#Bring Back Our Girls

SOCIAL MEDIA’S INVOLVEMENT IN THE NEWS STORY
The Story

On 4-5\textsuperscript{th} April 2014 276 teenage female students were kidnapped from a government secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria. The kidnapping was carried out by Boko Haram, an extremist terrorist organization occupying in Northeastern Nigeria.

It is believed that the girls were sold into slavery or prostitution.

An estimated 57 girls escaped in the days following the kidnapping and in October 2016 another 21 girls returned home. A remaining 114 girls are still missing.
Media Coverage

Any substantial news coverage of the kidnappings was delayed by a few weeks until the social media campaign ‘#bringbackourgirls’ started.

The story was covered in two main ways by different publications:

1. Reporting on the Boko Haram movement and updates the whereabouts of the teenage girls

2. Reporting on the social media campaign and the celebrities involved in the campaign
The Social Media Campaign

The social media campaign began on Facebook and Twitter with the hashtag ‘#bringbackourgirls’ in 2014. Social media played a very important part in the story as the campaign went viral and was being loudly talked about over social websites.

The public involvement of celebrities in the #bringbackourgirls movement brought worldwide attention to the campaign. Celebrities such as model Cara Delevigne, actor Gerard Butler and actress Emma Watson posted pictures on social media of them holding up posters reading “bring back our girls” or “real men don’t buy girls”.

REAL MEN DON’T BUY GIRLS

X BRING BACK OUR GIRLS
The Range of Platforms Used

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
Has social media helped to raise awareness?

Across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook celebrities posted pictures of themselves with ‘bring back our girls’ posters which definitely raised awareness for the story. A lot of the reporting surrounding the kidnapping story was focused on the celebrity involvement and the social media campaign.

The hashtag “#bringbackourgirls” became a global phenomenon in April 2014; there were over 3.3 million people tweeting about the subject. 27% of the tweets were coming from Nigeria, 26% from the US and 11% from the UK.

The most shared tweet was Michelle Obama’s picture with over 57,000 retweets.

The official Bring Back Our Girls Facebook page has 236,087 likes. The facebook page asks users to share petitions, news stories and images on their profiles to raise awareness.
Journalist and Audience Interaction

The social media campaign provided a surplus of information for the media to report on. The ‘bring back our girls’ official Facebook page and website frequently posts information about the search for the missing girls.

The #countdownto3years captivity is the most recent social media trend regarding the story. Social media users are trying to hold the Nigerian government to account themselves and the media is now reporting on the nature of the newest social media trend.

Families of the missing girls and girls who have returned home have posted their stories on Facebook and Twitter and journalists can easily find these people and publish their stories to raise awareness.

This also works the other way as the campaign social sites repost and share the links to news stories about the Nigerian kidnappings.
Would the story be different without the involvement of social media?

Social media played a defining role in the type of coverage of the story.

Tabloid newspapers latched on to the campaign on twitter, instagram and facebook and reported updates of the celebrity support of the campaign.

The social media campaign #bringbackourgirls brought widespread attention to the story.

The trend of celebrities posting selfies holding paper with ‘bring back our girls’ written on it created a new angle to the story.
Tabloid coverage of the story

The Daily Mail

The Daily Mail published sensationalized stories about the Chibok kidnappings. Their articles focused on the celebrity and social media aspect of the story; posting images and screenshots of trending tweets and celebrity selfies.

There was a lack of ‘hard news’ to encourage active support from their readers.