

Is Digital Activism Effective?



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The Power of Social Media in Activism

Social media has changed the way we share news. In the past, big companies and governments controlled the media, but now, everyday people can share information on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. This seems like a big step for democracy, but these platforms are still owned by a few big companies like Meta and ByteDance. So, while we can share our opinions more freely, our data is often collected and used for profit and political reasons.

What is Citizen Journalism?

Citizen journalism means regular people collecting and sharing news. It can be through blogs, social media, or even professional news sites that allow user content. This kind of journalism lets the public document and share important events, like protests or violence, right as they happen. This way, news reaches millions of people without going through traditional media.

For example, the Arab Spring and George Floyd's murder are two big events where citizen journalism played a key role. People used social media to show the world what was happening, which led to significant political changes and global movements.

Social Media and Campaigning

Activists use social media to spread messages and organize events. Two big movements that used social media effectively are Black Lives Matter and Me Too. After George Floyd's murder, the Black Lives Matter hashtag was used millions of times, and videos on TikTok got billions of views. This helped organize protests and share information. The Me Too movement started to support sexual assault survivors. When high-profile actresses spoke up against Harvey Weinstein, the hashtag #MeToo went viral, with millions of people sharing their stories on social media.

Challenges of Digital Activism

Despite its power, digital activism has some challenges:

1. **Digital Divide:** Not everyone has equal access to social media. Some people don't have the devices or internet needed to participate.
2. **Political Use of Social Media:** Political groups with lots of resources can misuse social media to mislead people and influence elections. The Cambridge Analytica scandal showed how personal data from Facebook was used without consent in political campaigns.
3. **Slacktivism and Virtue Signaling:** Some criticize social media activism as being shallow. For example, posting a black square for Black Lives Matter might feel supportive but can drown out more important information.
4. **Passive Interactivity:** Using social media also means giving our data to big companies. There have been cases where platforms like Facebook have used this data in ways that affect users' emotions.

Positive Impacts of Digital Activism

Despite these issues, social media is a powerful tool for activists:

1. **Empowering Marginalized Groups:** Social media gives a voice to groups often ignored by mainstream media. It helps share different perspectives and experiences.
2. **Democratizing Information:** Social media has made it easier for more people to access information, which is important for political engagement and informed decision-making.
3. **Bringing About Change:** Campaigns like Black Lives Matter and Me Too have led to real changes. They have raised awareness, prompted legal actions, and encouraged donations to social justice causes.

The Ongoing Debate

Digital activism can have a big impact and spread messages worldwide. But whether it can lead to lasting social change is still a topic of debate. Social media has both empowered people and presented new challenges. It's important to recognize both the opportunities and limitations of digital activism.



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