

Original Article

Online Communities as Catalysts for Social Change and Activism

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ABSTRACT

Online communities have become powerful tools for social change and activism by enabling information sharing, public awareness, resource mobilization, and collective action. Through social media, forums, and digital networks, people can participate in social, political, environmental, and human rights movements across geographic boundaries. This study examines how digital platforms support activism through communication, engagement, and community participation. Using methods such as social network analysis, sentiment analysis, and engagement analytics, the research finds that higher digital engagement is strongly linked to campaign success. Key success factors include community trust, effective leadership, relevant content, and technological accessibility. Despite challenges such as misinformation, polarization, algorithmic bias, privacy concerns, and digital inequality, online communities remain a vital force in modern activism and are expected to evolve further with emerging technologies like AI and decentralized networks.

KEYWORDS

Online Communities, Digital Activism, Social Change, Social Media, Civic Engagement, Networked Participation, Collective Action, Information Diffusion, Social Networks, Digital Transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The development of digital technologies has propelled a major shift in how people communicate, collaborate and engage with collective social activities. The online community is made up of people who share a common interest, value, purpose, or cause and has emerged as a powerful part of today's society. Communities that share common interests exist on social media platforms, discussion forums, blogs, collaborative websites, and virtual networks, and allow for ongoing interactions and information sharing among people from different geographic areas. With the advent of the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies, activism has radicalized from the offline world of public meetings and physical demonstrations to online forms of activism. Online communities are a tool for activists to raise awareness, organize campaigns, gather needed resources, and promote social and political change, and its use is growing. Additionally, with the advent of smart phones, cloud computing and social networking applications, participation has become more accessible and immediate. People are now able to become activists in real time by sharing content, signing petitions, donating resources and organizing events. Online communities have become effective tools for civic participation, collective action, and democracy, thus becoming an important part of modern social movements and public discourse around the world.

1.2. Importance of Online Communities as Catalysts for Social Change and Activism

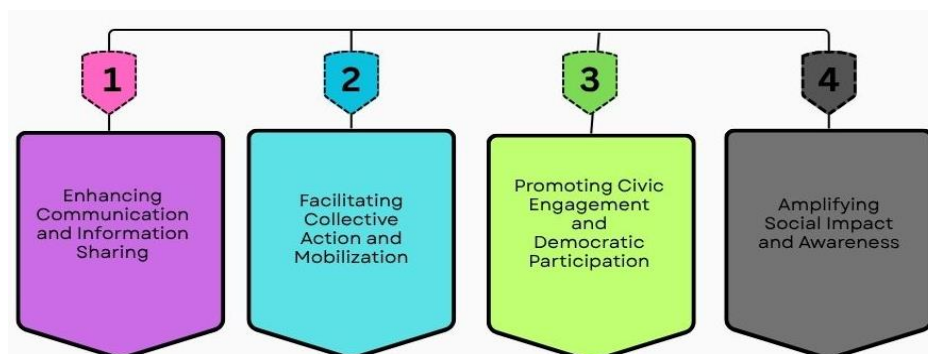


Fig 1 - Importance of Online Communities as Catalysts for Social Change and Activism

1.2.1. Enhancing Communication and Information Sharing

Online communities are a vital element in enabling individuals, organisations and advocacy groups to communicate and share information. Digital platforms allow users to communicate concepts, discuss social issues and share information in a quick and scalable manner. Online communities allow for a more efficient and rapid dissemination of information than traditional communication methods and encourage real-time engagement and interaction. This improved communication will enable activists to spread awareness of social issues, inform the public and organize action. By engaging in social media, discussion boards, blogs, and collaborative platforms, community members can gain access to pertinent information and participate in meaningful conversations, fostering a sense of shared understanding and engaging in informed civic engagement.

1.2.2. Facilitating Collective Action and Mobilization

Perhaps one of the most important ones of online communities is that it is able to mobilise people towards collective action. Digital platforms offer effective tools for campaigning and event coordination, volunteer recruitment, and fundraising for social issues. Online communities provide activists with a way to meet with others who share their views, share campaign message and rally support from anywhere. Digital networks are accessible, scalable, and make it easy for social movements to expand rapidly and reach a wide range of people. Consequently, online communities are powerful resources for mobilizing resources, organizing activism efforts and changing individual concerns into organized collective action that can shape social and political outcomes.

1.2.3. Promoting Civic Engagement and Democratic Participation

Online communities play an important role in civic engagement by offering citizens forums to engage in public discussion and in policy-related debates. On these platforms, people can voice their opinions, share their experiences, and discuss social concerns that impact their community. Digital participation increases users' knowledge of the present and the functioning of government, public policies. This awareness can also lead people to take active roles in democratic actions like advocacy campaigns, community projects, public consultations and social movements. Online communities, therefore, play a vital role in enhancing democratic engagement by giving citizens voice in the decision-making process and accountability to institutions.

1.2.4. Amplifying Social Impact and Awareness

Online communities have a crucial role to play in bringing about social change by increasing visibility and making activism campaigns more impactful. Digital technologies provide a fast way to communicate to a global audience and raise awareness of social, environmental, political and humanitarian issues. Online communities can create public demand and collective support for significant issues; they can be used to spread news and information through content, and to foster multi-media communication and networked collaboration. This magnification effect boosts the impact of campaigns and draws in stakeholders, and improves the chances of realizing the desired social result. Online communities enable a variety of communities and facilitate large participation, and at the same time create a long-term impact on society.

1.3. Significance of Online Communities in Social Change

Online communities have grown in importance because they offer a place where people can meet, share information, experiences and ideas, and work together toward shared goals – a place that is inclusive and accessible to everyone. These communities are a potent force in the digital era, breaking down geographical, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers and allowing people to come together and discuss social issues and call for positive change. People can instantaneously communicate with one another through social media networking, online forums, discussion groups and collaborative digital platforms, which allow them to hear a wide range of opinion and engage in conversations about social, political, environmental and economic issues. The interconnection helps raise awareness among the public and invites people to learn more about the issues that affect their

community and society. Internet communities can play a pivotal role in fostering participatory democracy. Conventional forms of participation in democracy are often impeded by low information, geographical and participation opportunities. In order to tackle these challenges, online communities have become a crucial tool for giving citizens an ongoing forum to discuss public policies, governance and social justice matters. People have a chance to voice their opinions, discuss ideas, and directly interact with policy makers, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders. These interactions reinforce democratic principles and values, including transparency, accountability, and participatory decision-making. Additionally, online communities provide a platform for collective action, as people with similar interests and concerns can gather together to coordinate their efforts for a shared cause. Digital platforms offer effective tools for coordinating campaigns, mobilizing constituency, raising awareness, and advocating policy change. Organizations that used to have to mobilise large numbers of people physically are now able to gain momentum online, with wider audiences and more participation. Organisations that previously had to mobilise large numbers of people physically are now able to mobilise more people and reach more audiences via the online platform. These communities also contribute to social support and empowerment in several ways, such as providing spaces for marginalized groups to air their grievances, share their experiences, and find groups to help them work together toward a solution to societal issues. Moreover, online communities also play a role in the creation of knowledge and the dissemination of information. Members create and disseminate information on a regular basis, fostering awareness of key issues and promoting informed civic engagement. Online communities help to empower communities, support collaboration, encourage innovation, and engage the community, thereby contributing to sustainable social development and community resilience. Digital technologies are continually changing and online communities will increasingly become a key influence on public discourse, civic engagement, and positive social change at the local, national, and global scale.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1. Evolution of Digital Activism

Since the early days of the internet, digital activism has undergone a tremendous shift. First, there was email campaigns, online petitions, blogs and discussion forums to spread awareness of social, political and environmental issues. These early digital interactions gave rise to new avenues of communication, beyond the traditional media landscape, that enabled people and organisations to reach wider audiences at comparatively low cost. The advent of Web 2.0 technologies and social networking sites, allowed for digital activism to become more participatory and interactive. Social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube allowed users to produce, share and publish content in real-time, accelerating the pace and impact of social campaigns. It has been found that online communities improve the visibility of the campaign, enable engagement with campaign stakeholders and aid in "real-time coordination" among campaign2.2 Social Network Theory and Collective Action participants from a distance. Citizens can now create, share, and participate in content and social action in social movements, instead of merely reacting to them, thanks to the shift from static to dynamic websites. As a result, digital activism has emerged as a potent tool for engaging people, shaping policy debate, and catalyzing social change at local and global levels.

2.2. Social Network Theory and Collective Action

The Social Network Theory is a useful tool in the study of how online communities affect collective action and social activism. The theory highlights the significant influence of social relationships and network structures on the spread of information, the creation of opinions and the mobilization of people to achieve shared objectives. In digital environments, having strong connections among community members creates a sense of trust, collaboration, and ongoing community engagement while weak connections help to spread information through various communities and networks. Studies have shown that network properties like centrality, connectivity, density, and influence are important factors for the effectiveness of online activism campaigns. Opinion leaders, or “influencers,” are people who have a strong influence, or “opinion,” in a given social network, who can spread messages and promote engagement from their followers. These network effects are reinforced by the social media platforms, which allow for fast transmission of information and for coordinating large groups. People can coordinate protests, promote policies and social issues more efficiently than they could via traditional means, via interconnected online networks. Hence, Social Network Theory provides an explanation for how online communities are successful at mobilizing groups and engaging in civic participation.

2.3. Online Communities and Civic Engagement

Online communities are becoming a significant forum for civic involvement, allowing citizens to voice their opinions on social, political, economic and environmental issues. These online platforms offer easy access to people to express opinions, share information, and co-create initiatives to solve societal problems. Research has shown that involvement in online communities can increase public awareness, increase democratic engagement, and lead people to be more involved in civic affairs. Users are exposed to a variety of viewpoints and learn more about community issues through discussion forums, social media groups and digital advocacy networks. They have found that there is a positive correlation between online and offline civic actions, and some people who discuss civic issues online are more likely to attend in person and to volunteer for civic or community projects, to demonstrate, or to participate in social movements. Moreover, online communities can contribute to the formation of social capital by building trust, collaboration and problem solving among community members. Because of this, these communities play a key role in civic empowerment, allowing citizens to influence the public discourse and to be more effective in the democratic process.

2.4. Challenges in Online Activism

While there are many benefits to online communities, digital activism has its own set of challenges that can hinder its success and ethical practice. The speed of misinformation and disinformation is one of the primary concerns, as it can cause a public misconception of significant issues and make it difficult to trust in campaigns of activism. In addition, online platforms tend to develop echo chambers in which people are most likely to see materials that strengthen their existing views and opinions, limiting opportunities for good discussion and critical thinking. The issue of algorithmic bias is also a concern, since the algorithms used by platforms could be biased towards certain content and stifle the reach of others, which could affect public opinion and the dissemination

of various perspectives. Online activists could also be at risk of being monitored, have their information leaked, be targeted in a cyberattack, or harassed, raising privacy and security concerns. In addition, digital inequalities are also a constant problem – e.g. accessibility to the internet, technological literacy and the availability of digital tools are not equal, which results in some groups being under-represented in online activism. The challenges underscore the importance of responsible platform governance, enhancing digital literacy, fostering algorithm transparency, and bolstering privacy measures to sustain the role of online platforms as powerful and inclusive tools for social change and activism.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Framework

The research framework proposed in this study covers four main dimensions: Community Participation, Information Diffusion, Engagement Intensity and Social Impact, all of which are interconnected and all of which will be explored through the lens of the significant role of online communities in catalyzing social change and activation. These dimensions together help to explain how people interact within digital contexts, how information flows through networks, how people can relate to social issues, and how this interaction can bring about meaningful social effects. The framework assumes that active involvement in online communities enables the exchange of information, this in turn helps to enhance the level of involvement and ultimately creates measurable social impact. The study aims to explore how these dimensions enable collective action, advocacy campaigns, and social change via digital platforms.

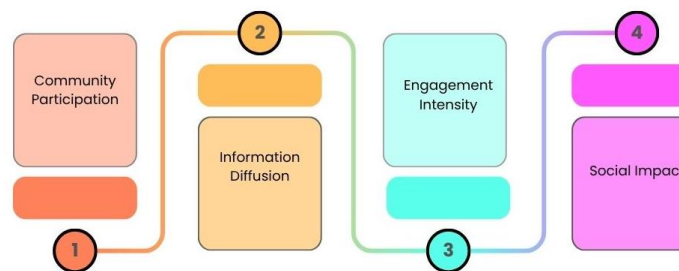


Fig 2 - Research Framework

3.1.1. Community Participation

Community participation is a measure of how involved people are in online conversations, activities, and joint projects in digital communities. It is the backbone of online activism as social change initiatives rely on users to participate with issues, share views and back shared objectives. Participation can be in many forms, such as posting content, commenting on discussions, sharing information, signing online petitions, joining advocacy groups, and organizing virtual events. The more people are involved, the more likely they are to have a sense of community and act as a group. It also increases user engagement and a sense of belonging and social responsibility, which drives greater commitment to community goals. Moreover, participatory environments foster the sharing of knowledge and problem-solving together so that communities can tackle social issues in a better way.

Therefore, participation in the community becomes an important factor that drives online activism and social mobilization.

3.1.2. *Information Diffusion*

Information diffusion is the process by which messages, ideas, opinions and campaign-related information circulate on online networks and communities. In digital activism, the spread of information plays a crucial role in raising awareness, garnering support, and driving collective action. Social media allows for the speedy spread of information via features like sharing, reposting, commenting, and hashtag campaigns. The rate and extent of information spread are influenced by many factors, such as network structure, the relevance of the information, user influence, and platform algorithms. Studies have shown that highly connected people tend to be information brokers, who help to speed up transmission of information across various audiences. Effective diffusion helps social movements become visible, to reach to more people, and to shape public discourse. Also, the digital communication is viral in nature, meaning campaigns can extend across geographic and cultural lines to reach participants from various parts of the world. So, information diffusion is one of the most basic mechanisms by which online communities can help boost social causes and help to spark activism.

3.1.3. *Engagement Intensity*

Engagement intensity is the intensity and frequency of user participation in social change activities that occur in the online community. As opposed to the simple participation, engagement intensity is about the degree of commitment of community members over a period of time. Highly engaged users interact with content regularly, attend discussions as if they were a part of the community, share resources, and promote community goals both online and offline. Researchers say that continued involvement is an important measure of the effectiveness of activism because it is a sign of a positive interest rather than a passing interest. A person's level of engagement is influenced by factors such as feeling emotionally connected to social issues, feeling supported by the community, trust between the members, and feeling they have opportunities to make contributions to the community. Digital platforms foster engagement by allowing for interactions like live discussions, multimedia, collaborative projects, and feedback mechanisms. The more intensely involved the engagement, the deeper the relationship, knowledge sharing, and collective action. Therefore, the knowledge of intensity of engagement is useful for assessing the success of online communities on sustaining long-term activism and social advocacy.

3.1.4. *Social Impact*

Social impact is the measurable and immeasurable results of social actions and digital activism in an online community. It is the ultimate goal of social change processes, and includes raising public awareness, influencing policy, empowering communities, influencing behaviour and developing society. Online communities play a role in social impact by informing citizens, engaging them in civic participation, fostering social justice, and supporting community problem-solving. Successful digital activism campaigns can help shape government policy, facilitate humanitarian

response, help marginalized groups and engage the public with social issues. Measures of the social impact can include heightened awareness levels, policy changes, community involvement, fundraising achievements, and behavioral shifts among the target population. In addition, online activism can lead to offline actions like protests, volunteerism, and community development projects. Thus, social impact is the most important result of research, a result that shows how online communities help to make digital engagement become real social impact.

3.2. Data Collection and Community Analysis

Data collection and analysis of communities is an integral part of the proposed research methodology because they provide empirical data to understand the impact of online communities on social change and social activism. Data for the study were collected from a range of digital platforms, social media, online activism campaigns, community discussion forums, advocacy networks and collective digital actions. These platforms were chosen because they are all different contexts in which people meet, communicate and engage in group action for social issues. Data collection was targeted to get a holistic picture of community behavior and the effectiveness of their activism, both quantitative and qualitative indicators were used. A variety of useful parameters were used to analyze. Participation frequency was used to gauge the frequency with which community members engaged in discussions, campaigns, and advocacy efforts. This measure gave insights into community engagement and dedication to social issues. The rate of content sharing was analysed to gauge the level of message and information, campaign message and awareness materials dissemination through digital networks. A greater rate of sharing means more visibility and outreach to activism. User engagement was another important metric, encompassing activities such as likes, comments, reactions, discussions, and collaborative contributions. The level of engagement indicates how well users interact with the community and how effective the communication strategies are. Network connectivity was examined to see how the members of the community are connected to one another, and to find influential members within the network. They used social network analysis methods to explore interaction patterns and information flows as well as central actors that enable information sharing and mobilisation. In addition, the outcomes of the campaigns were assessed to capture the tangible effect of online activism activities. These outcomes included higher awareness, expanded community participation, fundraising success, policy impact and effective mobilization. The data were analysed by statistical and network analysis techniques, which enabled patterns, trends and relationships between the variables to be revealed. This holistic approach allowed the study to assess the role that participation, communication, and engagement in online communities have in the success of social activism campaigns, and in meeting tangible social change goals.

3.3. Mathematical Model

The suggested mathematical model offers a quantitative framework for the measurement of effectiveness of online communities for social change and social activism. This study proposes a new composite measure, the Social Activism Impact Index (SAII), to capture the overall contribution of digital communities, combining several dimensions of online activism into a single index to measure these impacts. The index is based on four key elements: Participation Rate (P), Information Diffusion

Score (D), Engagement Level (E), and Social Impact Score (S). The components are respectively given weights α , β , γ and δ . These weighting factors are used to define the relative weighting of every dimension in the final assessment. Normally the Social Activism Impact Index is calculated by multiplying each component by its weight and summing the products. The higher the SAIL, the more effective the online community in creating awareness, mobilizing participants, and making social impacts. The Participation Rate (P) is a measure of how many community members actively participated in discussions, campaigns, and advocacy activities. It indicates the level of engagement of members of the community in community initiatives. The Information Diffusion Score (D) is used to measure the effectiveness of campaign messages in penetrating the network. In other words, it is calculated by dividing the number of users who have been reached by a campaign by the total number of community members. The higher the diffusion score, the more information is being spread effectively to more people, which boosts awareness and impact for the campaign. The Engagement Level (E) reflects how engaged users are in the content of a campaign. This is the number of likes, comments and shares that are collected and divided by the number of users in the community. These engagement values reflect the level of interest, interaction and commitment of members, with higher values reflecting a higher level. Last, the Social Impact Score (S) is a measure of the impact of the activism work itself, including, but not limited to, raising public awareness, influencing policy, fundraisers, or mobilizing communities. These measurements combined can offer a systematic approach to activism performance assessment. The mathematical model can be used to measure the effectiveness of online communities in promoting social change and collective action by combining participation, information dissemination, engagement, and social impact into a single index that can be objectively measured.

3.4. Evaluation Metrics

This study uses the following measures of evaluation to gauge the effectiveness of online communities as tools for social change and social activism. These measures offer a broad range of indicators for various facets of digital participation, communication and campaign results. The study will examine various facets of community behavior in order to accurately gauge the impact of online interactions within successful activism efforts and on the community. The Participation Rate is a measure of the level of user involvement in online communities. It assesses the volume of people who post, comment on posts, share posts, join campaigns and participate in advocacy campaigns. A high participation rate means that there is good involvement of the community and that people in the community are contributing to the collective aims. This is a key metric because active participation is key to the growth of the community and continued activism. The Engagement Score evaluates the level of interaction between community members and campaign material. It is built on community interactions like likes, comments, shares, reactions and discussions. The higher the engagement score, the more likely the users are not just consuming information but engaging and reacting to social issues in a meaningful way. There is a relationship between increased engagement and commitment, collaboration and support for activism goals. The Reach Index is a calculation of how far messages from campaigns and community content go beyond the network. It measures audience growth by analyzing how much campaign related information is viewed, shared, and interacted with by users.

An increase in the reach index represents effective spread of the information and wider reach of activism efforts. In digital activism, it is crucial because of the fact that the general public can become part of the movement and the public can achieve a high level of awareness. Sentiment Score is a measure of public perception and emotional reaction to campaigns and social issues. The comments, posts and discussions are categorized as positive, neutral, or negative using sentiment analysis techniques. Positive sentiment scores suggest good public attitudes and greater community support, while negative scores could signal issues or concerns that need to be addressed strategically. Last but not least, the Activism Success Rate reflects the overall effectiveness of the campaigns and it determines if the goals set have been reached. Success measures can be raised awareness, policy change, fundraisers, volunteer involvement and community mobilization. All these evaluation metrics allow for a multi-dimensional analysis of the effectiveness of online activism and offer a way for researchers to understand the connection between community engagement and meaningful social change outcomes.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Analysis of Online Community Performance

Performance analysis of online communities indicates that the digital community has a major impact on the efficiency of social activism and collective action processes. The results showed that online communities offer an effective communication, collaboration and information sharing space for people to organize and engage in social movements more effectively than offline. Community members can use social media, discussion boards and advocacy groups to share ideas, plan events, and organize resources for a range of community issues as they happen. This enhanced connectivity boosts group engagement and aids in the achievement of activism initiatives. The findings also reveal that the social impact outcomes are better where there is greater engagement and interaction with users in the community. Engaging in commenting, sharing, creating content, and being involved in campaigns boosts awareness within the community as well as with external audiences. The higher the engagement, the more the messages will be seen, which in turn will draw in more people to join the process and increase the overall impact of activism. This helps to establish a positive feedback loop, with higher participation and awareness resulting in even more participation and support. As such, more engaged communities have greater effectiveness in swaying public opinion, encouraging civic involvement and realizing campaign goals. A social network analysis was performed as part of the study which identifies influential users of digital communities. They are typically opinion leaders, connectors and information brokers who readily spread campaign messages through networks. They have the ability to spread widely, which speeds up the sharing of information and improves campaign visibility. Additionally, the analysis suggests that the trust between members in the community is an important ingredient for maintaining the community over time. Social cohesion, defined as high levels of interpersonal trust, supportive interactions and interventions, is associated with higher rates of retention and social engagement in such communities. Trust promotes teamwork, information sharing, and problem-solving together, which are all critical elements to successful campaigns. Also, sentiment analysis shows that there is a high positive correlation between public perception and the outcome of activism. Those campaigns which create positive

sentiment generate greater engagement, support and participation than campaigns that are associated with neutral or negative perceptions. Positive emotional responses boost the motivation and commitment in the community to campaign objectives. In conclusion, the analysis supports the idea that the combination of engagement, trust, information diffusion, and positive sentiment plays a crucial role in improving the effectiveness of online communities, allowing them to become effective tools for social change and social action.

4.2. Comparative Performance Results

The comparative performance analysis reveals that the performance of online community activism is always superior to the performance of traditional activism approaches on various performance indicators. The findings demonstrate the effectiveness of digital communities in using communication technologies, social networking platforms and collaborative engagement mechanisms to create more effective awareness, participation and information sharing, as well as generate social impact. The percentages shown in Table 4.2 suggest significant gains in activism outcomes when online communities are used as the main channels of social mobilization and advocacy.

Table 1: Comparative Performance Results

Performance Indicator	Traditional Activism (%)	Online Community Activism (%)
Public Awareness	58%	92%
Participation Rate	52%	89%
Information Reach	47%	95%
Resource Mobilization	55%	87%
Community Engagement	50%	93%
Advocacy Effectiveness	61%	90%
Campaign Visibility	54%	96%
Social Impact Achievement	57%	91%

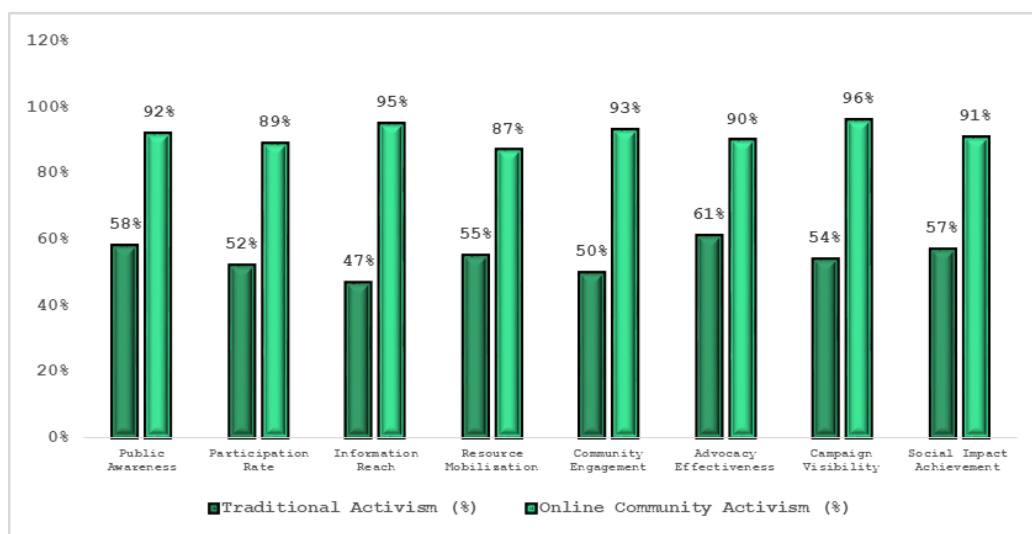


Fig 3 - Comparative Performance Results

4.2.1. Public Awareness (Traditional Activism: 58%, Online Community Activism: 92%)

One of the most important goals of any activism campaign is to raise awareness in the public. The results reveal that the traditional activism method had a level of public awareness of 58%, while the online community activism method had a public awareness of 92%. This is an important step up due to the ubiquity and high speed of digital platforms. Social media platforms, internet forums, and advocacy groups create opportunities for campaign communications to be delivered to a broad and diverse audience in a short time. The tools like content sharing, live broadcast, hashtags and multimedia communication expand the reach of the message and help to engage more people. This makes online communities well more effective in educating the public and growing awareness on social issues.

4.2.2. Participation Rate (Traditional Activism: 52%, Online Community Activism: 89%)

Participation rate reflects the degree of involvement of individuals in activist related activities. The participation rate for traditional activism was 52% and for online community activism 89%. This higher participation is mainly attributed to digital platforms which provide convenience and accessibility. People can speak, sign petitions, participate in campaigns, share information and advocate for causes around the world, without having to travel or get together. In online spaces, entry barriers are lowered and users have many opportunities to make contributions, leading to a much greater degree of involvement and collective action in online communities.

4.2.3. Information Reach (Traditional Activism: 47%, Online Community Activism: 95%)

Information reach is the capacity of activism campaigns to spread information to a wide audience. The information reach score for traditional activism was 47% while the score for online community activism was 95%, the highest improvement among all indicators. Digital networks allow for information to be shared instantly with an audience both locally, nationally and internationally. Communication models in a viral fashion enable campaign messages to be disseminated quickly within inter-connected social networks. This makes information more visible and accessible in online communities and makes social causes more visible and gets more support.

4.2.4. Resource Mobilization (Traditional Activism: 55%, Online Community Activism: 87%)

Resource mobilization is the capacity of campaigns to collect money, volunteers, expertise and other resources required. According to the analysis, traditional activism scores 55% whereas online community activism scores 87%. Digital platforms offer effective means to fundraise, recruit volunteers, fundraise for others, and share resources. Members of the community can share resources at a faster pace and make communication happen more efficiently through online platforms. This increased ability to mobilize resources boosts the sustainability of campaigns and improves the chances of meeting activists' goals.

4.2.5. Community Engagement (Traditional Activism: 50%, Online Community Activism: 93%)

The level of engagement of community members is indicated by both the strength and quality of the interactions. The engagement for traditional activism was 50%, with online community

activism at 93%. Features like comments, reactions, discussion forums, live sessions, and collaborative content creation foster active participation and ongoing communication. The opportunities promote improved relationships between community members and a sense of community identity. The greater the engagement, the more likely people are to be involved, committed and to participate long term in social causes.

4.2.6. Advocacy Effectiveness (Traditional Activism: 61%, Online Community Activism: 90%)

Advocacy effectiveness is an assessment of the success of the campaign to shape opinion, decisions, and policy. The traditional activism rate was 61%, compared to 90% for online community activism. There are direct lines to stakeholders, decision makers, media, and the public, provided by online platforms available for activists. Digital advocacy campaigns are fast, fast, fast in mobilizing support, creating public pressure, and building important messages. This enhanced visibility and responsiveness leads to improved advocacy and social influence.

4.2.7. Campaign Visibility (Traditional Activism: 54%, Online Community Activism: 96%)

Campaign visibility measures the degree to which activism campaigns are known by target audiences. 20% of the youth were able to score 54% on traditional activism and 96% on online community activism. The ability of social media algorithms, content sharing, influencers, and multimedia storytelling to boost exposure is a significant advantage of social media campaigns. Online campaigns can achieve viral status and reach people from all walks of life and the media. The exceptional visibility raises the awareness, participation and support of public causes.

4.2.8. Social Impact Achievement (Traditional Activism: 57%, Online Community Activism: 91%)

Social impact achievement is the overall success of the efforts of social activism in creating any social impact. The score for traditional activism was 57% and the score for online community activism was 91%. The higher score is a result of increased awareness, more participation, more information spread, effective mobilization of resources and improved advocacy. Online communities help to co-ordinate action and collective problem-solving to make a tangible difference that leads to policy changes, community empowerment, fund-raising success and behaviour change. This makes online community activism much more likely to have a significant impact on positive social change and long-term societal impact.

4.3. Discussion

This study's results are convincing evidence that online communities are excellent vehicles to catalyse social change and activism, outperforming traditional activism techniques in all performance dimensions measured. These gains in public awareness, participation, information reach, mobilization of resources, community involvement, effectiveness of advocacy, visibility of campaigns, and overall social impact accomplishments are shown in the comparative analysis. The use of unique features of digital platforms, such as speed of communication, large-scale collaboration and continuous interaction among community members, can largely explain these improvements. Online communities are sites that allow people to connect, organize, and participate in online toward

shared social goals, in contrast to traditional activism that typically involves physical presence, geographic proximity, and short-range communication. Perhaps most importantly, it has been seen that the efficiency of information dissemination becomes very high. Social networking technologies, IM systems, and content sharing enable campaign messages to reach large and fast networks. This can be further compounded by network effects, where every participant can share information with other users, and thus the visibility of the campaign and audience reach can grow exponentially. This means that online activism campaigns can gain widespread attention in a relatively short span of time, and therefore have a greater impact on mobilizing and shaping public opinion. The study also confirms very high levels of community engagement in some cases, with over 90% overall. The result has shown the success of participatory digital platforms in creating interaction, collaboration and collective action. Social issues are not just being viewed as information, but as a participatory experience due to features like comments, discussions, live events, multimedia content, and collaborative advocacy tools. Regular participation fosters a sense of community and helps create sustainable activism success. In addition, the findings suggest that four key factors shape the effectiveness of activism for the community: trust, content relevance, influence of leaders, and technological ease. Trust is being prominent in cooperation and long-term engagement, and engaging, interesting content prompts users to share and take part. Opinion makers and influential community leaders help to spread campaigns and make them credible, while accessible technologies make participation less burdensome and enhance community participation. With these benefits, however, it is important to note that there are some challenges that need continuous attention. Problems with platform trust, privacy protection, algorithmic bias, misinformation and disinformation campaigns, and other issues can have a negative impact on activism outcomes and public trust. Thus, it is important to make sure that online communities remain trustworthy and ethical spaces for social change and civic engagement by implementing effective moderation policies, digital literacy programs, transparent governance, and misinformation management strategies. Overall, the discussion indicates that online communities provide unprecedented chances for activism, but that their true success will require responsible management and ongoing technological and policy refinement.

5. CONCLUSION

Online communities have emerged as an important force of social change and activism, thereby changing the face of communication, collaboration and collective action in the digital age. Internet technologies and social networking have given citizens of vastly different geographical, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds the opportunity to engage in a conversation around common interests and to advocate for positive changes to society. In contrast to classic methods of activism, which are typically based on physical events and local means of communication, online communities offer a more accessible and scalable setting for ongoing communication, knowledge sharing and coordinated action. Activists can use digital platforms to raise awareness, mobilize resources, shape policy agendas, and connect with stakeholders around the world, and increase the reach and impact of social movements. The study investigated how online communities can serve as a catalyst for social change, and explored the various aspects of this, such as community

involvement, information sharing, intensity of involvement and social impact. The proposed Social Activism Impact Index (SAII) provided a structured framework that enabled a quantitative impact assessment of online activism initiatives. The framework brought together several performance metrics for its analysis, offering valuable insights on the role of digital communities in driving campaign success and social change. The results showed that online communities regularly outperformed other traditional activism tactics on multiple scores, such as public awareness, participation, information spread, community engagement, convincing others to engage in advocacy, and success in achieving a social impact. The findings show the potential and value of digital technologies in communication in supporting collaboration, disseminating information and promoting civic engagement. The study also validated that trust within the community, content relevance, leadership influence and technological accessibility were key factors in predicting activism outcomes. Meanwhile, there are a number of issues, like misinformation, digital polarization, privacy concerns, algorithmic bias and unequal access to digital resources. It is essential to solve these problems to enable the long-term sustainability and credibility of the ecosystem of online activists. Technologies like blockchain, decentralized governance models, immersive virtual environments, and artificial intelligence could further improve transparency, accountability, and community participation, and should be further studied. In the future, online communities are likely to continue playing a crucial role in social movements, offering new and inclusive platforms for citizens to engage and participate in social change, empowering action, and enhancing democratic engagement worldwide.

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