

# **The Digital Battlefield: Investigating the Role of Online Platforms and Social Media in Shaping the Chana Movement's Quest for Democracy and Justice**

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## **Abstract**

The Chana Community Movement in Thailand's Songkhla province opposes a government industrial estate project that threatens the region's environmental and cultural heritage. This study explores how the movement leverages online platforms to mobilize support, organize protests, and communicate its message, while also addressing the challenges posed by digital tools. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered from primary and secondary sources, including observations and stakeholder interviews, and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that while digital platforms are essential for communication and mobilization, they also introduce significant challenges, such as misinformation, government surveillance, and the digital divide, which can hinder inclusive participation. The movement's success depends on effectively integrating digital tools with offline activism and addressing the risks associated with online manipulation. This study contributes to the broader discourse on digital activism by illustrating how online platforms can both empower and complicate social movements in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Digital Activism; Social Media; Community Movement; Democracy and Justice

## **Introduction**

The rise of digital platforms and social media has transformed social movements into digital battlegrounds where the fight for democracy and justice unfolds (Tufekci, 2017). These platforms have become essential for movements globally, allowing them to challenge power structures, mobilize supporters, and disseminate information effectively (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). This study examines how digital tools have shaped the Chana Community Movement's fight for democracy and justice in Thailand's Songkhla province. The Chana Community Movement arose in response to the Thai government's plan to develop an industrial estate in their community. Concerned about environmental damage, cultural loss, and lack of transparency in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) processes, the community turned to digital platforms to advocate for their cause (Amnesty International, 2022). Through social media, the movement has garnered public support, raised awareness of the project's threats, and directly challenged the government's plans.

Digital activism has enabled the Chana Community Movement to organize protests and craft narratives that resonate both nationally and internationally, emphasizing its role in a "digital battlefield." However, this battlefield presents challenges, including misinformation,

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government surveillance, and the digital divide, which complicate the movement's efforts (Castells, 2015). While digital tools are powerful in modern activism, there is a gap in understanding how these platforms specifically influence strategies and outcomes in movements like the Chana Community Movement.

## Research Objectives

1. To examine how online platforms and social media shape the strategies of the Chana Community Movement in its pursuit of democracy and justice.
2. To identify and analyze the challenges the Chana Community Movement faces on the digital battlefield and assess how these challenges impact its effectiveness.

## Literature Review

### Digital Activism, Social Media, and Social Movement Theory

The transformation of socio-political mobilization through digital technology has positioned social media platforms as pivotal tools for contemporary activism. These platforms have revolutionized the dynamics of political movements worldwide, particularly in regions like Thailand, by enabling decentralized communication and facilitating collective action. Social Movement Theory provides a valuable lens for understanding the influence of social media on political engagement. Scholars such as Tufekci and Wilson (2012), Rainie et al. (2012), and Theocharis (2015) emphasize that social media decentralizes communication, empowering individuals and organizations to effectively mobilize support, disseminate information, and coordinate collective action. Critical features of social media, including interactivity, immediacy, and the potential for content virality, significantly enhance the reach and impact of social movements (Boulianne, 2015; Young, Selander, & Vaast, 2019).

Resource Mobilization Theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) explains how social movements acquire and utilize resources—such as human capital, technology, information, and social networks—to achieve their goals, particularly within the context of digital activism. This theory suggests that digital platforms are crucial for mobilizing public support, disseminating information, and coordinating activities. For example, the widespread use of hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter demonstrates how digital tools can draw national and international attention, galvanizing public participation. Additionally, digital platforms also facilitate more efficient resource management, enabling movements to secure financial support through online campaigns and expand their networks by connecting with other groups engaged in similar causes.

Framing Process Theory (Snow & Benford, 1988) offers a framework for understanding how social movements construct and disseminate narratives to gain support, legitimize their causes, and mobilize participants. This theory highlights the strategic use of language, symbols, and stories to shape public perception and align a movement's goals with broader societal values. By employing framing strategies, social movements can humanize their causes and resonate with supporters on an emotional level. For example, movements can use social media to share compelling stories and images that highlight their objectives, thereby broadening their appeal and reinforcing their position against opposing viewpoints.

Integrating Social Movement Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, and Framing Process Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the role of digital activism in contemporary social movements. These theories collectively help to explain how social movements utilize digital tools to decentralize communication, efficiently manage resources, and construct powerful narratives that resonate with broader societal values. This theoretical approach is crucial for understanding the dynamics of modern social movements and the evolving role of digital platforms in shaping political and social change.

### **Harnessing Digital Activism: Strategic Adaptation of Social Movement Organizations**

Digital activism has revolutionized how social movement organizations (SMOs) engage in social and political advocacy. By fully integrating digital tools, particularly social media, SMOs have transformed their methods of engaging supporters, disseminating information, and mobilizing action. This shift goes beyond adopting new technologies; it reflects a significant reconfiguration of how movements operate in the digital age. As Castells (2015) notes, networked social movements are now free from physical and geographical limits, using social media as powerful tools for communication and broad mobilization.

Howard and Hussain (2013) identify three key strategies through which SMOs harness digital activism:

- 1. Strategic Coordination:** Digital platforms enable efficient coordination of protests, online campaigns, and unified approaches within decentralized groups.
- 2. Information Sharing:** Social media allows for the rapid dissemination of information, keeping audiences informed in real-time and countering misinformation.
- 3. Online Networking:** Digital platforms facilitate global connections among activists, fostering a community united by a shared cause.

The impact of digital activism is evident in movements like the Arab Spring, #MeToo, and climate activism, which have gained global support and driven significant change. As digital tools continue to evolve, SMOs are increasingly adopting advanced techniques like data analytics and artificial intelligence to enhance their efforts. However, challenges such as digital surveillance, online censorship, and the digital divide remain critical concerns that SMOs must address to sustain their work effectively.

### **Research Methodology**

To address the research questions—(1) how online platforms and social media shape the strategies of the Chana Community Movement in its quest for democracy and justice, and (2) what challenges the movement faces on this digital battlefield, affecting its effectiveness—this study focused on qualitative data collection, using semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth insights into the movement's digital strategies and the challenges faced in their activism.

**Data Collection and Instruments:** Data collection involved a comprehensive multi-method approach, utilizing both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data were gathered from academic databases such as Google Scholar and JSTOR, focusing on peer-reviewed publications, archival records, and media articles to establish a robust background on the Chana Network Movement (Yin, 2014). Primary data were collected through participatory and non-participatory observations, along with semi-structured interviews. The researcher actively engaged in community activities, including rallies and protests, and documented these events through detailed field notes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Interviews were conducted with a

diverse group of stakeholders, including leaders, activists, community members, and government officials, using digital platforms like Zoom and Google Meet.

**Data Analysis, Validity, and Ethical Considerations:** Data analysis employed thematic analysis, beginning with familiarization and followed by systematic coding that combined deductive and inductive approaches to identify key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Validity and reliability were ensured through triangulation, comparing data from multiple sources (Denzin, 1978), and by using member checks and reflexivity to minimize bias and confirm accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and allowing participants to withdraw at any time. The research adhered to the ethical standards of Chulalongkorn University's IRB.

## Research Conceptual Framework

This framework integrates Social Movement Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, and Framing Process Theory to examine how digital platforms influence the Chana Community Movement's strategies and challenges. Social Movement Theory explains how platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram enable decentralized communication, enhancing organization and coordination. Resource Mobilization Theory underscores the importance of these platforms in gathering resources such as support, information, and funding. Framing Process Theory highlights how the movement uses digital tools to craft and disseminate narratives on environmental justice and community rights, shaping public perception and legitimacy. Additionally, the framework addresses challenges including the digital divide, echo chambers, misinformation, and the risks posed by censorship and surveillance, which necessitate secure communication and strategic adaptation.

## Results

This section explores the roles and challenges of digital activism and social media in shaping the Chana Community Movement. Digital platforms are vital for communication, organizing protests, and mobilizing support, amplifying community voices on environmental and social justice issues. However, they also present challenges like misinformation, unequal access, and online manipulation risks. Achieving the movement's goals requires balancing digital tools with offline activism. The section is organized into three parts: the role of digital activism, the challenges posed by digital tools, and the impact of technology on the movement, highlighting the need for strategic application.

### 1. The Role of Digital Activism and Social Media in the Chana Community Movement

In this section, the argument centers on the integral role of digital activism and social media within the Chana Community Movement. These platforms serve crucial functions: facilitating mobilization and organizational coordination, raising awareness and setting agendas, fostering networking and solidarity among supporters, amplifying marginalized voices, and rapidly disseminating information and sharing knowledge. These components collectively underscore how digital tools empower the community to mobilize effectively, shape public discourse, strengthen alliances, elevate unheard perspectives, and educate both supporters and the broader public about their cause as detailed findings.

**Facilitating Mobilization and Organizational Coordination: Facilitating Mobilization and Organizational Coordination:** Online platforms have revolutionized communication and coordination within social movements, enabling members to share information, plan actions, and mobilize supporters effectively. Specifically, the Chana community has adeptly utilized social media platforms such as Facebook, LINE, and Twitter to enhance communication, facilitate discussions, and conduct online meetings. Research indicates that Facebook groups and pages are predominantly used by the Chana community movement to disseminate information about environmental issues, announce upcoming events, and publicize key events they organize, thereby enabling members to coordinate effectively, discuss strategies, and remain updated on the movement's activities. Furthermore, the LINE application has been employed for real-time communication among core members and volunteers, providing activity updates and organizing protest gatherings, ensuring quick decision-making and dissemination of information within the movement. One leader from the movement shared their experience:

*"We mostly use LINE because everyone in Thailand uses it to chat and update each other. It's great for quickly sharing information with the whole community."*

This research found that while Twitter is used less frequently than Facebook or LINE, it played a crucial role in mobilizing support during key protests. For example, the hashtag #SAVECHANA gained widespread attention during a Bangkok protest, becoming a top trend and drawing public and media focus to the movement. Instagram, though also used sparingly, helped share visual content from protests and community activities. Participants stressed the importance of using all social media platforms to amplify their message. A young activist from the Chana Community Movement highlighted this necessity,

*"We need to use all social media platforms as much as possible to make our voice louder, and we also use Instagram as it can share stories, pictures, and short captions that target young people to become more supportive of us. We need to make our fight against the possible impact of the Chana industrial estate project known to all groups of Thai people."*

The visual storytelling approach, including sharing compelling images, videos, and brief narratives, plays a vital role in garnering public empathy and support. By showcasing the beauty of their land and the threats it faces, the Chana Community Movement effectively communicates the emotional and environmental stakes involved, making their struggle relatable and encouraging broader support. Platforms like Instagram not only inform but also engage viewers, prompting them to act in support of environmental conservation and social justice.

Additionally, the movement has utilized Facebook's event creation features to organize and publicize activities, such as protests and awareness campaigns. For instance, they created a Facebook event titled "The Debate About the Guanyin Statue" to protest the construction of a statue linked to the Chana industrial estate project. This event allowed supporters to RSVP, invite others, and share the event, significantly increasing visibility and turnout. The event page also served as a central hub for updates and coordination, ensuring smooth communication among participants.

**Awareness Raising and Agenda Setting:** The utilization of online platforms has become a powerful tool for social movements to amplify their messages and extend their reach beyond traditional media channels. The Chana Community Movement, focused on environmental issues, exemplifies this by using these platforms to advocate for the protection of Chana's natural resources. This is captured in the framing of "Kuan (Hill), Pa (Forest), Na (Rice Field), Le (Sea)," which forms a core part of the movement's identity. Online platforms

have been crucial for raising awareness and setting the agenda, helping the movement highlight the importance of environmental conservation and mobilize broader support.

Research shows that the movement has effectively leveraged Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to run social media campaigns spotlighting environmental concerns in the Chana area. By using strategic hashtags like #savechana, #ปกป้องจะนะ (#ProtectChana), and #หมู่บ้านลูกทะเล (#ChildrenOfTheSeaVillage), and creating shareable content, they have reached a much wider audience than traditional media could. This approach marks a significant evolution from earlier conservation efforts, such as those by the Ban Sunkhong group, which relied on internet websites. Social media has accelerated the process of making campaigns go viral and facilitated broader public engagement. A member of the Chana Community Movement noted the significant impact of these digital strategies,

*“Before, we didn’t have social media, so organizing campaigns or protests took a lot of time. But during the Thai-Malay gas pipeline protests, we started using websites like ‘www.lanhoiseab.com’ to share our activities. Still, our reach was nothing like what we can achieve with social media today, especially for our protests the Chana Industrial Estate project.”*

This highlights the transformative impact of social media on the Chana Community Movement’s ability to organize and mobilize support. Previously, spreading information and rallying support for campaigns and protests was slow and labor-intensive. Websites helped, but their reach was limited compared to the vast audience accessible through social media today. With platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the movement can now share compelling stories, images, and videos almost instantaneously, quickly going viral and reaching a global audience.

Furthermore, a young activist from the movement mentioned that they have also utilized “online petition platforms” to gather support and express dissent against the lack of transparency in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) during the Chana Industrial Estate project in 2022. These petitions, easily shareable on social media, have facilitated rapid outreach to many people, thereby demonstrating widespread support for their environmental initiatives.

Moreover, research has found that collaborating with social media influencers who have a large following has enabled the movement to disseminate its message to a diverse audience that might not have been reached through traditional media or the movement’s own channels. For example, Thai celebrities and environmental activists like *Alex Rendell*, a famous actor and advocate for environmental conservation, and *Pita Limjaroenrat*, a well-known politician and social media personality, have used their platforms to raise awareness about the Chana Community Movement. Their involvement has significantly boosted the movement’s visibility and helped engage a wider, more diverse audience.

**Networking and Solidarity:** The Chana Community Movement has effectively utilized online platforms to build solidarity and amplify the voices of marginalized communities. Central to this strategy is the creation of virtual spaces, such as Facebook groups, where members share personal narratives and experiences. These forums provide emotional support, foster a strong sense of community, and facilitate in-depth discussions on environmental issues, the impact of mega-projects, and strategic planning, enabling collective learning and knowledge exchange.

Digital activism has been crucial to the movement's efforts, using social media to engage with environmental activists and organizations from other regions. Through Twitter chats and hashtags like #savechana and #protectchanasea, the movement has created a network of solidarity extending beyond its immediate community. This network is further strengthened by cross-posting content from other environmental movements, highlighting the interconnectedness of their struggles and fostering a shared purpose.

Collaboration with other movements through joint online campaigns, such as petition drives and social media challenges, has been instrumental in raising awareness and mobilizing global support. For example, Facebook groups have facilitated the sharing of personal stories and experiences related to the project's impact, deepening the sense of belonging within the Chana community. These platforms also enable more detailed discussions on environmental issues and mega-project effects, allowing members to share knowledge and shape the movement's strategy.

The movement has expanded its reach through collaboration with other movements, utilizing Twitter chats and hashtags to unite environmental activists across southern Thailand, including groups like the Andaman Sea Protection Network and Greenpeace Thailand. Cross-posting content has enhanced solidarity, such as sharing updates on the protection of the Khao Daeng archaeological site in Songkhla province. Furthermore, the movement has used social media to address broader issues, such as opposing the potential misuse of COVID-19 emergency laws to restrict freedom of expression and media, and raising awareness about related environmental concerns, like the Pakbara deep-sea port in Satun Province. By integrating digital tools with traditional activism, the Chana Community Movement has shown the effectiveness of a multi-faceted approach in advancing its goals and highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental and social justice issues.

**Amplifying Marginalized Voices:** Online platforms provide a platform for marginalized voices to be heard, allowing individuals and communities to share their stories and perspectives directly with a wider audience. For Chana Community members directly impacted by the project could have shared their stories, experiences, and concerns through videos or written posts, giving a personal face to the environmental and social issues involved about why people in Chana became against the mega project and why they need to protect environment in their homeland as one of leader stated.

*"We use social media to tell our stories, so others know why we need to protect our home. Some people think we are stopping Chana's development, but social media lets us reach more people. It's important for sharing our side and why we need to against the government project."*

The Chana Community Movement has effectively harnessed social media to expand its impact and reach. Hosting live Q&A sessions on Facebook has proven particularly valuable, allowing key members to engage directly with supporters. These sessions provide a platform for open dialogue, where supporters can ask questions and connect with the community, fostering a stronger sense of involvement and understanding. Additionally, these live sessions offer deeper insights into the movement's challenges, enabling real-time feedback during academic debates or public discussions, which helps refine strategies by adjusting tactics based on public perception.

Digital activism through social media is central to the Chana Community Movement's strategy. Collaborations with journalists and influencers, such as Thai journalist *Thapanee Eadsrichai*, founder of The Reporters, and Thai PBS, have significantly amplified their voice. Moreover, the involvement of Thai superstar *Alex Rendell* in environmental activities in Chana has further heightened awareness of their cause. By leveraging these networks, the movement

effectively disseminates its message, reaching a broader audience beyond their usual social media circles. These efforts illustrate how the Chana Community Movement uses online platforms to foster community, build international solidarity, and amplify the voices of those most affected by the environmental project. The strategic use of social media and collaborations with influential figures have been crucial in sharing their message and securing widespread support.

**Information Dissemination and Knowledge Sharing:** Online platforms are central to the Chana Community Movement's strategy for information dissemination, knowledge sharing, and mobilization. These platforms allow the movement to reach a broad audience quickly, which is crucial for its effectiveness. Social media channels like Facebook and Twitter are powerful tools for sharing updates, press releases, and news about state projects, community events, and legal developments. For instance, in opposing the Chana Industrial Estate project, the movement collaborated with NGOs and academics to produce a report highlighting potential adverse effects, such as pollution and the decline in natural resources like fish and biodiversity in the Chana Sea. This report was widely shared on social media to raise public awareness.

Before the widespread use of social media, the movement relied on dedicated websites and blogs as primary information hubs. During the opposition to the Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline in Chana before 2016, websites provided comprehensive information about the movement's goals, project background, and ongoing activities. These platforms hosted multimedia content, including documentaries, interviews, and photographs, offering insights into long-standing issues like local fishermen's struggles and military activities affecting land rights in the Chana Sea. In addition to public platforms, the movement uses applications like LINE for secure communication and targeted information sharing within specific groups, such as community organizers or volunteers. This approach facilitates the effective dissemination of sensitive information and strategies.

During critical moments, such as recent protests in Bangkok, the Chana movement has employed social media to broadcast live updates, share breaking news, and call for immediate action from supporters. This real-time communication is vital for rapid response and mobilizing individuals who may not be physically present, ensuring the movement's message reaches a broad audience and spurs collective action.

## **2. Challenges Faced by the Chana Community Movement in the Digital Battlefield**

This section addresses three key challenges of digital activism in the Chana Community Movement. First, it explores the digital divide, highlighting how unequal access to technology can limit participation and outreach. Second, it examines the impact of misinformation and online security risks, which can erode trust and effectiveness. Lastly, it discusses resource allocation and the risk of burnout among activists, emphasizing the need for sustainable strategies to maintain momentum and resilience, as detailed in the following findings:

**Digital Divide and Access Issues:** In interviews with leaders, local people, and aligned activists related to the Chana Community Movement, research has revealed that technology has become a crucial part of the movement's strategy. However, the movement faces challenges in ensuring equitable participation in its digital activism efforts due to varying levels of internet access and digital literacy among its members. This discrepancy can lead to



the marginalization of some individuals in online spaces, impacting the movement's inclusivity and democratic values. For example, one older woman member of Chana community movement expressed her difficulties with digital engagement:

*"When they have online meetings or Facebook live sessions, I don't know how to join. I have a mobile phone and internet, but I can only use my mobile phone for calls and texts. I don't know how to use social media for other activities."*

This statement emphasizes the digital divide within the movement, where some members have difficulty accessing information or participating in online discussions. This gap can lead to feelings of alienation among less connected members. The movement's dependence on digital tools for organizing and mobilizing can worsen these disparities, potentially excluding those without sufficient technology or internet access from crucial activities and involvement in the movement.

**Misinformation and Online Security:** From researcher observations, the Chana Community Movement faces significant challenges in combating misinformation on social media platforms. False narratives or misleading information about the movement's goals or actions can undermine its credibility and sow confusion among supporters. One member of Chana community movement mentioned,

*"When we protested the construction of the Guanyin Statue by IRPC through our Hayat Prayer activity post on Facebook, we encountered false information online that aimed to discredit our movement. Some people claimed we were against other religions because we did not have permission to make the Guanyin Statue, but our actual concern was the construction of this large statue in our majority Muslim community. This led to misunderstandings and made it challenging to maintain trust within our community."*

Digital activism through social media has significantly increased the Chana Community Movement's public visibility, but it also introduces challenges related to surveillance, data privacy, and the security of activists. The movement must carefully balance the need to reach a wide audience with the necessity of protecting its members' privacy and safety. To address these concerns, the movement's leadership has implemented strategies such as fact-checking and verification processes to ensure the accuracy of the information they share. Additionally, they provide digital security training to enhance members' understanding of online privacy and data protection measures, helping to safeguard the movement against potential risks.

**Resource Allocation and Burnout:** Resource mobilization is vital for the success of social movement organizations like the Chana Community Movement. However, the movement faces challenges in efficiently dividing resources between online activism and on-the-ground efforts. It's crucial for the movement to prioritize its activities to ensure both digital and physical initiatives receive enough support. For example, the Chana movement might allocate a portion of its budget to social media campaigns to raise awareness about environmental issues. At the same time, they need to reserve funds for organizing community events or conducting field research. Striking the right balance is essential to maintain the effectiveness of the movement's overall strategy. One leader from the movement shared their experience:

*"We must be strategic about how we use our resources. Sometimes we want to boost our online presence, but we can't forget the importance of our community meetings and direct actions. It's a constant juggling act to make sure we're effective both online and on the ground."*

This example illustrates the need for careful planning and prioritization in resource allocation to ensure the Chana Community Movement can continue its advocacy efforts effectively. Moreover, the continuous demands of digital engagement can lead to burnout among activists. Constantly updating social media, responding to online comments, and creating engaging content can be overwhelming. One activist shared their experience, saying,

*“Keeping up with our social media accounts to update any details, along with attending protests and meetings, can sometimes be exhausting. It often feels like there's no time to rest.”*

The relentless pace of digital activism can strain activists' long-term commitment, potentially leading to burnout, which decreases motivation and participation. To counter this, the Chana Community Movement needs to develop strategies that promote inclusive participation, protect against misinformation and security risks, and ensure balanced resource allocation and activist well-being. Implementing a rotating schedule for managing social media accounts can help distribute the workload and prevent burnout. Additionally, regular check-ins and support systems can offer activists the necessary backing to mitigate feelings of overwhelm and ensure their contributions are recognized and supported. By prioritizing member well-being and strategically managing resources, the Chana Community Movement can sustain its advocacy for environmental justice, maintaining its effectiveness as a powerful voice for sustainable development and community rights over the long term.

## Discussions

### **The Multifaceted Role of Digital Activism and Social Media in Community Movements**

Social media has fundamentally transformed the organizational dynamics of the Chana Community Movement, playing a crucial role in decentralizing its network and empowering its members. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have enabled the movement to create a more inclusive and horizontal structure, where power and decision-making are distributed among members rather than centralized in a hierarchical leadership. This shift has enhanced the movement's resilience and sustainability by fostering a strong sense of ownership and commitment among its members. One of the key advantages of social media is its ability to rapidly disseminate information and mobilize supporters. The Chana Community Movement has effectively used these platforms to bypass traditional gatekeepers, such as mainstream media and political institutions, allowing for direct engagement with their audience. This agility has been critical in coordinating swift responses to emerging issues, rallying support, and maintaining the momentum of their advocacy efforts. The movement's ability to connect individuals from diverse backgrounds has also enriched its strategies, promoting innovation and more effective solutions to the complex challenges they face.

Each social media platform offers unique tools that support the movement in distinct ways. Facebook's wide reach and versatile features make it ideal for organizing events, sharing updates, and engaging with a broad audience. Twitter facilitates real-time communication and public engagement, particularly using hashtags like #savechana, which have been instrumental in spreading awareness. Instagram, with its visual storytelling capabilities, helps the movement connect with younger audiences and humanize their cause. YouTube serves as a platform for sharing longer-form content, allowing the movement to delve deeper into issues and reach a global audience. Additionally, LINE, a popular messaging app in Asia, provides direct communication channels for coordinating activities and engaging with supporters.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chana Community Movement underwent a significant digital transformation, relying heavily on social media to sustain its activities amid restrictions on physical gatherings. This shift to digital platforms allowed the movement to continue organizing, sharing updates, and mobilizing support, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. However, the reliance on digital tools also exposed issues related to the digital divide, with some members lacking access to the internet or digital devices. The movement addressed these disparities by offering alternative communication channels to ensure inclusivity and broad participation.

### **Key Challenges of Digital Activism and Social Media in Community Movements**

Digital technology has dramatically reshaped the dynamics of socio-political mobilization, with social media platforms becoming essential tools for modern activism. Scholars like Tufekci (2017), Wilson (2012), and Theocharis (2015) have highlighted how these platforms decentralize communication, empowering social movements to mobilize support, disseminate information, and coordinate action more effectively. However, while these tools offer significant advantages, they also introduce substantial challenges, particularly for community movements like the Chana Community Movement. One major challenge is the digital divide, which creates disparities in access to technology and digital literacy among movement participants. According to Resource Mobilization Theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), the success of social movements depends on effectively acquiring and utilizing resources, including technology. The digital divide means that individuals without access to technology or the necessary skills are excluded from full participation, undermining the movement's inclusivity and equity. Addressing this gap through initiatives like digital literacy training and providing necessary resources is crucial for ensuring broad participation and aligning with the principles of social justice.

Echo chambers present another challenge, as social media algorithms often reinforce existing beliefs within a movement's supporter base, limiting engagement with a broader audience. Framing Process Theory (Snow & Benford, 1988) explains how movements use narratives and symbols to shape public perception and gain support. However, echo chambers can hinder this process by creating a self-reinforcing cycle of information that excludes differing viewpoints. To overcome this, the Chana Community Movement must actively engage with diverse perspectives and use targeted messaging to reach new audiences, thereby broadening its appeal and avoiding the pitfalls of insular communication.

Disinformation also poses a significant threat to the movement's credibility. In the digital age, where information spreads rapidly, false or misleading content can quickly undermine a movement's legitimacy. To combat this, movements must implement rigorous fact-checking mechanisms and educate supporters about media literacy, aligning with the principles of Framing Process Theory by ensuring that the movement's narrative remains credible and trustworthy. Building strong relationships with reputable media outlets can further help to counter false narratives and maintain public trust. Censorship and surveillance are additional challenges, particularly in politically repressive environments. The Political Opportunity Structure (POS) theory suggests that the success of social movements is influenced by external factors, including governmental repression. In the case of the Chana Community Movement, censorship restricts the ability to share information, while surveillance intimidates activists and can stifle participation. To navigate these threats, the movement must employ secure communication methods, such as encryption and anonymity tools, to protect

members' privacy and ensure the security of their communications. Raising awareness about digital security among members is also essential for enhancing resilience against these risks. In summary, while digital activism offers powerful tools for community movements, it also brings significant challenges that must be carefully managed.

### **Knowledge Contribution**

This study makes a crucial contribution to understanding the transformative role of digital activism and social media in modern social movements, particularly in politically restrictive environments. Focusing on the Chana Community Movement, it demonstrates how digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become indispensable tools for amplifying messages, mobilizing support, and coordinating actions. Through the lens of Resource Mobilization Theory, the research highlights the strategic use of technology as a resource that enhances public engagement, information dissemination, and fundraising, thereby attracting national and international attention. Political Process Theory further illustrates how digital activism provides a vital alternative space for dissent, enabling movements to navigate and counteract government censorship and surveillance.

Moreover, the study addresses the critical challenge of the digital divide, which limits inclusivity within social movements. By integrating online and offline strategies, the Chana Community Movement effectively bridges this gap, ensuring broader participation and aligning with New Social Movement Theory's emphasis on identity, culture, and communication. Drawing on insights from other significant movements, such as the Hong Kong protests and Black Lives Matter, this research offers a comprehensive blueprint for enhancing digital activism. It underscores the importance of digital literacy, equitable access to technology, and adaptability, providing practical strategies for sustaining and advancing social movements within complex sociopolitical landscapes.

### **Implications and Future Research Suggestions**

This research highlights important implications for social movement organizations (SMOs) that rely on digital activism. Digital platforms offer significant advantages for organizing and advocacy but also introduce risks that need careful management. SMOs should develop strategies that leverage the benefits of digital tools while addressing associated challenges. This includes ensuring digital activism is inclusive by bridging the digital divide, integrating online efforts with offline activities to broaden outreach, and implementing measures to counter misinformation and online threats. The Chana Network's experiences provide valuable lessons on effectively managing these challenges to enhance digital activism.

Future research should focus on several key areas to advance the field. Investigating the long-term impacts of digital activism, particularly under government censorship, will provide insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of digital strategies. Additionally, exploring the strategies SMOs use to overcome digital barriers, assessing the influence of emerging technologies on activism, and examining the relationship between digital literacy, technology access, and participation are crucial. Addressing these areas will improve the inclusivity and effectiveness of digital activism, offering social movements better tools and strategies for navigating the evolving digital environment.

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