



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Myanmar's Spring Revolution 2021:
How the nation resists the military coup in the age of the
internet“

verfasst von / submitted by
Su Su Han

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science (MSc)

Wien, 2023 / Vienna 2023

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 066 550

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Communication Science

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Katharine Sarikakis

Abstract (English)

Myanmar people have invariably used Facebook as Google, as a primary source to follow up on the latest news and trends, because it is instant, up-to-date, and affordable. Doubtlessly when the military seized the country through a coup d'état in 2021, Facebook became the most essential tool to share information, communicate, raise awareness, and display the brutality of the Myanmar military to the world. In the beginning, social media was commonly used to motivate people to engage in street protests, however, later in the year, a group of pro-democracy forces emerged which elevated the course of social media use to another level. It substantially became a digital crowdfunding tool to persuade people to participate in financial support for the pro-democracy forces by creating various forms of creative content and online projects. This paper scientifically explores the use of digital media to understand more about the role of technology in Myanmar's spring revolution by analysing 29 Facebook pages and 481 Facebook posts that are intended for helping the groups fighting for Justice, Democracy, and Freedom. Additionally, it investigates how the style of revolution evolves after two years of the military coup. It reveals the digital tactics and techniques, and the creative approach of technologically savvy Myanmar youths to raise funds for the revolution amidst the internet restrictions and ferocious treatment of the military on revolutionaries. Concerning the role of social media in this revolution, this paper uses a qualitative content analysis with a grounded theory approach to provide useful insight for further in-depth study.

Keywords: digital media, Facebook, Myanmar's spring revolution, military coup, digital resistance

Abstract (German)

Die Menschen in Myanmar nutzen Facebook ähnlich wie Google: Als primäre Quelle, um die neuesten Nachrichten und Trends zu verfolgen, weil es schnell, aktuell und erschwinglich ist. Als das Militär das Land 2021 durch einen Staatsstreich eroberte, wurde Facebook zweifellos zum wichtigsten Werkzeug um Informationen auszutauschen, zu kommunizieren, das Bewusstsein zu schärfen und der Welt die Brutalität des myanmarischen Militärs zu zeigen. Anfänglich wurden soziale Medien häufig genutzt, um Menschen zu Straßenprotesten zu motivieren. Später im Jahr entstand jedoch eine Gruppe von pro-demokratischen Kräften, was die Nutzung sozialer Medien auf eine andere Ebene hob: Es wurde im Wesentlichen zu einem digitalen Crowdfunding-Tool, um Menschen durch verschiedene kreative Inhalte und Online-Projekte davon zu überzeugen, sich finanziell an der Unterstützung der pro-demokratischen Kräfte zu beteiligen. Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht wissenschaftlich den Einsatz digitaler Medien, um mehr über die Rolle der Technologie in Myanmars Frühlings-Revolution zu erfahren, indem sie 29 Facebook-Seiten und 481 Facebook-Posts analysiert, die den Gruppen, die für Gerechtigkeit, Demokratie und Freiheit kämpfen, helfen sollen. Darüber hinaus untersucht sie, wie sich der Stil der Revolution zwei Jahre nach dem Militärputsch entwickelt hat. Sie enthüllt die digitalen Taktiken, Techniken und den kreativen Ansatz technologisch versierter Jugendlicher in Myanmar, Geld für die Revolution zu sammeln, inmitten von Internet-Beschränkungen und der grausamen Behandlung von Revolutionären durch das Militär. In Bezug auf die Rolle der sozialen Medien in dieser Revolution verwendet diese Arbeit eine qualitative Inhaltsanalyse mit einem fundierten Theorieansatz, um nützliche Erkenntnisse für weitere eingehende Studien zu liefern.

Schlagwörter: digitale Medien, Facebook, Frühlingsrevolution in Myanmar,
Militärputsch, digitaler Widerstand

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Introduction

In the early morning of 2021 February 1st, a few hours before the inauguration of the newly elected civilian government National League for Democracy (NLD), Myanmar's military launched a coup d'etat to overthrow the current democratic government. The coup leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of the Myanmar Armed Forces detained the state counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, President, elected NLD leaders, ministers, politicians, writers, and activists (Paddock, 2022), and declared a state of emergency for a year (Kipgen, 2021).

Following the coup, the military immediately faced a strong rejection from the civilians. Tens of thousands of anti-coup protesters took over the streets across Myanmar in resistance to the coup – proceeded as peaceful demonstrations – escalated quickly into a nationwide bloodbath in a few weeks (Dussud, 2021). Despite the brutal military crackdowns throughout the country, the nationwide mass protests continued online and offline until today.

Like most protests in this internet era, social media plays a huge part in this spring revolution. Shortly after the military coup on February 1st, people of all ages flooded online social media with hashtags and posts to show solidarity and resistance to the coup. In this revolution also known as Myanmar's spring revolution, the majority of activists on the ground, at the forefront of protest and online social media movement initiators are mainly young people aged between 16-35 years old (Thant, 2021) who are also identified as "Generation Z" in Myanmar (Jordt, Than & Lin, 2021). These youths "seem self-organized, using social media and the internet as mobilizing tools to organize what looks like an emerging leaderless social movement" (Subedi & Garnett, 2021, para 13).

Unlike the older generations who have lived through a strict military regime, this generation grew up living under a different form of society which is more open and democratic, with

internet access and mobile phones (Schimpl, 2021). Generation Z with better connectivity and technology has accomplished much more than their older generations could have achieved in previous anti-regime movements and uprisings thirty decades ago.

This paper aims to understand how Myanmar people utilize digital technology under the heavy-handed suppression of military Juntas and how their digital revolution evolves from the beginning of the coup until now. Brooten, McElhone & Venkiteswaran (2019) points out that media studies in Myanmar are just starting to develop and only a few of them are academically studied in English, let alone social media. After the coup, the country is partially shut again therefore, the country needs to be studied more than ever. Therefore, this topic is a good opportunity to fill the gap in Myanmar's academic study. This paper uses the qualitative content analysis method and secondary literature research to gain deeper insight. The data is collected through the Facebook platform which is mainly used for raising awareness, standing with the people who are fighting for democracy, and helping people whose lives are suffering in this turmoil.

Literature Review

The Coup and Resistance

After the military grabbed power from the nation's civilian government, nationwide massive protests erupted within days of the coup. The military immediately declared a state of emergency for a year, once the coup was proclaimed, the two main broadcast media MWD TV station and MRTV channel instantly became the main stations to publicize military propaganda (Tea Circle Oxford, 2021). As soon as the military announced the coup, communication mediums such as telephone, internet access, and most television broadcasts were ceased (Paddock, 2022);

the commercial banks and stock markets were shut down (Paddock, 2022) and putting the country into chaos. For more than half a century, Myanmar lived under a military regime, but the country's democratic transition has been significantly progressing within the last decade (A & Gaborit, 2021). This transition was stalled when the military seized the country, and the authoritarian power regime with the use of brute force to oppress the civilians returned (A & Gaborit, 2021).

In the following weeks of the coup, the young people who mostly grew up with digital devices and the internet - “are politically minded and globally connected” (Banki, 2021, para.3.) led many resistance movements including the anti-coup Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), which was initiated by young medical workers, and soon joined by civil servants such as municipal, union government staff, private banks workers, factories workers, teachers, firefighters and substantially all other employees (Jordt, Than & Lin, 2021). According to Reny (2022), more than six hundred police officers joined CDM, and two thousand military officers resigned to show solidarity in the face of opposition. Waves of peaceful protests through massive demonstrations and general strikes followed which were participated by millions of people across the country (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The coup quickly triggered various resistance movements including boycotts of the military’s retail business and social rejection of military members, their families, and supporters meanwhile the military responded with violence including killings, shooting, and detaining protestors recklessly, torturing prisoners, raiding homes at nighttimes (Thawngmung & Noah, 2021). Based on the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP, 2022) report, the military has killed more than 1500 civilians and arrested more than 11,000 people since the coup.

Forming of Parallel Government NUG

In rejection of the coup, a few of the NLD parliament members who escaped from the coup arrest, together with a few elected parliamentarians from other parties formed the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and a new cabinet National Unity Government (NUG) on 16th of April 2021 (Khine, 2021). NUG has been striving to receive recognition from International communities and particularly, the support of Myanmar ethnic armed organizations (Thuzar & Tun, 2022). Unlike the previous government NLD which failed to evaluate the promise of federalism, NUG emphasizes implementing federalism from the beginning (Thuzar & Tun, 2022). According to Thuzar and Tun (2022), 13 out of 26 members of the NUG cabinet are of ethnic nationalities and one-third are women, including LGBTQ+ human right activists, and ministers from NLD rivals political parties. When it comes to public communication, “most of the NUG’s policies and positions communicated via social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter, the role of the NUG Ministry for Information, Communication, and Technology seems minimal” (Thuzar & Tun, 2022, p. 14). Being the government in shadow, the process to legitimacy is hindered in many ways. Nonetheless, Given the situation NUG is in, the parallel government has already gained legitimacy in some areas of the country (Thuzar & Tun, 2022) in two years. Indeed, The NUG has strong people support but Junta still holds the resources (Saito, 2022).

Soon after NUG was officially formed, the Myanmar military immediately outlawed and declared the NUG and CRPH terrorist groups (The Irrawaddy, 2021). On the opposite side, the NUG government also proclaimed agreements that were made with the terrorist military will not be considered legal or recognized by NUG and its successors (The Irrawaddy, 2022) when the reports about holding a meeting with the chief junta Min Aung Hlaing and one of the powerful

ethnic armed organisations, the United Wa State Army (USWA) are made. Violence and Economic crisis, Dunst (2021) argues that the only way out from this turmoil eventually is the negotiation of Juntas and the NUG government, including ethnic minority communities and political party members. Nonetheless, Saito (2022) points out that the agreement for negotiation between the military and NUG is the most improbable because, on one hand, the military portrays the NUG as terrorists, and on the other hand, NUG will fail to retain public support if they come to terms with the Juntas (Saito, 2022).

Internet resistance

Facebook is synonymous with the internet in Myanmar for most users, and nearly half the nation's population uses Facebook (global witness organization, 2021). During the most intense time of protests, civilians, protesters, journalists, and activists widely used Facebook for “mutual encouragement, information sharing, and news updates” (Deejay & Wells, 2021, para 9). The real situation of the revolution is not televised as the military controlled the state television immediately after the coup (Jordt, Than & Lin, 2021), however, social media has made it possible for the outside world to witness the real state on the protest ground. With smartphones in the hands of half a nation's population, it has not been possible to restrain the flow of information from going to the outside world.

As these violent acts of the military unfolded for the world to see through social media, the military tried to implement more restrictions. Junta attempted to identify Facebook users with many followers and issued several warrants for those who supported and encouraged the anti-coup movement on social media (Khine, 2021). Junta implemented a new penal code section 505(a) and (b) - “any attempt to hinder, disturb, damage the motivation, discipline, health and

conduct of the military personnel and government employees and cause hatred, disobedience to them, or disloyalty toward the military and the government is punishable by up to three years in prison.” (Khine, 2021, p.9) which mainly targets activists, independent journalists, public figures, and social influencers.

In order to control the news flow, Junta restricted social media use by imposing nationwide internet access shutdowns, and such internet outages usually began around 1 o'clock and lasted 8 hours on most nights for 72 days (Padmanabhan et.al, 2021). Following the nightly curfews, popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter access were also banned (Padmanabhan et.al, 2021). Initially, only Facebook was temporarily blocked due to the spread of misinformation by the order of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, therefore most Myanmar young netizens migrated to Twitter which is a less popular platform in Myanmar compared to Facebook (Judith, 2021). The junta announced the further suspension of all social media use later in the month, nevertheless, the tech-savvy young generation used virtual private networks (VPN) to bypass these restrictions (Sharma et.al., 2021) and accessed the internet anonymously, and continued to share photographs and videos of the resistance on social media.

Digital Media in Myanmar

From decades of isolation from the outside world to leapfrogging into the digital age, the rapid changes in digital technologies certainly have their consequences. “From a heavily censored environment, Myanmar people are finding themselves flooded by information.” (Poveda, 2018,p. 279). With Internet access, the use of social media platforms followed. For most Myanmar people, their first experience with the internet did not start with a desktop

computer using google but instead started with a smartphone using Facebook (Lee, 2019). Out of all the social media platforms, Human Rights Council (2018) claims that Facebook, without a doubt, is the most common social media platform in Myanmar. In 2016, researcher Einzenberger made an in-depth interview with three local people in the telecommunication business to study the use of social media and the internet in Myanmar. According to the interview, “The Internet” for Myanmar People is Facebook. They use Facebook as google, an answer to everything, a primary source to follow up on the latest news and trends, because it is instant, up to date; and all the media outlets are already on Facebook (Einzenberger, 2016). For instance, in rural areas or remote areas where printed news journals take days to arrive at their place, and by the time the newspapers have arrived, the news is already outdated, therefore, people find it more convenient to read news on Facebook. As for traditional news use, Enizenberger (2016) suggests most people only use TV to watch films nowadays, not very popular as a news source; and it is likely that Facebook is dominating in every area such as business, public, and media in Myanmar.

Further on, greater challenges come with the rapid development of digital technologies. As for the challenges, Poveda (2018) asserts that there is a knowledge gap between rural and urban areas, inadequate digital literacy skills, and above all lack of user awareness and critical thinking skills to distinguish which information is correct and whatnot. On the contrary, the findings from Lehmann-Jacobsen (2018) suggest that most users are aware that not all the information on Facebook is reliable. Social media users realize that they have to rely on their rational thinking and fact-check before they fully trust the news (Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2018). However, some findings also point out that people’s ability to fact-check is still limited (Witten-Woodring et.al, 2020). The authors also found that “most people engage selectively with information” (p.420); but their decision to trust or not to trust the information simply relies on

“friends, family, or their intuition” (Witten-Woodring et.al, 2020, p.420). Even though one can see the skepticism towards Facebook, people still choose to depend upon Facebook information, states Lehmann-Jacobsen (2018).

Myanmar Mainstream Media

Myanmar is one of the world's most heavily censored countries (Thu, 2012) and the news media was extremely restricted and controlled by the authorities until the end of prepublication censorship in 2012 (Lee, 2019). The penalties for breaking the censorship laws can be severe, therefore, the private press needs to be more careful about what they feature in the press (Thu, 2012). Even though pre-publication censorship has ended to a certain extent with the transition in political power, the publishers and editors still have to “self-censor” or take responsibility for the publications (Thu, 2012, p.26). In Burrett's study about the liberalization of Myanmar media and politics in the country's transition process (2017), the author argues that Journalistic freedom is not admitted by legal law but only granted at the discretion of the government; therefore, the author claims that “liberalization did not include a new freedom of information law” (p.50) but “freedoms as a means for the regime to achieve its broader policy objectives, most notably to end Western sanctions” (p.56). The author continues to point out that many of the journalists are young and do not get adequate training opportunities and foreign access to learning international professional norms which hinders the liberalization process and has negative consequences for professionalism and ethics (Burrett, 2017).

Furthermore, Myanmar state media continues to dominate the printing sector (Burrett, 2017), and has always been known as a government mouthpiece (Brooten, McElhone & Venkiteswaran, 2019); and because of the strong press censorship in the country, foreign news

media such as BBC, VOA, DVB, and RFA has become a significant medium for people, and the popular news media that are highly relied upon Myanmar People (Burrett, 2017).

Theoretical Consideration

Political Participation Theory

This study lies in the framework of digital media use and political participation, hence, I draw the political participation theory into consideration. Deth (2001) argues that every study about political participation theory is essentially based on a democratic state. From Deth's perspective, there are four main features to emphasize from many different aspects of political participation (2001). The author describes that, firstly, political participation refers to the participation of people as citizens not as politicians or civil servants; secondly, it should be understood as an action or activity, on that account, only watching political news or having an interest in politics is not equivalent to participating; thirdly, the activities or actions that citizens take is of one's own free will and not by the order of ruling class or obligated by the law. Lastly, the term political participation covers the word political system (such as government or politics) in a wider range, in this sense, it is not only limited to specific phrases or levels or areas (such as parliamentary decision-making or national elections). Nevertheless, the author concludes that modern technology has widened the scope and modes of political participation which eventually blurred the lines between political and non-political activities and areas, thus, participation can be everything. From another perspective, Kavanaugh et al. (2016) state that "political participation theory emphasizes that an informed citizenry is fundamental to democracy" (p.2), therefore, in order to reflect the citizen's actual interests, they are to be informed, if not, the ideals of representative democracy might be threatened argues Lee & Xenos (2018). Kavanaugh

et.al. (2016) points out that well-informed citizens are likely to be more engaging in the democratic process (such as information sharing and discussion) and the author continues that having access to reliable information which are “accurate, factual, trustworthy and relatively unbiased” (p.2) to users is particularly crucial during political turmoil or revolution because it is easier for the people to respond and interpret the changing situation. In addition, seeking political information (Kavanaugh et.al., 2016), protests, and rejections should also be included as forms of political participation because they are clear signs of citizens’ interest and opinions (Barnes, Kasse et al., 1979, as cited in Deth, 2001).

Regarding this aspect, I consider how well people are informed and reflected in this and how they engage in this spring revolution. Typically in countries with consolidated democracy, traditional broadcast media such as national television, press, and newspaper are considered to be an essential medium to bring reliable information to the public (Kavanaugh et.al., 2016); however, in countries like Myanmar where the authoritarian regime controls everything, these traditional media have always been known to be a tool for government propaganda.

Social network and engagement

The emergence of the internet and social media networks have amplified the prospect of activism and uprising (Cortés-Ramos et al., 2021). In Lee's (2017) perspective, “Internet diffusion facilitates the emergence of new pathways to political participation” (p.64). Kavanaugh et.al., (2016) states that social networks indeed play a more important role in societies with authoritarian regimes since the government usually censors news information and controls mass media, and people are more likely to depend on their private social networks for information and support. The research findings on the Tunisian revolution suggest that during the crisis, the

majority of people often seek information from independent media rather than government-controlled state media and they tend to rely on face-to-face communication, sharing friends and family, Internet-based sources, and social media for information about political developments; and only a few reportedly used government state media (Kavanaugh et.al., 2016).

Furthermore, Di Gangi & Wasko (2016) develop the Social Media Engagement theory using user experience as the content of direct observation or contribution to an event. Many researchers suggest that the main element of engagement is an intense perception of involvement (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). At the same time, Santosa, Wei & Chan (2005) argue that the intensity level of involvement of the user is directly related to their interests in using the system. Consequently, the user's knowledge contribution online is likely to be influenced by community engagement and it has been found that the user contribution intention depends on how much they engage in it (Ray, Kim & Morris, 2014, as cited in Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Di Gangi & Wasko (2016) also find that perceived risk¹ influences positively on user behavior based on their research on adolescents and risk behaviors. The authors state that those adolescents will continue to engage in a certain behavior in a similar manner even though they are well-informed of the dangers of that behavior Di Gangi & Wasko (2016).

Additionally, Strandberg (2013) examines some scholarly arguments about civilian engagement and participation in politics on social media that in fact, society is being divided unevenly because using the internet needs a skill to some extent; and even if they are divided fairly, the political news will only attract to those who are interested and motivated, therefore, all citizens may not equally be exposed. Arguably, there are several studies suggesting that news consumption on social media is not always an intentional consumption, it also includes exposing

¹ Perceived risk is when the user's perception of the undetermined and unfavourable consequences of engaging in a certain activity (Pathak & Pathak, 2017).

incidentally while using social media for other reasons (see for example, Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). Hence, findings suggest that social media use often has an indirect effect on the user's attitude and behavior, state Kim & Chen (2016). In other words, it motivates the users' individual civic engagement indirectly which encourages them to express and allows them to participate in political opinions (Lee, 2018).

Social Media and Activism

In times of crisis, young people have a history of coming together to demand social and political change. According to the research findings, young people nowadays are becoming less and less engaged in formal politics or institutional political activities (such as voting and membership in political parties) (Rainsford, 2017; Dalton, 2008) which is becoming a global concern (Shahzad & Omar, 2021). On the flip side, they are more involved in non-formal politics (such as boycotts and demonstrations) in contrast to older generations (Henn and Foard, 2012; Sloam, 2012, 2013, as cited in Rainsford, 2017, p.790); and they utilize insider tactics (for example petitions and boycotts) which seems to be easier to include in daily life and less disruptive (Earl, Copeland, & Bimber, 2017). On one hand, Rainford (2017) states that this change in political participation is mainly because the understanding and views towards formal politics of young people have shifted. On the other hand, Earl, Maher & Elliott (2017) argue that youth are involved more in non-formal politics like protest because it is "such a go-to, modular, flexible tool for displaying a desire to change, not because of some changing internal value dispositions about citizenship..." (p. 6-7).

As we enter into the technology era, social media have become a place to amplify young people's voices (Velasquez & LaRose, 2014), and a substitute for other forms of participation

like “in-person activism” (Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017, p.1). In this sense, many young people are likely to engage more in social movements directly through social media platforms with a higher communication pace and more resolute engagement than joining a political party (Cortés-Ramos et al.,2021). In recent years, the new ways of online engagement or social media’s capability to mobilize people in politics have attracted the attention of many scholars. Indeed, social media has created the development of the internet and information, and “Compared to other mass media, their development and use have not stopped growing, given their immediacy, interactivity, and use as a communication tool between people and global activism” (Cortés-Ramos et al.,2021, p.2). Soon after the Arab spring revolution started, the importance of social media became a highly debated topic among scholars. Many of the scholars highlighted the innovation of social media as the center of mass communication among young protestors and how social media provides a voice to civilians specifically in less democratic environments where authoritarian regime controls mass media to shape public opinions (Smidi & Shahin, 2017; Wolfsfeld, Segev & Sheafer, 2013). Undeniably, the media coverage during the Arab spring revolution was focused mainly on young protesters with smartphones in hand, galvanizing the streets in political resistance, which was even considered a Facebook or Twitter revolution by some reporters (Brown, Guskin & Mitchell, 2012). Some studies suggest that social media in fact acts as a crucial medium to show the conflicts that are happening on the ground during the revolution to the outside world rather than inside the country where the uprising is actually taking place (Brown, Guskin & Mitchell, 2012). Hence, the authors argue that social media indeed is an important tool to spread news information in the revolution but one cannot essentially assume that social media is the main mobilized force (Brown, Guskin & Mitchell, 2012).

In order to understand more about online activism and user behaviors, I draw “slacktivism” into consideration in the analysis. Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya (2017) state that while many have focused on a study about youth activism with the rise of social media, there is also another side that has emerged which is called “slacktivism”. Slacktivism, as the authors define it, is “an online form of self-aggrandizing, politically ineffective activism” (Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017, p.1). Online activism has many known advantages; it inspires young people to participate more in voting, join political and social movements, sign petitions, and such (Chau, 2020), but the downside is not all activism is always politically effective. Oftentimes, the line between activism and slacktivism is insignificant because at times the same person might be participating in both (Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017), and slacktivism can also work as an encouragement to participate in purposeful protests in the future (Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2013, as cited in Cabrera, Matias and Montoya, 2017). The term slacktivism is considered pejorative to some researchers because some believe that it is a lazy form of activism (Fisher, 2020) that requires little to no effort, for example, Clicktivism, which is a form of slacktivism, is liking and/or sharing a post or a video on social media platforms without any purposeful support (St. Louis Public Radio, 2014). Kristofferson, White & Peloza's (2014) research findings indicate that people who engage in clicktivism as a form of public token support do not necessarily tend to join in further purposeful support. Nonetheless, Vie (2014) argues that individual acts of such may be ineffective, but when many individuals participate in this small action to support the issue, this becomes mass support that increases awareness, and prominence and encourages it to be included in popular discussion.

Research Questions

Based on the previous literature review, the followings are the questions I propose:

1. What kind of role does digital media play in this revolution?
2. How do revolution activists utilize digital media to connect with the audience and how do they engage?
3. What are the digital contents revolution activists generate and how are they effective?

Methodology

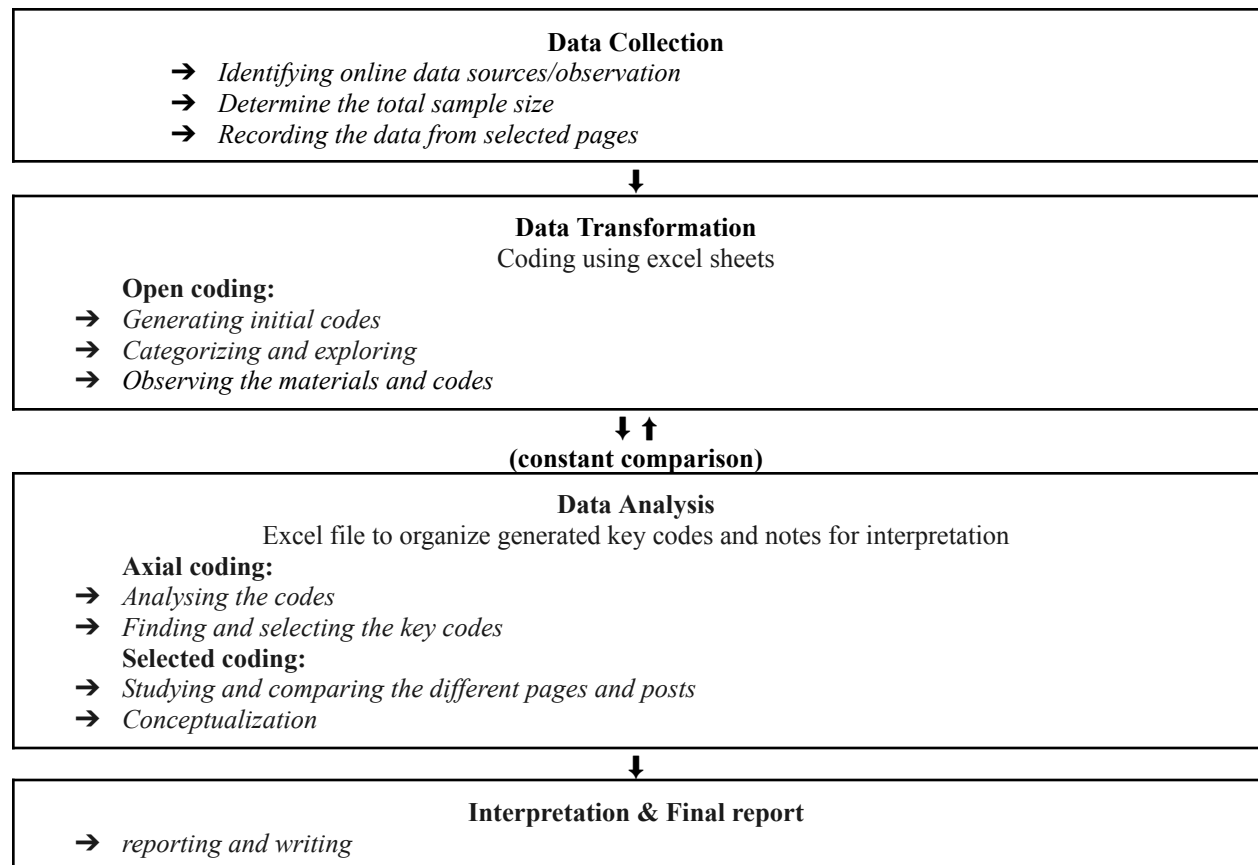
The paper adopts a grounded theory approach to establish a substantive research process and explores secondary literature for the facts to base on. According to Glaser & Strauss (1967), The Grounded theory can be distinguished into “constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling” (as cited in Cho & Lee, 2014, p.4). In a constant comparative analysis, a researcher performs systematic data collection and analyzes the data concurrently, and in the course of analyzing the data, different cases are compared and contrasted to conceptualize the phenomenon (Cho & Lee, 2014). Moreover, Theoretical sampling essentially is “the process of collecting data for comparative analysis” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.9, as cited in, Cho & Lee, 2014, p.4), which involves contrasting different data of the situation to gain multiple prospects in the process of analysis that will inspire the next phase of the data collection (Cho & Lee, 2014). In other words, Theoretical sampling is about ideational data collection to receive a deeper insight into the actual sample (Pieterse, 2020). Cho & Lee (2014) also suggest that “During analysis, researchers must be theoretically sensitive to the data analysis that guides them toward what to do next” (p.4). Therefore, This study is analyzed in different phases as suggested.

Research Design

Figure 1 shows the different phases of analysis of this study. This design is based on the grounded theory model that was generated by Corbin & Strauss (1990) which was later evolved by Cho & Lee (2014) and Four phases of the “social media-to-concepts” approach by Lai & To (2015) and modified to be more suitable for this research. According to the authors, data collection and data analysis should be parallel and through the coding process, one should find relations among codes and identify the most prominent and frequent quotes.

Figure 1

Data analysis procedure



Method

A qualitative content analysis is conducted to understand more about digital technology use in Myanmar's spring revolution. As discussed above, Facebook is widely used as a primary medium for resistance in Myanmar, and numerous Facebook pages and groups that are dedicated to the revolution have emerged after the coup. On that account, the study analyses 29 Facebook pages that focus on and support the resistance. Of 29 Facebook pages, 481 posts are observed to identify and understand the form of digital communication in the spring resistance. The pages are chosen in three steps-observation. Firstly, pages are selected according to their popularity among Burmese Facebook users and similar page suggestions by Facebook, and by pages themselves. Secondly, To indicate the officiality of the pages, the recommendation of well-known public figures, activists, and NUG/ CRPH official pages are looked into. Lastly, the information and website links they have provided on the pages are analyzed. The time of the sampled posts ranged from March 2021 to September 2022, however, due to innumerable posts on some pages, some of the earlier posts are not accessible. Although for some pages, the timeline filter function is available publicly. In such cases, earlier posts from 2021 are studied. Additionally, only publicly accessible posts are studied for limited access and ethical reasons.

As for data collection, coding software for directly downloading Facebook pages is not available, hence, the data is coded in google excel sheets manually. Two Excel sheets are created for coding. The first sheet is for putting data on each page into categories. The second sheet is used to code the individual posts that are collected from the pages. Initial codes are generated from the first empirical research of the pages of the first excel sheets. Then, codes for the second excel sheet are generated and categorized based on the first sheet. As I explore post by post, more codes are generated and arranged to be more unified. Before interpretation of the data,

written information, pictures, videos, likes, shares, and comments of each post are all coded and put into categories.

Findings

Overviews of the data

Among 29 Facebook pages, the most frequent page type is Charitable/ Non-profit Organisations and Community Organisations, followed by News & Media, Mobile Applications, Entertainment, Arts, and Government Organisations. A total of 481 posts are randomly collected from 29 Facebook pages. Based on the overall analysis, the followings are the main categories that are generated: News & Information Reports, Official Statements & Certificates, Fundraising & Donation, Motivation & Encouragement, Strikes & Demonstration, Facebook Live Discussion & Opinion, and Audience Response. During coding, new sub-categories are also needed to develop and adjust which are as follows: Informational, Instructional, Emotional, Entertainment, Creativity, and Interaction. Posts are allocated in more than one category accordingly because their contents are not set to one category. While more than half of the pages are open from march 2021 to early 2022 in response to the coup, some of the pages are found to be opened way before the revolution has started, and converted to activism and revolutionary pages after the coup. Out of all the categories that were generated, the most prominent one among others is News & Reports which represents 25.99% of all the posts. The category comprises any information update about the revolution or the pages themselves. One-third of the posts are shared with images but the rest is either with videos or just captions. Although the fundraising and donation category represents only 17.04%, this type of content is also allocated to other categories such as news information and encouragement. For instance, CDM medical network, a page that

represents and supports the medical workers who joined the civil disobedience movement (CDM), shares information about how to join the new program “Spring Healthcare Heroes - SHH” where you can be a member of the program for certain monthly fees and your membership fees will go to the CDM workers, which is a form of fundraising but also an information sharing post. Therefore, fundraising and donation category may not be the highest in percentage alone but this is the most prominent category of them all.

Post Coup: A Transformed Resistance Style

It is almost two years since the military took over and the short-lived global attention on Myanmar has waned because of other crises like the war in Ukraine. Myanmar news may have faded away from international headlines, but their fight for freedom is an ongoing mission. The loss of interest in the Myanmar conflict may as well be because the uprising is not taking place in the streets of the cities like Yangon anymore. The military's violent crackdowns, arbitrary arrests and torture, and the worst COVID-19 pandemic wave in June 2021 may have altered the freedom approach.

When I look at the posts that are posted in the first three months after the coup, the contents are more focused on participating in the different movements, boycotting military-owned businesses, pressuring international businesses to end their affiliation with the military, other daily marches updates on the street and instruction on how to protect oneself if the military treated the crowd with violence. Their protest manner was more about showing unity, solidarity, and strong people's force and letting the world see it through digital platforms.

Figure 2



Note. Digital posters for inviting people to join in the upcoming demonstrations, screenshots from Facebook Page, digital image (left): Civil Disobedience Movement (2021, 26 March), digital poster (right) : Civil Disobedience Movement (2021, 13 March).

Figure 2 shows how the page motivates people to participate more in the uprising and accelerate the resistance. The first image is an announcement for the upcoming march, and the second image is an invitation to engage in the revolution. The posts indicate that unity is power, using ²catchphrases that rhyme, and a red color that actuates the revolutionary sense in each poster. The audiences are also positive and supportive with thousands of likes and shares, comment phrases like “the revolution will prevail” with three finger salute sign which is a pronounced phrase and a revolutionary sign used by the supporters and can be seen in other types

² Catchphrase can be roughly translated as Image-1(left): “Everybody Assembly for Fascist Revolution!” , Image-2(right):” If being oppressed, Riot!, If being attacked, Fight Back!”

of posts as well. These types of contents reflect the revolution pattern from earlier months of the uprising where people are heated from sudden changes and the loss they have suffered from the recent coup, the rage, and the strong will to fight for freedom. Nevertheless, It is noticed that this form of revolutionary posts transformed into something more discreet in the later months of 2021 and 2022.

Figure 3



Note. Demonstrations: Photos with the messages for the ongoing revolution without showing the faces of the protestors, Screenshot images from Facebook pages: image 1(left), Mizzima - Myanmar News - English Edition (2022, 8 August), image 2 (above right): Yangon Revolution Force- YRF (2022, 17 September), image 3 (below right): Yangon Revolution Force- YRF (2022, 21 September).

Figure 3 shows the transformed protest style that activists executed one year after the coup. In the first image, four people whose faces cannot be seen are holding umbrellas with the Burmese digit “8” written in each of them, which represents the first nationwide uprising in 1988, commonly known as the 8888 uprisings. The image was uploaded on the 8th of August to honour the people who led this uprising. The second image is intended for the UN to recognise and invite the UN representative who is elected by the shadow government NUG. In the picture, a group of people is holding the message and also wearing paper masks with UN representative U Kyaw Moe Tun’s face. The third image is taken at one of the famous parks in Yangon and the message in the image reads “there will never be peace under tyranny”, and is a people-less protest that is getting more common after the military brutal attack on unarmed protestors. A page called Yangon Revolution Force- YRF posts this type of protest content regularly on their page with captions that explain the idea behind all this. In their posts, they often use the term “soft strike” and entitle their group as a “soft strike community”. The reach for the posts is generally well over a thousand likes, however, share and comment counts are noticeably less compared to earlier posts from 2021. Although the audience is still using the phrase “the revolution will prevail” quite often, it can be perceived as the reaction is less angry and not as enthusiastic as before. Indeed, these contents suggest that the revolution approach has changed from showing the great people’s power to the smaller individual activist group who are seemingly trying to remind people that the revolution is not over and that the country is still under dictatorship. In general, demonstration and protest-type content are not seen as much as other content, it covers only 12.47% of all the posts, nonetheless, this type of post has a higher interaction rate such as more shares and likes, In fact, it motivates and evokes a revolutionary

sense in people, therefore, it can be assumed that the users are more likely to help the revolution by donating the groups that are fighting for justice when they see this kind of posts.

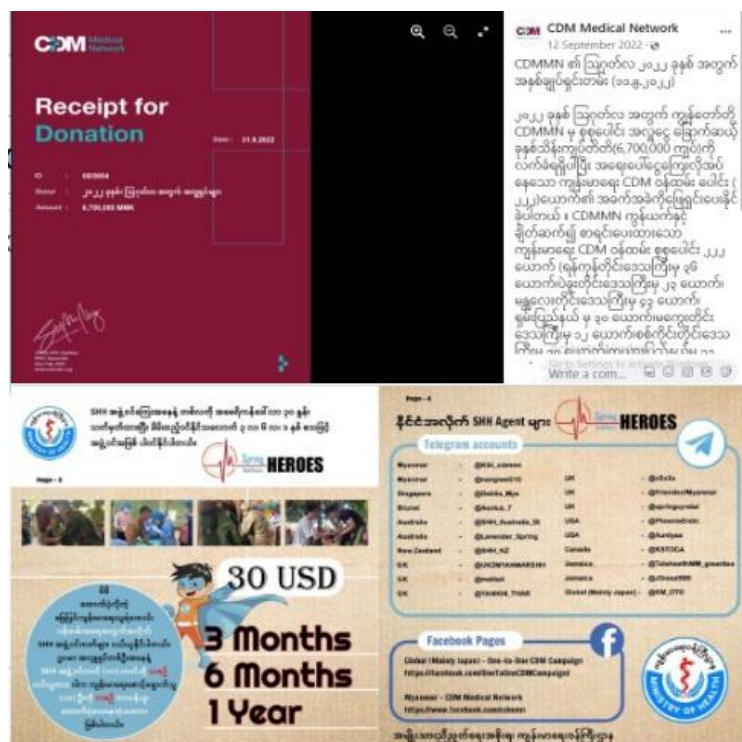
Change in Resistance Movements: From CDM to PDF

Among all other movements and strikes that were carried out, Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) is most likely to be the most popular movement. Three out of 29 pages are dedicated to this particular movement. Two of the pages, Civil Disobedience Movement and One-to-One CDM Campaign are intended for general CDM pledgers and the other page CDM Medical Network is specifically intended for CDM medical workers. The content on the Civil Disobedience Movement page focused on reporting government organisations or other organisations members pledging CDM, CDM-related news & information such as CDM call centre to get help if you are a CDM pledger, and promoting creative internet donation campaigns like “#phonestrike” using modern social media sign “hashtags” as the title of the campaign to increase awareness to an online donation program. It is also noticed that the page also emphasizes persuading military soldiers to join CDM using emotional-type posts by telling an emotional story, together with digital typographic posters to catch the attention of the platform users. In their posts, They highlighted major inequality and injustice between soldiers and high-rank military officers and questioned the soldiers if it is worth risking their own lives for those high-rank officers with unlimited wealth when soldiers on the front line are struggling to feed their own families. Moreover, The page claimed that they do not necessarily manage the donations for CDM pledgers, however, they seem to be working as a middle person by directing the people in need to the help group. This page has the highest likes and followers of all three CDM pages that have been mentioned above and has many supportive audiences and interaction

in general, but unexpectedly, the page stopped uploading new posts at the end of July 2021. So, the question here is “what does it mean for the CDM movement?”.

The answer is, the CDM movement is still there but it appears that many CDM pledgers are being pressured, arrested, traced down, tortured, and targeted by the military, even more so, the new policies made by the military banned CDM pledgers from hiring by private sectors, which led many CDM pledgers to reconsider joining the movement (Lipes, 2022). Another motive seems that the CDM pledgers are not receiving adequate help from support groups. One of the posts from Civil Disobedience Movement says the CDM support groups are struggling to help CDM pledgers but the unstable internet to no internet, not enough donation money, and banking problems have made the support process slow down, yet they are still trying their best and tell people to leave a message through messenger chat if you need help. It appears that Facebook messenger is the primary application for direct communication with each person. The comment section proves that most of the CDM pledgers are struggling greatly. Some mention that they left a message in the chat but no response, Some say that they have never received support of any kind, and very few say they had received help, but on the other hand, there are some comments that said they join CDM because they are willing to do so even though they are struggling they do not expect any help. According to a Radio Free Asia (RFA) article, NUG estimates that they have lost around 40% which is 150,000 CDM pledgers in 2022 (Lipes, 2022). This could be one of the reasons why the page has stopped.

Figure 4



Note. Image 1(above) shows the report of the received donation money for August and the caption explains the amount of CDM pledgers that have been supported for the month. Image 2 (below) shows a Spring Healthcare Heroes (SHH) program where you can be a member and the membership fees go to CDM medical workers who are giving medical care to PDF members, and the contact information if you want to join. Screenshot from Facebook Pages- Image 1(above): CDM Medical Network (2022, September 12), Image 2 (below): One-to-One CDM campaign (2022, September 17).

Interestingly, When I look at the other two pages that represent CDM, both of which are posting regularly until today. Figure 4 shows that the pages continue to create content about their donation campaigns and reports about their donations to CDM workers. Although, their posts do not focus on CDM on the whole but also on promoting other projects to help People's Defense Forces (PDF). Here, what I should not ignore is the role PDF plays in this revolution. The People's Defence Force (PDF) was established by the National Unity Government (NUG) on the 5th of May 2021 to fight against the military. "The PDFs are systematically formed, trained, and

equipped as main combat forces by the NUG and its allied Ethnic Armed Organisations” (Hein, 2022). The comments on these PDF-related posts tell that after the military used deadly weapons against empty-handed citizens, many young Burmese people seem to believe that it is senseless and unjust to fight this fight without anything to defend. The lack of support from international communities, it appears young people have decided to take matters into their own hands. Hein (2022) states that at first, a lot of people, especially the older generation thought of this group as nothing more than some rebellious youths with no clue of war who would easily be defeated by the Myanmar army with over 60 years of experience. Despite all the criticism and doubts, with no international support and very limited equipment, the PDF is indeed the biggest threat to the military in just a year (Hein, 2022).

It has been observed that some of the young CDM pledgers have joined the PDF to fight in the frontline, or to give medical attention to PDF members and villagers whose villages are around PDF camps in the Jungle. It seems that some who cannot risk as much have left this life-threatening CDM but other CDM pledgers who are willing to take risks joined PDF to continue this fight until the end. Therefore, it can be concluded as the CDM movement may have lost its steam in this sense but the fight for revolution continues in another form.

Digital Fundraising

Investment and Lottery: Is the country's future in hands of NUG and PDF?

I cannot deny the fact that more than half of the pages that I have studied are focused on supporting the PDF and displaced people during the civil war. The Facebook pages may have different names and different focuses but the finding suggests that all the pages are working together with the NUG, and this whole support network is called the “supply and transport”

team, and the team is not only inside Myanmar but is spread all throughout the world. Different countries have different representatives for handling the funds that are received from the projects and campaigns since it is not safe to keep the funds in Myanmar banks. All the funds later go to the anonymous supply and transport teams inside Myanmar to support PDF groups in different regions of Myanmar. The Supply and transport task can be handled anonymously but to receive large sums in order to support large groups like the PDF, there is no other platform like Facebook to raise awareness for the fundraising projects.

Figure 5



Note. The information for The End of Dictatorship (EOD) fundraising program “Spring Investment” and a digital image indicating the land unfairly grabbed by the military. Screenshots from Facebook Page, image1 (left): Click2Donate (2022), image2 (middle): The End of Dictatorship (2022, 21 September), image 3(right): The End of Dictatorship (2022, 18 August).

The project called “Spring Investment” could possibly be one of the most significant projects among all other fundraising projects that are presented on the pages I analysed. The Spring Investment is an official fundraising program by NUG that sells thousands of strategic acres of land in Yangon and Mandalay that are occupied by military-related businesses. The Facebook page called The End of Dictatorship (EOD) specifically handles this project, and the idea behind this investment is buyers can choose the lots they like and make a down payment of 40%, and purchase the rest of 60% when the revolution is over. As seen in figure 5, the caption of image 1(left) says “In only half an hour, more than 400 lots were sold, buy it before it’s too late!” and a piece of information about the areas that are already sold out. The tone in this post can be expressed as encouraging, positive and hopeful. Image 2 (middle) and 3 (right) explain the areas in Mandalay that were unfairly grabbed and occupied by the military, the value of the land and installment amount for buying, and the contact information for buyers at the foot of the image. The whole project may seem unrealistic to an outsider because first of all, it is uncertain how long this revolution will take, and secondly, the whole project is happening on online media so there is no guarantee for anything, however, these posts received many supportive reactions, for instance, “These NUG projects are getting better and better”, “It’s time for our solidarity Mandalay! Let’s buy it! ”, “The revolution will soon prevail and take back what’s ours!” and also comments like “I could not afford so I will support in another form”. This reveals the rancour people have on the military and how much people are relying on NUG and believing NUG will win this war.

Furthermore, Pages always support each other's projects, oftentimes they promote new programs from other pages on their own pages. The concept for most of the projects is relatively similar. The practice they do is similar to a lottery system where a page initiates a project that

comes with a prize and the supporters can buy an online ticket to win that prize in a specified period of time, and occasionally in a lucky draw style, comes with many prizes of different values and raffle tickets. For example, in one project called “San Yay” which means “Upstream”, the prize is a handcrafted wooden painting by the son of former state counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, and a ticket cost 100USD, and in 96 hours, 7081 tickets were sold, said one report. Another significant style of fundraising is simple crowdfunding. The content creators introduce a project using colorful digital images, sometimes short videos to grab people’s attention and motivate them to donate. In return, the page creates digital certificates of appreciation for donors with their names. In some cases, donors do not want to use their real names, therefore, they come up with witty titles for themselves, stimulating other audiences to contribute, so that they can also have their appreciation certificates with their own idea of funny names. These projects may appear simple and fun, but seems rather effective in stirring up motivation, and one cannot deny the devotion and dedication these online activists have for this revolution.

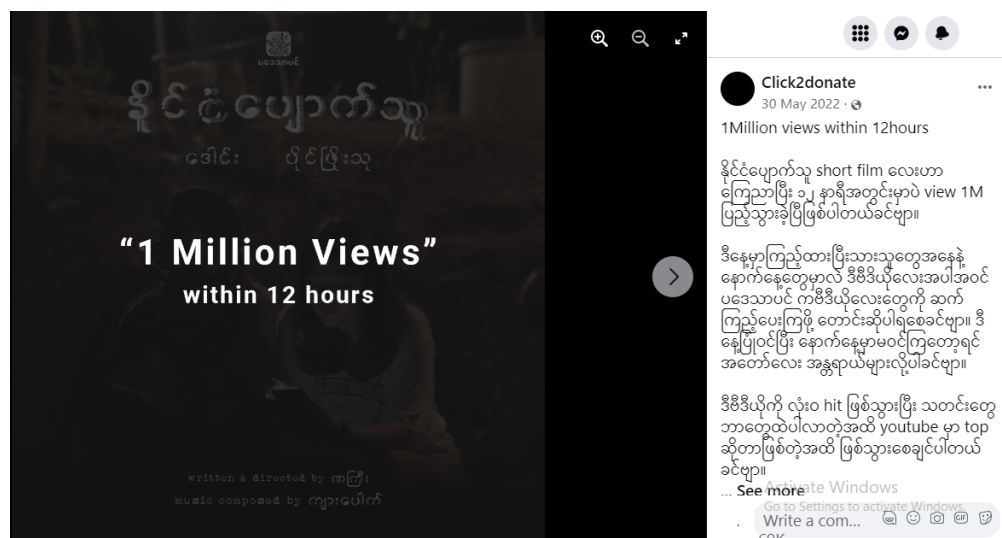
The Era of Technological Revolution: The Art of Clicking

Crowdfunding, Lottery tickets, and all these methods of Fundraising involve someone contributing their money, besides, it is quite unpredictable how much longer this Spring Revolution will take to end. Consequently, how much longer can these supporters contribute to these projects?

Naturally, some people may grow tired of contributing, or some may still be willing to contribute but could not afford to spare. For these reasons, the tech-savvy young generation, who have been taking the lead in the revolution since the beginning, started a new method of fundraising called “Click to Donate”, a method that does not involve donating money but a

moment of your time online. The Facebook page called Click2Donate with 1,096,023 followers, the highest number of followers of all 29 pages I have studied, encourages people to click the links and use the mobile apps that young Burmese IT developers created for this revolution. By doing so, the creators can earn money through advertisements from the website and mobile applications they created. People who participate by clicking the link or using the app are known as “clickers”. The more clickers there are, the more online ads they will receive, since this form of participation is the safest of all other activities, the activists motivate people to participate multiple times a day. The page's main content includes daily reports of clicker amounts from different countries, earnings from clicking, and sharing detailed instructions on how to click in order to work properly. It is most likely to be the most popular form of fundraising in this revolution. This fundraising method consists of using VPN applications to bypass social media restrictions, websites with informative articles, mobile game applications known as Play to Donate, Daily News mobile applications, and multiple YouTube and Facebook channels with short videos, music videos, and animation videos, each of these have their own Facebook pages for information sharing about their news updates. Notably, Different VPN applications have been used ever since using social media platforms was restricted soon after the coup. Therefore, PDF supporters developed their own VPN applications to increase earnings for the revolution.

Figure 6



Note. Reporting about a short film called “The stateless” by a well-known Burmese director and activist Na Gyi, shot in a PDF camp, which is on a YouTube channel, hit 1 million views in 12 hours. Screenshot from the Facebook page, Click2donate (2022, May 30).

This creative form of fundraising through Entertainment is the most well-perceived type of Fundraising because it is easy to use, and entertaining, one can experience heart-touching stories, and some are humorous, some artistic. Truly, the type of creative content they are creating is limitless. It is undeniable this revolution revolves around Technology but the creativity of this generation z should also be acknowledged. Most of the videos they uploaded are made in PDF camps by PDF members who have nothing more than a phone and a laptop. They create many different types of content such as PDF music videos, cooking in the pdf camps, tutorial videos, talk shows, and so on. These people cover every digital content that can be seen online every day but the difference is they create these whilst living in camps that could be bombed anytime and fighting in the battleground, with some of those fighters as young as 17.

News and Reports

Media Repression After the coup

Since the Myanmar military tightened the control of the state-owned media including domestic and international outlets after the coup, private independent media has become more important in sharing truthful information with the people. As aforementioned in the literature review, Myanmar media outlets have always been persisting to survive long before the 2021 coup mainly because of the press restriction laws. Many Journalists and reporters were targeted during the revolution and many of them were arrested, criminalized, and tortured in prisons (free press unlimited, 2022). Over 100 journalists are detained and arbitrary arrests, prosecution, attacks, and at least 3 of them are killed (free press unlimited, 2022). Since journalism is criminalized, there are fewer and fewer journalists who want to take a risk for the sake of true information. It is getting harder for journalists to get the news since the country is turning into a battleground and most areas are now restricted (Khine, 2021). Therefore, most journalists have to rely on clandestine reports by the locals or citizens (witnesses) where an event has occurred (Khine, 2021). Considering it is risky and costly to report the news as printing papers, most independent media run news as a digital channel on social media/ other platforms and report privately in safe areas/places because doing it in an office is not an option anymore. Nevertheless, these independent media such as Mizzima news, Myanmar Now, and DVB are still the main source of information for the public, and the anti-coup Facebook pages I analysed often share informational posts from above mentioned popular independent media to base their facts on the posts.

Digital News Media and Communication

News and Information with the highest percentage among all other categories, It can be observed that five Facebook pages out of 29 pages are news media channels. One of the pages called Kho Phyu meaning “white dove”, reports briefs of all the daily news together, each in short sentences; only in the comment section, they mention the link and source of the original news page. The page targets the audience in the area where other forms of news are inaccessible during hardship such as wars, the idea is those who have internet access can screenshot their brief news to either share with friends and family via phone messages or show them directly. Pages like Public Voice Channel and D-day Channel are not only focused on reporting news but also manage talk shows or live discussions with NUG ministers and other public figures. Another page like Federal FM radio channel focuses on reporting news daily, and a channel like Thadin even has its own News mobile application which is also one of the recommended apps to use for “clicking”. These channel programs mainly include daily PDF battles with the military, military raids in villages, interviews, entertainment like poem reading and story-telling, and even in different ethnic languages of news are presented in some of the channels. As these channels are not actual news media so to say, it seems they do not necessarily have physical newsrooms and it is unclear if they have actual journalists or mainly rely on clandestine reports. They only exist to update the truthful ground situation of the revolution because immediately after the coup and 90 percent of the media sectors across the country were seized (Khine, 2021), since then they are only allowed to broadcast either military propaganda content or non-revolutionary news or will be held accountable.

Another significant way of communication on these pages is that the activists, page admins/ advocates, journalists, PDF members, NUG members, and other public figures share their opinions, experiences, and open discussions via Facebook live regularly. As I have said

before, these pages are all connected, therefore, the pages announced the live session beforehand on their pages so that many are aware of the upcoming discourse. Some live sessions can be joined by the audience free to listen and comment questions for the live session as well. In this course, communication is more transparent between the audience and revolution leaders.

Discussion

It is an undeniable fact that technology and digital platforms play a significant role in this revolution. Without these platforms to communicate, this revolution will take a completely different course. Myanmar has a long history of military brutal crackdowns, arresting, people hiding, resisting, and fleeing the country. More than 30 years ago, a similar student-led uprising happened and ended with lots of bloodsheds. Nonetheless, the huge difference back then and now is that there is the NUG government which has strong public support and overseas support, and there seem to be an implementation of policies and plans by NUG for the People's Defence Force so that it is more than just a group of rebels, alliances with some of the powerful ethnic armed organisations, and most importantly, digital technology, a communication tool to exhibit all these things to the citizens. Despite the internet restriction and military oppression, the continuous effort of anti-coup advocates and their fight for freedom and justice should not be disregarded. On top of that, their effort will not be as effective without the help of technology.

Just as Deth (2001) argues about political participation theory, modern technology has blurred the line between political and non-political activities, for instance, playing PDF mobile games, participating in the clicking, and watching the videos the pages uploaded to help increase funds can be considered as a form of participation. Unlike watching the political news on Television, social media can create an immediate impact on the other end of content creators

because in cases such as digital fundraising, every view or click is crucial; once the person chooses to engage in content for at least 30 seconds, it will be counted as one view or one visit, therefore, the more engagement the content gets, the higher chance of getting more advertisement and reach in the future. One could argue the possibility of incidental content exposure on social media, indeed, it may as well be an unintentional consumption, and perhaps, the person who engages in the content is not particularly interested in politics but somehow interested in the content that is presented and participated in the activities like watching the video until the end. What should also be taken into account is that not all contents presented by those pages are political content, some are a pure form of entertainment such as PDF members singing famous songs or cooking food videos. Hence, It is also important to note that people from either side, the military or anti-coup supporters or even non-partisan, may have a chance of incidental exposure to this non-political content. This type of incidental consumption of non-political information “can have important effects on political outcomes such as learning or participation. The more people are confronted with non-political content (without actively looking for it), the more they are potentially distracted from their primary political processing goal” (Matthes et. al., 2020, p.8). Therefore, the consumer with different political affiliations can also get distracted by such content which may lead to a conversion of political perspective. This proves the point about modern technology weakening the line between political and non-political activities and that participation can be everything.

Clearly, digital media made it much easier for anti-coup activists to share and inform every endeavor with the citizens in a timely manner. On the contrary, the overloaded information on digital media may overwhelm the citizens with this years-long revolution. Park (2019) states that when people are inundated with news and information on social media, they are less likely

to interact with the information from social media. This could be one of the reasons the later posts on some of the pages have fewer comments and fewer likes because it is noticed that some of the pages post more than one post per day. Once in a while, some page uploads sentimental or entertaining post with creative content that oftentimes stir up the user's attention and gets a great number of likes and interactions. Therefore, it may be more considerate to post informative and creative posts once in a while than posting too often. Considering the credibility of the information, the generally approved measure would be popularity (Abbasi & Liu, 2013). However, the interaction behaviors of anti-coup supporters on those pages suggest that popularity is not the only measure of credibility but similar personal beliefs and objectives for this revolution. For example, in purchasing the lots sold by the NUG government on social media, the contract is made online and there is no guarantee that NUG will be able to take over the country's leadership soon. Indeed, accountability is not ideal when the whole process of revolution relies on a social media platform. Myanmar has a strong tradition of doing charity as a virtue for good fortune. It is possibly one of the motives for these fundraising events can be carried out for two years after the coup.

Whilst Slacktivism can also be seen quite often in multiple posts, such as sharing or simply liking or commenting just a simple sticker on the posts without any further engagement or any discussion about the content, the act of lazy activism did favor this revolution especially when it comes to digital fundraising where reach can make a difference on the outcomes of the whole program. The finding suggests that the revolution is not as heated as the beginning of the coup and the downside of this is that people still want democracy and freedom but instead of demanding it with their own voices and taking risks, they rather rely on a group of people who are committed to fighting with the regime until the end which might prolong the revolution even

more than it should be. Subsequently, The excessive use of social media has always been a controversial topic, and there may likely be disagreements over the digital methods Myanmar's freedom fighters have been executing over the years. After all, it is social media and it is a known fact that you cannot believe everything you see on the internet, thus, one cannot really prove the accuracy and truthfulness of these contents, the intuition and rational thinking of each user would be the asset in this situation. Nevertheless, the technology and innovative ideas of the youths retain this revolution for this long, and it certainly will continue to be part of it for however long this revolution takes.

Ethical Consideration

There are some underlying ethical challenges in this study as this contains the use of social media and internet data as research material to study human subjects. As a researcher, an ethical concern for this study is, there is no actual human contact in this study, unlike face-to-face interviews or surveys, researchers couldn't obtain consent for the data since the dataset is rather large to make contact with everyone. In my belief, the most important thing for a researcher in this type of situation is Respect. Nycyk (2020) suggests "Respect is subjective but is linked to being considerate not to do harm when using data to which there is no consent given" (p.5). Although the data that will be collected from social media is public, concerning one's privacy, an ethical researcher's job is to keep the data well protected and to handle it with full respect. Therefore, I only retrieved the data that are completely public and when I screenshot the post, I erased the parts where the names of the people are visible.

Conclusion & Limitations

This study explores the use of digital media during the coup and post-coup in ongoing Myanmar's spring revolution. This study reveals the profound method of communication in the age of the internet and the dynamic style of digital content used by the resistance groups to mobilize the Myanmar people from inside and outside of the country, and the resolute action of resistance groups making a way through digital repression in Myanmar's revolution. Most of the academic studies about the Myanmar coup focus on the Myanmar regime and the country's post-coup social and political turmoil, but this study offers a different way of viewing the Myanmar coup from the side of the pro-democracy activists and its digitalized resistance. In this revolution, it is hard to pinpoint who are the main advocates because there is no one leader figure that they follow, instead, all the resistance groups work together with the NUG as comrades towards "one goal". "One goal" in the context does not essentially mean they all share the same political preference but they share the same hatred towards the regime. The growing resistance of the armed forces and its supporting digital groups may raise many concerns about morality and peace, but arguably this method put immense pressure on the regime (Dunst, 2021), although the whole procedure of relying too much on social media to raise funds is rather challenging and outcomes are relatively unpredictable. It is definitely not a perfect process but more of a necessity to keep this revolution going. Even so, digital resilience is indisputably the most significant aspect of this revolution. As a matter of fact, this resistance against the regime does not solely depend on physical resistance anymore, technology will also be one of the major determinant factors in this revolution.

As for the limitation, this study has plenty to point out. First of all, this research only focuses on the content of the handful of pages uploaded in a certain period of time, so unlike

face-to-face interviews, it excludes insightful socialization and emotional connection. Secondly, the use of social media on the military side is not deeply considered in this study. Since all the information on the pages I explored is public, it would be interesting to see how the coup supporters or the side of the military will perceive or use these pieces of information to gain insight for them. Myanmar is already an under-researched topic, and is still in need of a lot of research background, hence, a study like this is a good start for the country and for future research.

For future studies, it would be more insightful to conduct in-person communication to gain deeper personal opinions on the matter. Unlike studying the reaction of users only through comment sections which might not be as sincere due to slacktivism, this study will benefit from studying the receiver's point of view with in-depth interviews.

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