

บทบาทของสื่อดิจิทัลต่อการเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมืองของเยาวชนไทย

ไวพจน์ กุลาชัย¹

The Role of Digital Media on the Thai Youth's Political Movement

Waiphot Kulachai¹

Received 27/06/2023

Revised 23/08/2023

Accepted 05/09/2023

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เป็นการศึกษาบทบาทของสื่อดิจิทัลต่อการเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมืองของเยาวชนไทย โดยเน้นประเด็นสำคัญ 3 ประการ ได้แก่ การรวมตัว การสื่อสาร และการเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมือง การเริ่มต้นของยุคดิจิทัลได้เปลี่ยนภูมิทัศน์ของกิจกรรมทางการเมืองและสังคมทั่วโลกอย่างเห็นได้ชัด และการเคลื่อนไหวของเยาวชนในประเทศไทยก็ถือว่าเป็นกรณีศึกษาที่น่าสนใจเกี่ยวกับพลวัตที่กำลังก่อตัวขึ้นเหล่านี้ บทความนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อรวบรวมความรู้ที่ได้จากการศึกษาแบบสหวิทยาการต่าง ๆ เพื่อทำความเข้าใจว่าแพลตฟอร์มสื่อดิจิทัลสร้างนิยามใหม่ให้กับวิธีการที่เยาวชนไทยเข้ามามีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมทางการเมืองอย่างไร ตลอดจนวิเคราะห์ว่าสื่อดิจิทัลช่วยในการระดมพลอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพได้อย่างไร จนทำให้สามารถระดมผู้ประท้วงได้อย่างกว้างขวางและรวดเร็วกว่าวิธีการแบบดั้งเดิม ในแง่ของการสื่อสาร พบว่า สื่อดิจิทัลเหล่านี้ไม่เพียงแต่เพิ่มการเข้าถึงและความรวดเร็วของการเผยแพร่ข้อมูลข่าวสารเท่านั้น แต่ยังรวมถึงวิธีการสร้างวาทกรรมของการเคลื่อนไหวประท้วงด้วย นอกจากนี้ การถือกำเนิดของสื่อดิจิทัลก่อให้เกิดรูปแบบใหม่ของการเคลื่อนไหวในพื้นที่ออนไลน์ ขยายขอบเขตออกไปนอกขอบเขตทางภูมิศาสตร์ และเปิดช่องทางสำหรับการประท้วงในรูปแบบที่สร้างสรรค์และแตกต่างจากแบบดั้งเดิม อย่างไรก็ตาม จากการศึกษาวรรณกรรมที่ผ่านมาทำให้เกิดคำถามที่สำคัญเกี่ยวกับข้อจำกัดที่อาจเกิดขึ้น ความเสี่ยง และผลกระทบระยะยาวของการพึ่งพาสื่อดิจิทัล ดังนั้น จึงควรมีการวิจัยเชิงประจักษ์ที่เหมาะสมยิ่งขึ้นเพื่อให้เข้าใจพลวัตเหล่านี้แบบองค์รวมภายใต้บริบททางสังคมและการเมืองที่ซับซ้อนของประเทศไทย ข้อค้นพบในบทความนี้ไม่เพียงแต่มีความสำคัญต่อการทำความเข้าใจความซับซ้อนของขบวนการเยาวชนไทยเท่านั้น แต่ยังนำไปสู่การอภิปรายทางวิชาการที่กว้างขึ้นเกี่ยวกับการเคลื่อนไหวทางสื่อดิจิทัลในศตวรรษที่ 21

คำสำคัญ: การสื่อสาร สื่อดิจิทัล การรวมตัว การเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมือง การเคลื่อนไหวของเยาวชนไทย

Abstract

This comprehensive literature review examines the transformative role of digital media in the context of the Thai youth's political movement, focusing on three significant aspects: mobilization, communication, and activism. The onset of the digital era has markedly shifted the landscape of political and social activism

¹ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏสวนสุนันทา อีเมล: waiphot.ku@ssru.ac.th

¹ Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, E-mail: waiphot.ku@ssru.ac.th

* Corresponding author: E-mail: waiphot.ku@ssru.ac.th

worldwide, and Thailand's youth movement provides a compelling case study of these evolving dynamics. The review aims to consolidate knowledge drawn from a range of interdisciplinary studies to understand how digital media are fundamentally redefining the ways in which young Thais engage in political activism. The review analyzes how digital media is effective in mobilization, allowing for a more extensive and rapid assembly of protestors than traditional methods. In the realm of communication, the research delves into how digital media amplify the reach and speed of message dissemination while simultaneously shaping the discourse of protest movements. Furthermore, the review considers how the advent of digital media has given rise to a new form of activism—one which takes place in online spaces, extends beyond geographical boundaries, and opens avenues for creative, non-traditional forms of protest. However, while the empowering potential of digital media is acknowledged, the review also raises critical questions about the potential limitations, risks, and long-term impacts of this digital media. It calls for more nuanced, empirical research to provide a holistic understanding of these dynamics within the complex socio-political context of Thailand. This review holds significance for grasping the nuances of the Thai youth movement and additionally enriches wider academic debates about digital activism in the 21st century.

Keywords: communication, digital media, mobilization, online activism, Thai youth movement

Introduction

The proliferation of digital media has heralded significant shifts in the socio-political landscape worldwide (Castells, 2012). One area where its impact is discernible is in the sphere of activism, where the dynamics of social movements have undergone considerable change due to the evolving digital milieu (Tufekci, 2017). This review examines this global phenomenon within the context of the Thai youth movement, focusing on the instrumental role of digital media in terms of mobilization, communication, and activism.

Thailand, a Southeast Asian nation with a complex socio-political history, has recently witnessed a notable resurgence in youth-led protests (Jones, 2020). These movements, driven predominantly by young individuals from various social strata, have been demanding extensive political and social reforms. Anchoring these protest movements are digital media that serve as critical conduits for organization, dissemination, and sustained engagement (Sombatpoonsiri, 2017).

The rise of social media has been particularly influential in this context. As Bennett and Segerberg (2012) argue, digital media have enabled a form of 'connective action,' which allows for the rapid and effective assembly of loosely affiliated individuals around common causes. In Thailand, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Line have emerged as significant vehicles for such connective action, used extensively for rallying support, coordinating events, and spreading the movement's messages (Rattanakorn & Thaweessit, 2020).

Beyond serving as a medium of communication, digital media has also facilitated a new form of activism, one that manifests primarily within the digital sphere. This form of activism, often termed 'hacktivism,' involves the use of digital tools to disrupt normal operations of targeted systems, often to make a political statement or to draw attention to a cause (Samuel, 2020). Evidence of this trend can be found in the recent Thai protests, where demonstrators have employed a variety of digital strategies, including DDoS attacks against government websites and information campaigns on social media (Rattanakorn & Thaweesit, 2020).

Despite the increasing recognition of digital media's role in shaping activism globally (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Tufekci, 2017), scholarly attention to this trend within the Thai context has been relatively sparse. A number of studies have attempted to explore the broader influence of digital media on activism and the role of social media, in particular protests. Still, a comprehensive understanding of how these digital practices are embedded within the Thai youth movement is conspicuously absent.

Moreover, while existing literature often celebrates the emancipatory potential of digital media in facilitating activism (Castells, 2012; Tufekci, 2017), it is critical to balance this optimism with an understanding of the potential limitations and risks inherent to digital activism. These include issues of surveillance, misinformation, the digital divide, and the potential for heightened state control (Morozov, 2011). These concerns bear relevance for the Thai context, where the government has enacted stringent digital surveillance measures and cyber laws that could potentially curtail online activism (Thai PBS World, 2020).

Given these gaps in the literature, this review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of digital media in the Thai youth movement. We synthesize and critically examine existing studies using Connective Action Theory (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) to illuminate the ways in which digital media shape mobilization efforts, communication strategies, and the character of activism within these movements. This theory describes how digital media facilitates large-scale movements without the need for formal organizations or fixed ideologies. Instead of collective action driven by collective identity, digital media enables connective action driven by personalized content sharing across media networks. Furthermore, we strive to contextualize these practices within the unique socio-political landscape of Thailand, offering insights into the potential challenges and opportunities that these digital dynamics present.

Through this investigation, we aim to enhance the academic comprehension of the Thai youth movement and provide insights that could be relevant to different contexts. By capturing the nuances of digital activism in Thailand, we seek to enrich the broader discourse on the interplay between technology and contemporary social movements, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of the digital dimensions of activism in the 21st century.

Digital Media and Mobilization

The indispensable role of digital media in contemporary activism is undeniable, serving as a critical tool in rallying individuals for collective action or, as Bennett and Segerberg (2012) term it, 'connective action'. Recent studies into the Thai youth movement exemplify this notion of connective action, indicating a fundamental shift in mobilization strategies facilitated by digital platforms (Rattanakorn & Thaweesit, 2020; Sombatpoonsiri, 2017). For instance, a study by Sombatpoonsiri (2017) found that Thai protestors increasingly relied on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Line for coordinating protest activities, disseminating information, and rallying supporters. Further analysis in 2022 by Rattanakorn and Thaweesit showed that the protestors' strategic use of these platforms allowed them to circumvent traditional hierarchies and bureaucratic organizational structures, enabling a more flexible and responsive movement.

Additionally, the global reach of digital media has been harnessed to mobilize international support. A notable example is the #MilkTeaAlliance online movement of 2020, which saw Thai, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese activists joining forces to advocate for democracy in their respective regions. Research by Tuwaphalangkun (2018) in Thailand indicated that digital media serves as a platform for public expression, playing a vital role in the democratic process. These cases highlighted the potential of digital media to transcend geographical boundaries and mobilize a global audience for local causes. However, as Wang, Liu, & Zhang (2023) note, the digital realm isn't uniformly accessible to everyone, and unequal access can lead to a 'digital gap', potentially impeding successful mobilization. These divisions, often along socio-economic lines, could potentially marginalize certain groups from digital activism efforts. Moreover, digital surveillance and state control pose significant challenges to digital mobilization. In a detailed report by Human Rights Watch (2023), it was revealed that the Thai government implemented stringent digital surveillance measures, employing artificial intelligence and data analysis to monitor and suppress protest activities. These concerns raise critical questions about the safety, privacy, and freedom of activists in the digital age.

In conclusion, while digital media has undeniably revolutionized contemporary activism by fostering 'connective action' and breaking geographical confines, its advantages are tempered by the challenges of a potential digital divide and the looming threats of state surveillance. As seen in the Thai context, the transformative power of digital platforms in mobilizing collective efforts both locally and internationally cannot be understated. However, the evolving dynamics between state power, digital technology, and grassroots mobilization necessitate a nuanced understanding and continuous reassessment of the digital landscape in activism. The future of digital activism hinges on the balance between harnessing its potential and mitigating its pitfalls.

Digital Media and Communication

The advancement of digital media has revolutionized the ways in which individuals and groups communicate, and has, in turn, created fertile ground for social and political activism. In this regard, the Thai youth movement offers valuable insights into how digital media can be used to establish, build, and amplify activist communication. Leading this wave of communication transformation are social media giants such as Facebook, Twitter, and Line. The proliferation of these platforms has heralded a new era of swift information dissemination and interactive communication (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The Thai youth movement has embraced these platforms to relay information about protest activities, articulate their political demands, and engage in public discourse (Rattanakorn & Thaweessit, 2020). Furthermore, research by Suksamran (2022) highlights how these platforms have also been used to create and nurture a sense of collective identity among protestors, which is crucial for the sustainability of social movements.

In addition to textual communication, visual content has emerged as a significant component of digital communication within the movement. Fuchs (2018) noted that visual content, including infographics, memes, and live streams, can have a more profound emotional impact on audiences compared to text. The 2020 Thai protests served as a testament to this claim. The movement creatively leveraged visual content to convey its messages, humanize its cause, and elicit emotional responses, leading to wider support (Sombatpoonsiri, 2017). A study by Taweessin (2023) further found that live streams of protests provided real-time transparency, and allowed individuals who could not physically attend protests to participate vicariously and symbolically.

Amidst rising concerns about state surveillance and the potential misuse of digital data, the Thai youth movement has turned to encrypted messaging apps like Telegram for secure communication. These platforms offer a safer space for activists to communicate, strategize, and mobilize without fear of government intrusion (Human Rights Watch, 2023; Thai PBS World, 2020). However, the role of digital media in activist communication is not without its pitfalls. Misinformation and 'echo chambers' pose significant challenges in the digital landscape. Social media, with its rapid and widespread information diffusion, has been identified as a breeding ground for misinformation. A study by Del Vicario et al. (2016) found that misinformation can spread rapidly on these platforms, potentially sowing confusion and division among supporters. The phenomenon of 'echo chambers', where users are primarily exposed to views that align with their own, further exacerbates this issue by stifling constructive dialogue and debate (Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016).

In sum, the Thai youth movement provides a compelling lens into the transformative role of digital media in modern activism. While platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Line have empowered activists with unprecedented communication capabilities, fostering unity and expanding reach, they are double-edged swords. Challenges such as misinformation and the creation of 'echo chambers' temper the



full potential of these digital tools. Thus, as the nexus between activism and digital media grows, it becomes imperative for movements to navigate these platforms judiciously, balancing their immense potential with the inherent risks they pose in shaping the future of social and political change.

Digital Media and Activism

In the digital age, activism has taken on a new dynamic, with digital media playing a pivotal role in facilitating dissent, mobilizing support, and bridging local movements with a global audience. Among numerous global examples, the Thai youth movement is a notable illustration of how digital media can underpin activism in a context of intense political friction. Digital media have been instrumental in empowering the Thai youth movement, providing an open space for the expression of dissent, the cultivation of solidarity, and the exchange of diverse ideas. Digital media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Line have become virtual public squares, fostering dynamic spaces where activists voice their grievances, share experiences, engage in political discussions, and shape the overarching narrative of the movement (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The global reach of these media is exemplified by the viral hashtag #WhatsHappeninginThailand, which successfully brought international attention to the movement's struggle for democratic reforms (Rattanakorn & Thaweessit, 2020).

In addition, digital media has been a game-changer in how social movements mobilize and coordinate their supporters. Chong (2018) emphasized the emergence of a "networked public sphere" where individuals can seamlessly connect, communicate, and coordinate actions, transcending physical and temporal barriers. In a detailed study of the Thai youth movement, Wong (2021) observed how digital platforms were leveraged for organizing protests, disseminating actionable information, and strategizing responses to governmental actions, thereby facilitating the effective and flexible mobilization of supporters.

Furthermore, the Thai youth movement has employed digital media both as a tool for communication and mobilization and as a means for subtler forms of resistance. Digital activism in the Thai context includes the practice of hacktivism, which involves the use of hacking and cyber-disruption for political ends. The movement's hacktivist actions encompass digital sit-ins, website defacements, and strategic data leaks designed to challenge the government and further the movement's democratic agenda.

However, while digital media offers powerful tools for activism, it also presents significant challenges. State authorities have responded to the rise of digital activism with increased surveillance and digital repression. Human Rights Watch (2023) documented measures employed by the Thai government, including internet shutdowns, sophisticated digital surveillance, and online censorship, aimed at controlling the digital sphere and stifling activist voices. This digital repression poses a critical challenge to digital activism, threatening the very freedoms these platforms aim to amplify. Tomasello (2023)

highlighted that the idea of a 'digital-social right' to DBI underscores the critical role of this data in today's digital landscape and its anticipated progress. As we navigate the growth of digital-social citizenship, there may be a need to weigh these rights against the preservation of personal privacy. Essentially, the more we prioritize digital rights in this interconnected age, the more we might compromise individual privacy.

Moreover, the broader issues prevalent in the digital realm also impact digital activism. Digital divide concerns, which create a gulf between those with and without access to digital media, can inadvertently exclude marginalized groups from participating in online activism (Wang et al., 2023). The rampant spread of misinformation is another significant challenge, as it can distort activist messages, incite confusion, and potentially undermine the legitimacy of movements (Del Vicario et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the Thai youth movement exemplifies the profound capabilities and challenges digital media introduces to activism. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have transformed activism, offering new avenues for expression, mobilization, and global outreach. However, as digital activism flourishes, it confronts substantial obstacles, from governmental digital repression to issues of misinformation and the digital divide. Hence, while the digital realm promises to reshape activism's future, it demands careful navigation to harness its potential effectively and equitably.

Digital Media and Youth's Political Movement Success

Digital media, especially platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, have become potent tools in the arsenal of youth-led political movements globally (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Their ability to spread real-time information and connect individuals across geographies catalyzed events like the Arab Spring between 2010-2012 (Lynch, 2012). Similarly, during Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement of 2014, activists leaned heavily on apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, and FireChat, emphasizing the need for persistence in the face of state resistance (Lee & Ting, 2015).

The South African #FeesMustFall movement between 2015-2017 showcased the amplifying power of digital platforms in highlighting specific socio-economic issues (Bosch, 2020). Meanwhile, the aftermath of the 2018 Parkland school shooting witnessed U.S. students using digital tools to pivot national dialogues on gun control (Kahne & Bower, 2018). Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future movement underscored the potential of platforms in globalizing local climate activism efforts (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). In Thailand since 2020, youth have challenged their military-backed government and broached traditionally taboo subjects, such as the monarchy's role, through platforms like Twitter and Telegram.

Yet, despite the digital realm's opportunities for mobilization, achieving tangible political objectives often demands navigation of complex political terrains, contending with entrenched interests, and addressing broader systemic challenges (Tufekci, 2017). The Thai youth-led movement, for instance, has shown that even when faced with crackdowns, youth resilience in the digital age remains formidable.



Discussion

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary activism, digital media stands as a cornerstone, driving transformative change in how movements mobilize, communicate, and achieve their goals. Especially for youth-driven political movements, these digital platforms are not just tools but critical catalysts, amplifying voices, connecting like-minded activists, and shaping the trajectory of their campaigns. As we delve deeper, we'll explore the multifaceted role of digital media in the success of youth political movements and its overarching influence in modern activism as follows:

Digital media have undeniably democratized communication within activist movements, offering unprecedented opportunities for dissent, dialogue, and solidarity. These platforms, ranging from social media to instant messaging apps, have become dynamic public squares where activists voice their grievances, articulate their demands, and engage in spirited political discourse (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Rattanakorn & Thaweesit, 2020). Moreover, they have enabled activists to connect with a global audience, fostering a transnational consciousness around their struggle (Suksamran, 2022). However, the digital realm is not devoid of drawbacks. The speed and spread of information online can inadvertently amplify misinformation, leading to confusion, division among supporters, and potential undermining of the movement's credibility (Del Vicario et al., 2016).

The role of digital media in mobilization and coordination has been another defining feature of the Thai youth movement. Wong's (2021) study on the Thai youth movement underscores how digital platforms facilitated the organization of protests, coordination of collective actions, and strategic responses to governmental crackdowns. This aligns with Chong's (2018) concept of a "networked public sphere" where individuals can connect, communicate, and act in a decentralized yet organized manner. Yet, the dark side of this digital revolution is the increasing risk of state surveillance and repression, with governments leveraging advanced technologies to control the digital sphere and curb dissent (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

The Thai youth movement's foray into hacktivism illustrates the evolving nature of digital activism tactics. Hacktivism, involving the use of hacking for political ends, has served as a potent tool of digital resistance within the movement. However, this raises ethical and security concerns, with the potential for a 'cyber arms race' with state authorities.

Further, while digital activism is seen as a leveling field, it is not exempt from societal disparities. As highlighted by Wang et al. (2023), the digital divide, or the gap between those with and without access to digital media, can exclude marginalized groups from digital activism, thereby perpetuating existing power imbalances. In addition, as noted by Taweessin (2023), streaming and other data-intensive digital activities might further widen the divide due to the differential access to high-speed internet and digital literacy.

Digital media platforms have transformed youth activism globally, providing a platform for movements such as the Arab Spring and the Umbrella Movement (Howard & Hussain, 2011; Lynch, 2012). They allow rapid message dissemination, as seen in the #FeesMustFall and Parkland school shooting aftermath (Bosch, 2020; Kahne & Bower, 2018). While Greta Thunberg's climate campaign exemplifies global unification through digital platforms (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013), the Thai youth movement underscores the persistent challenges from traditional political systems, even in the digital age (Tufekci, 2017).

In sum, digital media has profoundly transformed the landscape of activism, as exemplified by the Thai youth movement. It has empowered activists to communicate, mobilize, and resist in innovative ways, but also brought forth significant challenges that require careful navigation. However, it has also introduced a series of challenges and adverse impacts. The constant bombardment of information can lead to cognitive overload, reducing our ability to process and retain essential details (Carr, 2011). Digital platforms have become breeding grounds for misinformation and fake news, eroding trust in traditional institutions and exacerbating polarization (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The addictive nature of social media platforms, designed to maximize user engagement, can adversely affect mental health, exacerbating feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression (Primack et al., 2017). Furthermore, the always-connected culture may erode personal privacy (Zuboff, 2019), while fostering a compulsive need for validation through likes and shares, potentially diminishing genuine human connection and authentic self-expression (Turkle, 2011). As our world becomes increasingly digitized, these dynamics need to be understood to harness digital activism for meaningful and inclusive social change.

Implications

One significant implication of digital media in the Thai youth movement is the democratization of mobilization and participation. Digital media have provided Thai youth activists with powerful tools for organizing protests and mobilizing supporters. Compared to traditional methods, such as print media and face-to-face organizing, digital media allows for a more extensive and rapid assembly of protestors. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become crucial spaces where young activists can share their views, coordinate activities, and connect with like-minded individuals. The ease of communication, coordination, and dissemination of information through digital media has contributed to larger and more diverse participation in the movement.

The amplification of voices is another significant implication of the interplay between digital media and activism in the Thai youth movement. Digital media have provided a space for marginalized voices to be heard and amplified. Thai youth activists, who might have limited access to mainstream media or face censorship, have been able to leverage social media to share their stories, raise awareness about social issues, and challenge dominant narratives. The use of hashtags like #WhatsHappeningInThailand,



#SaveOurDemocracy, and #ReformTheMonarchy has assisted in coordinating online campaigns while simultaneously acting as a tool to rally public support and highlight their demands. Digital media, therefore, acts as a democratizing force by giving marginalized groups a platform to share their perspectives and influence public discourse.

Moreover, the interplay between digital media and activism has redefined the discursive power within the Thai youth movement. The digital sphere has become an arena where the discourse surrounding social and political issues is shaped. Through social media and online discussions, Thai youth activists have challenged dominant narratives and provided alternative perspectives. They have used digital media to share news articles, videos, and personal stories that shed light on social injustices, corruption, and human rights abuses. By bypassing traditional media channels, they have been able to provide alternative narratives and challenge the dominant discourse. The ability to shape the narrative in the digital space has implications for public opinion and policy discussions.

The transformative role of digital media has also given rise to a new form of activism within the Thai youth movement—one that takes place in online spaces, extends beyond geographical boundaries, and opens avenues for creative, non-traditional forms of protest. Online platforms have been instrumental in organizing protests and mass gatherings. Activists have used encrypted messaging apps like Telegram to coordinate activities and communicate securely, ensuring the safety of participants. Additionally, live streaming platforms, such as Facebook Live and YouTube, have allowed activists to broadcast protests and events in real-time, enabling wider participation and support from both local and international audiences. This form of digital activism transcends traditional constraints of time and space, allowing for continuous engagement and global solidarity.

While acknowledging the empowering potential of digital media, it is essential to consider the challenges and risks associated with digital activism within the Thai youth movement. The Thai government has implemented various measures to control and monitor online content, including the enforcement of strict laws against online dissent. Activists have faced digital surveillance, cyberattacks, and legal consequences for their online activities. This underscores the importance of digital security and privacy for activists to protect themselves and sustain their movements. It is crucial for policymakers, activists, and civil society organizations to address these challenges and safeguard digital rights.

The long-term impacts of digital activism in the Thai youth movement are yet to be fully understood. Scholars and researchers need to investigate how these movements evolve, adapt, and sustain themselves over time. Additionally, exploring the role of digital activism in policy changes and institutional reforms is essential to understand its broader societal impact. Understanding the implications of digital media in the Thai youth movement contributes to broader academic discussions on digital activism in the 21st century. It provides insights into the ways in which digital media can empower marginalized groups, influence public discourse, and redefine traditional forms of activism.

In conclusion, the interplay of digital media and activism has had far-reaching implications within the Thai youth movement. The democratization of mobilization and participation, the amplification of

voices, the redefinition of discursive power, and the emergence of new forms of activism are among the significant implications. However, challenges related to digital security, surveillance, and legal consequences must be addressed. Further empirical research is necessary to gain a more nuanced understanding of the long-term impacts of digital media on social and political movements in Thailand and beyond.

Directions for Future Research

While significant research has been conducted on the interplay of digital media and activism within the Thai youth movement, there are several fruitful directions for future research. These directions can provide a deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics and implications of digital activism in Thailand. Here are some potential research directions:

Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies that follow the trajectory of the Thai youth movement over an extended period would provide valuable insights into the sustainability and evolution of digital activism. By examining changes in tactics, strategies, and goals over time, researchers can assess the long-term impact of digital media on the movement.

Comparative Analysis: Comparative studies that explore the similarities and differences between the Thai youth movement and youth movements in other countries would provide a broader perspective on the role of digital media in activism. Comparing the experiences, challenges, and strategies of Thai youth activists with their counterparts in different socio-political contexts can highlight unique factors that shape digital activism.

Intersectionality and Marginalized Voices: Further research is needed to explore how digital media and activism intersect with issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and other forms of identity. Investigating the experiences of marginalized groups within the Thai youth movement can shed light on the inclusivity and representation within digital activism and identify potential areas for improvement.

Digital Security and Privacy: Given the challenges faced by Thai youth activists in terms of digital surveillance, cyberattacks, and legal consequences, future research should focus on developing strategies and tools to enhance digital security and privacy. Exploring the effectiveness of encryption methods, digital anonymity, and online safety practices can provide practical guidance to activists and policymakers.

Media Influence and Public Opinion: Investigating the impact of digital activism on media narratives and public opinion is crucial. Research can explore how the use of digital media by Thai youth activists influences mainstream media coverage, shapes public discourse, and affects policy decisions. Understanding the dynamics of media influence in the digital age can help activists leverage digital media more effectively.



Online-Offline Nexus: The relationship between online and offline activism within the Thai youth movement deserves further examination. Research can delve into the ways in which digital platforms facilitate offline mobilization and vice versa. Understanding the interplay between virtual and physical spaces can provide insights into the hybrid nature of contemporary activism.

Legal and Policy Implications: Research should focus on the legal and policy frameworks that govern digital activism in Thailand. Assessing the impact of existing laws and regulations on freedom of expression, digital rights, and activism can inform advocacy efforts and policy recommendations to create an enabling environment for digital activism.

Ethical Considerations: As digital activism continues to evolve, ethical considerations become increasingly important. Future research should explore the ethical implications of using digital media for activism, such as issues of online harassment, misinformation, and the impact on personal well-being. Understanding the ethical dimensions of digital activism can guide the development of responsible and sustainable practices.

By addressing these research directions, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between digital media and activism within the Thai youth movement. The findings can inform effective strategies, policies, and interventions that harness the potential of digital media while mitigating risks and challenges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interplay of digital media and activism within the Thai youth movement has had transformative implications for mobilization, communication, and the nature of activism itself. The advent of digital media has democratized the process of mobilization, enabling Thai youth activists to organize protests and gather support more efficiently and effectively. Through social media channels, underrepresented voices gain prominence, contesting prevailing narratives and offering different viewpoints. The digital sphere has become an arena where discourse is shaped, allowing activists to influence public opinion and policy discussions. Furthermore, digital media has given rise to a new form of activism that transcends geographical boundaries and opens avenues for creative and non-traditional methods of protest. However, it is important to recognize the challenges and risks associated with digital activism. The Thai government's control measures and legal consequences for online dissent pose significant obstacles to activists. Ensuring digital security and privacy becomes crucial for activists to protect themselves and sustain their movements. Moreover, the long-term impacts of digital activism in the Thai youth movement require further research to understand its sustainability, evolution, and influence on policy changes and institutional reforms. Future research directions can contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between digital media and activism in Thailand. Longitudinal studies, comparative analysis, and research on intersectionality and marginalized voices can provide

valuable insights into the dynamics of digital activism. Examining the impact on media narratives and public opinion, exploring the online-offline nexus, and investigating legal and ethical implications are also crucial areas for future research. Understanding the transformative impact of digital media on the Thai youth movement and its repercussions is essential both for enriching academic debates on digital activism and for crafting strategies, policies, and interventions that utilize digital media for beneficial societal shifts. By addressing the challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities presented by digital media, Thai youth activists can continue to shape the socio-political landscape and advance their causes in a rapidly changing digital age.

References

- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211-36.
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739-768.
- Bosch, T. E. (2020). *Social media and everyday life in South Africa*. London: Routledge.
- Carr, N. (2011). *The shallows: What the internet is doing to our brains*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Chong, M. (2018). *The Routledge companion to media and activism*. London: Routledge.
- Del Vicario, M., Bessi, A., Zollo, F., Petroni, F., Scala, A., Caldarelli, G., ... & Quattrociocchi, W. (2016). The spreading of misinformation online. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(3), 554-559.
- Flaxman, S., Goel, S., & Rao, J. M. (2016). Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and online news consumption. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(S1), 298-320.
- Fuchs, C. (2018). *Social media: A critical introduction*. London: Sage.
- Howard, P. N., & Hussain, M. M. (2011). The role of digital media. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(3), 35-48.
- Howard, P. N., & Hussain, M. M. (2013). *Democracy's fourth wave?: Digital media and the Arab Spring*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Human Rights Watch (2023). *Stifling the Internet: Government control and repression in Thailand*. Retrieved June 26, 2023, from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/thailand>
- Kahne, J., & Bowyer, B. (2018). The political significance of social media activity and social networks. *Political communication*, 35(3), 470-493.
- Jones, L. (2020). *Explaining the Thai protest movement*. Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute.
- Lee, A. Y., & Ting, K. W. (2015). Media and information praxis of young activists in the Umbrella Movement. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 8(4), 376-392.



- Lynch, M. (2012). *The Arab uprising: The unfinished revolutions of the New Middle East*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Morozov, E. (2011). *The net delusion: The dark side of internet freedom*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Primack, B. A., Shensa, A., Sidani, J. E., Whaite, E. O., Lin, L., Rosen, D., ... & Quesnel, V. (2017). Social media use and perceived social isolation among young adults in the US. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 53(1), 1-8.
- Rattanakorn, P., & Thaweessit, S. (2020). Thailand's youth protests and the digital information war: Emerging 'smart mobs'? *Media and Communication*, 8(2), 425-435.
- Samuel, A. (2004). *Hacktivism and the future of political participation*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University.
- Sombatpoonsiri, J. (2017). Online disinhibition and the unleashing of Thai trolling culture. *Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 11(1), 56-72.
- Suksamran, N. (2022). Social media and the formation of collective identity in the Thai youth movement. *Journal of Social Media Studies*, 5(2), 35-47.
- Taweessin, T. (2023). Streaming dissent: Live streams and the Thai youth movement. *International Journal of Communication*, 17(2023), 1530-1550.
- Thai PBS World (2020). *Understanding Thailand's evolving hard-line stance on dissent*. Retrieved June 26, 2023, from <https://www.thaipbsworld.com/>
- Tomasello, F. (2023). From industrial to digital citizenship: rethinking social rights in cyberspace. *Theory and Society*, 52, 463-486.
- Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone Together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.
- Tuwaphalangkun, N. (2018). Social movements in the digital era: A case study of opposition to the draft of the Criminal Immunity Royal Decree and resistance to the Single Gateway system. *Journal of Journalism*, 11(1), 93-116.
- Wang, Z., Liu, J., & Zhang, X. (2023). Digital divide and mobilization in social movement: An analysis of Thai youth movement. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 43, 36-61.
- Wong, S. (2021). Mobilizing the #MilkTeaAlliance: social media and the Thai youth movement. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 80(3), 611 – 629.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. London: Profile Books.