


Chapter 12

X-Raying Digital Activism in Selected Countries: New Frontiers for Mobilization


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ABSTRACT

The spectacle of digital activism has taken the world by storm as silent voices manipulate the advantages or opportunities provided by social networking sites (SNSs) to organise protests by engaging their audiences using a panoply of digital technologies. The efficacy of such novel engagement as part of social action movements has become common worldwide, and Africa is no exception. The proliferation of digital media spaces has often made authoritarian resilience costly, but it continues to oil the surveillance economy, data capitalism, and global information manipulation. The chapter presents classical case studies reflecting how this phenomenon has engulfed African states. A qualitative research approach unpacks this phenomenon, as it has become deeply rooted in Africa's drive for social change. The chapter enquires about epistemological reasons such platforms have become a threat to the legacy media.

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INTRODUCTION

Fergusson and Molina (2020) argued that increased access to social media and other communication networks characteristically escalates the likelihood of protests. Mwaura (2017) noted that studies on social media in Africa have focused on social media activism and not on the taxonomy of social media dissidence. Suwana (2019) defined digital activism as using digital media to take part in activism to achieve agendas, push for economic, social, and political change, and organize public campaigns (Edwards, Howard, & Joyce, 2013). On a similar note, Hutchinson (2019) viewed digital activism as an amalgamation of several approaches toward protest, visibility, mobilization, and activity. The author associated digital activism with civil disobedience as denial of service attacks, open-source advocacy, and hashtag activism. Joyce, (2010) states that this form of activism constitutes using digital media to engage in hashtag activism, such as hashtag movements and open-source advocacy. Gerbaudo (2017) argues that netizens connected through digital networks can coordinate action, share information, and develop goals for political activism. Digital activism marks a new phase uniquely distinguished from traditional legacy activism, as discussed below.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study;

RQ1. What is digital activism?

RQ2. What are the different forms of digital activism?

RQ3. How have these forms manifested themselves on digital platforms in selected African countries?

RQ4. Why do marginalized groups resort to digital activism?

Research Methodology

The researchers used a literature review to analyze content relating to digital activism in selected countries. Singh & Sahu (2020) highlighted that the ability to develop research by referring or connecting it to existing knowledge is a building block of all academic research activities, notwithstanding discipline. According to the authors mentioned above, integrating findings and perspectives from many empirical findings makes it practical for a literature review to address research questions with no single study's supremacy. The researchers undertook the following activities as a way to accomplish the literature review:

- designing the review,
- conducting the review,
- analysis; and
- writing up the review.

The literature review flowchart is illustrated in Figure 1. This flowchart guided the study concerning digital activism. The literature has been initiated focusing on research in digital activism in selected countries.

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