

The fundamental difference between traditional and digital diplomacy lies in the fact that digital diplomacy offers easier and faster access to information. Furthermore, the integration of digital media into diplomacy has enhanced interaction and relationships between organizations and individuals (Cultural Diplomacy Dictionary, 2013).

Digital Media: Defined as media based on electronic (digital) technology operating on a "0-1" system (Al-Rubaie, 2015).

Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs: One of the Saudi government ministries, responsible for regulating the state's foreign relations and diplomacy with other countries.

It also organizes domestic and international travel. Previous Experiences:

⌘ **The American Experience:** The Americans began experimenting with digital diplomacy in 2002.

The US State Department established an office dedicated to digital diplomacy to implement it in managing its relations and policies with other countries.

The US is the country that most frequently uses this type of diplomacy, as evidenced by the following:

λ The US media includes approximately 194 Twitter accounts and over 200 Facebook accounts. Twitter users tweet in seven languages, and there is continuous communication between US State Department employees and approximately 15 million people worldwide (Al-Yateem, 2018).

λ The US State Department continued to expand this type of diplomacy between 2006 and 2010, taking several steps to enhance the use of digital media in diplomacy (Tayyiba, 2017).

⌘ **The French experience:** French activity in relation to electronic diplomacy using the Internet included the fact that diplomatic missions (more than 280 missions) had websites on the Internet in common languages, reaching 15 languages (Diplomacy in France, 2019).

Reference Studies:

Al-Zayed's study (2025) aimed to examine elite trends regarding the future of cultural diplomacy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia within the framework of Vision 2030. Cultural diplomacy is a type of public diplomacy that utilizes cultural exchange to build understanding and positive relations between nations. It involves sharing aspects of a country's culture, such as art, music, language, and traditions, with other countries to promote mutual respect and cooperation. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which focuses on political and economic negotiations, cultural diplomacy focuses on soft power and people-to-people communication. Through Vision 2030, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has sought to enhance its cultural standing globally through cultural programs and events aimed at the international community.

Al-Muzaini and Al-Mutrafi's study (2024) aimed to examine Saudi preventive diplomacy and the protection of intellectual security. Titled "Saudi Preventive Diplomacy and its Impact on Protecting Intellectual Security," the study addresses the concepts of preventive diplomacy, intellectual security, and related terms such as intellectual extremism and terrorism. The study's significance lies in highlighting the role of Saudi preventive diplomacy in protecting intellectual security from the perspective of Vision 2030. The aim is to identify the tools of Saudi preventive diplomacy, activate its role in Islamic, regional, and international organizations, and assess its impact on achieving the Kingdom's domestic and foreign policy objectives.

While Ajimi's study (2024) aimed to examine the role of digital diplomacy in shaping the image of Saudi Arabia abroad, the study sample consisted of numerous research papers on digital diplomacy in both Arabic and English, covering the period between 2017 and 2023. The sample included 22 research papers and studies, which were presented and analyzed in detail.

This analysis involved reviewing several scholarly studies published in specialized journals and various scientific databases. The sample comprised 10 foreign, 7 Arab, and 5 Saudi studies. Through this multi-faceted analysis, it was found that 16 studies employed an analytical approach to present their findings, while 4 utilized a survey methodology. Only 2 studies focused on a qualitative approach to develop their content. The study's results demonstrated significant developments in the field of digital diplomacy, showing how reliance on digital tools such as social media platforms and electronic media has become essential in promoting foreign policy and strengthening the Kingdom's role as a key player on the global stage. The study also highlighted the role of the Center for Communication and New Media at the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, established in 2019, in producing content that reflects and reinforces Saudi identity. From its international standing, and to directing diplomatic messages abroad.

Al-Harbi's study (2023) also examined the effectiveness of digital diplomacy in building relationships with the public from an international public relations perspective: a case study of the Saudi Arabian diplomatic missions' use of Twitter in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the last decade, the use of digital diplomacy tools has increased, accompanied by a clear research interest in studying all topics related to describing and analyzing the limits of relying on them to influence the state's image and foreign public opinion. Despite this, there is a pressing need for further studies that attempt to delve deeper into the mechanisms and dynamics of these digital platforms and the limits of their use in the field of digital diplomacy. In this context, the current study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of diplomacy in building relationships with the public from the perspective of international public relations. The study adopted a theoretical approach that explains the development of the concept of digital diplomacy and its various functions, within the framework of the vision presented by the researchers Dodd & Collins in the form of a model that clarifies the functions of digital diplomacy through social media platforms. The current study is a descriptive study that adopted the case study method and the content analysis tool, through the content analysis of tweets, which amounted to (1181) tweets divided into (730) tweets published through the official account of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's mission to the United States via Twitter, as well as (451) tweets published through the official account of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's mission to the United Kingdom.

The study by Abdulrahman and Sawsan Jabbar (2021) aimed to examine diplomatic representation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: a historical study of its origins and development up to 1953. While the concept of international relations was linked to the emergence of states, it was initially unorganized. With the development of international relations and the expansion of communication between states, the need arose for diplomatic representatives and ambassadors, requiring their permanent accreditation. Diplomatic representation has become a cornerstone of international relations, enabling states to bolster their international standing and strengthen their regional and global influence. Initially, diplomacy was simple and traditional. However, after World War II, it underwent a radical transformation, particularly with the emergence of new issues on the international stage, such as the establishment of political and economic relations. This led to a more expansive and complex work for diplomats, necessitating the establishment of a comprehensive system of diplomatic representation. The study examines diplomatic representation in the Kingdom from its inception to the end of the reign of King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud (1953), addressing the concept of diplomacy and the stages of diplomatic representation's development in the Kingdom, from the establishment of the Political Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the present day. Its evolution into the General Directorate of Foreign Affairs and finally its transformation into the independent Ministry of Foreign Affairs to regulate and manage foreign relations. The research relied on a range of sources from authors who worked officially in the diplomatic field, adding facts and details to the emergence and development of diplomatic representation in the Kingdom.

Al-Osaimi's study (2021) also aimed to examine the future of Saudi digital diplomacy in light of current international transformations, using the International Communication Center as a model: a quantitative and qualitative study. This approach is considered the best way to predict and assess the future, starting from the present and an awareness of its challenges. Thus, the study's problem lies in defining the features of the future of digital diplomacy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and clarifying the role through which the Kingdom can positively influence the peoples of other countries through technology. The thesis also examines the impact of current international transformations on the future of digital diplomacy. This study aimed to anticipate the future of Saudi digital diplomacy by applying it to the International Communication Center, through studying the current reality of Saudi digital diplomacy, and identifying statistically significant differences between the average responses of the study participants, who are experts in Saudi digital diplomacy and employees of the International Communication Center. To achieve its objectives, the study followed the methodology of future studies in a quantitative and qualitative manner, using the Delphi technique to survey the opinions of (11) digital diplomacy experts in two rounds, as well as personal interviews with employees of the International Communication Center. The results of the study, with regard to the future work of the International Communication Center, indicated the need to work on establishing a "Soft Power Council" specializing in ways to enhance soft power and implement digital diplomacy

through specialized experts and adopting it through the International Communication Center. The center will also expand its linguistic focus to include working on language policies for friendly and geographically close countries, such as Chinese and Persian. It will contribute to a better understanding of the cultural, social, and political image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia globally by promoting digital outreach and disseminating information about current developments within the Kingdom. However, the center anticipates that the shortage of human and material resources will pose a challenge to digital diplomacy in the future, unless addressed now through the inclusion of a specialization in soft power and curricula dedicated to digital diplomacy, its strategies, and its implementation. The researcher recommended drawing inspiration from leading and effective international experiences in digital diplomacy, while remaining consistent with Islamic teachings and Saudi traditions. She also emphasized the necessity of establishing a unit to evaluate the performance of digital diplomacy within the country. This unit should comprise individuals from various disciplines and levels, tasked with monitoring evaluation processes and performance, providing them with all necessary training, guidance, and authority, and reporting its findings and recommendations directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Media.

Research Problem:

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs seeks to build international relations to achieve Vision 2030 and maintain Arab unity and a distinguished global standing. Despite this, some studies have indicated the need to develop the digital diplomatic performance of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which occupies a leading position among countries worldwide. Given the important role of digital media in the field of media, and its advantages, most notably the use of modern tools to accomplish tasks, this has prompted the development of the role of digital media in enhancing the performance of Saudi diplomacy.

Research Questions:

The researcher proposed a set of questions for the current study, which are as follows:

- 1- What is the role of digital media in developing the performance of Saudi diplomacy from the perspective of political and media elites?
- 2- What obstacles does digital media face in fulfilling its role in developing Saudi diplomacy from the perspective of political and media elites?
- 3- What are the methods for activating digital media to develop Saudi diplomacy from the perspective of political and media elites?

Research Objectives:

The importance of the current study lies in the following:

- 1- Identifying the role of digital media in developing the performance of Saudi diplomacy.
2. To highlight the most significant challenges and obstacles facing digital media in fulfilling its role in developing Saudi diplomatic performance.
3. To identify ways to activate the role of digital media in developing Saudi diplomatic performance.

The Importance of the Research:

The importance of this study can be divided into two parts:
First: Theoretical Importance:

- The topic of digital media and its reliance on modern technologies and tools is of paramount importance due to its active role in developing the work of diplomatic institutions.
- There is a scarcity of research addressing the role of digital media in developing the diplomatic work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in general, and the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular.

Second: Applied Importance:

- This study aims to provide a scientific approach that assists those working in the diplomatic corps of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs in utilizing digital media to enhance their performance.
- It seeks to uncover the perceptions of media and diplomatic elites regarding the most significant challenges facing digital media in fulfilling its role in developing the performance of diplomacy within the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to propose the most important solutions to overcome these challenges. Research Methodology:

The current study employed the following research methodologies:

1- Survey Methodology: The researcher used the descriptive survey method, as it is suitable for accessing information and data about a phenomenon or group of phenomena.

2- Analytical Methodology: The researcher used the descriptive analytical method to accurately describe the phenomenon and identify its causes and controlling factors. Research Sample: The sample studied in this research comprised a group of media and political elites. The media elite included a number of journalists in addition to employees of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the sample, which consisted of (35) political and media figures.

Research Tools:

1- Questionnaire: The researcher used a questionnaire in her study, which is one of the most important tools used to collect data from the studied sample. It consisted of a set of questions formulated to meet the research objective, aiming to identify the viewpoints and orientations of the sample members.

This research will examine the role of digital media in developing the performance of Saudi diplomacy. Study Scope: Spatial Scope:

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Temporal Scope: The study was conducted between 2024 and 2025.

Questionnaire Validity: This means that the questionnaire includes all the elements necessary for analysis and that its items and questions are clear. It also means that the questionnaire measures what it was designed to measure. Questionnaire Reliability:

The researcher conducted a reliability test on the questionnaire using a test-retest process with 10% of the sample. The reliability coefficient was found to be 95%, confirming the validity of the questionnaire used for data collection.

The research questions were then answered by analyzing the data collected through the questionnaires using the SPSS statistical analysis program and a five-point Likert scale.

Question 1: - What is the role of digital media in developing the performance of Saudi diplomacy, represented by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the perspective of political and media elites?

- To answer this question, the researchers calculated the arithmetic means and standard deviation as follows:

- **The statement** (1)- Digital media is capable of keeping pace with modern changes in diplomatic work) ranked first with an arithmetic mean of (3.65) and a standard deviation of (0.83). This can be explained by the presence of powerful and influential digital media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which directly reach followers in the diplomatic field. Through these platforms, diplomacy establishes relationships between countries and peoples by influencing public opinion.

Table (1): Statistical results illustrating the role of digital media in developing the performance of Saudi foreign diplomacy

Number	Paragraph	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	Digital media keeps pace with modern developments in diplomatic work.	3.43	0.87	1
2	Digital media has the ability to attract and persuade audiences and followers regarding foreign affairs.	3.13	0.95	5
3	Digital media can be used to build a strong network of relationships that serve the interests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.	3.20	0.92	4
4	Digital media is capable of clarifying facts and countering what some countries publish regarding foreign affairs.	3.14	0.91	6
5	Relying on digital content serves the objectives of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the diplomatic field.	3.23	0.89	3
6	Digital media outlets are considered a tool for disseminating Saudi policy abroad.	3.26	0.88	2

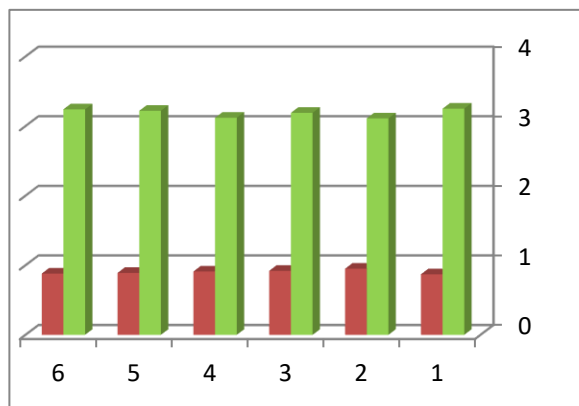
- **In second place is paragraph (6)**, which considers digital media a tool for disseminating Saudi policy abroad, with a mean of (3.43) and a deviation of (0.87). This indicates the importance of digital media in the diplomatic field and that it is a priority for Saudi diplomacy in order to present the Saudi vision using digital technologies, as confirmed by the researcher (Abdul-Aal, 2018).
- **This is followed by paragraph (5)**, which states that digital content serves the objectives of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the diplomatic field, with a mean of (3.23) and a deviation of (0.88).

- **Next is paragraph (4)**, which explains that digital media is capable of clarifying facts and countering what some countries publish regarding foreign issues, with a mean of (3.13) and a deviation of (0.95).

- **Paragraph (3)**, which states that digital media can be used to establish a network of strong relationships that serve the interests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, came in fourth place with a mean of (3.20) and a deviation of (0.92). This result indicates that digital media is capable of building strong relationships if it is developed using technological means. The field of digital technologies and the internet.

- **Item (2)**, "Digital media has the ability to attract and persuade the public and followers regarding foreign affairs," received a mean score of (3.20) and a standard deviation of (0.92), ranking fifth. This is explained by the fact that the successive developments and the ongoing confrontation between Saudi media and the media of the occupying power are among the most important factors causing weakness in Saudi digital media regarding foreign affairs and attempts to reach a large audience base.

- **Item (1)**, "Digital media keeps pace with modern changes in diplomatic work," ranked last with a mean score of (3.12) and a standard deviation of (0.91). This is due to the sample's awareness of the capabilities possessed by others and the potential that enables them to effectively utilize digital tools to reach an audience base for support.



*MEAN **STANDARD DEVIATION

Figure (1): Graphic representation of the statistical results regarding the role of digital media in developing the performance of diplomacy for the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Question 2: What obstacles hinder digital media from fulfilling its role in developing Saudi foreign diplomacy, from the perspective of political and media elites?

Table (2): Statistical results regarding the obstacles hindering digital media from fulfilling its role in developing Saudi foreign diplomacy

Number	Paragraph	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	Diplomatic personnel capable of handling digital media, especially in the field of digital diplomacy, must be relied upon.	4.55	0.64	1
2	Saudi diplomatic discourse must surpass its counterparts in other countries in both influence and impact.	4.35	0.72	4
3	The ideology and intellectual framework of digital media discourse must influence diplomatic performance.	4.47	0.65	3
4	Diversity in the use of digital media prioritizes excellence in Saudi diplomatic performance.	4.49	0.61	2

- **From the table, we find that item (1)**, which states the need to rely on personnel capable of handling digital tools, especially in the field of digital diplomacy, received the highest arithmetic mean (4.55) and a deviation of (0.64). This indicates the importance of relying on individuals trained to use the latest technology-based tools in the diplomatic field.

- **Item (2)**, which states that Saudi diplomatic discourse should surpass its counterparts in other countries in terms of both influence and impact, received an arithmetic mean of (4.35) and a deviation of (0.72). This is evident from the diversity of digital platforms representing Saudi diplomatic discourse in many countries around the world.

- **Then we find paragraph (3)** stating that the ideology and intellectual framework of digital media discourse should influence diplomatic performance, with a mean of (4.47) and a deviation of (0.65). This is explained by the weakness and lack of experience, as improving the reality of digital media in the diplomatic field fundamentally requires skills and capabilities capable of attracting and influencing foreign audiences.

- Finally, we find paragraph (4) stating that the diversity in the use of digital media prioritizes excellence in Saudi diplomatic performance, with a mean of (4.49) and a deviation of (0.61). This is logical due to the high level of competitiveness of Saudi digital media compared to all other countries (Abrash, 2018).

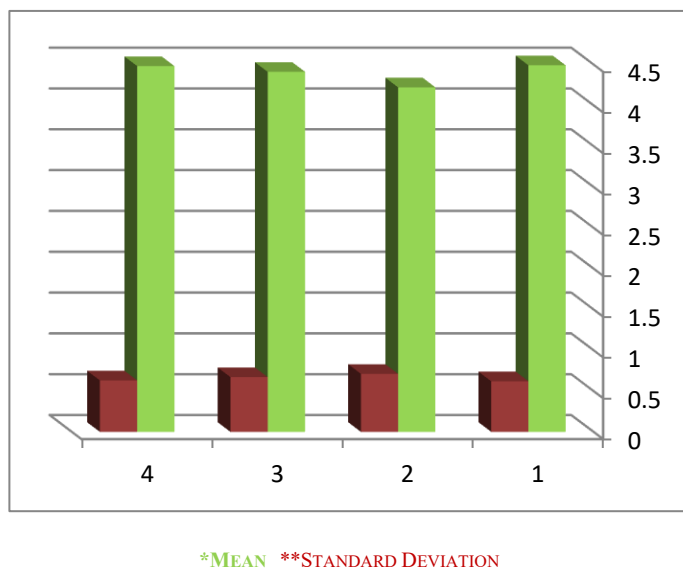


Figure (2): Graphic representation of the statistical results regarding the obstacles facing digital media in performing its role in developing Saudi foreign diplomacy.

Question 3: What are the methods for activating digital media to develop Saudi foreign diplomacy from the perspective of political and media elites?

Table (3): Statistical results of methods for activating digital media to develop Saudi foreign diplomacy.

Number	Paragraph	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	Training and qualifying diplomatic personnel to enhance Saudi Arabia's foreign diplomacy.	4.49	0.68	1
2	The involvement of trainers from sectors outside the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs contributes to the development of digital media and its performance in relation to Saudi Arabia's foreign diplomacy.	4.37	0.72	3
3	Employing Saudi diplomatic personnel with the ability and skills to use modern technological tools.	4.39	0.71	2

- The table shows that item (1), "Training and qualifying diplomatic personnel to develop Saudi foreign diplomacy," received the highest mean score (4.49) and a standard deviation of (0.68). This demonstrates the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' focus on qualifying and training diplomatic personnel.

- This was followed by item (3), "Employing Saudi diplomatic personnel with the ability and skills to deal with modern technological tools," with a mean score of (4.39) and a standard deviation of (0.71). This highlights the importance of possessing the skills necessary to keep pace with the latest developments in the world of digital media and journalism, which are crucial for addressing Saudi foreign policy issues.

- In last place was item (2), "The interest of non-Ministry of Foreign Affairs sectors in trainers contributes to developing digital media and its performance in relation to Saudi foreign diplomacy," with the lowest mean score of (4.37) and a standard deviation of (0.72). Despite the low value of this item, the importance of non-Ministry of Foreign Affairs sectors in developing digital media cannot be underestimated.

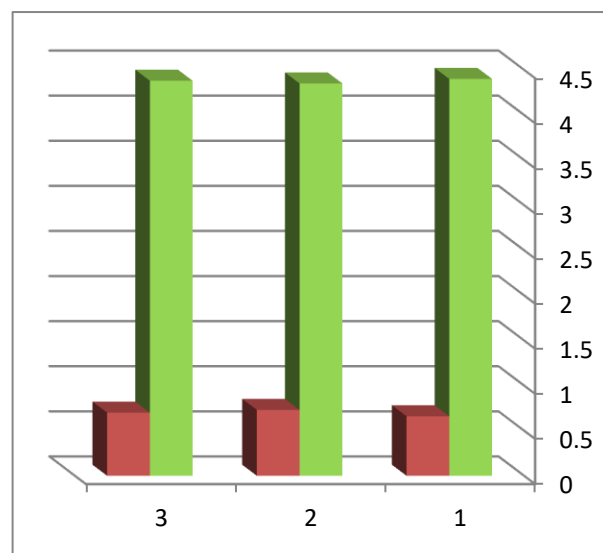


Figure (3): Graphic representation of the statistical results related to methods of activating digital media to develop diplomacy for the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Conclusion:

This research examined the role of digital media in developing the performance of Saudi diplomacy from the perspective of political and media elites.

-The primary objective was to identify the role of digital media in enhancing the performance of Saudi foreign policy from the perspective of these elites, as well as to review the most significant obstacles hindering the advancement of digital media in the diplomatic field.

- The research also explored the most important methods necessary to support the development of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' performance through the use of digital media.

- The study was conducted using a sample , Data was collected through a questionnaire, then statistically analyzed using SPSS software, and the results were presented graphically using Microsoft Excel.

- The results indicated that digital media is capable of keeping pace with modern changes in diplomatic work. Furthermore, the results demonstrated the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs' interest in digital media within the diplomatic sphere, recognizing it as a fundamental tool for presenting the Saudi vision using digital technologies.

- However, the ongoing developments and confrontation between Saudi media and the media affiliated with the occupying entity are among the most significant factors contributing to the weakness of digital media within the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and limiting its reach to the widest possible audience.

-The successive developments and the ongoing confrontation between Saudi media and the media of the occupying entity are among the most important factors leading to the weakness of digital media within the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and limiting its reach to the widest possible audience. Ajimi (2024) emphasized the role of digital diplomacy in shaping Saudi Arabia's image abroad.

-He noted its contribution to establishing new, efficient, and effective avenues for diplomatic communication between different countries and cultures. In an era characterized by speed and openness, government officials have become more directly engaged with the public through social media platforms, making these platforms key channels for interacting with broader segments of the population.

-This digital openness has facilitated rapid and complex developments in foreign policy and provided a space for new actors, operating outside traditional diplomatic frameworks, to influence the perception of their countries and cultures internationally. It is worth noting that Saudi Arabia is one of the region's leading countries in adopting digital diplomacy while simultaneously maintaining its traditional diplomatic practices.

-This focus has helped the Kingdom cultivate a stronger image, aligning with the aspirations of Vision 2030.

- Regarding the challenges facing digital media in developing the role of Saudi foreign affairs, one of the most significant factors is the need for personnel capable of handling digital tools, particularly in the field of diplomacy.

- Furthermore, the divisions and accusations that have emerged... Based on a digital survey of the social media pages of a select group of activists, one of the biggest obstacles to showcasing Saudi foreign policy and diplomacy through digital media is the lack of digital platforms.

- The role of digital media is of paramount importance to Saudi diplomacy by enhancing direct communication with the global public, shaping a positive image of the Kingdom (especially within the framework of Vision 2030), managing crises and correcting misconceptions, and disseminating the Kingdom's vision and objectives using modern tools such as artificial intelligence.

-This strengthens soft power and opens avenues for interaction through digital platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and Zoom.

- The results also showed that training and qualifying diplomatic personnel has an impact on developing Saudi foreign diplomacy.

This indicates the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' commitment to training, building, and developing the professional capabilities of diplomats in various fields.

-The research also emphasized the importance of cooperation across multiple sectors to activate and support the role of digital media in improving the performance of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Furthermore, direct and real-time communication with the world, shaping the national narrative, correcting misinformation, engaging with youth, promoting global dialogue, and supporting Vision 2030 transform diplomacy into an effective tool for building a positive image, managing crises, and reaching global audiences, moving beyond traditional channels.

The study also highlighted the crucial role of modern digital media in enhancing Saudi diplomatic performance and the necessity of making Saudi digital media more effective across all diplomatic spheres, given the Kingdom's distinguished position both domestically and internationally.

The study further indicated a need to increase expertise in technological applications for the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to improve its performance. Additionally, the study emphasized that enhancing the skills of media personnel within the Ministry is a key approach to developing digital media performance in Saudi diplomacy, while also underscoring the importance of non-governmental sectors.

Research Proposals:

The following key roles of digital media in Saudi diplomacy have emerged:

- **Enhancing soft power and positive image:** Contributing to presenting a strong and modern image of Saudi Arabia, aligned with Vision 2030, through the dissemination of interactive and engaging content.

- **Direct and effective communication:** Enabling diplomats to communicate directly with foreign audiences and opinion leaders, bypassing traditional media, via platforms like Twitter, thus facilitating interaction and engagement.

- **Crisis management and information dissemination:** Serving as a vital tool to counter misinformation and correct misconceptions about Islam and the Kingdom in real time.

- **Information dissemination and awareness:** Used to disseminate positive news and developments within the Kingdom, highlight important issues, and promote awareness of Saudi culture.

- **Developing operational mechanisms:** Utilizing applications such as WhatsApp and Zoom to enhance collaboration and interaction between the organization and member states (such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation).

• **Updating tools and strategies:** Adopting modern technologies such as artificial intelligence to increase the reach and appeal of content, and developing the digital infrastructure to support diplomatic efforts. Challenges and Opportunities:

• **Opportunities:** Building sustainable digital capabilities, expanding language coverage, and engaging citizens in national efforts.

• **Challenges:** The need to build human capacity and develop strategies to address cyber risks and bridge the gap between expectations and reality. In general, digital media represents a qualitative leap in Saudi diplomacy, transforming it into a more flexible and effective tool for achieving its objectives on the international stage.

• **Roles of Digital Media in Saudi Diplomacy:**

• Raising awareness and shaping public perception.

• Shaping the national narrative: Utilizing social media platforms to disseminate Saudi Arabia's official narrative on its issues and promote its values and culture.

• Reaching youth: Targeting young people globally through digital content to attract and educate them about Saudi Arabia's opportunities and future vision.

• Effective communication and crisis management.

• **Rapid response:** Immediately responding to events and crises and correcting misinformation through digital platforms to control the narrative.

• **Building bridges of communication:** Establishing direct dialogues with the public and international institutions, thereby enhancing trust.

• **Activating Public Diplomacy:**

• **Building virtual communities:** Creating spaces for interaction around shared issues to unify public opinion and influence decision-making.

• **Marketing opportunities:** Promoting investments, economic opportunities, and Vision 2030 initiatives globally.

• Enhancing transparency and participation.

• **Engaging the public:** Transforming the public from passive recipients to active participants through comments and self-generated content.

• **A platform for dialogue:** Utilizing digital media as a tool for public discourse on important issues.

Study Recommendations:

The study presented a series of recommendations, the most prominent of which are outlined below:

• Strengthening the focus on digital diplomacy, with an emphasis on raising awareness among diplomats and citizens about its importance in enhancing the Kingdom's international image.

• Developing awareness of the relationship between modern technology and digital diplomacy, and producing more direct and in-depth media content about modern technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, and their role in enhancing digital diplomacy to increase awareness of the importance of this relationship.

• Expanding the range of electronic services provided by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its embassies, while promoting reliance on modern technologies to improve the efficiency of digital diplomacy.

• Intensifying training programs to enable diplomats to acquire technical skills that enhance their ability to use digital diplomacy effectively.

• Changing diplomats' perception of digital diplomacy as a tool to improve diplomatic performance, rather than a threat to their jobs.

• Increasing awareness among Saudi youth about the importance of digital diplomacy by organizing meetings and workshops that help them utilize modern technologies to enhance the Kingdom's international image.

• Protecting diplomatic systems from technological risks to ensure the secure progress of digital diplomacy without exposure to the dangers of cyberattacks and hacking.

• Preparing more scientific studies that target digital diplomacy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, linking it to several modern variables, such as artificial intelligence, the Kingdom's Vision 2030, and future aspirations.

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