


Chapter 5

Exploring Socio– Cultural Challenges in Online Movements

Olusegun Jegede

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0169-2331>

Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that digital activism relies on pragmatic language strategies to explore and address the socio-cultural challenges inherent in online spaces. Digital activism, defined as the use of digital platforms to mobilize for social and political causes, relies on pragmatic language strategies to foster engagement, address cultural sensitivities, and represent diverse voices. Pragmatics, the study of language in context, offers insight into how speech acts, politeness, and implicature are employed to enhance the persuasiveness and inclusivity of activist messages. Theoretical frameworks of pragmatics and sociocultural identity are discussed, revealing the role of language in shaping collective identities within movements. Case studies illustrate how each movement overcame linguistic barriers and cultural tensions through pragmatic approaches. The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of further research into the evolution of language in digital activism and the need to better understand how online communication impacts social change.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-5297-8.ch005

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Relevance of Digital Activism in Global Discourse

Activism encompasses the deliberate actions and efforts of individuals or collectives to bring about change in societal, political, economic, or environmental spheres (Jegade, 2024). From historical contexts such as the civil rights movement and women's suffrage to contemporary labour rights campaigns, activism has long been a driving force for justice and transformation. These traditional forms of activism relied heavily on physical mobilisation, demonstrations, and other on-the-ground tactics that required substantial resources and coordination. As noted by Jegede (2024), these movements often utilised advocacy strategies such as strikes, petitions, and legal battles to challenge authority and raise awareness.

The advent of digital technologies has significantly transformed the context of activism. Social media platforms, mobile apps, and other digital tools now serve as essential channels for mobilisation and message dissemination. This contemporary mode of activism, often referred to as “clicktivism” or “hashtag activism,” relies on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to propagate causes and foster global engagement. Through digital activism, grassroots movements can achieve widespread visibility and exert influence without relying on mainstream media or substantial financial backing. Movements like #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and climate change advocacy campaigns have successfully used the internet's reach to promote justice and challenge systemic issues on a global scale.

Digital activism involves the use of digital technologies—especially social media—to organise, mobilise, and advocate for political, social, or cultural transformation. According to Gerbaudo (2017), the ideological framework of digital activism has evolved from cyber-autonomism to cyber-populism, reflecting a shift towards using digital spaces for collective identity formation and coordinated action. While earlier forms of digital engagement focused on minimal-effort actions such as liking or sharing posts (George & Leidner, 2019), the scope of digital activism has expanded. Activists now employ more sophisticated methods like hacktivism and cyber-conflict to disrupt established power structures (Karatzogianni, 2015).

Infrastructures supporting sustained digital campaigns have also emerged. Scholz (2010) argues that digital activism is not confined to momentary actions but includes long-term strategies that build digital communities and support networks. However, this evolution has prompted critical reflection. The initial optimism about the democratizing potential of digital activism is increasingly tempered by concerns regarding its actual impact and effectiveness (Kaun & Uldam, 2018). The continuously shifting digital environment demands that activists adapt their tactics

36 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/exploring-socio-cultural-challenges-in-online-movements/383995

Related Content

An Ecological Model of Student Interaction in Online Learning Environments

Genevieve Marie Johnson and Audrey Cooke (2020). *Multicultural Instructional Design: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 387-415).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-ecological-model-of-student-interaction-in-online-learning-environments/231354

Integrated Model of Affordable Housing Delivery for the City of Windhoek

Isaac Okoth Randa (2016). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 1-15).

www.irma-international.org/article/integrated-model-of-affordable-housing-delivery-for-the-city-of-windhoek/175635

From Facebook to WhatsApp: The Changing Mood of Social Networking in India

Faizia Siddiqui, Mohammed Iftikhar Alam and Roshan Lal Raina (2014). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 23-36).

www.irma-international.org/article/from-facebook-to-whatsapp/120712

Public Participation Distribution and Marketing: An Inseparable Duality

Patrick Weber, Sascha Alexander Wagner and Rüdiger Kabst (2016). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 1-13).

www.irma-international.org/article/public-participation-distribution-and-marketing/179903

The Nexus Between Population Aging, International Trade, Foreign Direct Investment, and Economic Growth in G20 Countries: A Panel Vector Autoregressive Analysis

Anna Kiziltan (2021). *Handbook of Research on Economic and Social Impacts of Population Aging* (pp. 172-198).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-nexus-between-population-aging-international-trade-foreign-direct-investment-and-economic-growth-in-g20-countries/280426