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Social Trust, Political Trust and Digital Activism: Unfolding the Causal Mechanisms in Greece

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Submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Sciences

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// Abstract

This thesis seeks to identify the ways in which social and political trust have an effect on digital activism. In doing so, it bridges four strands of research on social trust, political trust, political participation and connective action. This approach permits identifying several research gaps that are directly addressed through an empirical analysis of a crucial case study (Greece) with low levels of social and political trust. The analysis uses rich primary data collected through an original online survey and semi-structured interviews. The collected data is analyzed using a mixed methods design that combines multivariate statistical analysis and thematic analysis. The main findings illustrate that social and political trust influence differently the forms of digital activism. In general, social trust has a positive effect on all the forms of digital activism. The results are more nuanced with political trust: high levels enhance some forms of digital activism, while low levels augment the involvement in other forms of digital activism.

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Glasgow, 23 September 2023

Author’s Declaration

I certify that the thesis presented here for examination for PhD degree of the University of Glasgow is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it) and that the thesis has not been edited by a third party beyond what is permitted by the University’s PGR Code of Practice. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it is permitted without full acknowledgement.

I declare that the thesis does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree [unless explicitly identified and as noted below]. I declare that this thesis has been produced in accordance with the University of Glasgow’s Code of Good Practice in Research.

I acknowledge that if any issues are raised regarding good research practice based on review of the thesis, the examination may be postponed pending the outcome of any investigation of the issues.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The emergence of new social networking platforms has led to new forms of online political participation and social movements in contemporary politics (Agojo et al., 2023; Akpojivi, 2023; Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Ozkula, 2021b; Suwana, 2019; Van Deth, 2016; Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012a; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). The so-called web 2.0 has been theorised to contribute to politics in numerous ways, and also to facilitate the pursuit of collective action on specific issues and in support of political and social causes (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Greijdanus et al., 2020; Lundgaard, 2016; Nam, 2010; Oser et al., 2013; Uysal et al., 2022). Digital activism emerged in the 1990s but did not become widespread until the late 2000s. There was some early adoption on the internet through the use of forums or blogs (Gibson & Ward, 2009), but the web 2.0 and the rise of social media are the factors which have helped to define digital activism and brought it to a far wider audience. For this reason, the essence of some digital activism activities is now closely linked to the use of social media.

By the early 2000s, digital activism was mainly viewed as the digitalization of social movements and a means of online communication in order to pursue political change (Gibson & Ward, 2009; Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). Early on in its development, some argued that digital activism is just a digitally facilitated form of offline activism, as was also argued for online political participation (Nam, 2010), but in the 2010s the true potential of digital activism became apparent through its adoption on web 2.0 platforms (de Bakker, 2015). The major changes it has brought include new forms of activism and new ways to participate online. The decade 2010-2020 revealed cases such as the "indignados", the "Arab spring", "MeToo" and "Black Lives Matter" movements, LGBTQ+ activism, and so on, all of which were widely supported by the public, mainly through social media, leading to significant mobilisation, and showcasing the potential of digital activism (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Lamoureaux & Sureau, 2018; Suwana, 2019). This decade also confirmed the capabilities of digital activism and showed the need to provide a more precise definition of what digital activism is and for a typology around digital activism.

However, it has also been highlighted that digital activism is not just a set of social movements and activities performed online (Van Deth, 2016). As such, numerous types of online political participation fall under the banner of "digital activism", such as blogging, petition-signing, and boycotts. In terms of more unconventional forms of online political participation, collective and connective action also seem to be crucial forms of digital

activism (Belinda, 2007; Bourne, 2010). Connective action has to do with personalized participation in a cause using digital means such as social media (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Lundgaard, 2016). This is why it is crucial for digital activism. Collective action relates to how people form a collective identity in order to pursue a greater good (Baldassarri, 2011). The evolution of digital activism is connected with the evolution of all the aforementioned types of political participation and social movements. Political participation has long been defined as a process of interaction between citizens and decision makers where citizens are trying to exert an impact on policies (Conge, 1988; Verba, 1967).

The classification of conventional and unconventional means of political participation is also relevant to digital activism, as it reflects how it has evolved in digital culture. Conventional political participation has usually taken the form in democratic states of electoral politics, which involves voting and party politics (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991) Kourvetaris, 1982). On the other hand, unconventional activities include boycotts, petitions, and demonstrations, which represent ways to express feelings of political dissatisfaction and a desire for reform (Belinda, 2007; Stockemer, 2014). Adding to this literature, collective action and collective identity is seen as the involvement of people in efforts to achieve a common goal or to address a common sociopolitical cause (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In the internet era, this has moved a step further with connective action, where the use of technology has become more individualised but also enables a collective identity. As such, connective identity refers to similar capabilities addressed in online environments (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The difference with digital activism is that while collective and connective action are broader activities in online environments, digital activism comprises a specific set of activities including slacktivism, metavoicing, data dissemination, digital assertion, buycotts, boycotts, digital petition signing, hacktivism, data activism, and e-funding. However, collective and connective action do contribute to creating what is known as digital activism. Both political participation and social movements are necessary elements to consider in order to examine the evolution of digital activism and its typology.

Similarly, since the early days of scholarly examinations of political participation and social movements, an argument has been made that there is a very tight connection between these phenomena and trust. For example, in unconventional political participation, lack of trust is thought to initiate the relevant actions that a group of people will take (Belinda, 2007; Bourne, 2010). In contrast, conventional political participation has also been directly connected with trust but in the opposite way, in that the higher the trust, the higher the participation is expected to be (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991). This situation applies both to online and offline forms of political participation as well as both collective and connective

action. All these forms, as well as traditional activism, have been connected with both social and political trust in the literature (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015; Stolle et al., 2005). However, digital activism as a category includes elements of all the above. Digital activism in this sense has not been extensively discussed, nor has its relationships with forms of social and political trust been fully explored. As such, the research question of the current thesis asks how social and political trust influence digital activism.

Research Goal and Gaps in the Literature

This thesis aims to understand the relationship of different forms of social and political trust with different forms of digital activism, and to explore how and why people in Greece perform those different forms of digital activism. This section identifies the methodological, empirical and theoretical gaps relating to digital activism in the literature, and explains how this thesis contributes to filling those gaps. First, it explains what the gaps around the definition and the typology of digital activism are. Then, it analyses how the gaps around the causal mechanisms of digital activism are identified and why it is important to build a deep understanding of those mechanisms.

As was highlighted above, there is a clear need for a definition of digital activism, but there is also a need for a clear typology of which activities form digital activism as well as the key drivers in performing these activities. Earlier studies looked at how digital activism is defined and what type of activities should be considered part of it (J. George & Leidner, 2019). For this reason, more and more studies are trying to connect digital activism with other more established areas of the literature such as political participation (Van Deth, 2016). Thus, based on past literature, recent studies have sought to provide a definition. However, the fast-paced and ever-changing landscape of social media has hindered consensus on a definition that includes everything that is related to digital activism.

The rapid rise in the use of numerous forms of information and communications technology has meant that digital activism is much more likely to occur than in the past, which is why many proposed definitions stress that it relates to activism that takes place in online networks (Gibson & Ward, 2009; Kaun & Uldam, 2018; Sivitanides & Shah, 2011; Suwana, 2019). This situation provides a great starting point both in understanding how the prior scholarship sees digital activism and the key drivers to performing digital activism.

However, the major empirical gaps relate to the fact that generally, digital activism is seen as traditional activism which is facilitated by the use of technology and the internet rather than as a different area of study. This has limited the study of digital activism as the increased span of activities brought through technological advancements and what those

activities represent in their full context are not clear or fully considered by the literature (Gibson & Ward, 2009; Kaun & Uldam, 2018; Sivitanides & Shah, 2011; Suwana, 2019). This issue leads to a narrow understanding both of how social media has changed the landscape and of what digital activism is really about.

Another gap relates to how the study of digital activism has remained at the theoretical level without concentrating on one case (Kaun & Uldam, 2018). For example, not many studies have concentrated on a specific case in order to explore the extent of the use of digital activism activities, and very few studies have even been clear on what set of activities represent digital activism (J. George & Leidner, 2019). This also highlights the need for a typology, where a clear number of specifically defined activities can be confirmed as representing forms of digital activism, thus emphasising the differentiation between digital activism and traditional activism, social movements, online political participation, and collective – connective action, to avoid confusion in the literature and boost clarity (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Although there have been attempts to emphasise a specific digital activism activity and refer to it as "digital activism", there has been a lack of research explanation of why an activity is theorised as a digital activism activity, under which category it falls, and what the discussion around this activity is in the literature. Most of the time, for example, a research paper generally discusses a specific activity, for example a "call to support a product", without explaining that this activity is known as a buycott, how this activity is performed in offline domains, the point of differentiation on online networks, and so on (Zúñiga et al., 2014). A deeper exploration of these questions will address a significant gap in the literature by naming and defining the specific digital activism activities rather than simply using the term "digital activism" generally (J. George & Leidner, 2019) (Van Deth, 2016). A typology is considered to be of crucial importance to avoid confusion between specific activism types such as "slacktivism" (pressing the "like" button on a post related to a social or political cause) with digital activism as a whole, as it represents just one of the many activities that fall under this term. This is why the present thesis addresses digital activism as a whole new domain of research that overlaps with other activities but also remains distinct due to its disruptive nature. For this reason, it is also important to identify the reasons why someone would perform a particular form of digital activism and whether their level of social and political trust could have an impact on their decision to do so.

This thesis theorises that social and political trust play a critical role in determining whether someone will participate in digital activism. Treating social and political trust as causal mechanisms is a way of revealing the motives of citizens in performing such

activities, and identifying whether this has to do with the change they want to bring, with whether they support something, or whether their lack of trust may make them more active. A distinction between which activities are influenced by high or low levels of trust will also help in better understanding the nature of each of the specific digital activism activities identified in this thesis. This is important because some forms digital activism are expected to be influenced by low levels of political trust while others are hypothesised to be initiated because of the presence of high levels of trust. Similarly, social trust is considered important as it will provide insights into how people are influenced to participate in those activities. The prior studies of online political participation have also tended to examine how trust impacts the online relationships that are built on social media (de Bakker, 2015).

Earlier studies have examined whether low or high levels of trust create the need for more participation, and the findings of the current research will also shed light on this debate (Bourne, 2010; Van Deth, 2016; George & Leidner, 2019). Another major gap in the literature relates to the causal mechanisms underpinning digital activism, since the factors which lead to digital activism are not yet understood. Past research has found that frustration is one of the major reasons to perform a form of digital activism, or to express the need of participation. The current thesis connects the dots and based on the literature review it finds that a common causal mechanism for other research areas that overlap are the forms of social and political trust (Van Deth, 2016).

To summarise, this thesis addresses the above-described gaps in definition and causal mechanisms, and specifically examines how levels of social and political trust shape individuals' engagement with different forms of digital activism. The thesis brings evidence from the Greek context with the help of a survey of 1,681 respondents and interviews with 27 participants. This approach sought to define digital activism as a set of activities that happen in online networks with the goal of achieving change or influencing decision making. Additionally, this study's review of the different forms of digital activism clarifies each activity and showcases the new forms of activism that have emerged through the rise of social media and new technologies. The thesis also proposes social and political trust as two drivers that can lead to digital activism through developing hypotheses that are then tested in the Greek setting. The gap in prior research regarding causal mechanisms is also addressed through the interview questions and the survey, where the participants confirmed that social and political trust are amongst the reasons they would perform digital activism. As such, the survey results showed that people with higher levels of social trust are more likely to perform digital activism, and that different levels of political trust lead to different digital activism activities.

General Approach, Methods and Theories

The first major step is to provide a literature review of prior work on social and political trust and how these were connected with past forms of activism, providing the reasoning for why these should also be regarded as important in understanding digital activism. This will reveal a pattern of relationships that can be considered causal mechanisms prompting the activities in question. Greece is chosen here as a crucial case study which fulfils the criteria and addresses the gaps in the literature. An overview is given of the levels of social and political trust in Greece in past decades and the reasons influencing these levels. Simultaneously, the study looks at how Greece performs in terms of activism and social media engagement in order to provide as much depth as possible. The thesis also sets out its definition and typology of digital activism, revealing the connection of types of digital activism with forms of trust. It directly highlights how low or high levels of political and social trust influence each one of the different activities under examination. By doing so, the present work establishes whether there is a positive or a negative effect of each form of trust towards each digital activism activity. Deductive reasoning is then used in order to showcase the efficacy of the analytical framework, confirm (or deny) the research hypotheses and address the main research question, on how forms of trust influence digital activism.

The rationale behind these different steps and the phases of the current research is that the first step identifies the existence and nature of the research gap, and sets the research problem; more depth is added by identifying the points in the literature that should be clarified one by one. The analysis of past types of digital activism and how activism has evolved over time reveals a basic typology of digital activism as well as some common definitions, in order to create the hypotheses and track the research gaps. The second step in this research is to establish the basis of potential connections of social and political trust as causal mechanisms with digital activism. This is a crucial step because it represents half of the reasoning in forming the hypotheses, since the past literature has not gone into any depth on the possible causal links between trust and digital activism. This unique standpoint is therefore crucial not only in shaping the main research question, but also in elaborating the study and acting as a starting point for further research. The third step is to leverage the empirical data drawn through the specific case of Greece with the help of interviews. This step builds understanding of the initial definitions and typology as well as expanding them to explore the causal mechanisms of digital activism, both contributing to the existing literature and opening up space for more research by increasing the detailed understanding

of each specific type of digital activism and the context of Greece. The fourth step completes the process of examining the research variables by combining the information collected in step three with the first two steps, to draw comparisons between the past literature and the findings of this thesis.

The case of Greece, a country with low levels of political trust and medium to high levels of social trust, is a relevant to investigate their effect on digital activism. Indeed, Greece is a country with one of the highest levels of social media use in the world, and since most of the digital activism types examined in the current thesis take place on or through social media. A crucial case study, is a case that fits in theoretical assumptions and tries to confirm a theory (Eckstein, 2000; Gerring, 2007b); Greece represents a crucial case study because of the characteristics mentioned above. This case is important to understanding digital activism since Greece has low levels of political trust and high social media usage, making it easier to track how these might influence people to perform digital activism.

The six digital activism types to be examined here in the case of Greece and in connection to how trust influences them, are differentiated as follows. First, "slacktivism" will be reviewed, and was chosen on the basis that it represents the digital activism activity which is easiest to perform. This activity is a much discussed one, and there have been many debates on whether it is effective or not and many questions raised around who performs this activity and why. Secondly, I examine "metavoicing", which can be considered as one of the easiest activities to perform in relation to gaining political support, whilst other types such as "buycotts" might require greater effort or have higher costs. Then, types such as digital assertion might require certain skills in order to post and create content on social media platforms, but they can be used as a way to express frustration and political distrust. These variations are key to the research design of the current thesis.

Data dissemination is another activity included in the present thesis's hypotheses, and the reason behind its inclusion is because it can be directly associated with levels of trust; however, it also requires a specific skill set since not everyone is sufficiently technologically skilled to engage in it. The final activity selected was boycott, which has also long been known as an offline activism activity, but in its digital form it permits us to understand lesser-known activities and draw some comparisons. Although the literature explains what each of these digital activism activities are, it has not established connections with how social or political trust might be impactful on them, as well as on a number of other variables such as social media use for information, entertainment, or political interest (J. George & Leidner, 2019). The survey and the interviews carried out here built understanding

of how the interviewees see each of the types of digital activism listed above, and how social and political trust influence them in engaging in each of these activities.

The survey was used both to acquire recent data on levels of social and political trust in Greece and to understand the extent to which Greek citizens perform digital activism. A survey is considered an established way to measure whether people trust or distrust something, even though some scholars argue that a survey cannot provide all the depth needed to understand whether someone has high or low levels of trust (Newton, 2001). For this reason and in order to reveal the reasons why someone may perform digital activism and the patterns of activism they may choose, interviews were also deployed in the current study. Effective questions to measure the levels of trust can be derived from the European Social Survey and past studies (Zmerli & Newton, 2008). Similarly, the sociodemographic questions used here were based on previous surveys. The current thesis brings novelty to the research since the questions around digital activism were generated in order to measure each digital activism activity separately. For this reason, explaining what each activity is so that the respondent had a comprehensive understanding of them was of crucial importance. The sample aimed to be representative and non-probabilistic, and for this reason certain parameters were considered and the sample had to be adjusted to certain characteristics of the Greek population such as age, educational level, and gender.

The interview questions sought to connect different digital activism activities with the self-stated levels of trust of the respondents. The survey was conducted in November 2021, and captured 1,681 responses. Around 30 people expressed interest in participating in the interviews and 27 interviews were conducted in January 2022. The timeframe for the analysis of the survey results started as soon as the survey ended in December 2021. Mixed methods were used in order to perform the quantitative part of the analysis with the survey and the qualitative part with the interviews. For the survey results, regression was used in order in order to track whether social and political trust were positively, negatively, or not at all related with digital activism. Since there were two independent variables, social and political trust, multiple regression was used (Field, 2007). The interviews, on the other hand, were analysed via thematic analysis, where the meanings of the interviewees are clarified (Gavin, 2013). The goal in the interview data collection was to identify the themes, patterns, and issues that emerged and to understand the reasons why the interviewees perform digital activism and how this decision was being influenced or driven by their individual levels of social and political trust. The thematic analysis thus helped in tracking social and political trust as well as digital activism.

Methods and Data

The approach used in this thesis is set out in the Research Design chapter (Chapter 4). It is highlighted that due to their disruptive nature, a study on digital activism and forms of trust should focus on collecting as much information as possible, to generate data from multiple perspectives. For these reasons, a mixed methods approached was designed through surveys and then interviews. The justification is that the number people in Greece performing digital activism, which digital activism activities they tend to perform, let alone the reasons why they tend to perform these activities, are all unknown. The survey was therefore designed to provide the first set of data on what activities are performed, how often they are performed, and how likely people are to perform them. Then, the interviews concentrated on the reasons why people in Greece tend to perform these activities, and whether they do so because of their personal levels of social and political trust. A thematic analysis method was used to analyse the interview data in order to identify the main explanations relating to social and political trust and digital activism. Thematic analysis makes it easier to transmit to the reader the meanings expressed by the interviewees (Gavin, 2013). In the quantitative part of the analysis and the findings collected through the survey responses, the answers were measured on an ordinal scale and correlation analysis was used to examine whether social and political trust are related with digital activism. This method also allows comparisons and reveals patterns between variables (Field, 2007).

The creation and use of a typology of the various forms of digital activism is useful because it offers clarity on what exactly is meant by digital activism. It also helps in understanding the evolution of contemporary theories around activism in online networks versus the more traditional forms of activism, and how they are distinct. Overall, this approach places digital activism in a stable position in the literature among both contemporary studies and traditional theories around social movements, political participation, and the digital shift. It also contributes to creating an overview and sheds light on further research paths. The thesis also contributes more broadly to the field of political science by examining the changes brought by the advent of digital activism, and how people use these new forms of political engagement (e.g., as means to express their trust, distrust, support, or frustration). The discussions of digital activism and the variables influencing it presented throughout this thesis contribute to debates on its efficacy, on whether it is just a facilitation of older versions of activism or a completely new domain, and other questions raised by prior researchers. The thesis also adds to long-debated topics such as how social trust and political trust are based on societal values which, even in the digital era, will be driving factors for behavioural patterns on digital media. Overall, the current thesis provides

many insights around digital activism, social and political trust levels, and their associations in the case of Greece.

Contributions of the thesis

The thesis provides three main contributions to the literature. Those three contributions link to the main research question of the thesis and are based on the research gaps that were identified. The first contribution relates to the conceptualisation of digital activism. Critical engagement with the literature on digital activism confirmed that online political participation in combination with collective and connective action forms digital activism. Then, digital activism itself can be classified into different sets of activities, some of which represent an evolution of offline activities. For example, the concepts of political consumerism and boycotts existed for many decades before the age of social media and digital activism. However, the facilitation of ICT (Information and communication technologies) brings boycotts in the present era and since this activity can be organised on online networks, it is on the list of digital activism activities. Despite that, many activities facilitated by digital activism did not exist in the past, such as slacktivism, metavoicing, digital assertion, data activism, hacktivism and botivism. These activities emerged with the rise of social media, having not existed prior to the technological advancements that enabled digital activism (J. George & Leidner, 2019). These activities are classified as forms of digital activism, and as has been explained above, a clearer definition of what digital activism means is provided in the current thesis.

The conceptualisation of digital activism presented in the current thesis highlights that it is not simply a facilitation of offline activism; instead, it differs in its typology since it includes many new activities. This contribution not only contributes to explaining digital activism as a category, but also how its conceptualisation is understood by citizens. Through the survey it was easy to understand the extent to which people were familiar with digital activism in its various forms. Through the interviews a deeper understanding of how people see digital activism, how familiar they are with it, and the reasons they cited for engaging in it were all developed. As such, digital activism was defined as an activity that happens on social media and is a form of online political participation that involves collective and connective action, with its own subtypes. Accordingly, the questions that were generated in the survey and the interviews to measure digital activism are novel, because no past studies have conducted surveys on the specific digital activism activities explored in the current thesis, or on their relationship with social and political trust. As such, the current thesis

contributes to overall understanding of digital activism and its various types as well as its causal mechanisms.

A second contribution relates to how social trust influences people to perform digital activism activities. The study finds that social trust works as a causal mechanism in performing digital activism; that it influences all the examined activities; and that has a clear impact on whether someone will perform digital activism or not. This finding emerged through the survey results, where a correlation between social trust and digital activism was found, as well as a positive effect of high levels of social trust towards the examined digital activism activities. Through the interviews, it appeared that people's personal networks are an important reason why they may engage with digital activism. This contribution is important for the literature since prior research has not reported many details on the factors driving digital activism. One of the possible reasons highlighted in the literature is frustration, but how interaction with our social network could impact engagement in digital activism activities has not been debated. As such, the current thesis establishes the connection between social trust and digital activism and highlights that high social trust has a positive effect on conducting digital activism as a whole, but particularly specific forms of digital activism such as slacktivism, metavoicing, data dissemination, boycotts, buycotts, and digital assertion. This provides a better understanding of digital activism, but also highlights the impact that social trust might have in online networks.

A third contribution relates to how political trust influences people to participate in digital activism activities. Political trust is the second causal mechanism confirmed in the thesis. This finding is highlighted in multiple cases through the interviews and the survey data also suggest that political trust influences digital activism to a great extent. It is worth mentioning too that political trust leads to digital activism in different ways. The hypotheses expected this relationship, and the results indicate that low levels of political trust drive people to perform forms of digital activism such as data dissemination, digital assertion, and boycotts. However, it was also found that some forms of digital activism are influenced by the higher levels of political trust - these activities are buycotts and metavoicing. This expectation is connected with the nature of each activity; for example, by engaging in boycotts someone can express their frustration towards a policy or company or product, whilst with buycotts they show support through purchasing a product. This contribution not only shows the complex relationship of political trust with digital activism, since both low and high levels of political trust are conductive towards digital activism, but also highlights the importance of researching the relationship of forms of digital activism with political trust and not the general idea of digital activism as a whole. because the latter approach can be

misleading. As such, the contribution here is not only that political trust and digital activism are correlated, but that both low and high levels of social trust can lead to different forms of digital activism, as expected by the hypotheses. All these contributions taken together provide great insights in understanding the effects of social and political trust not only on the various forms of digital activism, but on social media overall.

Thesis Structure

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 starts to build deep understanding of digital activism, by presenting its typology and the different forms of political participation and social movements that lead towards what is nowadays known as digital activism. The discussion starts with political participation and covers traditional offline political participation before moving onto online political participation, which is related to digital activism. The chapter also defines and analyses collective and connective action and how they are connected with digital activism, draws a distinction between conventional and unconventional methods of political participation, and defines and explains theories of digital activism. This chapter seeks to highlight that digital activism as an umbrella term comprises some activities that are unconventional types of participation and some which are conventional. It also engages in theories of social movements and collective and connective action, thus creating a mixture of all these categories. This chapter supports the structure of the thesis by bringing understanding the concept of digital activism and the gaps that exist in the literature.

Chapter 3 provides a literature review on social and political trust. It starts with core definitions around the two concepts, emphasising their similarities and differences and how each might influence digital activism. It presents theories around social capital and classifies social trust into three subtypes: personalised trust, particularised trust, and generalised trust. Then, it connects these types with specific forms of digital activism and creates hypotheses around them. Moving on, political trust is defined and identified as having two subtypes: diffuse support and specific support. The same process as with social trust is undertaken and it is hypothesised that several digital activism activities are influenced by political trust. The chapter also highlights the effects of social and political trust on digital activism before forming the hypotheses. Understanding social and political trust helps this study to find ways to connect these variables with digital activism in order to address the research question.

Chapter 4 describes the research design, which is that of case study research, and more specifically, a single most likely crucial case study. The chapter also highlights how variable measurement is done and the parameters used in the survey, along with presenting

the survey questions. It then explains how validity measurement is performed, before moving on to the methods of data collection and an explanation of the mixed methods used. The research solely uses primary data, collected through survey and semi-structured interviews in order to uncover the reasons why Greek people perform digital activism.

Chapter 5 presents a historic overview of the levels of social and political trust in Greece. This adds depth to the study context of Greece and how the research variables have evolved over time. The chapter examines the sociopolitical phenomena that have taken place over the years in the country, and justifies the reasons for its lower or higher levels of social and political trust. Events such as the financial crisis that were impactful on both social and political trust are also mentioned. The historical background given on the country shows that both social and political trust levels have traditionally been low. The main reasons for this are economic and linked to the development of the state, which often involved clientelism. Among other factors that have influenced the levels of both social and political trust in Greece are the migration crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The post COVID-19 era is also discussed.

Chapter 6 presents the findings on social trust and discusses how these are connected with digital activism. As a first step, the results highlight how the different digital activism activities are expressed, and these are then considered in relation to the hypotheses introduced earlier in Chapter 3. The chapter mainly presents the survey results on slacktivism, boycotts, and data dissemination, and explains how engaged people are with these activities and how likely they are to perform them. Additionally, the main variables of influence are highlighted, and levels of social trust are presented. The results show that Greece is a country with medium levels of social trust, and that social trust is one of the main reasons for engaging in digital activism. Social trust has a positive effect towards all the examined digital activism activities. The interviews are used as an explanatory means to acquire the depth of understanding required on the relationship between social trust and digital activism. As such, based on thematic analysis, the relationship between trust and digital activism is analysed.

Chapter 7 presents the findings around political trust and how it connects with digital activism. First, the results on political trust are presented. Greece is found to be a country with notably low levels of political trust. Then, the digital activism activities that were hypothesised to be connected with political trust are analysed: metavoicing, digital assertion, and buycotts. For metavoicing and buycotts it was hypothesised that high levels of political trust would influence people to perform these activities, whilst for digital assertion lower levels of political trust was predicted to do so. In order to understand the motives of people

who perform these activities, the interviews are also discussed in relation to why certain patterns exist. Overall, the results show that political trust influences all the examined digital activism activities, and the positive and negative effects it has on the different activities are outlined.

Chapter 8 interprets the results of the thesis and creates links between theory and practice. This chapter provides an overview of all the contributions the research brings to the literature. It does so through setting out the three main contributions of the thesis to the literature. The first is connected with exploring digital activism as a concept. The second has to do with how social trust influences digital activism, and the third with how political trust influences people in performing different digital activism activities. It also presents all the advances made here in understanding digital activism. The connections between levels of social trust and political trust with digital activism are also noted and their influence on digital activism and its development is highlighted again. This chapter provides the contributions of the current thesis to the literature, and highlights that both social and political trust are conducive to digital activism.

Chapter 9 presents the conclusions of the current thesis and summarises all the insights that were acquired through the surveys and the interviews. It also restates the connections between the different variables and highlights the main findings of the current study. Additionally, it clarifies the limitations of the present research, and points out some peculiarities and areas that should be researched further. Finally, it highlights all the domains where further research is needed, and how the results may be applicable in wider contexts.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL ACTIVISM

This chapter defines online political participation and collective and connective action, and explores how they are involved with digital activism, analysing the latest forms while presenting the existing debates, in order to understand the relationship between digital activism and trust. In the first section, a literature review on political participation explains its traditional types before moving to consider online political participation and the new forms that have emerged in recent years. It also draws a distinction between conventional (electoral activities and party politics) and unconventional (demonstrations, petitions, and boycotts) types of political participation. The chapter then proceeds to explain the similarities and differences between online and offline political participation, outlining why digital activism represents a type of political participation. It then continues by explaining both collective and connective action and how they are related to digital activism and online political participation, before drawing to a close by outlining all the different types and subgroups of digital activism activities, namely Digital Spectator Activities, Digital Transitional Activities, and Digital Gladiatorial Activities.

Political Participation: Explaining the Key Concepts and Types

Political participation has been defined as citizens' activities in the world of politics, involving behaviour where citizens affect the government's choices, creating an impact on policies (Conge, 1988; Van Deth, 2016; Verba, 1967). Verba (1967) presented some of the main characteristics that define participation, emphasising the intention of influencing those who are making political decisions (Conge, 1988; Verba, 1967) and highlighted that there should be an interaction between citizens and decision-makers without any limitations at the government level. For this reason, multiple definitions have been given to political participation by different scholars, one of the most prominent being that it is an action or an activity initiated by ordinary people in pursuit of a political outcome (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). As such, political participation is not an action of politicians or of people involved in politics, nor is it government or state related; it is a voluntary form of engagement without any law obliging citizens to do so (Van Deth, 2016).

Forms of political participation

Van Deth (2016) explains that traditional forms of political participation included activities such as voting or communicating with politicians, joining causes, and/or showing support for political candidates. With the evolution of social media things became more complex, and we even have digital electoral campaigns as part of the evolution process (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012b). Additionally, technological advancements have brought many new and different perceptions into political participation theory, bringing acts such as boycotting products, blogging, signing online petitions, and volunteering or other digital activism activities into the theory (Van Deth, 2016). This concern is widely discussed in debates around offline and online participation and around what will later be explained as collective and collective action through the social movement perspective of participation. Aichholzer and Allhutter (2009) explain that online participation in many cases has brought a more participatory role to what was previously known as political participation through enabling citizens to stay in closer contact with what they want, while other scholars have argued that existing social gaps can potentially widen (Oser et al., 2013) or that in this way, personalized political strategies and campaigning can be used through social media (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016).

Following similar ideas, scholars argue that people exercise their online political participation in the same way they would their offline political participation (Vissers & Stolle, 2014). The Internet also brings change to offline participation by bringing political humour or jokes in the form of memes and other materials endorsing social movements (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). One of the biggest examples is how bots be used in the era of online political participation. More specifically, bots in social media are defined as software controlled profiles (Shao et al., 2018). While there has been debate around their use, scholars have outlined that they will play a big role in political participation, because they can imitate human interactions (Stephens, 1998). However, some scholars suggest that one connotation of 'bots' refers to situations where neither automated software or humans can work on their own but both act together in a combined way (Lebeuf, Zagalsky, Foucault, & Storey, 2019). Before moving onto the debates on online and offline political participation and their types, it is important to outline that low levels of online participation are usually equivalent to low levels of offline participation (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). The metrics show that people participate in both cases much less than they potentially can, for example because they are using the Internet and media for other reasons such as personal communication and entertainment (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006).

There is an argument that people tend not to participate in political debates mainly for three reasons: 'because they can't, because they don't want to and because nobody asked' (Brady et al., 1995, p. 271), which supports the idea that political participation depends on a number of variables. As an example, people of higher societal status are believed to participate more, emphasising the idea that the higher the level of education or class someone has, the more they will participate (H. Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Heidenheimer, 1981). Resources are seen as important in order that someone can achieve political participation and engagement, with money, time, and skills being the three most prominent facilitators of political participation (Brady et al., 1995). These resources are related to the fact that if someone has time then they can participate more, while having money means they can contribute more towards their beliefs; and if someone has civic skills they can participate more effectively (Brady et al., 1995). The same researchers found that many different things shape what we name political participation, including someone's interest in participating locally, and educational factors which lead to civic skills such as language and adequate writing and speaking skills (Brady et al., 1995).

Conventional and Unconventional Political Participation

Political participation has many different typologies and models. Some are presented above, but there are two other concepts of great interest to the present discussion as we move towards online and offline modes of political participation. While it is widely believed that the more democratic a country is, the higher its political participation will be (Stockemer, 2014), we also need to differentiate conventional political participation from unconventional. Conventional political participation relies more on electoral campaign activities, interest group politics and party politics (S. H. Barnes, 2006; Stockemer, 2014). However, prior findings suggest that the more politically advanced a country is the more conventional its political participation will be (S. H. Barnes, 2006). The electoral process of conventional political participation include actions such as voting and general political administration (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991) whilst conventional participation tries to find viable prospects for democracy (Kourvetaris, 1982). In general collective action is not considered significant in conventional political participation, contrary to what happens in unconventional participation (Belinda, 2007). However, the norms and traditions of a country are often embedded in its conventional political participation (Bourne, 2010). It is understood that two of the main things that influence conventional participation are the time to be able to participate, and energy for political engagement (Belinda, 2007).

In contrast, unconventional political participation describes situations in which the mistrust of citizens creates the need for participation (Bourne, 2010). Non-institutionalised means of acquiring political influence include unconventional political participation methods (Stockemer, 2014). In other words, unconventional methods of political participation tend to arise when corruption, inequalities, low credibility, low accountability, and a lack of integrity exist (Bourne, 2010). Citizens tend to support dynamically unconventional political participation under these conditions (S. H. Barnes, 2006). Because of the nature of the mistrust, gender, social class, education, and income inequalities can strongly influence the participation of citizens (Belinda, 2007). For example, in the USA, African American people are considered to use more unconventional political participation methods than white people because of the inequalities they face and their resulting lack of trust in state institutions and government (Belinda, 2007).

On the one hand, feelings of dissatisfaction with (for example) the educational system and the government and having political engagement can lead to many actions such as demonstrations, petitions, or boycotts which can be said to represent peaceful unconventional methods (Stockemer, 2014). On the other hand, sometimes other types of engagement are used which are more aggressive and less related to the traditional norms of conventional political participation (Bourne, 2010). Unconventional political participation nowadays has both peaceful and violent sides, the latter of which come mainly through protests, riots or terrorist activity even though in past decades there has been a shift to more peaceful unconventional activities (Stockemer, 2014). For example, Jamaica in 1997 experienced gas riots where properties were destroyed, but today in Jamaica protests are mainly peaceful (Bourne, 2010). The range of activities which might be undertaken under the scope of unconventional participation includes both legal or illegal, and violent or nonviolent ones (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991). The actions driven through unconventional political participation means are often characterised as the actions of people trying to make their voices reach governments and institutions, and as a way to express their apathy through political participation (Bourne, 2010). While mistrust leads to unconventional activities it is important to outline that it is not necessarily of a violent nature just because it is not in support of the system (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991).

Some scholars have suggested that unconventional political participation can co-exist or cooperate with other typologies and participation models, with the resource model being one of them (S. H. Barnes, 2006). Activities representing unconventional methods can include roadblocks, protests, online blogging, revolts, and contacting the media, activities which represent collective action based on the idea that mass involvement is stronger than

individual action, and boosts political participation (Belinda, 2007; Bourne, 2010). These activities also include signing petitions (requiring only low commitment and effort) or attending demonstrations or protests (requiring higher commitment and effort) (Belinda, 2007; Stockemer, 2014). Scholars argue that these have stronger commitment of the conventional methods, which is debatable, but it is important to differentiate the unconventional methods from low-risk conventional electoral activities (Belinda, 2007). Joint action and a resulting collective identity are connected with unconventional political participation, not conventional political participation (Belinda, 2007).

Conventional and unconventional political participation are considered by some scholars to be related (Saunders, 2014). For example, education is really important for both to occur, and positively related with both, and the critical thinking it promotes can simultaneously be helpful for electoral activities and unconventional methods (S. H. Barnes, 2006; Stockemer, 2014). Unconventional political participation has been rising in recent decades among citizens, as has happened in Sweden, while conventional political participation techniques have been declining (Barnes, 2006; Bourne, 2010; Stockemer, 2014) on the whole, although this is not always the case, as in Chile unconventional methods have been on the decline (Stockemer, 2014). This situation has led to debate on whether unconventional political participation's rise is inversely proportional to the decline of conventional participation (Stockemer, 2014). Despite all the differences, scholars agree that age, sex, generation, and education all have a relation to both types of political participation (Kourvetaris, 1982).

Online and Offline Participation: Similarities and Differences

Di Gennaro and Dutton (2006) explain that years of apathy have led countries such as the UK to try to find new ways of encouraging political participation. Online participation is discussed by some scholars as a new method of political participation even though there is not a big difference in impact and some offline elements remain (Oser et al., 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). Online political participation is often considered to be a facilitator of political participation although this is not guaranteed (Nam, 2010). The two main differences brought by the Internet in political participation is the higher engagement with its online form and the intercommunication of citizens and politics and easier access to information (Anduiza et al., 2010). More specifically, political participation as outlined by Vissers and Stolle (2014) has several aspects, including political engagement (both offline and online), and political activism (again, both offline and online). Political engagement is important in order to limit apathy, as explained by Di Gennaro and Dutton (2006), and to analyse where

apathy exists; for example, in which age groups or educational levels (Nie et al., 1974), while in the meantime data can be gathered on which methods of political participation are most popular, such as the example of petition signing in UK, which is considered to be the most common act of political participation (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). While political activism strategies are analysed further later in this chapter, it is important to highlight that many scholars highlight its connection with political participation (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Oser et al., 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2014).

In general, even though the Internet provides possibilities for greater political engagement, only a small percentage of people use the Internet for political purposes (Büchi & Vogler, 2017). It is widely argued in the literature that technology and the Internet have had a big impact on political participation (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Oser et al., 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). The offline form of participation is available to citizens under the form of traditional resources; as Brady et al. (1995) suggested, online resources have only a slight influence on it (Anduiza et al., 2010). Traditional resources may determine whether a citizen can access the internet, while online resources might indicate the frequency in which they use information and communication technologies (ICTs) and which types. Online political participation is a new form of political participation which some scholars believe is crucial for campaigns and movements. New skills are required for this participation, and as an extension of the traditional resource of civic skills (Brady et al., 1995), computer skills are also needed in order to participate (Anduiza et al., 2010).

Among other existing ideas, there are two ideas which will be discussed here as they contribute to this analysis, the first being that all this Internet integration creates engagement even with groups that were never before keen on participating, and the second idea being that online participation addresses inequalities (Oser et al., 2013). Firstly, online participation is widely defined in the literature as more opportunistic, since it gives the opportunity through digital media to engage to people who under other circumstances would not have the opportunity to participate politically (Oser et al., 2013). In the meantime, scholars recognise that younger age groups of those between 18 to 24, because of their digital engagement, are more likely to participate online rather than offline, creating a potentially more participatory younger audience in some cases of online participation (Conroy et al., 2012; Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Furthermore, it has been suggested that online participation can even increase civic engagement and group membership, which is considered to influence political participation in general, while also radically changing the way that offline groups function (Conroy et al., 2012). Indeed, scholars explain that in many cases, traditional forms of political participation such as joining political parties or

supporting them, discourage younger people from participating because of their perceived more traditional nature (Büchi & Vogler, 2017).

In contrast, the interconnectivity of social media also has an important role to play in attracting younger people to engage politically since they are more involved than older groups with online platforms (Salman & Saad, 2015). Combined with research that indicates that the youth population represents about the 46% of the global population, this shows the potential that online political participation can have (Salman & Saad, 2015).These arguments are also supported by examples such as Arab youth movements' success in mobilising and communicating across borders during the Arab Spring uprisings (Salman & Saad, 2015). Prior research has highlighted the benefits of online participation based on the low cost of political information on the Internet, on the wide availability of the Internet and its interactivity, and on the idea that the Internet is widely used regardless of socioeconomic criteria by all social groups (Oser et al., 2013). Research findings also suggest that in many cases, the idea of offline political participation does not encourage lower social classes to engage, whilst online political participation is more encouraging for these social groups (Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2017).

However, Schradie (2018) explains that digitality can also have the opposite effect in enlarging social gaps since not all socio-economic classes have the same digital means and access, for many reasons such as time or cost and access to facilities or other amenities. Similarly, Di Gennaro and Dutton (2006) examined whether political inequalities related with gender, age groups, social class, and many other aspects are also represented in the online form of political participation. Their results showed that in the UK, the inequalities were also present in online political participation since, for example, men had higher probabilities of trying to contact politicians through an online platform than women did (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). This can be theorised from various perspectives, but in order to examine whether online political participation differs from offline, it is important to outline that as defined by Lehman-Schlozman, Verba and Brady (2010), there are three explanations why people are not active in politics: ''they can't, they don't want to, and nobody asked'' (Lehman-Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2010, pp. 488). However, even though some inequalities of traditional political participation are reproduced in online political participation, it has been found that online participation manages to bring new audiences into the political realm, comprising people who under other circumstances would not have engaged politically, but who participate in political activities due to the Internet (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006).

Other scholars suggest that even though there are similarities between online and offline political participation, and many activities stay parallel from the offline to the online, some activities are not identified in online participation (Oser et al., 2013). In their research, Oser et al., (2013) present that online and offline participation both share some actions which are exactly the same, such as signing petitions, contacting politicians, and donating; meanwhile, some others such as joining political groups are still quite similar and parallel, in contrast with actions such as participating at a rally or a protest which has more offline features (Oser et al., 2013). Despite this, Gil de Zúñiga and Puig-i-abril (2009) explain that digital media are thought to increase engagement among groups which would not have being affected by offline forms of engagement. Many acts of political participation are acts of activism or digital activism (Van Deth, 2016) based on whether it is online or offline. The parallel side of online and offline political participation as presented by Oser et al. (2013) reveals many similarities between the two forms, which also helps to emphasise that both have similar effects in political participation as a whole (Gil de Zúñiga & Puig-i-abril, 2009). Although online political participation is considered to successfully engage younger audiences, digital media have the potential to boost political participation across the board (Nam, 2010).

Their similarities and differences notwithstanding, both online and traditional means can be influential in participation - but a big difference has been noted between them in audience engagement across age-groups and education levels (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Nam, 2010). While younger people are considered to participate more in online participation modes, wealthy senior people do participate more in offline activities. Overall, despite age or socioeconomic character, the debate between online and offline participation shows that they both still represent modes of facilitating participation and engagement (Nam, 2010).

Collective and Connective Action

Scholars often present theories around political participation and social movements which include the ideas of connective and collective action. Collective action is considered to be action which involves a social phenomena, made by groups in order to realise a collective good, or in other words, with a common target or goal (Baldassarri, 2011). Collective action is related to social or political reforms and unites people under a common cause (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Accordingly, collective actions can include actions shaped by people with common beliefs which go as far as revolutions, military coups, or riots (Baldassarri, 2011). On a smaller scale, even neighbourhood associations need to engage in some collective action in order to discuss and solve their problems (Baiocchi,

1999). Political participation, as explained earlier, is always connected with joining causes with a political aspect (Van Deth, 2016) which through collective social phenomena can lead to activism (Baldassarri, 2011). Online causes can also have a collective action perspective which asks for or engages the participation of social media users (Nekmat et al., 2015). Actions such as riots and revolutions represent some of the capacity of collective actions in an offline manner, while many more forms, such as boycotts or buy-cotts, are facilitated through online digital means (Baldassarri, 2011; Van Deth, 2016). In many cases, it is theorised that participants in collective action often do not understand the outcome of their actions since they are formed through groups because they cannot foresee the impact (Baldassarri, 2011).

In defining connective action, scholars outline that it uses digital media as an organising agent and provides a more individualised and personalised engagement than collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). It is widely argued that collective and connective action are related with personal connectivity (Nekmat et al., 2015), given that the interaction of a person on social media and the feedback they receive from acquaintances helps in gathering and disseminating information and communicating about a cause to people who did not previously know much about it (Nekmat et al., 2015). Accordingly, the scale of movement can also be enlarged through this kind of process (Nekmat et al., 2015). This collective identity is often considered to adopt a constructivist point of view by self-identifying a unified 'us' versus 'them', which allows the movement to be self-reflexive (Bakardjieva, 2015). In contrast, it has also been theorised that in collective action, individuals undertake smaller actions and get the same credit because it is difficult to tell who is contributing the most (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). From a rational perspective, this raises the individualist view that people cannot be expected to cooperate even if they have a common goal (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Thus, connective action is another manner of doing similar things but with the absence of the collective identity (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Connective action uses personal action frames and personalised communication, which is technologically enhanced (Bennett, 2012). This personalised communication has two sets of actions: personal communication technologies which use tweets and texts as part of personal engagement, and political content (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Moreover, the distinction between connective and collective action deepens in relation to the more individualised and technological activities involved in connective action, which do not need organisational resources as is the case in collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Lundgaard (2016) explains that in contrast to collective action, in connective action there is no need for a sense of unity or a collective identity, and an

individual can achieve maximum interaction through personal action on social media, which is also a part of what Bennett (2012) defines as personalised politics. As stated earlier, collective action provides a self-reflexivity to the group and its members, whereas connective action promotes a self-motivation, a self-definition, and a self-organisation rather than relying on collective organizational resources (Bakardjieva, 2015; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Lundgaard, 2016). Furthermore, it is important to explain that social media (also expressed as web 2.0) exerts a great influence in connective action (Lundgaard, 2016). As a result, individuals can take action by posting or defining online content based on their own perceptions, giving their own meaning to an online political action or creating their personal expression individually (Lundgaard, 2016). Collective action is not considered to be really impacted in its dynamics by digital media, whilst connective action is based upon them and its dynamics are dependent on them (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Social media mobilisations are found by some scholars to accelerate identity formation processes and the framing of a mobilisation (Cristancho, 2016). After explaining some similarities or distinctions of collective and connective action, they should be analysed in terms of what outcomes they bring. In relation to cases such as the Arab Spring, there is a wide literature on the contribution of social media in both connective and collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Salman & Saad, 2015). Connective action engaged young Arabs to express their frustrations through social media (Salman & Saad, 2015). Collective action in this case also helped to mobilise them as citizens. Therefore, some scholars have argued that the personalised communication in social movements which is a characteristic of connective action can also find way into collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Online Political Participation and Social Movements

It is commonly suggested that the Internet and web 2.0 (also known as social media) have had a great impact to date in political participation and connective and collective activism actions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Lundgaard, 2016; Nam, 2010; Oser et al., 2013). Other scholars have argued that social media platforms are not making anything life better, and are just widening existing social gaps, creating a new digital inequality (Schradie, 2018), since the Internet itself is an economic factor that helps to define a wealthy country or society (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). Social movements and activism are considered to pursue an impact through collective or connective action on a state or a social phenomenon (Amenta et al., 2010). Similarly, political participation has been defined as seeking to influence and to have an impact on political decisions (Conge, 1988; Van Deth, 2016; Verba, 1967). Due to the capability of social movements in boosting and acquiring more democratic

rights (Amenta et al., 2010), people's involvement in political participation can be boosted (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012b). Accordingly their participation plays a big role on whether the activists are driven through political or non-political aims of to perform these activities and activism itself (Van Deth, 2016). People pursue politically active roles through political participation via becoming members of political parties (Büchi & Vogler, 2017; Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012b) but this pursuit is also found in the aims of social movements with regard to achieving representation and reforming or creating new political parties (Amenta et al., 2010).

On this point, and following the discussion above, it is important to outline what digital activism is and how it relates to the concepts presented so far. Since the term digital activism refers to the usage of digital media. We now move forward to focus on the online forms. Digital activism has various things in common with political participation, while it is an online form of activism which connects with collective or connective identity (Bakardjieva, 2015; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Gustafsson, 2012; Jen Schradie, 2018). More specifically, digital activism, through the facilitation of social media through a plethora of activities, encourages audiences to express views on, participate in, and interact with a social or political matter (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). In the same way, political participation encourages interaction between the audience and provides actions such as signing petitions (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012b). Digital activism, with the same scope, includes actions such as the signing of petitions among the possible ways to conduct digital activism and increase participation (Böhle & Riehm, 2013; J. George & Leidner, 2019; Karpf, 2010; Yasseri et al., 2017). In this way, political participation, along with social movements (Amenta et al., 2010) and activism, and through collective and connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), shares some connections and similarities with them, such as the aim of participating in and influencing politics (Amenta et al., 2010), all of which are important in seeking to understand the background and the forms of digital activism.

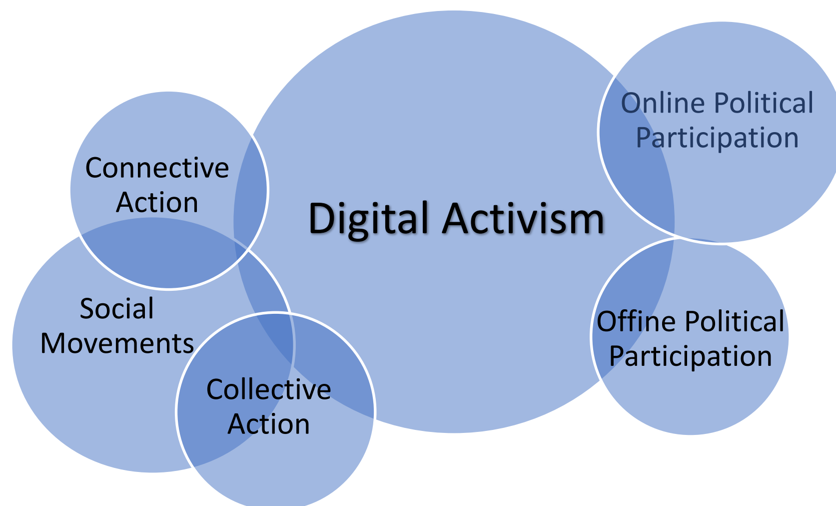


Figure 2.1 Theories that contribute to Digital Activism

What is Digital Activism? Defining the Main Components

The rise of the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) has been extensively researched. Researchers have examined whether and in which ways they have influenced communication and social movements (Gibson & Ward, 2009). Since the 1990s, the term 'digital activism' has been used increasingly and in many different disciplines (Kaun & Uldam, 2018). Sivitanides & Shah (2011) explain that multiple digital technologies exist that can be used to produce a digital activism outcome. More specifically, devices with online capabilities such as computers or mobile phones can be used to pursue change in political and social affairs (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). Suwana (2019) explains that in order for digital activism to exist, there is the need for digital media usage along with a motivation or a purpose of civic activism.

On the first level, social media and other digital media manage to achieve easy connectivity between people, which means that people with common targets or similar ideas can easily communicate and discuss their purposes (Lamoureaux & Sureau, 2018). While there is an extensive academic discussion about whether things have changed with the advent of digital activism, some scholars support the argument that social media and digital activism are widely used and have had a huge and multifaceted impact in the form of revolutions or movements such as the Arab Spring of 2011 or the ''Indignados'' (It was a movement of people in Greece, Italy and Spain during the financial crisis who were against the austerity measures) of the early 2010s via organising mobilisation and mass protests (Bennett &

Segerberg, 2012; Lamoureaux & Sureau, 2018; Suwana, 2019). For this reason, Kaun and Uldam (2018) suggest that a deep understanding of digital media is needed in order to examine people's involvement in digital activism.

From a different angle, some scholars outline that in many cases the power of social media is overestimated, and that this is one of the reasons why cases like the abovementioned did not grow any further, or failed to achieve their desired political outcomes (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2012). This is referred to in the literature as "cyber-optimism" and in many cases bring other arguments along with it, such as the potentially harmful effects of the Internet on social movements and political participation (Howard, 2011; Morozov, 2011). These aspects of the Internet include the dissemination of propaganda or interest representations by groups and even extend to online surveillance and espionage which might even threaten the purposes of activists, since they will be online (Howard, 2011; Morozov, 2011). The connection between social media use and information diffusion and outcomes in politics has been much debated (Howard, 2011; Morozov, 2011). The debates in academia still tend to research how political outcomes are affected by social media usage, and both scepticism and optimism have been expressed by different scholars (Kaun & Uldam, 2018). The different arguments presented have included some views that the social values of a human culture are represented on social media, which are influencing political outcomes (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2012).

De Marco, Robles and Antino (2017) define digital activism as the repertoire of political and citizen participation through digital means, which also has offline effects. A paradigm for the idea that digital activism has offline effects could be the 2011 Egyptian revolution, which was connected with the government's social media blackout (Akhlaghpour & Vaast, 2017). In line with this, Bennett and Segerberg (2012) discussed collective and connective action, outlining that collective action in digital activism helps to bridge different causes while enlarging them and scaling them more quickly. Focusing on connective action, they explain that it is far more individualised and organised without needing to establish a collective identity (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). For these reasons, individuals who are using social media on a daily basis and have access to digital devices such as phones and computers in their personal life are more familiar with connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012)

Using the Internet and digital media-based digital activism takes a plethora of forms and politically engages many social media users, with as many as 66% of social media users making at least one act or interaction of digital-political activism regularly (J. George & Leidner, 2019). The most common definition for digital activism is that it is activism which

uses, or is being conducted in, digital network infrastructures such as the Internet (Gibson & Ward, 2009; Kaun & Uldam, 2018; Sivitanides & Shah, 2011; Suwana, 2019). Definitions such as that can always be contested in the literature (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011), but they accurately describe an area which is connected to many different disciplines and has many different forms, as will be analysed later in this chapter. Murthy (2018) explains that digital activism is enacted by what is defined as web 2.0 or social media, and is related with social or political causes which can give a feeling of interconnection between the users' organisations and politics in a way which resembles something like a 'digital village'. Other opinions suggest that web 2.0 and digital activism moves forward in facilitating activism because of the speed and effectiveness with which a cause can be communicated (de Bakker, 2015). Raising awareness through organising and mobilising digital activism also differentiates itself from offline activism by building relationships online based on trust (de Bakker, 2015). Importantly, access to the internet and social media does not necessarily mean digital activism, since someone still has to choose to engage, and these forms of media only give the opportunity to ordinary people to become activists – they need to pursue it (Mutsvairo, 2017). Having worked through the aforementioned definitions and explanations of digital activism, the definition adopted for this study holds that digital activism represents an interaction related to social and political causes which is enacted through social media and permits the participation of someone through the activities they engage in online.

Forms of Digital Activism

Digital activism, as stated earlier, has multiple dimensions and is shaped by many factors (Kaun & Uldam, 2018; Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). It can be broken down into three main subcategories as expressed by George and Leidner (2019): Digital Spectator Activities, Digital Transitional Activities, and Digital Gladiatorial Activities (George & Leidner, 2019, p. 7). Following this categorisation of the three aforementioned subcategories and the ten forms (slacktivism, metavoicing, digital assertion, data dissemination, political consumerism, hacktivism, data activism, e-funding, botivism and digital petitions) of digital activism, I will now explain some of the different views presented in the literature of each. As the authors present it, their categorisation of digital activism represents a digital adoption of Milbrath's framework on political participation (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Milbrath, 1965). More specifically, they define that digital spectator activities comprise most digital activism related acts that individuals perform using digital media. Those activities include *clicktivism,* also commonly indicated as *slacktivism, metavoicing,* and *assertion* (J. George & Leidner, 2019). The scheme brought by George and Leidner is used in the current thesis

since it represents one of the most complete classifications of digital activism to date. This first category is usually expected to be the least direct, since the actions that shape it are more interacting with something rather than creating; for this reason, it is often criticised as lazy activism (Breuer & Groshek, 2012). In addition, as a set of activities it requires minimal personal involvement, such as liking a post or comment (J. George & Leidner, 2019), and this is another reason why scholars are sceptical towards its effectiveness in shaping political outcomes.

The second category is digital transitional activities, which include the activities that represent digital activism activities as theorised by George and Leidner (2019): political consumerism, digital petitions, botivism, and e-funding. In contrast with the first category, in this set of activities the individual gets involved more directly with activities and creates or participates more profoundly. The final set of activities are digital gladiatorial activities, which include data activism, exposure, and hacktivism. These are the hardest to achieve but they involve the most engagement and the most direct activities so they top the digital activism hierarchy pyramid as explained by George and Leidner (2019). There are numerous different categorisation schemes of digital activism; for example, Majchrzak *et al.* (2013) in their theoretical standpoints include clicktivism in metavoicing because of its interactive with other users. But, to analyse what digital activism is more precisely, it is important to discuss all the definitions shaping it, and the variety of theories regarding its forms.

Digital activism encompasses a variety of methods which contribute differently towards generating political change. It facilitates many activities which tend to be costless, to take less time than and to have the potential of reaching a wider audience. In this way, as a form of online political participation digital activism is considered to achieve wide participation among younger audiences (Conroy et al., 2012; Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). At the same time, it introduces new methods which can be beneficial for the future of activism by being more democratic through the participation of different groups via processes such as online petition signing (J. George & Leidner, 2019).

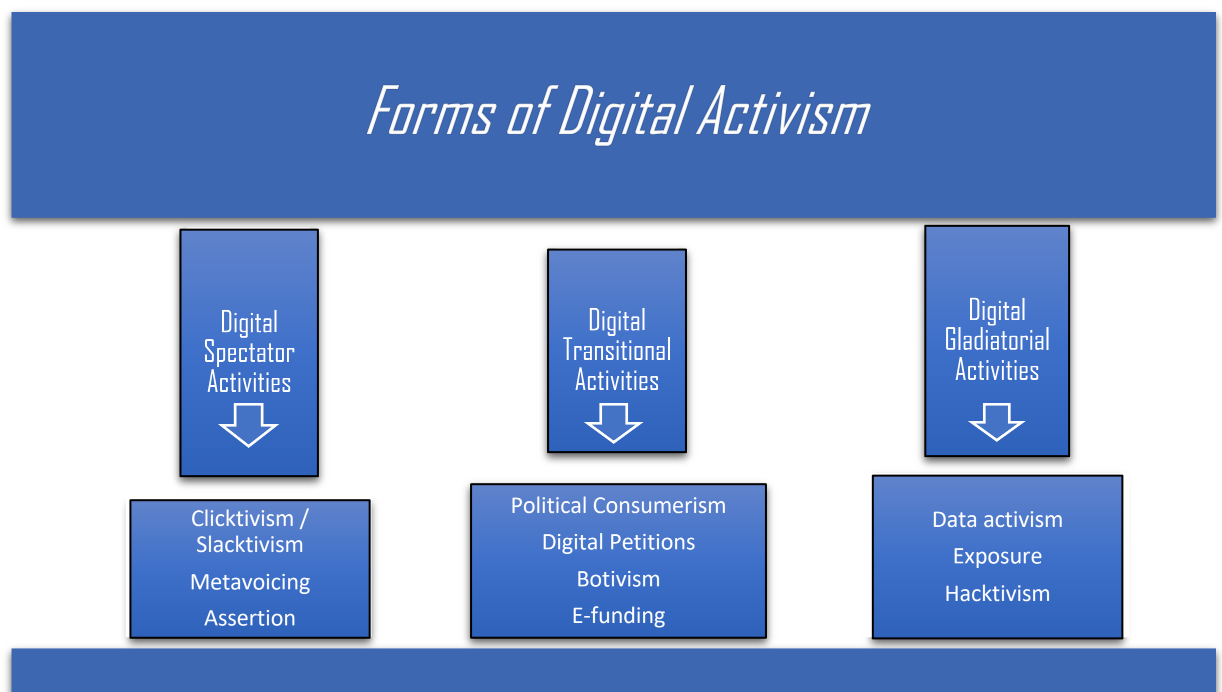


Figure 2.2 Forms of Digital Activism

Clicktivism / Slacktivism

Clicktivism is one of the most prominent digital activism acts, and includes interactions through social media in order to promote social or political goals (Nayar, 2018). George and Leidner (2019) explain that clicktivism is defined as the process of a minimal social media interaction such as a like, a follow or an upvote for any post, blog or media containing activist content, or joining an online group on platforms such as Facebook (Christensen, 2011). This form of digital activism does not require the expression of personal opinion or the individual's original voice and only needs the minimal effort of having social media accounts without any extra personal commitment (J. George & Leidner, 2019). For this reason its effectiveness and responsiveness in bringing political change are frequently questioned. Christensen (2011) expressed the view that the term slacktivism (or clicktivism) has changed and shifted from a positive connotation in the 1990s to a negative one to the 2010's because of the non-committal political status it has and the facility of performing such an act of activism. There is discussion in the literature that clicktivism often makes participants think they are taking action, but their action has no offline effects (Joyce et al., 2010). For this reason, the main points that define slacktivism is that it is easy to accomplish, is low risk, and refers to small digital efforts (Butler, 2011). These social media slacktivism or clicktivism efforts amount to the same set of activities either derived from slacker + activism or from click + activism (Butler, 2011; Halupka, 2014).

Cammaerts (2015) explains that clicktivism has often been regarded as ''lazy activism'', and that most people using this form of activism fail to make time in their lives for real-time activism and mobilisation (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 7) but create the illusion of participating in activism (Dennis, 2014). Additionally, Dennis (2014) argues that clicktivism requires minimal political engagement, and as Joyce et al. (2010) explain, this means that such activism's initiatives often disappear and dissolve as fast as they are created. More specifically, this click-engagement participation allows participants to leave as easily as they enter, which is one of the reasons why such movements do not tend to last.

However, Christensen (2011) underlines that slacktivism can have multifunctional identities since it can involve taking part in short-term boycotts or even participating in and spreading activist actions such as the Earth Hour. Leading to digital engagement without any specialised skill set, clicktivism is argued to be a political reaction for everyone (Halupka, 2014). Similarly, George and Leidner (2019) explain that even micro-activism such as clicktivism can produce outcomes such as increased volunteering or reminders of political situations requiring further action. In the relevant literature, many scholars explain that clicktivism is important for many reasons, two of which are the low-cost and the low-risk it requires of the participant (Halupka, 2014). Digital activism, and in this case clicktivism, also raises awareness among people, which helps to spread activism in general and can also simplify actions which used to be complex (Halupka, 2014). Karpf (2010) provides a more neutral critique of clicktivism, underlining that it is often criticised for its lack of effectiveness because it has mainly indirect benefits rather than direct ones. Karpf (2010) notes that it is mainly presented in cases of e-petitions which achieve 'higher-level asks in the future and allow organizations to reference the petition-signers in media events and lobbying appointments' (Karpf, 2010, p. 20).

Metavoicing

Metavoicing refers to user interaction with a post containing activist content made by another user; this can include commenting, sharing, and retweeting (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Majchrzak *et al.* (2013) refer to the knowledge and productivity that can be shared through this kind of online groupthink, which can benefit not only digital activism but many different domains (Majchrzak et al., 2013). A controversy of metavoicing is that in the workplace raises, where enterprises and corporations use metavoicing to achieve their interests, which are not necessarily the workers' interests, but at the same time without creating workers' reactions (Majchrzak et al., 2013). Metavoicing's echoing of messages through the Internet can also promote some controversial effects of digital activism which

raise scepticism in the literature. Holm (2019) explains that voices in discussions using metavoicing can also be dangerous, highlighting the example that in Sweden antifeminist messages have been spread, where such groups were facilitated through these digital means and used metavoicing to promote their ideas.

On the other hand, metavoicing is connected with the identity of the user in the sense that the bigger ones' social network is, the bigger are the probabilities of the activism's message being echoed in the chamber of internet since it will reach younger audience (J. George & Leidner, 2019). In other words, this means that the profile of a user, his identity as a heavy social media user or not unleash the potential of his interactions in digital activism. For these reasons, retweeting or re-sharing and commenting can be the base of metavoicing in activism background also depending on the quality of the engagement. In this way, they explain that forms of digital activism such as metavoicing can be used by individuals as an assurance that someone's claim is legitimate, and that many other people believe the same thing. Meanwhile, there is a hypothesis that this form or affordance as highlighted in the context of Holm (2019), can create voices and recognize other people's voices which can make a message spread easily. The importance of metavoicing is highlighted in many different sciences, since it does not only represent the initiation of a topic in a social media context which can also lead to personal engagement and collective action but it is explaining things about the psychology of the individual (Moreno & D'Angelo, 2019).

Assertion

Completing the first set of digital activism activities which together comprise the subcategory of digital spectator activities, George and Leidner (2019) present the concept of assertion. This term refers to online acts such as digital media content creations which engage to the maximum the personal level of digital activism. Assertion is the act of creating content and posting it on social media platforms; this can be videos, photos, posts, or audio files related with activism (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Assertion can lead to both clicktivism and metavoicing and initiate government communications and e-participation (J. George & Leidner, 2019). This is because such content is easily reproduced and shared, which enlarges the audience. For example, a video from YouTube can be shared many times, found on Twitter with hashtags, and combined with other digital activism tools to refer to a topic (Thorson et al., 2013). Videos can be a great tool for activists and many NGOs use them in order to promote storylines and engage with their members and supporters because of their interactive nature (Thorson et al., 2013).

While assertion can also be used in such a way as to create the opposite effects of what digital activism pursues, as explained earlier through Holm's (2019) paradigm, in some cases it can also help activists' purposes to go viral. Joyce et al. (2010) present a case of assertion to show the capability of digital media to convert an offline event into something that can have online impact and mobilise people. On January the 1st 2009, when Oscar Grant, an unarmed man, was shot by a police officer in Oakland, witnesses captured the incident on video and it went viral on online social media after being uploaded and shared by many different accounts, thus catching the attention of many people and inspiring rallies and mobilisation, both online and offline (Joyce et al., 2010). Activism content is not only posted on social media platforms such as YouTube or Flickr after an event, but can also become a way of mobilising beforehand activists or participants (Joyce et al., 2010). Photos also can be of great use for activism on social media. An example are the initiatives taken by different social media platforms such as Facebook which sometimes asks its users to change their profile photo to childhood heroes or other themes which represent support for different causes such as fighting against child abuse or child labour (Butler, 2011). Such digital mediums that are communicating digital activism content through photos and videos are building a sense of collective identity (Joyce et al., 2010). The use of videos and photos as tools of activism is considered to have a significant impact in social revolutions (Butler, 2011). Such influence has been noted both with the Arab spring of 2011 (Jen Schradie, 2018) and in other instances such as the 2009 protests in Moldova against the communist government (Butler, 2011).

Digital Transitional Activities

Digital transitional activities as theorized by George and Leidner (2019) are related more with participation in political activities. For this reason, those activities are considered to be more direct and to have a bigger activism and participation impact than the previously discussed set of activities (J. George & Leidner, 2019). More specifically, digital transitional activities include contacting politicians or taking part in political meetings (J. George & Leidner, 2019) and as such they also represent forms of political participation. Additionally, monetary funding and donations are becoming more and more common through web 2.0 interactions (Lewis et al., 2014) and also belong to this group of activities (J. George & Leidner, 2019).

Political Consumerism

George and Leidner (2019) explain that one of the four main components of digital transitional activities is political consumerism. People who use this form of activism decide based on their personal criteria to buy specific companies' products - or to boycott them (J. George & Leidner, 2019). This process is facilitated by social media and the Internet more widely since users can engage in online research and identify whether companies reflect their personal beliefs. Boström, Micheletti, and Oosterveer (2018) point out that boycott can be used as a negative reaction to a political behaviour while it has a more positive connotation regarding the means that people chose to support producers because of their behaviour. They explain how social media relates to this, by presenting how role-models, celebrities, or influencers can impact people's consumer behaviour. More specifically, these authors give the example that veganism is a prime political consumerism action found on social media since many people of influence support that it promotes a healthier lifestyle, even though this claim can be contested (Boström et al., 2018).

Scholars argue that social media platforms have been crucial in the advancement of political consumerism (Zúñiga et al., 2014). Additionally, they explain that in some cases, such as the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, people organised themselves and created groups and pages on Facebook (such as Boycott BP, which numbered over 800.000 members) in order to show their frustration about the environmental damage that was caused and to try to force the company to take responsibility (Zúñiga et al., 2014). Although the effectiveness of such boycotts is questioned in the literature, even though BP seemed to have decreased its market capitalisation by almost 100 billion dollars it is still debateable whether this happened because of the boycott or as a consequence of the wider effects of the oil spill (Wang et al., 2016).

Digital Petitions

In the US, the UK, and many other democracies, governments have increasingly been adopting electronic communications with their citizens. Böhle and Riehm (2013) explain that digital petitions are not only technological advancements, but they also help users to cooperate in a more user-friendly environment, and these authors define that it is a more participatory digital way to sign, learn about, and interact with a petition. In this way, petitions are often processed online and introduced to more audiences such as younger people, who are using social media more than other social groups (Conroy et al., 2012; Di

Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). The UK government has been one of the most prominent supporters of digital petitions, having created a three-step process that allow citizens to create a petition. First, five signatures are required for the petition to go online, then in the second step 10,000 supporters guarantees a government response; lastly, if the petition reaches 100,000 signatures it might even be debated in the UK Parliament (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Yasseri et al., 2017).

Yasseri et al. (2017) argue that digital petitions are getting more and more attention from both users and governments because they provide wider participation at a lower cost. However, they explain that despite the benefits that this promotion through social media might have for the petitions, sometimes the outcomes are not so promising. As Yasseri et al. (2017) explain, the acceleration of petition signing evolves quickly but also decays quickly, and as a result, in the UK, only 15% of petitions get more than 10,000 votes, and only 0.7% more than 100.000. In the same vein, Berg (2017) raises questions about the effectiveness of, and anonymity that surrounds, online petitions. An online petition which will provide anonymity might lack validity because of that; on the other hand, with the disclosure of political opinions online, anonymity is not always assured because of its online and electronic dimension and the possibility of tracing users (Berg, 2017).

Botivism

The third component of digital transitional activities is botivism (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Earlier in the online political participation section we discussed what bots are and how they can be involved in activism participation. In essence, botivism is the use of the technology of bots for activism purposes as a way to influence real users (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Savage et al., 2016). For the above-mentioned purposes, bots are mainly used through social media by organisations, governments, and companies via automated software which creates posts or presents ideas according to people's likes and interests.

This activity is widely criticised with regard to how it can be used to persuade citizens, and for this reason it raises ethical questions. Political parties across the world use bots in discussions to support their own views with comments in order to demonstrate their popularity and good reputation to voters (Savage et al., 2016). Another characteristic which can be interpreted either as beneficial or as a threat is the capability of bots of engaging as if they were individual human actors, since this can also be used to persuade the electorate for politico-economic purposes (Young et al., 2019). It has been argued that although bots have these drawbacks and can influence people in their decisions, they can also be used as one of the most effective ways to respond to social calls, and are a great way to attract volunteers

for social causes (Savage et al., 2016). In their study, Savage et al. (2016) analysed the responses of people collaborating with bots for volunteering reasons and found that as many as 81% of the volunteers in their sample responded to calls by botivists. Additionally, human-bot collaboration has been argued to have great potential through so called human-bot partnerships where humans and bots interact and work towards a shared outcome politically (Young et al., 2019).

E-Funding

The provision of funding causes or campaigns has always been a vital support to activism by helping to achieve goals, promote donations and gather the required finances for social causes (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Morena (2006) defines and categorises four main types of traditional funding. Public funding, which comes through governments or bigger organizations such as the UN, donations which are made through Trusts or Foundations, individual donations, and donations by organisations to other organisations (Morena, 2006). Technology has reinforced the traditional means by adding both social media and the Internet into the race for fundraising for good purposes (Lewis et al., 2014). It is believed that since the emergence of the Internet, one of the first common actions that happened at a collective level was donating (Chadwick, 2007).

In the early 2000s it was observed that the ability to donate online was highly welcomed by people, who showed great willingness to do so (Chadwick, 2007). Social media platforms such as Facebook and even websites such as Causes, Justgiving and GoFundMe have been helpful to support fundraising initiatives (Lewis et al., 2014). For example, a case that drew worldwide attention was the conflict in Darfur, which prompted a Save Darfur campaign on Facebook to collect more than 100,000 US dollars from one million different users. The previous summer, organisations such as Greenpeace and WWF as well as famous actors like Leonardo Di Caprio had managed to gather donations for the Amazon rainforest through using social media (Falkenstein, 2019). In causes such as Darfur, Lewis et al. (2014) explain that even though it is easier for people to join a cause online, their engagement may not be active, and many are just observing the cause without taking any action or donating any amount.

In theory, the practical parts of e-funding seem to exemplify what is theorised as resource mobilisation. E-funding involves using the resources raised online in order to promote a certain social change. Those resources are money, time, and communication technologies, which are also considered to be part of resource mobilisation (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). It is argued that resource mobilisation theory in general can help understanding

of how social media movements work because of the context and the resources involved (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). Resource mobilisation is considered to be in close connection with collective and institutionalised actors (Jenkins, 1983). Given that, in e-funding, resource mobilisation utilises many available resources, such as time, money, opportunities and organisational skills (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). Additionally, resource mobilisation theory helps to provide insights, because it examines the linkages with other groups, the dependence on external support, and the tactics needed to control the given social movement (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). There is debate on how the resources available can be deployed in the best possible way to bring success to a movement (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) and the information flow of social media helps to achieve this goal (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

Digital Gladiatorial Activities

Considered to be the most direct form of participation of all the grouped activities discussed here, digital gladiatorial activities aim to make change and not just be a part of it, as was the case with the two previous groups. This can also be understood with reference to the three main forms that represent this set of activities, which are: Data activism, Exposure, and Hacktivism (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Seek to bring essential change by changing the political scene and influencing individual politicians, publics, and governments (Milan, 2017).

Data activism:

As theorised in the literature, data activism has different aspects. Milan (2017) presents that data activism questions the neutrality of the data presented online, underlining that they are set in such a way as to represent certain socio-political views. Data activism on its own has two forms, the re-active and the pro-active; the first is related to addressing threats to citizens' civil and privacy rights, while pro-active data activism uses data in order to promote social change (Milan, 2017). One of the key features of data activism is to bring so-called 'open data' into play (Schrok, 2016). To be more precise, it seeks open access to citizens' government data or data that it is of public concern (Schrok, 2016). In general, data activism tries to empower individuals to hold their data, instead of big organisations such as Facebook, and to ensure that government data will remain open for citizens and in terms of data access (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Data activism targets more citizen-centric data and politics (Lehtiniemi & Ruckenstein, 2019). Collective identity visions such as MyData represent the interests of data-activism in trying to be more human-centric and to achieve

good data protection in order to build a citizen-oriented digital economy through the data (Lehtiniemi & Ruckenstein, 2019). Mobilisation purposes might also be included in the reasons why, and ways in which, data is to be used (Chenou & Cepeda-Másmela, 2019).

The promotion of accountability and transparency is underpinned by the principles of democracy, political participation, collaboration, and choice upon which data activism is based (Schrok, 2016). Data activism in general involves working to improve self-determination and data protection (Lehtiniemi & Ruckenstein, 2019). The aforementioned in combination with data activism is considered to have the power to alter visions of the world, and even theories of knowledge (Lehtiniemi & Ruckenstein, 2019). For example to change the way we perceive democracy in online environments, by having the right to have our own data. The purposes of data activism include improving community life and the infrastructures of governance (Schrok, 2016). Through outlining the importance of data in our era, data philanthropy is another branch of data activism which provides scientists, analysts and other groups with the data they need (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Even though in many cases the methods under which these data is acquired are questioned, there is always the perception that civic hackers do not abuse data since their sole purpose is to make transparent issues of public concern (Schrok, 2016). Representing on this manner arguments that suggest that data activism has to do about organizing, diffusing and collecting data related with social problems (Chenou & Cepeda-Másmela, 2019).

Exposure

The term 'exposure' refers to so-called data leaks in which confidential data are made widely available through unauthorised dissemination (J. George & Leidner, 2019). In some cases it is argued that such leaks lead to improved transparency and give more opportunities to access suppressed information (Joyce et al., 2010). The most famous platform to have engaged in data leaks is WikiLeaks, which is considered to have contributed to transparency by spreading information on unethical actions by countries so that people will know what has happened (Cammaerts, 2015; Joyce et al., 2010), and it has been characterised as a new system of media (Chadwick & Collister, 2014). Similar opinions explain that cases such as that of Edward Snowden increase political communication (Chadwick & Collister, 2014). Snowden was one of the first cases to show that surveillance can be followed as a tactic of politics by states towards other states and people (Dencik & Cable, 2017). As a result, this case and that of groups such as WikiLeaks created great mobilisations and prompted countries to take steps towards endorsing better public knowledge of political affairs (Dencik & Cable, 2017; Patz, 2016).

Patz (2016) explains that leaks happen because the transparency of institutions or governments is often inadequate, and the information provided to people is less than they demand, due to official secrecy. However, leaks on political issues are not happening only because of activism initiatives and the need for transparency; they also involve political games around power acquisition (Patz, 2016). One prior study has highlighted that it is important to realise that politicians or officials might collaborate with groups by sharing secret information which will allow the latter more access to information (Patz, 2016). Such cases are even possible in the EU because of internal conflicts or conflicting interests, and they are associated with domains of inter-institutional relations and even agriculture (Patz, 2016).

Hacktivism

This form of digital activism derives from hacking and activism and promotes hacking as a way to resolve social and political inequalities and achieve change (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Lindgren & Lundström, 2011). This definition provides a distinction between hacktivism and hacking, since the latter has as a target the promotion or pursuit of self-interest which might not be related to politics, while hacktivism seeks to achieve a social goal such as greater transparency in politics (Hampson, 2012). To represent hacktivism, a hacking action should be politically or socially motivated, and it should not be initiated by government or an official body, but by groups who want to influence a political situation for an activism purpose (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). Those purposes are further defined by identifying three groups of hacktivists, the first of which are cyberterrorists who attack via viruses. The second group are civic hackers who use their technological knowledge to upgrade and improve something rather than to destroy; and lastly, the third group are patriotic hackers who attack citizens and countries which they identify as enemies of their own (J. George & Leidner, 2019). This situation raises questions towards hacktivism and the risk that it creates a cyberwar where non-state actors also have a role and play their part in a digital space, which might even create military conflicts in cyberspace (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). As in the case of data activism, civic hackers have the same motives of bringing transparency to issues of public concern (Schrok, 2016).

Despite all the ways in which hacktivism can be beneficial for politics, for example by providing greater accountability and transparency, the borders between it and cyberterrorism are easily crossed because of hacking's fundamental aspects (Hampson, 2012). For this reason, in many countries such activities are prohibited in an attempt to prevent bigger issues. Many people believe that hacktivism should be protected and some

legislation on the matter exists; those who support its existence explain that ''it is a part of the price to be paid for the freedom of expression'' (Hampson, 2012).

Discussion on digital activism

Digital activism is a medium of significant influence, and some scholars have underlined that it can be both dangerous and effective as an activism method; thus, in the literature there are many optimists and pessimists regarding the concept and practice of digital activism. Sivitanides and Shah (2011) explain that digital activism not only influences many different aspects and disciplines, but is also influenced in turn. More specifically, they explain that there are always social, economic, and political factors which influence how and on which level activism or digital activism is conducted (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). In relation to the social factor they explain that expectations are based on cultural habits or predictions of how someone can influence digital activism. Accordingly, economic and democratic status influence digital activism, and in a democratic society, the freedom to engage in digital activism in a political context is more recognised in the legal frameworks (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). The authors also highlight that both access to digital media and the internet and associated facilities depend on the economic wellbeing of an individual; in other words, people in wealthy countries have more opportunities for digital usage, which in turn also influences their practice of digital activism (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011).

Schradie (2018) explains that inequalities and social gaps exist on social media, as she explains that digital activism can also have a negative impact and widen these gaps. The two main reasons behind this are time and access to facilities such as internet devices or other advanced technology (Schradie, 2018). From a different point of view, other scholars believe that through forms of digital activism such as metavoicing, shared knowledge can be spread allowing everyone's voice to be heard (Majchrzak et al., 2013; Halupka, 2014) even though in some cases these voices might contrast with what activists represent (Holm, 2019).

Despite all the aforementioned points, the potential of digital activism activities lies in promoting social change through citizen transparency and participation (Chadwick & Collister, 2014; Schrok, 2016), which gives great opportunities to different groups to engage and participate in forms with which they feel more familiar (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Also it is important to highlight not only who participates but how different things such as different forms of trust influence different activities of digital activism. This shows why it is important to understand how trust affects engagement with digital activism. Additionally,

despite the variety of interpretations on the effects, effectiveness, contribution, and influence of digital activism on political outcomes and the engagement of citizens, the literature support research designs which address the research question in order to establish the relation between government trust and digital activism. The different opinions towards effectiveness indicate that participation and activism do not reach a broad audience in many cases, since some cases of activism fail to trend or go viral on social media, as happens in India with online feminist activism which needs broader media support (Guha, 2014). Similarly, other scholars highlight that social media activism should somehow embrace popular contemporary culture in order to become successful, and this is one of the reasons why even though we have ‘’many clicks there are little sticks’’ (Lim, 2013, p. 553).

Digital Spectator activities require the minimum effort of the users in order to engage politically and make their own statement (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Halupka (2014) argues that such activities have a low risk, and that their low cost or even free use through social media as well as the small amounts of time that they consume are among the major strengths of digital spectator activities. On the other hand, because of the minimal effort and time required, scholars often criticize these kinds of activism as not part of real activism (Cammaerts, 2015; Kristofferson et al., 2014).

Based on the discussion in the prior literature, it is important to outline that this form of digital activism, while one of the simplest, also represents one of the most important, since it communicates political information to users who would hardly participate otherwise and engages the (Kristofferson et al., 2014), emphasizing what the literature defines as participation by different groups. In this way a sort of collective action through the participation process (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) is created because of the amassing of likes and shares, plus the personalisation and the connective action of the individual it fosters, helping individuals to understand a cause through their own perception (Bennett, 2012).

Such participation behaviours may create a generation of activists who do not engage politically other than engaging in micro-activist activities (Kristofferson et al., 2014). Further, one of the biggest weaknesses of this form of digital activism is that depending on the capacity of someone’s social networks, it can recreate inequalities in terms of what is spread on the internet, or which social groups can interact with it (Jen Schradie, 2018). Despite this, digital spectator activities remain a means to facilitate large-scale communication, information and interaction (Q. Chen et al., 2016) on political activity with users of all sorts of social media, in an easy and low-cost or free (Kristofferson et al., 2014) way of participation, making it of great importance (Christensen, 2011).

All the above-mentioned activities comprise the group of Digital Transitional Activities presented by George and Leidner (2019). The impact of these activities is that they endorse political participation and activism via promoting new activities through interactive means and connect people who have the same ideas, as happened in the case presented by Zúñiga et al. (2014). Additionally, it is theorised that they can create new domains and methods of activism and participation through interactivity between humans and technology (Savage et al., 2016; Young et al., 2019). While they have the potential to engage different audiences in more democratic means of participation such as digital petitions (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006), they also raise the danger of loss of validity and widening of gaps (Berg, 2017; Jen Schradie, 2018; Oser et al., 2013). Another weakness raised is the potentially negative connotations that the term 'bots' get through the popular belief that they can cause harm through persuasive outcomes and that even when a social cause reaches a wider audience, participation is still not granted (Nam, 2010), which happens many times in relation to donating (Lewis et al., 2014).

The set of Digital Gladiatorial Activities set out above represents the most active and direct forms of all the activities explained so far (J. George & Leidner, 2019). For this reason they also tend to be the hardest to achieve, and to be the highest risk in terms of being successful (Hampson, 2012). However, they all share similarities in the things that they are trying to achieve, which is also their biggest strength. On the one hand, through many different processes such as open-data related activities or leaks related to information openness and hacktivism, this set of activities tries to achieve the political participation of people through democratising means such as transparency and accountability (Chadwick & Collister, 2014; Joyce et al., 2010). On the other hand, the weaknesses can sometimes undermine trust and political participation. More specifically, the probability of cases such as that of Edward Snowden can also have effects which can threaten the relation of two or more governing actors, while political interests and power games with 'authorised' leaks can undermine the purpose of activism and exposure (Patz, 2016). Finally, depending on its uses, even hacktivism can become hacking with negative connotations and legal or political implications (Hampson, 2012).

This chapter has presented a literature review around the different forms of political participation. First, a distinction was provided between online and offline political participation. This distinction explained the new methods that have emerged alongside traditional methods, and their digital alternatives such as petitions and e-petitions. Then, a second distinction presented conventional and unconventional types of political participation, through electoral or party activities. The third distinction presented the logic

of connective and collective action and then digital activism, and its typology was presented as a form of online political participation. The next chapter will provide a literature review around social and political trust and will emphasise and explore the similarities and differences between them. At a later stage they will be connected with digital activism and a discussion will be presented on how they might influence, or be influenced by, these activities. This will help to form the hypotheses of the current thesis that will be analysed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3: TRUST AND DIGITAL ACTIVISM

This chapter defines social and political trust, explores the differences between them, analyses the existing types of political trust, and identifies gaps in the prior research in order to explore the relation of trust with political participation and digital activism. The research question of the current thesis is to see how social and political trust influence engagement in digital activism, and what are the main reasons behind performing digital activism activities. The previous chapter provided a review of digital activism and its activities whilst this chapter will show the connecting dots of digital activism and forms of trust. This will become clearer after providing definitions for both social and political trust and their types, as well as on how they connect to digital activism or its components.

Social Trust: Definitions

This section defines social trust and discusses its types. Social trust has always been a very important aspect of social capital and civic engagement (Rahn & Transue, 1998). For this reason, defining it will enable a more detailed view of what it is and how it differs from political trust. Although it can be difficult to define social trust, there are determinants which allow us to explain how it works, such as honesty, objectivity, and fairness (Verducci & Schroer, 2010). Fukuyama (1995) sees trust as the expectation of an honest and cooperative community, emphasising that once this is created, cooperation promotes a sense of mutual trust. Other definitions include actions to maintain trust; for example, ensuring freedom of speech (Verducci & Schroer, 2010) or fostering a cooperative attitude which provides expectations and optimism (Draude et al., 2018).

Social capital has been theorised as the foundation of social trust in the literature, and trust is often seen as part of social capital (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Welch et al., 2005). Social capital based on Putnam's theory consists of norms and values such as trust and networks (R. Putnam, 1995; R. D. Putnam, 2000; Siisiäinen, 2000). In his theory, societies ideally would look like interconnected trust networks, emphasising the role of trust at the core of an individual's relationships with the people that surround him or her (R. Putnam, 1995; R. D. Putnam, 2000; Siisiäinen, 2000). This is based on the idea that people can influence each other via their connections, and increase their interaction (R. Putnam, 1995). Thus, it is vital to understand the importance of trust not only in relation to social capital but

for society in general. From this point onwards, trust can be defined in multiple ways, and from different perspectives, but social trust refers to a person's social connections with, for example, his or her neighbours or people from the same workplace (R. Putnam, 1995).

Social trust can further be explained as trust between social groups, and a general trust of citizens of the same places, associations, or even families; in this way, interconnected networks of citizens are connected by mutual trust (Siisiäinen, 2000). In other words, social trust is defined as a feeling of trustworthiness in the personal connections among individuals (R. D. Putnam, 2000). Limited or even no personal relationship and experience is required between the individuals involved to create the feeling of positive expectation that trust brings (Govier, 1997). The idea of social trust begins with the self-oriented questions of who can be trusted, and whether most people can be trusted or not in a society (R. D. Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2018). The answer to that kind of question is that social trust is not addressed to specific groups of people or for particular purposes, but is applied to a more general public and without any specific reason, which distinguishes it as general versus a more particular form of trust (Uslaner, 2018). The latter has to do more with particular groups, and is mainly applied to people who are identified to be closer to someone's self (Uslaner, 2018). For this reason, social trust is considered to be stable and unchanged by specific purposes or because of the outcome of events (Hovmand & Tinggaard-Svendsen, 2017; Uslaner, 2018).

Other definitions of trust propose that trust starts from us, and that someone should trust in the way someone else trusts, and trust others and the way they trust (Govier, 1997). In other words, it is argued that someone should develop this mutual condition of trusting people (Govier, 1997). For example, someone could say that it is easier to trust a stranger when someone we know vouches for them, and this brings more interpersonal perspectives of social trust into the general concept (Welch et al., 2005). Interpretations of trust vary; other scholars suggest that it is more like a responsibility by which the interests of other people will be taken into account (Earle & Cvetkovich, 1995). These authors outline that confidence and trust are two different things, but that when they come together, they shape what is perceived as trustworthiness (Earle & Cvetkovich, 1995). Other scholars argue that there are dimensions of trust which are individual or shaped by social systems, thus explaining the existence of debates in the scholarship (Delhey & Newton, 2003). Accordingly, some findings suggest that social trust is related to social belonging and many other variables such as health and happiness (K Newton et al., 2018), which contrasts with other scholars' argument that trust can have as a basis strangers and does not need specific reasons (Govier, 1997; Uslaner, 2018).

Moreover, in debates on social trust claims are made that trust can have multiple definitions, or that it is multidimensional and has multiple perspectives. Warren (2018) explains that social trust is widely connected with interpersonal connections. When a person is in a position to actually communicate with another person it is easier to see that person's motives (M. Warren, 2018), but it is argued that social trust does not stop there, as when someone we are acquainted with warrants and guarantees that someone is trustworthy, this can promote a sense of social trust (M. Warren, 2018; Welch et al., 2005). In general it is argued that trust should be regarded in the multidirectional form that not only will you trust someone, but you can also be trusted (Siisiäinen, 2000; Uslaner, 2018). For such reasons, the importance of cooperation in trust is outlined by many scholars (Kenneth Newton, 2001; R. D. Putnam, 2000), and there is a need for mutual trust (Siisiäinen, 2000). The importance of trust in a society is fundamental, meaning that it is crucial to try to understand how it functions (Kenneth Newton, 2001). For this reason and because of the variety of explanations and definitions given towards social trust, next I present its multidimensionality as types of social trust (K Newton et al., 2018).

Types of Social Trust

Scholars have identified three main types of social trust, those are personalised, particularized and generalised trust. It is important to understand the types of trust since it has been highlighted that participation both online and offline are influenced by trust at a great extent, and as it was denoted earlier (Newton et al., 2018), participation represents one of the main components of digital activism. Starting with personalised trust; in terms of cooperation, individuals share their motives and their face-to-face interactions based on a sense of trust (Draude et al., 2018). Social trust has a strong impact on people's judgement and beliefs, and where there is lack of knowledge of scientific facts, a person's judgements are driven by their social trust (Siergist & Cvetkovich, 2000). This type of social trust is related with the personal interactions of individuals, thus shaping the relations between them via personal communication (Draude et al., 2018). Based on being trustworthy, individuals who think of social trust as something important are less likely to act in ways considered untrustworthy (Rahn & Transue, 1998). Untrustworthiness mainly occurs because, as Warren (2018, p.78) describes, "trust cannot be taken for granted"; thus, people sometimes mistrust others due to identifying conflicting interests in their motives. Meanwhile, even personalised forms of trust are related with social capital, which refers here to the norms and values of at least two individuals which are used for purposes of promoting cooperation (Fukuyama, 2001). These ways contribute to what is presented in social capital as

productivity, which is initiated by trust and represents ideas of how we influence each other (R. Putnam, 1995; R. D. Putnam, 2000).

Additionally, it is theorised that someone's personal knowledge can affect their personalised trust, since many people are not able to assess, judge, and understand the potential risks of different domains in their technological interactions (Siergist & Cvetkovich, 2000). While the role of personal experience is in many ways related with trust, this is not absolute in cases of familiarity with someone (Wollebæk et al., 2012). Optimism and other variables such as norms of personal happiness also have an impact on someone's trust based on their own life, emphasising that an individual's feelings dictate trust more than other circumstances (Delhey & Newton, 2003). For these reasons, the absence of social hierarchy levels and social and economic equality are needed for trust (Draude et al., 2018).

The second type of social trust is defined in the literature as particularised trust (Draude et al., 2018). This form of trust expresses the feeling of having a group identity, or a social identity which brings the individuals of the group closer, and creates mutual trust (Draude et al., 2018). In other words, scholars define this type as people who trust and have faith in people of their own group, and not a general trust of other groups (Uslaner & Conley, 2003). To differentiate this form from personalised trust, in particularised trust there is no need for personal interaction as people can be trusted because of the specific characteristics, values, and ideas they represent. Particularised trust tends to exist between people who identify as similar, making it more specific than generalised trust (Uslaner, 2018). From a different perspective, some scholars argue that particularised trust can have so many categories it has to be even more specific, and they add other types such as interethnic trust, which subcategorises different ethnic groups and different religions as separate forms of trust (Wollebæk et al., 2012).

Particularised trust is identified as trust towards specific institutions, specific groups, and for specific purposes based on similarity to others and the interests they represent (Newton et al., 2018; Uslaner, 2018). In this type of trust there is no need to know other people in person in order to trust them, but there is a feeling of belonging to the same group, which can include religion, age group, or many other different variables (Newton et al., 2018). It is also debatable that even people who self-identify themselves as belonging to one group of trust can present particularised trust elements. For example, even someone who trusts in general, in his workplace people, friends, and family, will have particularised trust in many cases which derives from specific relational interests (Warren, 2018).

The third type is generalised trust, which is related to general trust but on a bigger scale. Generalised trust is a universality of trust which promotes the idea of trust towards

everyone and a deep faith in humanity (Draude et al., 2018). The promotion of trust even between strangers is also expressed under this form, which has its basis in the belief of sharing common norms and values as individuals because of our shared human nature (Uslaner & Conley, 2003). Moral norms play a crucial role in theorising that most people are trustworthy, thus leading to generalised trust (Wollebæk et al., 2012). In this form of trust, individuals tend to participate more in actions such as volunteering, allowing them broader contact with strangers (Uslaner & Conley, 2003).

Despite the belief in a general trust and the cooperation involved, there are many factors that influence someone's trust. In cases where individuals have been robbed or mistreated in different ways by the state or other individuals, these incidents are considered to have a big impact on someone's adopted trust form, and generalised trust is not likely to be their choice (Van Lange, 2015). Some findings suggest that people in general tend to have more negative views of other people rather than positive ones, due to character attributes or prejudices, stereotypes, and dynamics which make generalised trust harder to achieve, and rarer (Van Lange, 2015). Mistrust between people and society is based on the idea that the world is a dangerous place and continues to spread where interests are getting involved (Stolle, 2002).

Trust has multiple benefits, such as reducing costs and supporting people to take potentially beneficial risks, or to be more productive (Stolle, 2002; Uslaner, 2018). Modern society involves more and more interactions with strangers, and many people move to other countries with the result that many different religions and ethnicities who have different lifestyles co-exist in contemporary societies, and generalised trust is of crucial importance in the process of integration in complex and diversified societies (Stolle, 2002). As a result, larger societies need more cooperative mindsets between citizens and there is a need to assume that people share the same values (Fukuyama, 1995; Uslaner & Conley, 2003). Values can include civic responsibility as a duty of each citizen, driven through honesty and obedience (Letki, 2006). In societies, for example, contracts between two parties and two people represent a form of trust. In general, trust is like a community spirit with those considered trustworthy, who pursue social outcomes through the values they share (Letki, 2006).

Discussion on Social Trust

Social trust is mainly measured using a standard survey question which seeks to reveal whether a person is generally trusting or distrusting. Many scholars contest the effectiveness of the standard survey question (Newton, 2001). One of the main reasons is that people

cannot be categorised as trusting or distrusting personalities because they might have different approaches in different circumstances and aspects of life, either social or political, based on their experiences (Newton, 2001). Wollebæk et al. (2012) explained that trust is not always generalised in terms of universality; neither it is always characterised by things like familiarity with others and other feelings towards unity and groups. Their study's findings suggest that sometimes the experience of an individual in a shared context partially shapes their opinion along with the influences of more types of trust such as community trust (Wollebæk et al., 2012). The prior findings vary, and for some scholars trust represents a precondition for cooperation and a way to achieve collective identity, reduce costs, and provide communication and social coordination which affects even government and other institutions (Draude et al., 2018). Levi and Stoker (2000) argued that trust is a relational and unconditional judgement or belief of an individual, meaning that someone becomes vulnerable to someone else through trust while there is the possibility of a betrayal.

In personalised trust, relationships are based on face-to-face communication and relationships between individuals, where personal trust becomes a shared value (Draude et al., 2018). Simpler methods of personal trust suggest oaths or promises and the belief that someone is trustworthy as an entity (Draude et al., 2018). As such, personalised trust raises the vulnerability of an individual in trusting someone else, which in some cases (for example digital media) might be used to personalise advertisements and create individual preferences based on their trust to recommend places or products (Cheng et al., 2016). In particularised trust, by contrast, an individual's attitude is shaped by the group identity, and collective identities are common (Draude et al., 2018).

Experiences are crucial to being able to identify oneself as part of a group, if someone has been violated or discriminated against for reasons such as gender, ethnicity, or religion, then this will be highly likely to play a crucial role in shaping their particularised trust, and even their social connections have a great impact even though in some cases this can have opposite effects such as demobilisation (Draude et al., 2018; Wollebæk et al., 2012). Finally, in generalised trust, the trust of every individual towards everyone else has often been questioned, but scholars have argued in the meantime that it is the most socially fruitful and productive type of social trust and implies the importance of trust in the future promotion of efficacy and cooperation (Draude et al., 2018; Uslaner & Conley, 2003; Van Lange, 2015). Explaining social trust in this chapter will help to explain the relationship it has with political trust and to differentiate them. Moreover, the analysis of both will help to establish a connection between trust and digital activism, which will be examined in terms of the consequences it presents and how they connect to digital activism.

Before moving on to the next section, it is important to understand the connection between social and political trust. It is argued that both social and political trust promote active citizenship (Newton et al., 2018). Even though trust and participation are connected by many scholars and theorised to have an important relationship (Chen, 2004; Newton et al., 2018), not many suggestions have been made as to what the relationship between trust and digital activism is. Support and cooperation have been identified as really important factors for both social and political trust (Easton, 1975; R. D. Putnam, 2000). Additionally, it has been argued that in some cases trust types can influence one another, and participation can contribute to them. More specifically, social trust based on participation can promote creativity, which in turn can lead to social, political, or even personal change (Earle & Cvetkovich, 1995). In addition, scholars have found that collective capacities can widely be achieved by both social or political dimensions of trust (Newton et al., 2018). Moving on, the next section provides an introduction to political support and trust, which will be reviewed with their consequences for social trust later in this chapter. Later, the chapter will present the general consequences for, and effects of, social trust on politics and how it connects with digital activism as form of political participation. This will help to examine how digital activism relates to political trust. High social trust is often related to positive outcomes (Rahn & Transue, 1998) but it also has its risks (Verducci & Schroer, 2010). Someone who trusts becomes vulnerable as they place their trust in someone or something and have expectations which may make them dependent on the decisions made by the trustee (Draude et al., 2018; Verducci & Schroer, 2010). This risk and vulnerability is crucial in order to have trust, which is why it usually referred to as ‘’accepted vulnerability’’ (Draude et al., 2018).

Political Support and Political Trust: Definitions and Types

This section defines political trust in order to later examine its relationship with online political participation and digital activism. Providing an analysis of the debates in the literature, it will provide an overview of the determinants of political support and trust, followed by the definitions and consequences linked with digital activism. The context of political support is mainly presented through Easton’s (1965) framework. Scholars have engaged in a wide-ranging discussion with arguments seeking to explain the concept of political trust and political support. Their findings suggest that there are three main levels of political objects (J. Chen, 2004; R. Dalton, 1999; Easton, 1975). These are the regime, which means the values, norms, and institutions (Muller & Jukam, 1977); the authorities, which refers to the leaders in general, including the pool from which they are drawn (J. Chen, 2004;

R. Dalton, 1999); and the political community, which means the groups of people within the same political context (J. Chen, 2004; Easton, 1975).

In explaining political trust, it is important to outline how the concepts of support evolve within the literature. Political support and trust are theorised to be mediums through which people try to promote social and political change (Easton, 1975), although it is also argued that in the context of a democracy even dissatisfaction with authorities does not necessarily mean the start of political change (R. Dalton, 1999). Support permits the system to develop and satisfy demands, and it is related to citizens' behaviour in supporting decisions (Miller, 1971). Political support is directed mainly towards three levels of political objects: the authorities, the regime, and the political community (J. Chen, 2004; R. Dalton, 1999; Easton, 1975). This concept of political support has two main types, the analysis of which will help to unfold its definitions. Those two types are defined as specific and diffuse support (Easton, 1975). Political support in general is explained as a behavioural concept and as a way of a citizen to express whether he or she is in favour of something or holds negative views on it (Easton, 1975). In analyzing Easton's framework, Dalton (1999) explains that in order to be able to explain political phenomena and the political process through public behaviour, we need to draw a distinction between the different forms of political support. A deeper analysis of the definitions of the two main forms of political support is provided below.

Diffuse support

Political trust includes the attitudes held towards a political object (Wilkes & Wu, 2018). Diffuse support is a form of political support or political trust which leans towards authorities and the regime (Muller et al., 1982). The primary political object in this dimension of political support is the regime, and diffuse support links citizens to the regime (J. Chen, 2004). In general, it is defined as the behaviour or trust of someone who feels they can rely on the government based on a belief that the latter will act benevolently by doing "what is right" (J. Chen, 2004; Muller et al., 1982; Muller & Jukam, 1977). In this way, based on the goodwill of the government, the regime, or the authorities, diffuse support shows that it is value-driven (Wilkes & Wu, 2018). More specifically, values, norms, and institutions play a crucial role in diffuse support and how it is formed, through the perception that a government represents the same values as the individual in question (J. Chen, 2004). For the aforementioned reasons, this dimension of political support has been theorised as a medium of measuring legitimacy (R. Dalton, 1999; Muller & Jukam, 1977). In other words, diffuse support is explained as a reservoir of benevolent attitude and behaviour towards the

regime (Van der Meer, 2018), and as a trust reservoir towards political outputs (Voogd, 2017).

In more citizen-oriented arguments, a diffuse framework includes what a political object such as a regime represents for a citizen (Easton, 1975; Muller et al., 1982). Theories explain that diffuse support includes belief in the benevolence and goodwill of the actions and policies of a government, even if individuals might be opposed to them or might be negatively impacted by them, as part of the trust process towards the regime and institutions (Scheb & Lyons, 1999). In brief, Scheb and Lyons (1999) explain that diffuse support is a kind of public evaluation of the functionality of institutions, but with commitment to them. Scholars have built understanding of diffuse support as trust towards institutions and the acceptance and toleration of their political decisions (Ares-Abalde et al., 2016). As a result, diffuse support has a stable definition, of having trust in the primary object of the regime and authorities (Easton, 1975; Muller et al., 1982; Scheb & Lyons, 1999), and the evaluation of what political objects represent for a person. In specific support the definition is more transitional and is evaluated through what it represents for the citizens (Easton, 1975; Scheb & Lyons, 1999). This definition helps distinguish diffuse and specific support and underline where they might overlap on the political objects.

Specific Support

Specific support is one of the two dimensions of political support in Easton's framework (Easton, 1975). Miller (1971) introduces specific support as the "direct result of outputs that satisfy specific demands" (Miller, 1971). In other words, as the name suggests, this dimension of political support concerns support for specific policies or decisions by the government or the authorities (J. Chen, 2004). Other scholars have provided definitions referring to short-term evaluations of government performance (Van der Meer, 2018). In a way, specific support relates to the satisfaction of citizens with specific outputs and the performance of governments (Wilkes & Wu, 2018). Citizens are linked to the authorities through this type of support, which thus represents the primary political object of this dimension (J. Chen, 2004; Voogd, 2017). Additionally, through specific support citizens evaluate of the system based on the performance of the government or institutions (Ares-Abalde et al., 2016; Wilkes & Wu, 2018). This performance includes both political and economic situations which shape the opinion of citizens on the political object of how authorities perform (Ares-Abalde et al., 2016; Voogd, 2017).

The performance of the political authorities seems to be crucial to theoretical discussions on specific support. Easton (1975) explains that performance is what satisfies or dissatisfies individuals, leading them to develop specific trust or support towards something.

It is the outcome of the policies and the decisions, in other words, which causes satisfaction and the support of people (Easton, 1975). In this mindset, scholars explain that specific support is nothing more than a direct result of the government's actions (Miller, 1971). Some scholars have argued that the specific dimension of political support has on its own types and forms, and that these help to build definitions. Voogd (2017) presents his own classification based on Easton's framework, dividing specific support into particularised and generalised support and differentiating them on the basis of particular support for political parties or officeholders and authorities in general. Despite this classification, other arguments and findings suggest that the main dimensions of political support are diffuse and specific support, and that the latter symbolises policy-based evaluation (Scheb & Lyons, 1999). In this way, specific support in general is defined as attitudes and behaviours based on the fulfillment of citizens' demands, which helps shape the distinction of diffuse and specific support in the next section (Scheb & Lyons, 1999).

The importance of the distinction is often underlined, and reflects the fact that people might identify themselves as being opposed to the political authorities (Easton, 1975; Muller & Jukam, 1977). Easton (1975) explained that in a political system, while many people find themselves dissatisfied by the policies of a government, at other times even if they are dissatisfied they may still have trust in the regime. In this way, specific support is identified as the evaluation that occurs through a policy-based perspective and its effects, while diffuse support is more related to trust in institutions (Scheb & Lyons, 1999). Put simply, specific support has to do with the performance of political groups such as the elite or the government, whilst diffuse support is independent of policy outcomes and exists despite the potential mistrust of public dissatisfaction in cases where citizens are discontented with governments (R. Dalton, 1999). Thus, diffuse support is generally theorised to be oriented towards the political system, while specific support is more particular to decisions and outputs or office-holders (Van der Meer, 2018). Although many scholars highlight the importance of the distinction between specific and diffuse support, some outline that there is no clear reason for the independence of the two, and that in some cases, such as in voting effects, they are combined (Voogd, 2017). Similarly other scholars suggest a close relationship between diffuse and specific support despite the generally accepted distinction between them (Scheb & Lyons, 1999). For example, it is found that in some cases of national politics and organisations such as the EU, when national political involvement is obvious there is a large spillover of specific and diffuse support, as happened in the case of Greece with the financial crisis where satisfaction with domestic government had further effects of support towards the EU (Ares-Abalde et al., 2016; Conceição-Teixeira et al., 2014).

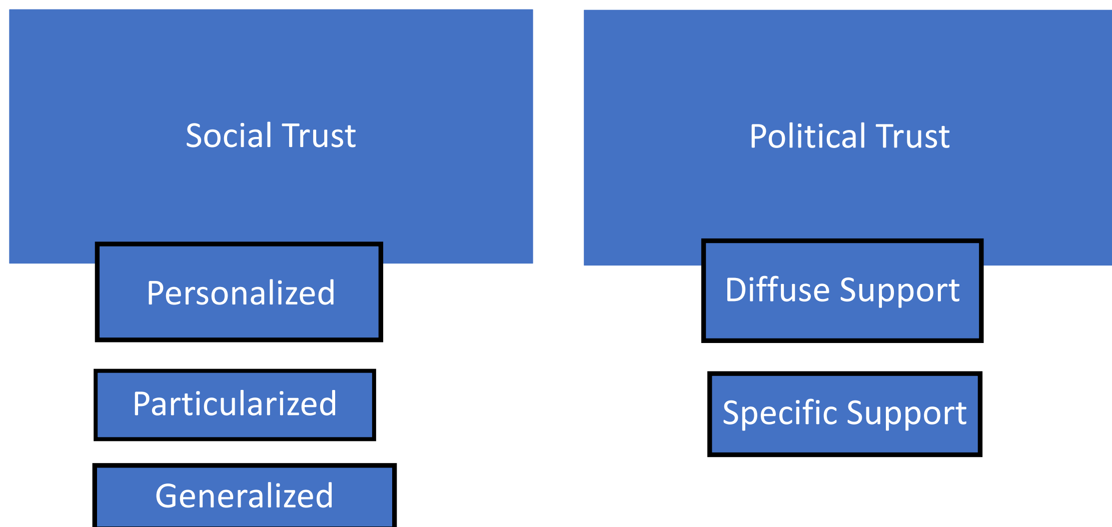


Figure 3.1 Forms of social and political trust

Despite also explaining the potential connection of diffuse and specific support, the main task is to differentiate them through their uniqueness (Easton, 1975). This means that specific support is uniquely different from diffuse support because of its relation with satisfaction, and how the latter is connected to the performance of the authorities. In other words, this distinction has its basis in the relationship between the needs and demands of citizens and the behaviour of the authorities (Easton, 1975). Diffuse support, from a different perspective, has a fundamental value in the political system and specific support is more performance-driven behaviour, with support expressed for specific office-holders (Conceição-Teixeira et al., 2014). In the meantime, diffuse support has to do with trust in the regime - hence the difference in the motives of supportive behaviour (Easton, 1975; Loewenberg, 1971).

The Effects of Social Trust on Digital Activism

This section discusses how social trust can lead to digital activism through various mechanisms such as social network or group identity (Draude et al., 2018; Verducci & Schroer, 2010). We can see many different groups with things in common, such as people of the same social class or religion getting together on occasions (Draude et al., 2018). With the facilitation of communication brought by technologies such as phones and social media,

activists can come together and perform digital activism (Joyce et al., 2010). This collective action identity shaped through social trust is a result of how someone perceives who is trustworthy. Social trust is conductive to digital activism (Joyce et al., 2010) through social networks, group identity, and common beliefs.

First, the existence of social networks linking friends and acquaintances gives individuals the opportunity to perform digital activism actions, and specifically digital spectator activities, because these are connected with personalised trust (Christensen, 2011; J. George & Leidner, 2019; Halupka, 2014). This happens because the personalised form of trust permits people in the same social network and environment to get involved digitally because they know and trust their digital friends (Christensen, 2011; Halupka, 2014). This relationship can also lead someone to get involved digitally because in their social network they find opinions with which they identify, while in general the bigger the social network someone has, the more likely they will be to reach a broader audience and affect more people based on social trust (George & Leidner, 2019; Warren et al., 2014). A second rationale suggests that social trust leads to digital activism through group and collective identities, which can happen both in Digital Gladiatorial Activities and Digital Spectator Activities (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015; Stolle et al., 2005). Third, social trust is considered to be able to initiate digital activism through maximising personal involvement and promoting active citizenship (Chen, 2004; George & Leidner, 2019; Newton et al., 2018).

In general, many scholars in the literature identify a relationship between social trust and digital activism, but they do not specify which forms or in which way this relationship works. For this reason, the following section presents the main debates about how social trust connects to digital activism, specifically in terms of their relationship, of how the first leads to the latter, and which forms influence or lead to this connection. This is important because it highlights how trust influence people to perform different activities. For example, for certain activities the impact of social trust might be bigger and for other activities smaller. Also, since it was highlighted earlier, for crucial components of digital activism, such as online political participation, there is a well-established relationship with social trust. Thus, it is expected that social trust will influence on performing digital activism, without knowing the extent that does so.

Hypotheses

There is a growing body of literature on the relationship between trust and digital activism. The following lines set out several arguments related to the way in which the two types of trust - social and political - can influence various forms of digital activism. They

have a multifaceted relationship which is underexplored in the literature and deserves greater attention. There are contradictory theories in the literature: while some scholars suggest that confidence in political institutions can lead to more digital activism (Warren et al., 2014), others believe that the lack of political trust can lead to higher digital activism (Joyce et al., 2010). In a similar way, there is a great deal of discussion of how trusting others might affect, unite, and lead to digital activism. In contrast with the literature on political trust, the majority of scholars suggest that high levels of social trust lead to digital activism, without any great discussion around how the lack of social trust influences digital activism (Govier, 1997; Uslaner, 2018). However, the current thesis aims to examine the relationship of how social trust influences digital activism and explore this multifaceted relationship.

It is important not only to examine the relationship of social trust with digital activism, but also with specific digital activism activities. Butler (2011) argued that social capital and social trust are of crucial importance for slacktivism. Personal acquaintances can lead to the creation of groups with a common activism purpose, increase productivity, and lead to digital activism and slacktivism activity (Butler, 2011). In this way, slacktivism, which is also known as clicktivism, can lead through different processes of social trust to many different outcomes, from gathering information online for a cause, to joining a cause due to the mutual beliefs involved, or a shared cause in a personal network (Butler, 2011).

The first section below formulates three hypotheses about how social trust favours three particular forms of digital activism: slacktivism, consumerism, and data dissemination. Those three activities were selected on the basis that "slacktivism" represents one of the easiest to perform activities, data dissemination requires more engagement than other digital activism activities and political consumerism is a traditional activism activity that is also brough to the digital era. The second sub-section proceeds in a similar manner in looking at the relationship between political trust and other particular forms of activism.

Social Trust and Forms of Digital Activism

There are theoretical reasons to expect several effects of high levels of social trust on slacktivism, consumerism, and data dissemination. This expectation is shaped through how social trust influences specific digital activism (Draude et al., 2018). Digital activities were selected to be examined because slacktivism is the easiest and most common digital activity; consumerism is an activity that exists both online and offline which helps to understand how differently it functions online; and data dissemination is one of the activities that requires the most expertise. The existence of social networks and the trusting relationships someone

has with their friends, family, and acquaintances make it more probable that they will like a post with activism content based on shared beliefs (Christensen, 2011; Halupka, 2014). The hypothesis here is that social trust can lead to slacktivism. This expectation is based on the mechanism of social network trust, and how this influences the interactions between users on social media. Following the arguments that I present below, I expect that high social trust leads to several forms of digital activism because of the social networks we have which contain people we trust. Having people that we trust in our network on social media, might be leading to liking a post with activism, either voluntarily because we agree with it or because we are asked to.

Social trust has multidimensional benefits, and the more trust someone has in their interpersonal interactions the more it can boost personal social trust online and influence digital activism (Halupka, 2014; Welch et al., 2005). This brings the rationale of trust and the social network into the conversation, and shows how they can lead to digital activism (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Joyce et al., 2010). The forms of digital activism that were selected to be examined for their relationship with social trust in the following hypotheses are slacktivism, boycotts and data dissemination. The reason behind selecting these activities vary, first slacktivism because it is considered one of the easiest activities to engage and this will show how often people based on their social trust are likely to perform this activity. Data dissemination, from the other hand, is one of the activities that require more engagement and this will show how much based on their social trust, people are willing to engage in an activity that requires more things and that is more complicated. Finally, on what it concerns boycotts, it is an activity that also existed in the offline activism and people used to perform this activity based on their social trust (Neilson, 2010). The aforementioned situation will reveal patterns and will permit comparison between how social trust influences people to perform the offline vs the digital version of boycotts.

The first hypothesis is built on the importance of social networks. The main logic behind it is that people use slacktivism (e.g. liking posts and sharing content) when they trust the people in their social network (Christensen, 2011; J. George & Leidner, 2019; Halupka, 2014). When people know other people offline and develop high levels of trust within that social network, they are more likely to interact with them online (Joyce et al., 2010). These interpersonal connections within the social network generate a general feeling of trust which is needed to perform such activities (Warren 2014, Christensen 2011). Trusting our network can lead to liking or reproducing their posts, or even creating our own digital activist posts, joining causes and movements with common beliefs, and actively becoming digital activists (J. Chen, 2004; J. George & Leidner, 2019; K Newton et al., 2018).

Individuals are more likely to identify posts that are closer to their own values, concerns, or beliefs via their social network. The latter makes it easier for individuals to perform slacktivism (Christensen, 2011; A.-M. Warren et al., 2014) because people identify specific characteristics in other users that they trust and among other people in their social network (Koranteng et al., 2019). Among the people we have in the same social network are different kinds of relationships (e.g. friends, family, work colleagues, and people we knew at school and in childhood) (Golbeck, 2006). The new technologies and the social media on mobile phones also make it easier for people to communicate based on their common goals, and to create collective identities and social networks and perform digital activism activities (Joyce et al., 2010). One of these forms of digital activism is slacktivism, which is based on the relationships developed by individuals and on perceptions of trustworthiness (Draude et al., 2018). For example, if we have a friend with whom we have shared a friendship since our childhood then based on the current hypothesis it is more probable we will interact with a post that this person uploaded based on our trust of this person. This is also supported by findings that suggest that people seek information and interact in social media networks with people they already know and trust (Hagar, 2013). First of all, it is considered that through social media, individuals connect with groups and start a trust-building process. While this happens, essential pieces of personal trust, such as reputation, help them in that direction (Netrvalova & Safarik, 2011).

There is also another practice of liking posts and performing slacktivism online (Butler, 2011). An example is through exchanging likes for activist posts because of the trust in the social network and the collective identity (Butler, 2011). For example, if we support gender equality movements then there is a higher probability that we have more people that support the same cause in our social network, which gives a feeling of unity and collective identity, which could lead to slacktivism.

If a close friend or someone we trust posts activism content online, it is more likely that we will perform slacktivism. For example, in June 2020 after George Floyd was killed by policemen, this in combination with the COVID-19 pandemic motivated and led people to express their dissatisfaction on social media (Camacho et al., 2020; Rao, 2020). Since this brutality became viral many people were able to see posts related to the Black Lives Matter movement through supporters of this movement or their friends and people they trust and interact with, through liking these posts on their social networks (Camacho et al., 2020). This situation continued with the Black Lives Matter movement and many people across the world have participated through their social networks; amongst them have been friends, celebrities, athletes, and idols who they trust, and in many cases people were influenced and

performed slacktivism and other activities (Camacho et al., 2020; Rao, 2020; Woods & McVey, 2016). Even on a personal level, I thought of this example because I noticed on my own social media feed that a majority of people were posting about this incident and I performed slacktivism by liking numerous posts by celebrities or friends of mine expressing that they were supporting the BLM movement.

Interpersonal trust within our social network also creates the possibility of forming group identities (Draude et al., 2018). The perception of trustworthiness and who deserves to be trusted can create collective capacities because people in social networks tend to share some common values, traditions, or faith which can lead to slacktivism (Draude et al., 2018; Verducci & Schroer, 2010). Additionally, on social media activists have often made calls for support by asking other users in their social network to like a post with activism content or to spread the message on social media (J. George & Leidner, 2019). For example, environmental activist groups ask people to share environmental causes or to perform slacktivism, and the more people who do so, the wider the audience this cause will reach.

For these reasons, high trust in somebody's social network makes it easier to initiate slacktivism. Trust is of crucial importance in order to shape and maintain a social network, and the social network is the reason why someone would read a post or participate in activism (Joyce et al., 2010). In other words, because of their social network and the people they know and trust, users are more likely to engage in slacktivism (Joyce et al., 2010). According to all these arguments, I hypothesise that:

H1: High social trust favours higher engagement in slacktivism.

A second hypothesis is that social trust in general, especially particularised trust, can lead to political consumerism (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015). Social trust can build collective capacities: it can bring together people who have similar beliefs, and who fight for the same causes and/or belong in the same groups (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015; Neilson, 2010). Trusting people who represent common values with one's own, or what is more widely known as particularized trust is widely agreed to lead to political consumerism activities such as boycotts.

Particularised trust needs effective communication in order for an individual to be able to identify other people with the same kinds of beliefs. For example, where the sense of a collective identity is stronger, particularised trust is useful for Digital Transitional Activities (J. George & Leidner, 2019). These activities include actions such as political consumerism, and others based on mutual relationships and shared beliefs (Boström et al.,

2018; Zúñiga et al., 2014). Groups with common beliefs can shape activities such as boycotts or environmental and vegan movements (Boström et al., 2018). In this form of digital activism, called political consumerism, social trust is of great importance. Consumers and users seem to develop mistrust towards political institutions while also developing trust towards other citizens (Stolle et al., 2005). This difference is important since here trust of others can shape boycotts which oppose the policies of institutions, while later it will be presented how trust and support lead to buycotts and boycotts via political trust, and while buycotts may fall under the same category of political consumerism, the differentiation between social and political trust presents completely different actions and relationships.

Trusting groups, and so-called particularised trust have been connected many times with activities such as political consumerism (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015; Stolle et al., 2005). For example, a person who belongs to a group that fights for the preservation of the natural environment would act politically by boycotting enterprises that do not respect the environment. More specifically, if a factory is sending its toxic waste into a river, then environmental groups will boycott the enterprise to show their anger and frustration. Several scholars have argued that trust can work as a motivation to consume politically (Neilson, 2010). There are two main reasons in the literature that can explain the conditions under which social trust can influence online political consumerism (Baptista & Rodrigues, 2018). The first reason is that the more people have a shared trust, the more information about political consumerism they will get, resulting in engaging more (Baptista & Rodrigues, 2018). This means that the more common values they have and trust towards a cause such as environmental purposes the more this shared trust will become a driving factor to perform political consumerism. This underlines the expectation that a collective sense of trust can lead people to fight and boycott an enterprise just because they have gathered more information about its policies or qualities, and the reasons why it should be boycotted. As a matter of fact, trust between people helps the circulation of information, which is argued to be a facilitator of political consumerism (Neilson, 2010). This is based upon the idea that the more information people get on political consumerism, the more likely they will be to act upon it (Neilson, 2010). A sense of collective identity and mutual trust can lead to trusting and joining a boycott.

For example, regarding the protection of the Amazon rainforest, people who receive information about deforestation or wildfires and the companies who threaten its natural balance, are more likely to act to protect it as per this theory. For this reason, political consumerism has been theorised as one of the most prominent and efficient ways to protect the Amazon (Zhouri, 2004). In other words, boycotting is a means of online political

consumerism that is used in such cases by some individuals. This trust process of people and collective identities built through the facilitation of information can lead to political consumerism (Neilson, 2010). As a result, I expect particularised trust, which means trust in particular groups of people and people who have similar values, leading to digital activism and online boycotting. This happens because through particularised trust, people trust one another and would fight for a cause together, and because of specific characteristics they can participate in political consumerism.

The second reason relates to how high levels of social trust can lead to the idea that people act with good intentions, including political consumerism actions, as these represent a common good and boost collective efforts (Baptista & Rodrigues, 2018; Neilson, 2010). These collective efforts can be shaped through trust to form a mutual effort and shared beliefs which will provide the motivation needed to act together (Baptista & Rodrigues, 2018; Boström et al., 2018; Neilson, 2010). For example, people who have trust and respect the natural environment such as a public beach would be likely to boycott enterprises seeking to buy the public beach, in order to sustain a common good, and to uphold the interests of all the people that go to this beach, not just those joining the boycott. As such, it is understood that with particularised trust, people or groups with specific characteristics who fight for particular causes can act because of their trust (Baptista & Rodrigues, 2018; J. George & Leidner, 2019; Neilson, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005).

As has been presented above, social trust can lead to online consumerism through group identities and trust in other people of the same group. In this way, groups of individuals with similar beliefs can join causes and shape consumerism movements through the facilitation of social media (Boström et al., 2018). I expect that social trust can boost a common belief between two or more people in an online environment; for example, that large clothing companies take advantage of their workers in the countries of production – which then leads to a high probability that the group will boycott these companies based on this trust and collective identity.

Social media posts are widely used to contribute towards environmental and vegan movements, and consumer action (Boström et al., 2018; Zúñiga et al., 2014). In such cases, the feeling of trustworthiness and the common identity helps to boost commitment to a common good (Neilson, 2010). Groups can gather in online environments because of their social trust and create posts and pages that express their frustration towards institutions, enterprises, or policies, and initiate boycotts where necessary (Zúñiga et al., 2014). There are numerous examples of this, such as the case of "boycott BP" after the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico (Zúñiga et al., 2014). This event is considered to have been a huge

environmental disaster, and led individuals to boycott the BP company through social media campaigns on platforms such as Facebook (Zúñiga et al., 2014). All these arguments create an expectation that:

H2: High social trust favours higher engagement in political consumerism.

A third hypothesis is that social trust can lead to data dissemination (J. George & Leidner, 2019). This expectation is based on how trust can build amongst groups, and the idea of the benevolence of an activity for a common good. I expect that if people trust a cause, they will support it. For example, if people believe that governments are not telling the truth to citizens and should be more accountable, then they are likely to support those who will disseminate the necessary data in order to tell the truth to the citizens. An example of such groups is WikiLeaks, which was formed in 2006 and has since published more than 6,500 previously undisclosed government documents that are of great importance to citizens, thus achieving popularity and the support of people all over the world (Sifry & Rasiej, 2011). For this reason, to form a group which will pursue a goal related to data dissemination, trust in the group members and trust of the people are of crucial importance (Schrok, 2016). The central issue here is to understand how generalised trust as well as the collective identity can become conductive to data dissemination.

Social trust through collective capacities can also strongly influence digital activism activities such as data dissemination. In this respect, trust among the members of the groups shaped is needed in order to maintain and try to achieve their aims (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Schrok, 2016). Exposure or unauthorised dissemination of mainly governmental information for the purposes of transparency and accountability to citizens is strongly linked with social trust (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Patz, 2016). Under this form of digital activism, trust is like a property of relationships, as denoted by Grabner-Kräuter and Bitter (2015), which leads to collective action. In other words, trust is crucial, firstly, for the formation of this process, because people's trust is needed as well as trust between those who actually pursue the target of data dissemination (Mavridis & Michalopoulos, 2010).

Secondly, the importance of social trust in data dissemination works as a social incentive and leads to the required cooperation of the members (Zhao et al., 2019). Similarly, other scholars suggest that the social network and the establishment of social trust play a great role in shaping and conducting data dissemination (Wu et al., 2015). This trust allows to people to form groups and adopt a united identity, which can lead to cases such as Snowden or WikiLeaks (Chadwick & Collister, 2014). It has also been outlined that when

trust is absent, such incentives and groups such as WikiLeaks who are considered as state enemies by many governments can easily dissolve. Following similar paradigms to the set of activities presented above, hacktivism theory states that it requires the existence of social trust (Stolle et al., 2005). It is another activity which requires social trust both between the group members who are planning to do the activity and from other people towards their goal (Cammaerts, 2013). The communicative purposes and the social goal that it represents differentiate it from cyber-terrorism, which is one of the reasons why people's shared trust leads to hacktivism.

On data dissemination, citizens tend to trust the wider goal of this activity as something that tries to achieve a common good (Schrok, 2016). In this way, trust works as a motive for the citizens to engage with such activities (Zhao et al., 2019). A wider cooperation is needed in order to be able to shape the data dissemination, which requires the attention of citizens and of the people that shape the activity (Zhao et al., 2019). The importance of the trust needed in order to perform such actions is seen in many cases such as WikiLeaks, which not only needs the group identity that is shaped through the process of this activity but a broader trust in the cause (Chadwick & Collister, 2014). The actions that WikiLeaks or the Anonymous collective perform are seen as forms of cooperation and interconnection of activists based on the trust of people which then enables them to spread confidential information for the greater benefit (Chadwick & Collister, 2014). In other words, people's trust in a cause and the motivation of learning new information can influence and initiate the procedure of data dissemination.

One of the well-known organisations that performs activities like data dissemination is the so-called Anonymous group (Coleman, 2013; Olson, 2013). Since they were formed they have taken various steps from trolling to disseminating data and hacking (Coleman, 2013). The story of Anonymous continues on an unpredictable path, having influenced many major events such as the Arab Spring of 2011, to which they contributed with documents and data (Coleman, 2013; Olson, 2013). Not only have they exposed human rights abuses and other controversial events, but they also provided technological assistance to other activists which were on the ground (Coleman, 2013). From 2010, Anonymous became virally accepted and trusted by many internet users and activists as virtual hackers who disseminate or attack for a common purpose (Coleman, 2013; Olson, 2013). Such groups exemplify how important high social trust is in contributing to the effectiveness and sustainability of the group as well as to causes and activities such as data dissemination. This is important because without the trust and support of people, the kind of these groups dissolve, however this was not the case for Anonymous who did found many supporters to

their actions via online means (Coleman, 2013). Data dissemination seeks to create transparency, a cause for which the target of the activity is clear to citizens (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015). It is widely argued that social trust is connected with achieving common goals and data dissemination targets to achieve a greater good (Fischer-Hubner et al., 2016). For this reason, it is considered the common goals and values are seen as an outcome of social trust that can be achieved through digital activism (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015; Patz, 2016).

Social trust and confidence in a cause are theorised to be connected with the transparency of a common goal (Fischer-Hubner et al., 2016). Through establishing trust, it is more likely that people who have common intentions will join together in an activity such as data dissemination (Zhao et al., 2019). In other words, higher generalised trust can work as a motive to perform data dissemination and freely circulate information (Mavridis & Michalopoulos, 2010; Schrok, 2016; Zhao et al., 2019).

Trust among people can also help to maintain the purpose of the group in relation to multiple causes (Chadwick & Collister, 2014). This is one reason why data dissemination for activist purposes is often related to low political trust (Cammaerts, 2013). Even in relation to a small institution or political party, if people do not trust the information given to them, they will search for the data that have been hidden from them; if in such a case these people believe that data dissemination would be an effective possible method to acquire these information, then they will trust the cause of data dissemination. In contrast, here the relationship of interest is how high social trust favours data dissemination, via creating support for the cause and establishing a group identity. The hypothesis that social trust leads to exposure has been theorised along the lines of how group identity requires trust to lead to such activities. Trust is one of the main reasons why online media activists come together to pursue collective capacities (Dumitrica & Mylynn, 2019). Through a combination of activism and participation, a sense of community is created; based on social capital theory, communities with high social trust are more honest (Letki, 2006). All the aforementioned findings showing how social trust leads to digital activism are of great interest.

H3: Higher social trust favours higher engagement in data dissemination.

Arguments against reverse causality

The thesis argues that social trust is a cause for digital activism. Reverse causality is improbable for at least two reasons. The general reason is the classic line of argumentation according to which attitudes lead to behavior (Bell et al., 2009; Campbell et al., 1960; Verplanken & Orbell, 2022). Following this reasoning, we would expect trust – an attitude – to influence digital activism – a behaviour. Moreover, social trust is an attitude that requires time to form; it is often the reflection of experiences accumulated over a long period of time (K Newton & Zmerli, 2011). Digital activism is a recent behaviour and thus unlikely to shape a long-lasting attitude (R. J. Dalton, 2019).

The specific arguments against reverse causality are related to the logic behind the relationship between social trust and each of the three forms of digital activism. For H1, it makes little sense to expect the pressing of the like button on a social media post to generate social trust. People do not start trusting their family, friends and neighbours after clicking on content that those individuals share. On the contrary, they click on the content because they have an attitude towards those people. For H2, people boycott for a reason and they expect a tangible outcome. One reason can be, as argued in this thesis, that such an activity is cultivated in an environment of high social trust (Neilson, 2010). On a similar note, earlier research shows that political trust can also be conducive to boycotts (Ropaul, 2018). However, there is little logic in expecting the boycotts to result in attitudes towards peers, family and friends. For H3, data dissemination entails disclosing confidential government information and bringing this to the public. Such behaviour is rooted in trust of the source that performed the leak in the confidential information, and generalized trust towards the person that performs the dissemination. There is a possibility for data dissemination to influence political trust since people may start developing attitudes towards politicians or institutions based on the documents to which they have access; this is the reason for which I do not have theoretical expectations regarding the relationship between data dissemination and political trust. It is improbable to expect data dissemination influence the trust that those who engage in it will have on the environment after the digital activity takes place.

Political trust and digital activism

Political trust can lead to metavoicing. This expectation is based on the fact that metavoicing can be used by individuals as a medium by which to express political trust (Hong & Nadler, 2011). Through metavoicing users can express their trust or mistrust in multiple ways and engage with politicians through social media retweeting and other tools (J. George &

Leidner, 2019). This expectation that political trust can lead to metavoicing comes under the specific support of political trust. Specific support is widely related with things such as government performance or trust specific decisions or policies (Voogd, 2017; Wilkes & Wu, 2018). In this way, people who have political trust which takes the form of specific support can retweet or share content they trust. For example, if someone fights for environmental causes and the government is adopting policies to protect the environment, it can be argued that it is more likely that this person will perform metavoicing based on the government's performance and their evaluation of it, as well as the shared value of protecting the environment. Indeed, social media platforms such as Twitter allow people interested in politics to easily interact with political leaders, and users can track tweets and posts on specific topics (Parmelee & Bichard, 2013).

Through feelings of active citizenship or group identities many citizens do interact with institutions on social media, expressing their trust or their opinions (Metaxas et al., 2014). It has therefore has been theorised by many scholars that political trust leads to various different digital activism activities (Majchrzak et al., 2013). People have a hope of transparency via social media, and through staying connected with institutions they are able to show their level of trust or their frustration. However, political trust and metavoicing in this expectation have a special bond; this comes under specific political support, whether for governments, policies, or politicians.

Activities like metavoicing can be used as a means of expression of specific support towards politicians. A good example of this is how US president Barack Obama used Twitter in the 2008 and 2012 elections (Parmelee & Bichard, 2013). Obama connected himself on an individual level with those who trusted and followed him, and this specific trust had a great impact both on the elections and on activities such as metavoicing (Parmelee & Bichard, 2013). It has been theorised that people who interact on Twitter with politicians have higher political trust, at least towards specific support if not towards institutions (Bekafigo & McBride, 2013). If someone trusts politicians, e.g., Obama, then there is the possibility of interacting with them through social media and revealing specific support through metavoicing. The nature of political trust leads people to express their ideas about the government's performance, whether this is related to trust or distrust. This specific support when it comes to trusting the government can involve many activities through social media, and expressing approval for a politician or resharing content to show support to a policy, a politician, or a cause (Calderon et al., 2015). This can also happen with low political trust, in which cases people express their frustration.

As a result, political trust can lead to metavoicing, and these characteristics and specific support can be explored in multiple ways through social media - but trusting or mistrusting an institution can lead to sharing or retweeting content related to it (Halupka, 2014). For all these reasons, I expect that:

H4: High political trust favours metavoicing.

Political trust can lead to digital assertion. This digital activism activity involves creating and posting photos or videos with a political message (J. George & Leidner, 2019). For this reason, distrust towards an institution, a politician, or a government may compel citizens to post things related to their frustration towards them. This expectation arises through the idea of active citizenship that many social media users pursue in the online environment, and in many cases also as a group effort towards showing discomfort or joining causes online. For example, through social media like Twitter, people can express their frustration towards the government and create posts or videos talking about political issues (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Parmelee & Bichard, 2013). This means that when a citizen who is active on social media is disappointed with a political situation or an event, they are more likely to create a post to express their thoughts and feelings.

An example of this activity could be the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil. Many people expressed their frustration on social media, and especially on Twitter, regarding the contradictions between the image of Brazil and the political decisions that were made in that period with the help of the World Bank that provided loans in order to make the sporting event more luxurious (Calderon et al., 2015). This frustration was related to the fact that more than 14 billion US dollars were spent on hosting the event, and many people were afraid that this would result in increased taxation and higher living costs (Calderon et al., 2015). Those public fears and disappointment towards these political decisions led to the expression of distrust towards institutions such as the World Bank and the Government of Brazil on social media platforms such as Twitter. These posts were collected as data in a study conducted by Calderon et al. (2015). This case shows the potential of social media and contributes to the expectation that low political trust can support digital assertion.

Through digital assertion, individuals who fight for environmental causes can present their distrust of institutions which do not respect the environment, and other activists who fight for gender equality can show their distrust of governments and political systems which they believe do not promote policies in favour of equality and equal salaries. Political trust or distrust provide motives to social media users to post activism material even though they

may have to include their personal information (Hellweg, 2011). In the meantime, politicians tend to present photos, videos, and other posts of themselves on social media to present the image of transparency to followers who stay connected with them based on political trust (Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006; A.-M. Warren et al., 2014). This also shows how political trust or distrust can give politicians reasons to use digital activism tools such as digital assertion themselves (A.-M. Warren et al., 2014). For example, a politician might express his or her own thoughts on a decision or a policy and express their frustration. The expectation that low political trust leads to digital assertion relates to how low political trust can influence people in expressing their feelings through social media platforms. For these reasons I expect that:

H5: Low political trust favours the use of digital assertion.

Political trust leads to political consumerism, and more specifically to buycotts. This expectation is formed on the premise that citizens buy products to support specific political institutions. Institutions try to prove that if consumers support them, they will simultaneously support more social causes (Micheletti & Stolle, 2008). Companies and enterprises tend to advertise that through buying their product, a small amount goes for a specific cause, for example to save animals in danger of extinction. For example, in countries such as Greece, where every summer the fire risk is significant, firms advertise that they will donate an amount to firefighters or volunteers protecting the forests. This is important since trust in buycotts comes as a reward and not as a punishment as happens in boycotts, and in order to perform buycotts, consumers look at previous practices by companies in order to build their trust (Friedman, 1996).

The trust held by citizens towards companies and institutions is what initiates a buycott, as someone who supports a social cause will find an institution with policies which match their beliefs. In this way, it is argued that citizens who consume politically believe that the institutions will support them with their choices (Neilson, 2010). An example of that this belief is the Citgo gasoline buycott initiated by Jeff Cohen, which targeted fighting against global poverty. In this example, through buying this specific gasoline, consumers were also helping to alleviate poverty (Pezzulo, 2011).

In general, it is theorised that people with higher political trust are more likely to perform buycotts, which shows a relationship between political trust and boycotts (Copeland, 2014; Neilson, 2010). Based on the trust people have towards an institution and its strategies, buycotts draw the attention of individuals to contribute towards a cause

(Pezzulo, 2011). This also shows how political consumerism can have two different perspectives, one which is influenced by social trust, and the other by the political trust; that is why boycotters tend to have lower political trust than buycotters do (Copeland, 2014). In other words, high political trust and trust towards institutions and what they represent seem to be the major reasons behind why individuals perform buycotts. Thus, institutional trust is the main factor contributing to buycotts. Another reason for this expectation is the transparency that arises through political trust which supports the formation of actions such as buycotts (Hellweg, 2011).

Individuals who have high political trust tend to get lots of information on political consumerism, and in acting upon this information, reveal their tendency to perform buycotts because of their high political trust (Neilson, 2010). For these reasons it is argued that those with high political trust are more likely to perform buycotts (Neilson, 2010), and regarding online buycotts I expect that high institutional trust works as a motive to perform this activity. Amongst all the aforementioned points it is argued that the goals of activists should be consistent with the products or services they buy, which also relies on pre-existing trust, and leads to buycotts (Friedman, 1996). Based on these arguments there is an expectation that:

Arguments against reverse causality

I argue that political trust is the cause of digital rather than the other way around for two main reasons. First, at a general level, there is the classical argument that an attitude leads to behaviour much more often than the other way around (Verplanken, 2022). Political trust is an over-investigated cause of political participation. In this case, digital activism is a particular form of political participation and I expect the same logical mechanism to apply.

Second, the specific hypotheses make it unlikely that political trust is a consequence of digital activism. For example, it is improbable that the level of political trust will change for those people who repost something related to politics. People usually repost when there is a strong motivation behind their behaviour. As such, the causal mechanism proposed by this thesis that trust in politicians or political institutions can favour reposting reflects the existence of such a motivation (J. George & Leidner, 2019; A.-M. Warren et al., 2014).

Regarding assertion, it is counter-intuitive that persons who post about political causes do not have an attitude towards politics and they will form it only after they post. Such an activity requires effort and some degree of information, which is usually animated by pre-existing attitudes. As such, it is much more plausible to expect that someone creates an original post about a political cause based on the frustration (or enthusiasm) with

politicians or political institutions. A post related on a political cause can create controversy but can hardly influence the author's level of political trust. Eventually, it can instill levels of trust among the audience, but that is a different causal mechanism.

Finally, the hypothesis about buycotts is equally straightforward: people need incentives to engage in such an activity and the level of political trust can be one of these. People have an attitude towards the institution that promotes or is associated with goods in order to engage in buycotts. Trust is a prerequisite of their behaviour (Neilson, 2010). It is thus difficult to identify a scenario in which people start by engaging in buycotts and then shape an attitude towards the institutions or politicians associated with the targets of their buycotts (Ackermann & Gundelach, 2022).

Control variables

In addition to the main effects, I control for several variables that are identified as important determinants of online political participation by previous studies. First, political interest has been often indicated as one of the main sources for political participation both offline and online (Campbell et al., 1960; R. J. Dalton, 2019; Hadjar & Beck, 2010; Klingemann & Fuchs, 1995; Morlino & Raniolo, 2017). Most previous findings indicate that in order to engage politically people must have a minimal level of political interest. Apathetic citizens are less likely to engage politically. Second, previous studies show that offline and online political participation often go hand in hand (Conroy et al., 2012; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Suwana, 2019; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). More precisely, people who are politically active in person are also more active politically online. For this reason, the offline political participation is included as a control variable.

Third, the general activity on social media can explain variations of digital activism (De Marco et al., 2017; Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). The causal mechanism is straightforward: people who spend more time on social media – for either entertainment or informative purposes – could be more engaged in digital activism compared to those who do not allocate resources to online activities.

The socio-demographic characteristics of gender, education and age have been important explanations for activism (De Marco et al., 2017; Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Earlier research shows that there are some differences between men and women in terms of political participation (Brown, 2014; Gerber et al., 2019; Rosenberg & Phillips, 1992). Also, there is evidence that women engage digitally differently than men (Scharff et al., 2017). People who are more educated tend to participate more, and they have more means to participate and express their opinions. Previous research shows that education increases

offline activism (Joyce et al., 2010) and thus there is a chance that it also increases digital activism. One of the reasons is that the level of education can foster digital literacy, which can also be influential for performing digital activism. Regarding age, some age groups do not use social media as much as traditional media (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011), which can influence their level of digital activism.

The survey included other control variables. I did not include all the controls in the statistical models because they have no effect on digital activism. I preferred to have the controls with influence on the dependent variable, thus keeping the models simple and easy to understand. Appendix 4 includes a robustness test in which I compare the model used in the analysis with one with three additional controls: knowledge, area of residence and left-right self-placement. The second model does not bring added value.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents the research design of this study, with an emphasis on the "philosophical assumptions that the researcher brings to the study" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The first section explains the case selection and why a single case study was used here. The second section focuses on the chosen methods of data collection and data analysis and provides further insight into how the research was formed. Along with the method of data collection and the variable measurement this chapter will help to connect the research question with the data analysis presented later.

Case Study Research

The current research is a single most likely crucial case, where Greece is the case, the independent variables are social and political trust, and the dependent variable is digital activism. In this section I explain what a single case is, and why Greece is a crucial case. Scholars argue that case study research is similar to learning how to build a house: someone can either study how a house is built, or how many houses are built (Gerring, 2007a). A case might involve one actor or multiple actors depending on the research purpose (Swanborn, 2010). The former is referred to in the literature as a single case study, which is mainly selected when a case is of "particular interest" and the researcher seeks to analyse its particularities and complexities (Gerring, 2007a; Stake, 1995). This single case study for the current research is Greece and the research question is to see how social and political trust influence digital activism. The alternative is cross-case research which uses comparison to draw its results (Gerring, 2007a). The definition of case study research is acquiring an understanding of a single or multiple cases in a real-world context (Yin, 2012). In the current thesis, understanding Greece and how social and political trust influence Greek people to perform digital activism is significant. This happens since Greece is a country with historically low levels of political trust, medium or low social trust depending on the political phenomena of the time, and also a country with high social media use. Defining the case is the starting point of case study research (Yin, 2012). In many cases in political science, the key units are countries (Gerring, 2007a). In a single-country research, the main target is to collect empirical data from that country (Pepinsky, 2019).

Case studies are generally considered to have multiple advantages, (A. George & Bennett, 2004; Yin, 2017). One of the biggest advantages is that case studies permit

qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data through the application of a wide variety of analytical tools (Zaidah, 2007). Case studies and their strategies provide insights into social phenomena. In the present case, this can be useful in understanding digital activism and how people engage with it (Zaidah, 2007). As Pepinsky argues, "understanding the history and the contemporary politics within a country gives [the researcher] a natural advantage in understanding" the processes related to the data of their research (Pepinsky, 2019). For this reason, the representativeness and relevance of the case to the research aims are the most important characteristics to consider during case selection (Gerring, 2008; Mills et al., 2009). A single case study is thus the study of a single unit or case that aims to provide both representativeness and variations of different theoretical dimensions (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Types of case studies include typical, diverse, extreme, deviant, influential, crucial, most similar, and most different.

Greece is a crucial single case study for the following reasons. The research question in the study examines the proposition that "social and political trust lead to digital activism" and analyses this proposition through six hypotheses, In the context of the current research crucial cases are considered countries with high or low levels of social trust. The target of such a case is to fulfil a theoretical prediction in a single case setting. Greece is a suitable context for investigating how social and political trust lead to digital activism for several reasons. Greece is considered to present low levels of both social and political trust, which are the independent variables of this research (Jones et al., 2008; Lolle & Torpe, 2011; Ydersbond, 2015; Zmerli & Newton, 2008). The reasons why Greece presents low levels of social trust include clientelist networks, infringements of social norms, and other characteristics of its social and political culture (Jones et al., 2008). In Greece, not only political trust as a form of trust in institutions commonly low but so too are the levels of trust towards specific politicians (Grönlund & Setälä, 2007). Another important reason why Greece is suitable as a case for this research is that it has high percentages of internet access, with more than 75% of its population online (Tsekeris et al., 2020), and there are more than 7 million Facebook users in a total population of 10,816,286 (ELSTAT, 2023). The fact that Greece is among the countries with the lowest levels of social and political trust in the EU (Exadaktylos & Zahariadis, 2012; Kaase, 1999; Van der Meer, 2017), alongside the fact that it has high internet access are the main reasons that make it a crucial case. Greece is a hard test to examine these variables since it represents a case where the levels of trust are relatively low and the social media usage relatively high with other countries, whilst simultaneously both high land low levels of trust are expected to lead to different digital activism activities. As such, the hypotheses-testing through a most-likely crucial single case

study (Gerring, 2007b; Levy, 2008), given the independent variables of this research, is what makes Greece suitable for the confirmation or disconfirmation of the expectation that different levels of social and political trust lead to digital activism.

Methods of Data Collection

The method of data collection relies upon primary data. Primary data are also helpful for such a novel case because data will be generated, in a subject area (digital activism) in which secondary data is still not widely available, especially in the case of Greece. The data collection was therefore done both via surveys and interviews. The survey was expected to depict levels of social and political trust, and then through the questions generated based on the six hypotheses, the study sought to test for and find the patterns of the relationship between the two types of trust and digital activism. Then, after conducting the survey, the interviews helped in building an explanation of the phenomenon. For example, if the results show that someone who has high political trust is taking part in more buycotts (H6), then through the interview questions they will have had the opportunity to elaborate more on this. In this way, the effects of trust in digital activism will be more recognisable. In other words, the survey was used to provide the relationship and to establish why something is happening, while the interviews show the reasoning and its depth.

Survey

I conducted with the help of Qualtrics an original online survey aiming to reveal the relationship between digital activism and political trust. The survey included questions related to the variables of the research (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). The importance and suitability of carrying out a survey for this research relates to various characteristics of surveys. It has been argued that surveys provide a standardisation of measurements: every respondent answers the same question and through this method, the same type of information is collected from different respondents (Owens, 2002). The survey questions were about social trust, political trust, and internet access, to allow connections to digital activism to emerge (Appendix 2). The survey used six questions for the variables as was the case in the European Social Survey to provide adequate information about the trust of individuals.

The surveys are based on sampling, which can be representative and non-representative sampling (Fife-Schaw, 2004). Scholars have emphasised that surveys should be representative of a population in some way (Acharya et al., 2013). In a representative sample, the results should be able to be generalised to the total population, which is also called the target population (Omair, 2014). As Israel (1992, p. 1) outlined, there are three

criteria: the level of precision, the level of confidence or risk, and the degree of variability in the attributes that are being measured. The level of precision also includes the so-called sampling error and is stated as a percentage that represents the range of the population's estimation (Israel, 1992). Then, the level of risk or confidence is based on the Central Limit Theorem which highlights that "when a population is repeatedly sampled, the average value of the attribute obtained by those samples is equal to the true population value (Israel, 1992). Finally, the third criterion of selection is the degree of variability, where the homogeneity of a population decreases the sample size needed while heterogeneity increases it (Israel, 1992).

A representative sample is one which has a strong connection to the target that it represents (Kruskal & Mosteller, 1979). One of the ways to achieve representation is to apply population parameters or limits for specific characteristics of the population (Enticott et al., 2017). To limit negative effects that can lead to bias and divergence in the sampling, one technique invoked in the current study is post-stratification (Lavrakas, 2008). Through this strategy, the researcher weights the respondents based on certain characteristics so that the sample can provide better generalisability and bias in terms of non-coverage or exclusion is minimised (Enticott et al., 2017). Additionally, through the adjustments provided by post-stratification, the researcher can ensure that the responding sample is equal in a way to that of the target population. For example, concerning gender representative samples, the target is to match the proportion of each gender in the wider population (Enticott et al., 2017). In the current research, based on data from the 2011 European Census accessed through the European Statistical System, data about gender could be presented for Greece.

I use a representative sample as a scaled-down version of the population, capturing its characteristics (Grafström & Schelin, 2014).The survey for this thesis used representative sampling by limiting inclusion in the sample based on four characteristics of the population: gender, age, education and area of residence. I used the percentages available in the most recent census in Greece (2011) to draw the sample and make it representative for the Greek population. For example, the percentage of female respondents in the Greek population is 51% and the sample has a similar percentage (54%). This is slightly overestimated due to the area of residence criterion for which it was difficult to identify male respondents in some regions. Age has a more accurate representation in the sample: there are 31% in the Greek population between 18 and 40 years old, which is very similar to what I have in the survey (31.8%). At the other extreme, the 65+ age group is 22% of the Greek population, and in the survey this age group represents 20.5%.

The survey includes 1,681 respondents with complete answers. Initially, the survey had 2,042 respondents with complete answers, but I noticed that the limitations on the four

variables did not work well. As such, I filtered the respondents further to ensure representativeness. Those respondents participated through various channels such as emails, phone calls, text messages, messaging apps such as Viber and WhatsApp, QR codes via Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. In terms of Internet Penetration, 9 million out of the total population have internet access, i.e. approximately 86% of the population.

Interviews

For the qualitative component of the analysis, data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews are suitable because they help in understanding the complexity between the relationship of social, political trust and digital activism. The reason behind the selection of the semi-structured interviews was the depth that they give to the personal experiences of the participants. The sample of the interviews was smaller and based on purposive sampling. A purposeful sample is considered to provide more in-depth information on why a phenomenon is happening (Palinkas et al., 2015). For this reason, I recruited 27 people from among the survey respondents to explain and expand the results of the survey through the semi-structured interviews. I stopped when the saturation point was reached, my initial list of respondents for semi-structured interviews was longer (40 people).

One of the main advantages of semi-structured interviews is that among their key characteristics is that the respondent can formulate his or her own answer instead of saying "yes" or "no" to a specific question. The tone is more informal and the respondents tend to feel more comfortable (Longhurst, 2003). It is not only important to see activism, but to understand activists, and semi-structured interviews provide exactly the tools that are needed to do so (Blee & Taylor, 2002). The flexibility given to the respondents allows the researcher to gain access to their personal views and motivations. The questions permit a better understanding of the research topic through the free ideas of the participants (Valesca-Lima, 2016). The standardisation of the semi-structured interview through the same questions generates differences that occur only because of the differences between the histories and identities of the respondents (Kallio et al., 2016).

The interviews were conducted online via Zoom, which was required since it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews because of the COVID-19 measures. This application was used because most participants were familiar with it and it permits recording. The interviewees were asked for consent before the date of the interview. During the interviews, notes were taken to facilitate the interpretation later on. The 27 interviewees in this study (Table 4.1) were selected based on specific criteria of selection. First, they had to have answered the survey so that they represented part of the initial results, which were to

be refined and explained further through the interviews, as the primary target of these interviews. Second, the interviewees had to have social media accounts, to indicate that they are eligible to perform digital activism. Third, because in social media young people tend to be more active in general, an equal opportunity was given to all age groups, this was achieved by conducting interviews with people from all the three different age groups that were considered by the current thesis. This allowed consideration of three different age groups, 18-40, 41-65, and 65+.

Table 4.1 Interviewees' Profiles

No.	Age	Gender	Area of Residence	Length of Interview	Degree of activism	Education
1	25	Female	Big City	07:54	Medium	Master’s
2	65	Female	Big City	06:20	Low	PhD
3	27	Male	Big City	15:03	Medium	Bachelor’s
4	55	Male	Big City	21:08	High	Master’s
5	23	Female	Big City	14:04	Medium	Bachelor’s
6	27	Male	Small City	11:01	High	PhD
7	26	Female	Big City	13:47	Medium	Master’s
8	25	Female	Small City / Island	13:19	High	Bachelor’s
9	28	Female	Small City/ Island	7:17	High	Bachelor’s
10	53	Male	Big City	12:03	High	Bachelor’s
11	27	Female	Big City	18:42	Medium	Master’s
12	23	Male	Small City	09:36	High	Bachelor’s
13	27	Female	Small City	12:35	Medium	Master’s
14	24	Male	Big City	10:55	Medium	College
15	30	Female	Big City	12:18	Medium	PhD
16	26	Male	Big City	12:47	High	Master’s
17	30	Male	Small City	11:30	Medium	Master’s
18	23	Female	Big City	10:19	Medium	Bachelor’s
19	32	Male	Big City	10:14	Medium	Vocational School
20	23	Female	Big City	8:44	Medium	Bachelor’s
21	24	Male	Small City	9:44	Low	Bachelor’s
22	25	Female	Big City	13:23	Medium	Master’s
23	23	Female	Big City	10:52	Medium	Bachelor’s
24	27	Male	Big City	9:52	Low	High School
25	26	Female	Small City	15:21	High	Master’s
26	19	Male	Big City	10:32	Medium	Bachelor’s
27	31	Female	Big City	14:51	High	PhD

While conducting the interviews it was important to place emphasis on the contextual factors that led the participants to trust or distrust, and their reasons behind conducting digital activism. To achieve this, it was very important to listen to the personal experiences of the participants as they shared the main motives behind their choices, and to ask follow-up questions to gain clarification. In the interviews which were planned to give depth to the research, terminologies relating to the different digital activism activities were also given so that the interviewees would be able to fully understand the purpose of the interview and to clarify how or whether they perform these activities (i.e., slacktivism/clicktivism: clicking and liking content on a social media platform that is related with activism). Since this study is exploring the reasons behind why they would perform digital activism, they were encouraged to elaborate on that based on completely understanding the reason for the interview. Finally, due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, most of the interviews were conducted online, and if there was any possibility to conduct any interview physically, then all the necessary protection measures were taken.

Data Management

The generation of data through the surveys and the interviews was of great importance for the process of the current research. The 1681 survey respondents were automatically transcribed through the survey platform. But, for the 27 interview participants there was a need to transcribe and store their data, to facilitate the process of analysis later. As such, transcribing the answers was identified as a way to help the measurement and in understanding the nature of the questions as a researcher. All the important things such as dates were included, and to avoid ethical pitfalls, anonymity was assured. In order to be able to differentiate the participants, each one starting with the first were assigned a number, starting with "interviewee 1" for the first one and so on. This was done in order to ensure that none of the participants would be traceable, and that only the researcher would know about their identity. Any personal information of the participants that arose in the interviews were removed and all data have been stored on the researcher's computer, where the access is restricted to the researcher and their supervisors.

Method of Data Analysis

Mixed methods help in gathering data, and it is necessary to outline the specific characteristics of the individuals who participated in the research. In order to respond to the research questions, a research method is always required in order to find scientific responses

and solutions (Aramo-Immonen, 2011; Brannen, 2005). Mixed methods research means research which involves more than one type of data (Brannen, 2005). Scholars have outlined the importance of defining mixed methods research before trying to conduct such a study, because the researcher can then decide whether or not it is suitable for their study (Cresswell, 2014). It is important to outline that many scholars describe the main two components of mixed methods as qualitative and quantitative methods (Aramo-Immonen, 2011). In other words, mixed methods research represents an effort to combine experiences with statistical trends (Cresswell, 2014).

Regarding the quantitative part of the research, one of the methods of data analysis used here is correlation. Field (2007) explains that a correlation or relationship can be of three different types: positive (i.e., the more someone practices something the better they get), negative, and not related. In other words, searching for a correlation has to do with examining the relationships between the variables. A regression analysis is also used in this study to assess the causal impact of variables on the outcome (Cresswell, 2014; King et al., 1994). Regression means to "fit a model to our data and use it to predict values of the dependent variable from one or more independent variables" (Field, 2007). When more than one independent variables are used, as is the case with social and political trust, then the analysis method is called multiple regression (Field, 2007). In the context of the current research, the dependent variable values are predicted through the independent variables of social and political trust. Ordinal logistic regression is used where Y = the ordinal response on the variable (Harrell, 2001). This technique can be performed through two different models, proportional odds (PO) and the continuation ratio model (CR).

This thesis uses ordinal regression analysis to match the measurement of the dependent variables (see the paragraphs on measurement below). I ran separate models for each dependent variable and the model fit is very similar across them (Appendix 3).

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is the process where the researcher seeks to clarify the meanings that the participant has explained (Gavin, 2013). Thematic analysis is a technique considered to be suitable to analyse data acquired through interviews (Gavin, 2013). This study uses deductive thematic analysis in which the themes are pre-set and linked to social and political trust, i.e. the hypothesized effects. The coding was done manually since the volume of data was relatively limited. The deductive thematic analysis includes a five-step process. The first is familiarisation, where the researcher examines and becomes familiar with the data that

they have collected. The second is the identification of the patterns and issues that can match the pre-established themes. In these first two steps, the interviews were transcribed.

The third step encompasses indexing, where "portions or sections of the data correspond to a particular theme" (Srivastava & Thomson, 2016, p. 76). In this step, based on the responses the labels were created through the answers (i.e., trust or uncertainty in responses, etc.). Step four is verification: the data that is organised by themes was reviewed for accuracy and usefulness. The last stage comprises mapping and interpretation. This stage is where all the analysis that was made before makes sense in that the researcher is led to start the interpretation of the data (Srivastava & Thomson, 2016). In this last step, the pre-established / deductive themes were complemented by inductive clustering of codes based on the patterns identified in the interviews.

Table 4.2 illustrates how the deductive themes and the inductive cluster codes were combined in this thesis. Political trust is one of the two main themes and the example refers to how this has an effect on metavoicing for one of the respondents. One of the inductive cluster codes is about sharing views with their network, a reason highlighted by some respondents to engage in assertion. The procedures for deductive themes and inductive cluster themes were different. The themes formed the basis for the interview guide and thus I sought to match sentences to them. I created the inductive cluster codes based on sentences with similar content used by interviewees. These will be presented in the qualitative analysis.

Table 4.2: Examples of Themes and Cluster Codes

Deductive Themes	**Sentences from interviews**
Political trust	Trust in government affects digital activism very much because the trust in each government affects controversy (…) Because it is very important, and it was imperative to be heard. For example, the refugee crisis that we all need to be aware of. For something so important I would do it, but for something less important I would not do it (Interviewee 6)
Inductive Cluster Codes	
Share views with network	For example, if you make a post and you have a lot of likes, the result is that the public has the impression that the impact that a person has increases more. So, his point of view is more important and the posts he makes have more penetration and a greater approach (Interviewee 10).

Variable Measurement

Four main types of measurement are identified in the literature (Koh & Owen, 2000; Michael, 2014). First of all, the nominal type is widely theorised to be the basic level of measurement (Koh & Owen, 2000; Michael, 2014). The first level of nominal measures is

categorical: gender, religious denomination, etc. for which there is no ordering or ranking. The second level of measurement is the ordinal measurement (Koh & Owen, 2000). In this level, categories have a relationship, and they are not mutually exhaustive and exclusive. For example, there are categories such as: shorter-taller, greater-lesser, harder-easier (Michael, 2014; Wagner & Gillespie, 2018). The measurement of ordinal variables is done through questionnaires usually of a Likert type, which can offer various options, i.e., from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. Through this type of measurement, quality of performance can be measured and it also helps in determining rank order, i.e., whether something is greater or lesser, etc. (Michael, 2014).

This thesis uses the ordinal variable measurement. Ordinal variables can give insight into an individual's placement on a scale (Koh & Owen, 2000). This is useful both for the present dependent variable, which will show both how levels of trust influence digital activism or the level of engagement with digital activism. To focus on this further, the data from the survey questions on the different hypotheses for digital activism will make it easier to track how, for example (if at all) social trust leads to slacktivism. As the examination of the relationship between social and political trust and digital activism is relatively new, I believe this study will be a good starting point for future research which can go into more depth. Different variables include individual level controls such as age, gender, and education, which all are attributes that influence the variables. Education contributes to better understanding the nature of politics; gender has been connected with political participation in numerous studies (Gherghina & Geissel, 2015); and in general the socioeconomic status attributes of individuals are considered to be important for their political participation and for digital activism.

A method that can help to reveal patterns of the relationship between social and political trust and digital activism is a standard survey. In order to reveal such patterns, the dependent variable should be dichotomous. This means that it will clarify whether someone is, or is not, led to the use of digital activism based on their level of trust, and this will also help in building a mutually exclusive context for the current research. As such, the survey will provide data on both levels of digital activism use and social and political trust while also establishing how the respondents belong to each category based on their answers.

The dependent variables – forms of digital activism – are measured as follows. The respondents of the survey had to answer the following questions. For slacktivism, "How often do you like a post on social media that is related with a social or political cause?" (slacktivism: liking posts of activism content, e.g., like a post for environmental protection) on a 6-point ordinal scale with possible answers (1 = not at all, 6 = very much). For

consumerism (boycott), “How often do you avoid buying ‘’(boycott)” a company’s product to show that you do not support its policies? (boycotts: not buying a product because of the policies of a company) (1= not at all, 6 = very much). For data dissemination: "How often do you support groups that publish (confidential) government data in public?" (Data dissemination: to release to the public confidential government data, e.g., Anonymous, WikiLeaks) (1 = not at all, 6 = very much).

For metavoicing: “How often do you repost or share content on social media, that was posted by an institution or a public person such as a politician, to show your support?” (metavoicing: to repost or share activism content that was posted by an institution or politician) (1 = not at all, 6 = very much). For digital assertion: “How often do you create an original post on social media to show your support or frustration for social and political causes?” (Digital assertion: to create an original content/post related with an activism cause, e.g., gender equality, sustainability etc.) (1 = not at all, 6 = very much). For buycotts: “How often do you buy a company’s product because you support its ‘boycotting’ policies?” (buycotts: to buy a product that simultaneously supports a cause, e.g., a company or an institution might say that if consumers support their brand, they will donate money to animal welfare/human rights/environment protection organisations).

For the first independent variable, that of social trust, the respondents of the survey were asked questions in a similar way to previous works exploring social trust (Zmerli & Newton, 2008) and to international surveys: “On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is very much, how much do you trust the following groups: Family / Neighbours / People from your neighbourhood, People you work with or went in school with, Strangers”. The respondents provided answers for each of these items, which were then added in a cumulative index with values between 0 (lack of trust in all these categories of people) and 50. The internal consistency of the index is very high, the value of Cronbach’s Alpha equals 0.81. As a backup, I ran an exploratory factor analysis showing that the items load on the same factor.

Political trust was measured in a similar way. The respondents were asked to indicate on an 11-point scale (0 = cannot trust at all, 10 = trust very much) how much they trust the following: politicians, Government, political parties, the European Union, and the local authorities. The cumulative index has values between 0 and 50, with very high internal consistency: the Cronbach’s Alpha equals 0.88. The back-up exploratory factor analysis shows that the items load on the same factor. The questionnaire also included a question about Parliament, but the correlation between trust in parliament and trust in Government was very high and I kept in the index only one central political institution (Government).

The first control variable, political interest, is measured using a question that is common to most international surveys: “How interested are you in Greek politics”. The available answers range from not at all (1) to very much (5). Offline political participation is a cumulative index that brings together the extent to which the respondents engaged in voting, volunteered in election campaigns, participated to protests or signed petitions in the most recent two years prior to the survey. For each of these modes of political participation, the respondents had to indicate whether they did them (coded 1) or not (coded 0). The index takes values between 0 and 4, with very high internal consistency: the Cronbach’s Alpha equals 0.84. The next two controls refer to the use of social media for entertainment and information purposes. The questions were about how frequently the respondents do this and the available answers were recorded on a four-point ordinal scale that raged from “seldom / never” (1) to “daily or almost daily” (4).

The respondents were also asked about their sociodemographic profile. The first was gender with three options: male, female, prefer not to say. the second “In which age group do you belong?” with three options: 18-40, 41-64, 65+, and the third was “What is the highest education level you achieved?” with six options: vocational school, high school, college, bachelor, master, or PhD. For the statistical analysis all the variables were standardized by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation for each value.

For the interviews the participants were asked the following questions: For H1: “Do you have any personal experience where you ‘liked’ a post on social media related with a social or political cause because it was posted by someone you consider a friend or family?” For H2: “Do you think that having trust towards specific groups that you share common things with can influence you towards consuming politically and/or boycotting? Share your personal experiences.” For H3: “Do you believe and trust groups that will benevolently try to bring out the truth when the governments are telling lies? (e.g., Anonymous, WikiLeaks). Share your personal experiences.” For H4: “Do you believe that trusting a politician or an institution can make you reshare (retweet, repost, repost in your story) content with an activism purpose? Share your personal experiences.” For H5: “Would you create digital content (post) regarding an unfair event or action of a politician or an institution? Explain your personal experiences.” For H6: “Have you ever supported an institution that simultaneously supports an activism cause by buying a product? Share your personal experiences”.

The questions regarding social and political trust (independent variables) were as follows: “Could you tell me how much you trust your friends, family and co-workers?” (Personalized Trust). The respondents were then asked: “Do you have particular groups of

people that you trust more than other groups?" (Particularized Trust), and: "Do you trust other people, even if you do not know them personally?" (Generalized Trust). For the second independent variable, that of political trust, they were asked: "Could you tell me how much you trust institutions and different political actors like political parties or governments? Explain/Elaborate some personal experiences" (Diffuse Support), and "Are there any politicians that you trust?" (Specific Support). The socio-demographic variables were measured with three introductory questions: "What is your age?", "What is your gender?" (If the participant wanted to share it), and "What is the highest educational level that you have achieved?".

Validity Issues

Measurement refers to the quantification of a phenomenon via assigning numbers (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). The operationalisation of the variables is met through generating tests for the quantification of the variables. To achieve this, the validity and the reliability are extremely significant (Creswell, 2009; Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). The reliability is shaped through the unknown true score and the error of the measurement process (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). The definition of validity is "the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure" (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). In the current research, in order to boost the validity and reliability, it is necessary to present the techniques adopted (Creswell, 2009). This is a single case study which, through employing both quantitative and qualitative methods and conducting a survey and semi-structured interviews, investigates the relationship between political and social trust with digital activism. These techniques are used to reveal the existing patterns and relationships between social and political trust with digital activism, and what causes them in the context of Greece. For the quantitative part, a representative sample was used and for the qualitative one a purposive sample was formed out of those who responded to the survey.

Ethics

Research ethics are of crucial importance for any research, and since the current research investigates social and political trust, and research ethics have a great deal to do with trust, it is particularly essential to discuss ethics (Fisher & Anushko, 2008). For these reasons, as Pimple (2002) highlights, a researcher should think about three things relating to their research: its truthfulness, its fairness, and its wisdom. The first characteristic, that of truthfulness, relates to whether the data collected through the research corresponds with the real world. Any alteration, such as producing results that do not represent the study or even

making up the results are considered to be falsification and fabrication (Pimple, 2002). The second characteristic, that of fairness, has to do with the social relationships of the research. Ethical infringements might include plagiarism or authorship claims and how human subjects were treated (Babbie, 2020). Additionally, in a research no one should be, or feel, forced to participate; all research should have a voluntary essence of participation (Babbie, 2020). The third question a researcher should apply to the context of their research is whether the research is wise. The wisdom perspective includes the relationship between the research agenda and the physical world (Pimple, 2002).

Research ethics are mainly expressed through five categories: Scientific Integrity, Collegiality, the Protection of Human Subjects, Institutional Integrity, and Social Responsibility (Pimple, 2002). Scientific integrity has to do with trust and foundational expectations (Kretser et al., 2019). This also raises the matter of anonymity and its importance in research. It is highlighted that in order to sustain research integrity throughout the research, best practices should be adopted including: scientific standards, objectivity, professional values, practices accepted by the scientific community when conducting the research, utility, clarity, and reproducibility (Kretser et al., 2019).

It is important to explain how the protection of the participants has been achieved. First, the consent of the participants was required, as they cannot take part in scientific research without their written consent (Connelly, 2014). This was done for both the survey and the interviews. The participants were informed that their participation is voluntary, and that within their rights, they can withdraw whenever they want. If they did not want to finish the survey or the interview, it is their right to stop. Voluntary participation ensures that coercion is not used (Connelly, 2014). No discrimination should ever be made based on gender, religion, ethnicity, or other factors that contribute to what was previously defined as unfairness (Babbie, 2020; Connelly, 2014). To avoid the deception of the participants, they were given definitions of the different types of social and political trust as well as digital activism. I explained to them the reasons for conducting this research. Honesty should always be present, and the researcher should ensure that no data or responses are misinterpreted. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured to protect the participants.

The pseudonyms given to the participants were fictitious letters of the alphabet. Finally, the data was stored on the researcher's computer and is accessible only to him and his supervisors for confidentiality purposes. This thesis passed ethics approval in 2021 prior to the data collection. This process included two steps: the administrative check and the Ethical Review which all followed the University of Glasgow's guidelines, and the complete ethical approval took place on 13 October 2021; the data collection process started after this.

CHAPTER 5: Social Trust, Political Trust, and Digital Activism in Greece

Introduction

This chapter presents the levels of social trust, political trust, and digital activism in Greece. Understanding the levels of social and political trust will illuminate the relationship of these research factors with digital activism. The chapter examines different social events and identifies the time when Greeks started to use social media as a tool for communication on social and political causes. This situation will provide insights on the first cases where the use of digital activism in Greece became apparent, as well as it will highlight the reasons why people did use digital activism. The first section discusses the levels of social trust in Greece in the broader context of the country's culture, politics, and socioeconomic development in the last two decades. Providing an overview of the levels of social trust in Greece over-time, will help in understanding later how the results of the current thesis are relevant to past research and what changes are observed.

The second section presents how political trust is shaped in contemporary Greece, and examines how the 2007-08 financial crisis, corruption, and other phenomena have influenced the levels of trust. Greece is considered to have low institutional trust and there are multiple reasons for this including the financial crisis, the migration crisis as well as the early development of the institutions (Glatz & Eder, 2020; Hooghe & Marien, 2012). This will permit comparison with past research and will be identifying later on political trust as one of the main reasons to perform digital activism.

Finally, the chapter discusses digital activism and how it became a tool of political participation and expression during difficult times such as the financial crisis and in times of political instability, as well as in the face of inequalities and other social and political phenomena. This explanation will help in understanding both what digital activism is, how digital activism is performed in Greece and what are the main reasons people perform these activities as well as how they relate to social and political trust.

Social and Political Trust in Greece

Recent events can explain why social trust in Greece is traditionally low. The historical background of the country, its socioeconomic conditions, and its general style of doing politics are all factors that influence social trust and make this case distinct (Jones et al., 2008; Kritsotakis et al., 2008; Rontos & Roumeliotou, 2013). Low levels of social trust exist in Greece because of clientelist networks, pension cuts, migration, and even religion (Kathimerini, 2018). Scholars argue that the lack of trust both at social and institutional levels is widely linked with economic backwardness, and this is precisely the case in Greece (Sapienza & Zingales, 2012). Even in times where Greece was performing economically well in comparison with today, studies show that social trust in Greece was still low. More specifically (Rontos & Roumeliotou, 2013) in a 2002 study found that the 76.3% of Greeks stated that they had to be careful with most people, and only 23.7% believed that "most people can be trusted".

The European Social Survey provides data on the levels of social trust in Greece from 2002 to 2010. This includes five ESS rounds, where Greece does not show a decline in social trust across the years, but the levels of social trust are consistently low (Glatz & Eder, 2020). Weak social networking and individualism are included in the reasons for this, as survey findings suggest that 67% of Greeks disagree that people are helpful and concerned for what happens in their neighbourhood (Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002). Scholars outline that several social events and moments have a significant influence on the social and political arenas of a country and its social trust (Ervasti et al., 2019).

Social capital is influenced by many different things, and the financial situation of a country in combination with its civic culture are two main reasons why someone should see the impact of social events in the levels of social capital (Daskalopoulou, 2018). All these contribute to a low percentage of trust in others, as Greece had a trust rate of only 17% in 2009 according to the OECD report of 2011. In the meantime, satisfaction with personal relationships scored 7.1 in 10, making Greece the country where people are least satisfied with their personal network, based on an OECD report (OECD, 2020).

Political trust in Greece is traditionally lower than in most other EU countries (Glatz & Eder, 2020; Hooghe & Marien, 2012). In functioning democracies, political trust works as a crucial part of people's expression towards the government and the system (Ellinas & Lamprianou, 2014). Political trust is in decline in many democracies, so Greece is not a unique case; indeed, declining political trust was also observed in other European countries in the mid-1990s for short periods of time. However, collapses were noticed in Greece, Spain and Portugal which seem to be more intense (Van de Walle, 2009). Data from the ESS and

studies on institutional trust in Greece have shown that across five rounds of ESS, trust between 2004 and 2008 dropped by 0.8 and 2.1 points between 2004 and 2010, which also reflects the influence of the financial crisis (ESS, 2010; Glatz & Eder, 2020). For example, trust in Greece towards specific politicians and distrusting other political parties or distrusting a politician and trusting other parties is probable. Greek political trust has been influenced by many different events.

The history of Greece is amongst the reasons for the absence of political stability and social structure in the modern state; this influences people's perceptions and trust towards the political system to a great extent (Christoforou, 2005). By narrowing down the focus, the discussion here will explain the level of political trust in practice, and how it was revealed by certain events across the past 16 years since Greece ratified the EU constitution (BBC, 2019). Public sector reforms and the new labour law, along with cases of corruption, were signs of a further decline in political trust during 2005-2007. People expressed their frustration by taking part in strikes to protest against corruption and new laws that were endorsing the private sector over the public sector in Greece (BBC, 2019; Rudig & Karyotis, 2014). From 2008 onwards, a new era of expressing low political trust began in Greece.

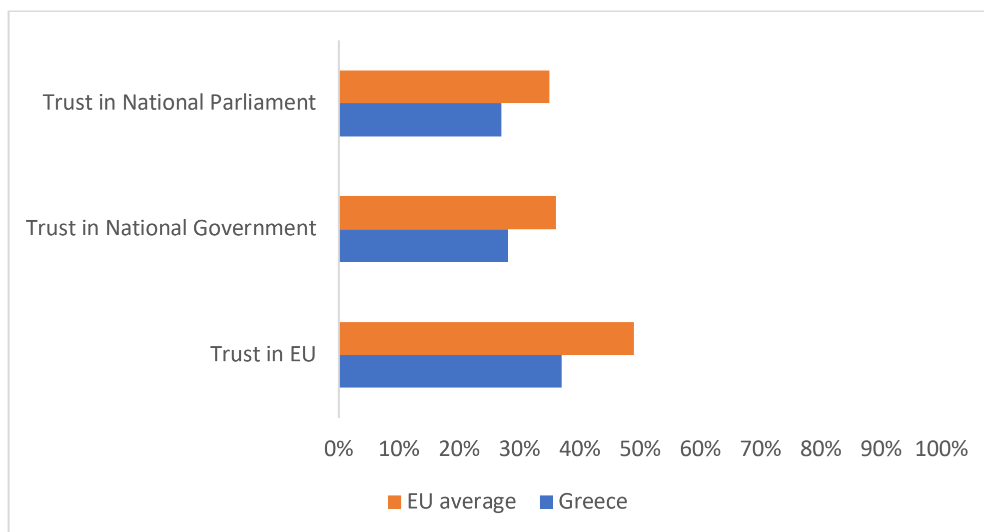
The government's economic policies led to more public sector strikes, and people used social media and protests as means to express their distrust (BBC, 2019; Vatikiotis, 2011). From that point onwards, the Indignados movement in Greece started, and social media users started to express their frustration. Moving beyond only using social media for coordinating protests and riots, Greeks created groups in which they expressed their distrust and dissatisfaction towards specific policies or corrupt politicians, and started sharing information in the groups too (Morikis, 2014). Furthermore, as social media use was growing in terms of population percentages of users, more people started expressing their frustration with political decisions on social media (Gerosideris & Ferra, 2020; Morikis, 2014).

The dissatisfaction expressed included actions such as Tweets, Instagram stories, and Facebook posts about politics. From social media, insights can be gained into how people reacted to the austerity measures and how political trust declined in the years of austerity not only at a national level in Greece, but also towards European and Bretton Woods Institutions (Beaudonnett, 2013). It is important to mention that Eurobarometer found in 2018 that even after all these years of crisis and the completion of the third financial adjustment program in Greece, one-third of Greeks still did not trust the EU, recording the highest distrust out of all EU member states (Eurobarometer 90.3) (Verney & Katsikas, 2020). This distrust towards institutions was expressed early on in the "Troika" days in 2010, which also led to distrust in Papandreou's government. As such, given all these influential events, it is

understandable why Greece is considered to have one of the lowest levels of political trust in the Eurozone, both in terms of diffuse and specific support, and of support for, and confidence in, international institutions (Ares-Abalde et al., 2016).

Greeks were distrustful of the government basically due to its poor performance of public administration and services for citizens (Van de Walle, 2009). Eurobarometer in Greece shows a steep decline in trust in multiple political institutions, such as the judiciary, the legislature, and the executive. In these terms, political confidence in the government in Greece suffered a steep collapse, but surprisingly this was not applicable to political parties even at the peak of the economic crisis in 2010 (Exadaktylos & Zahariadis, 2012). As far as the impact on the judiciary is concerned, the inability to enforce the law and the lack of accountability and responsibility of politicians for the situation in the country may be the reasons behind the decline in trust (Exadaktylos & Zahariadis, 2012).

Figure 4.1: Trust in different Institutions in Greece (2021)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 94 (Eurobarometer, 2021)

Historical reasons for low levels of social trust

There are some historical reasons why Greece presents low levels of trust. It is argued that the social capital is influenced by the way in which a society is structured (Koutsou, Partali, et al., 2014). Previous research outlines that one of the main reasons why Greece is a low social trust society is the: ‘’idiosyncratic development of civil society’’ (Jones et al., 2008). Greece’s civil society was affected by the norms and networks of corruption and so was unable to play a constructive role in the structure and economy of the country (Christoforou, 2005). For example, studies highlight that in Greece, the smaller the city the stronger the bond is between the residents, because they develop it through everyday interactions and

collaboration (Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002). This provides background information on how relationships are based on the structure of each local society.

Past studies have found that the structure of the Greek society is one of the main reasons why Greece is considered to be a country with low social trust (Rontos & Roumeliotou, 2013). This is related with all the social divisions that people in Greece faced because of political or historical events. The way that the Greek society was developed did not leave much space to people to trust each other. As mentioned above, Greece's historical background did not help to support the development of a strong civil society, but in addition, the international economic shocks of the 20th century, the great depression, the oil crises and the 21st century economic recession all strongly influenced the social capital of the country (Christoforou, 2005). The authoritarian rule in the 1960s, the social divisions and the political conflict are all elements that influenced levels of social capital in Greece (Christoforou, 2005). The authoritarian rule between 1967 and 1974 did not help the development of the country, because the absence of democratic means caused a lack of trust (Lyrintzis, 1984; Sotiropoulos, 2010). Even after the establishment of democracy in November 1974, the party system in Greece led to the emergence of clientelist networks, this means that in exchange of votes, the parties are providing benefits to the voters (Pellicer et al., 2022). During the period of authoritarian rule, political and social division were among the main reasons why social trust did not exist, but even after this dark era for the democracy of Greece the social divisions remained, and many people labelled each other as 'left' or 'right' (Christoforou, 2005; Lyrintzis, 1984). Even in the post-authoritarianism era in the 1980s – a time when political participation grew - the low levels of associational membership and trust remained (Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002).

In the meantime, the economic and political instability on their own hampered Greek social capital and its potential (Christoforou, 2005). Many things make Greece an interesting case in terms of the study of social capital, such as the density of its social networks, its shared values and culture, the mutual support under certain circumstances, etc. The main reason behind this situation is the early development of Greece in the 1970s which led to a weak civil state and relationships marked by clientelism, making it hard for people to trust each other when it comes to their interests (Jones et al., 2008). Additionally, this chapter will explain how more recent events such as migration flows, corruption, and the 2007-08 financial crisis have also seen deteriorations in levels of social trust.

In terms of clientelism, it has been argued that from as early as the end of the second world war, political parties in Greece have been characterised by their weak organisation and deep clientelist networks (Lyrintzis, 1984). First, the civil war between 1947 and 1954

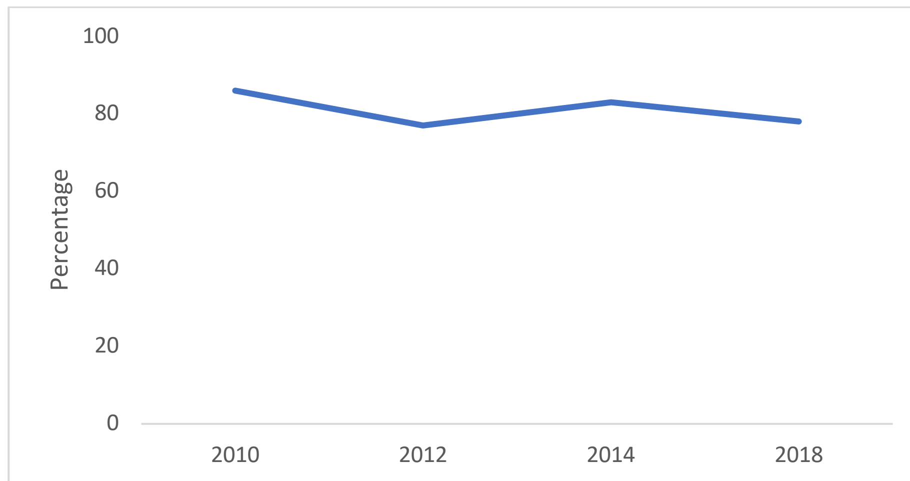
led to social division (Papadoulis, 2006). After the civil war, the role of the state in the rapid economic development of the country in the post-war era is key to understanding how clientelism worked in Greece (Lyrintzis, 1984). This is related to the role of the state as one of the major employers, and the crucial role of the public sector in the national economy (Lyrintzis, 1984). Simultaneously, the social division between communists and the right wing also influenced the development of a weak civil state (Lyrintzis, 1984; Papadoulis, 2006). Bureaucratic clientelism evolved in the Greek party system through "the systematic infiltration of the state machine by party devotees and the allocation of favours through it" (Lyrintzis, 1984).

The impact of parliament within the public administration continued the pattern of clientelist networks and corruption (Papadoulis, 2006). The Greek state's highly centralised system is one of the reasons for its economic backwardness and enduring clientelist networks (Triantidis, 2016). Parasitic jobs granted through political support in turn for political support have long been used by Greek political parties as measures of reward and influence. Even after the post-junta era and the first elections in November 1974, the political parties that brought hope of a mass-party system relied on MPs' clientelist networks (Lyrintzis, 1984; Papadoulis, 2006). Ministerial and parliamentary posts were linked to personal interests and clientele relationships in exchange for political support (Papadoulis, 2006). As such, it has been widely argued by numerous scholars that since the 1980s, the Greek party political system has maintained traditions of clientelism, patronage, and corruption (Lyrintzis, 1984; Papadoulis, 2006). The lack of organisational structures in Greece because of clientelist networks are often blamed both for the lack of trust, for social divisions, as well as for the emergence of the financial crisis later (Triantidis, 2016).

Social Trust in the Early 21st Century: Moving Towards the Crisis

To understand the Greek case, it is important to outline some of the most influential events that took place over the last decade. Some of the available data is illustrative of the low levels of social trust. In a 2020 report by the OECD, 70% of Greeks seemed satisfied with their personal networks and 30% of Greeks reported low satisfaction with their personal networks and their relationships. Although this level was the lowest among OECD countries, it marked an increase from 22% in 2013 to 30% in 2018 (OECD, 2020). In 2018, just over three quarters (78%) of the Greek population expressed the belief that they have relatives and friends on whom they can count in times of need. This is the lowest percentage among OECD countries, where the average is around 90% (OECD, 2020), and decreased from 86% in 2010 to 78% in 2018 (Figure 1) (OECD, 2011).

Figure 5.2 Levels of Social Network Support in Greece



Source: OECD (OECD, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020)

Greece has the most frequent social contact in comparison with other OECD countries, scoring 79% based on 2006 data that were released in an OECD report in 2011, even though Greece had the lowest levels of social trust. Eurostat data on social trust in Greece (namely trust in others) gives Greece a score of 5.3 out of 10 (Figure 5.3), which is one of Europe's lowest levels of social trust. Across all the reports to date, i.e., those by the ESS, the World Values Survey, OECD, Eurostat, Eurobarometer, Elstat, the most recent official available data for social trust in Greece was published by Eurostat in 2013. The Legatum prosperity Index ranked Greece 131st in Social Capital, stating that it is the weakest asset in Greece, where Greece scored 46.79. In the GSCI Index, Greece scored 49.6 for 2021 (OECD, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020).

The variation in levels of social trust in recent years is closely related to certain events in Greece in the 21st century. Greek society needed a couple of years to adapt to the shift from the Drachma, its traditional currency, to the Euro in 2001. When Greece organised the Olympic games in 2004, an event with great symbolism for the country, the economy was performing well at the time and trust was higher in comparison with previous years (BBC, 2019; Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002). Given the fact that the left-wing guerrilla group "November 17"[1] was dissolving after numerous arrests in 2002, Greek citizens were steadily developing more trust in each other - but this did not last for long. Since 2004, the Greek

[1] November 17 was a Marxist and Anti-capitalistic guerrilla group active from 1975 to 2002 in Greece, responsible for killing 23 people including Greek and foreign politicians. In 2002 after a bomb exploded near one of its members, the Greek authorities tracked other members, arresting a total of 14 members.

state had falsified its budget deficits, whilst in the meantime protests began that continued until 2005 (BBC, 2019).

First, the strikes to end the so-called "jobs for life" in the public sector created turbulence in both the private and the public sectors, thus also influencing levels of trust. Bad relationships with neighbouring countries Northern Macedonia and Turkey were also raising the uncertainty of Greek people and contributing to greater levels of social confusion (Rumelili, 2007). Simultaneously, a long history of annual wildfires due to arson started in 2006 and many people's properties faced annual danger (BBC, 2019; Morikis, 2014; Vatikiotis, 2011). All the aforementioned in combination with the financial instability and the financial crisis of 2007 in Greece contributed to the low levels of trust.

From 2008 onwards it is noteworthy that social media became a widely used tool by the public in Greece. People tend to speak more about social and political causes such as the wildfires or distrust through their online networks, beginning in forums and leading to the creation of online movements which had offline impact (Morikis, 2014; Vatikiotis, 2011). This section will also present the social structure and peculiarities of Greece, identifying the financial crisis and immigration as the main reasons why Greece is an interesting case for examining social trust and how this can relate to digital activism.

Debates around social capital in Greece and the relation to digital networking in combination with the outcomes of the 2007-08 financial crisis, gives the idea that the social solidarity became stronger (Daskalopoulou, 2018). The emergence of social media solidarity and activism in Greece is seen as an outcome of the opportunities that different crises give rise to (Theocharis, 2015). The nature of social capital is quite complicated, as can be understood from the fact that Greece is considered a low social trust country because of its "economic backwardness" (Daskalopoulou, 2018). This leads to the controversy that although the financial crisis occurred, social solidarity did rise and social trust increased as a coping mechanism (Ervasti et al., 2019). Studies examining the conditions behind low social trust have found a connection with the financial situation of the country (Christoforou, 2005).

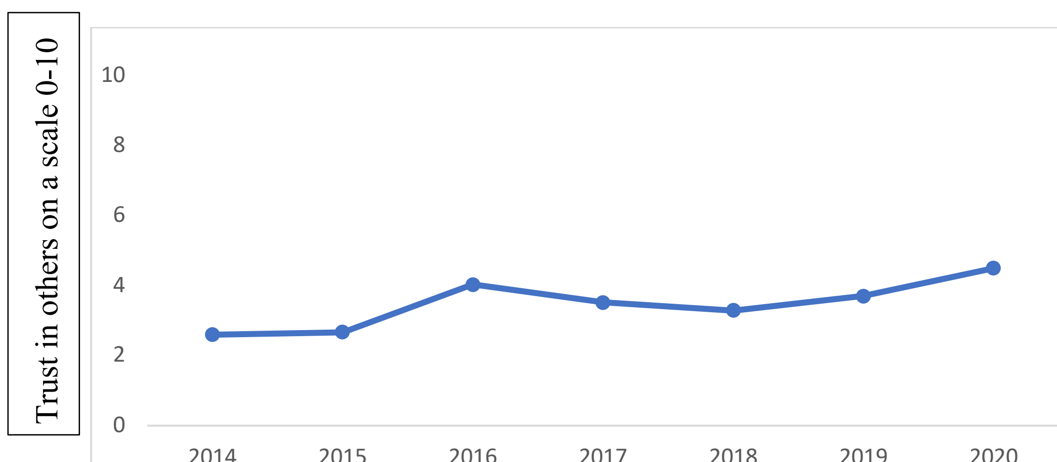
The economic hardships that the country faced did not create enough space for social capital's growth. For this reason, examining how the most recent economic recession influenced Greece can provide further insights into how the social capital of Greece is formed today (Economou et al., 2014). Even before the economic recession, Greece was considered to have low levels of social capital (Daskalopoulou, 2018; Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002) both in terms of associational membership and social trust. This was also observed in the difficulties of achieving social reforms, and the situation seemed to

remain similar even after the crisis (Daskalopoulou, 2018; Kathimerini, 2018; Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002). In 2017, 9 out of 10 people in Greece would disagreed that most people can be trusted, while 39% of Greeks did not trust their neighbours and only 20% trusted people of a different nationality or religion (Kathimerini, 2018).

Social life in Greece in the past ten years has been heavily influenced by the 2007-08 financial crisis. The crisis reduced so-called family support (Ervasti et al., 2019). As pensions were cut and unemployment influenced the younger generations, the economic relationships between families and friends tightened up and became less supportive, which influenced interpersonal trust (Ervasti et al., 2019). Historically, because Greece presents strong family ties and clientelist networks this was not a novel phenomenon (Jones et al., 2008; Rontos & Roumeliotou, 2013). The antisocial policies adopted during that period damaged the social cohesion and had a severe impact on social trust, as was explained above. Social trust declined because of the crisis for various reasons, including that when individual well-being (which is found to be connected with social trust) declines in times of a financial crisis, social trust declines as well (Ervasti et al., 2019).

Another reason why social trust is low in Greece is the persistence of the country's clientelist networks (Ervasti et al., 2019). Here it is important to distinguish generalised trust from interpersonal trust. While the clientelist networks contribute to the decline in generalised trust, they also reveal the bonds between friends and family (Rontos & Roumeliotou, 2013). Greece presents different patterns on levels of social trust than in the other forms of trust (Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002).

Figure 5.3 Trust in Others in Greece (2014-2020)



Source: World Bank (World Bank, 2021b)

Migration and COVID-19 Impact on Social and Political Trust

Migration is widely considered by social scientists to be one of the most important social phenomena of our times, and to influence social trust in a country (Cholezas & Tsakloglou, 2008). The impact of migration is crucial because Greece has recently had to face a deep economic recession and to cope with high migration flows without having the essential facilities in place to do so. An impact of immigration is mainly seen on what we call generalised trust, since research has shown that less than 25% of the Greek population believes that 'most people can be trusted', a rate that is continuously declining. In the 2018 World Values Survey, 9 out of 10 participants in Greece believed that most people cannot be trusted, this has also supported on past research (Kasimis, 2012; Rontos & Roumeliotou, 2013).

One of the reasons behind this situation is that Greece is seen as the gateway to Europe for millions of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, especially after the humanitarian crisis which began in around 2010 in the Middle East. One of the worst recessions in Greek history, which led to soaring unemployment, and the failure to cope with the migration flows, influenced social trust (Kasimis, 2012). Immigration and social trust in Greece have also been connected in the past, so the present situation that arose after the Arab Spring and the humanitarian crisis of the previous decade is not unique, past research expressed how migration is connected to low levels of trust (McLaren, 2012). In the 1990s and early 2000s Greece also had to face migration flows, with similar outcomes.

Previous studies have shown that the inclusion of Albanian immigrants influenced the social trust of Greece in three ways (Iosifides et al., 2007). The first of these is related to the formation of homogenous social groups, the second to the formation of heterogenous social groups, and the third to the relations of individuals who are all integrated into the same society (Iosifides et al., 2007). The combination of unemployment in Greece with migration, the social norms of the country, and the difficulties of immigrant integration and incorporation has comprised a multi-layered problem since then and worked as a barrier to the development of social trust (Iosifides et al., 2007). The mechanisms of the country for the integration of immigrants have always been weak, and this has not only made it hard for immigrants to be integrated into Greek society, but has also contributed to the low levels of social trust (Cholezas & Tsakloglou, 2008). The social and political infrastructure in Greece is formed in such a way that immigration markedly influences the unemployment rates (Cholezas & Tsakloglou, 2008). Nonetheless, this is also related to a great extent with the social structure of Greece in which the illegal or semi-legal employment of immigrants harms the social trust of the country even more (Cholezas & Tsakloglou, 2008).

Social trust in Greece was noted to have slightly increased during the recent times of crisis (Ervasti et al., 2019). People apparently lost their trust in institutions and started to come closer together with family and friends, thus raising personalised trust. Other reasons include the shared experience of the crisis, and since the institutions and the state failed to fulfil their roles, citizens started depending more on each other instead (Ervasti et al., 2019). Despite that, there are different levels of social trust in Greece across different geographical areas. As was highlighted before, the peculiarities of a place are important, and Greece's rural communities are considered to have an higher social trust than other areas because of the greater cooperation and more frequent interactions among rural people (Koutsou, Partalidou, et al., 2014).

Other studies have highlighted that Greece presents the lowest levels of group membership among EU states (Christoforou, 2005; Daskalopoulou, 2018). In the social media sphere this is obvious, because people tend to fight a lot in posts or comments even in groups with whom they share common values, and as a result the groups are often dissolved. Given the distinction in forms of trust that was explained above, this situation provides an insight into the levels of particularised trust, which are low. The low levels of group membership and trust are connected with different socioeconomic factors, but most of the literature suggests that further studies are needed in order to identify the causal link (Christoforou, 2005; Jones et al., 2008; Rontos & Roumeliotou, 2013). As was highlighted earlier, the peculiarities of Greece play an important role in that Greece's contemporary society was shaped by the different political and economic events that Greece faced in the 20th century (Christoforou, 2005; Daskalopoulou, 2018).

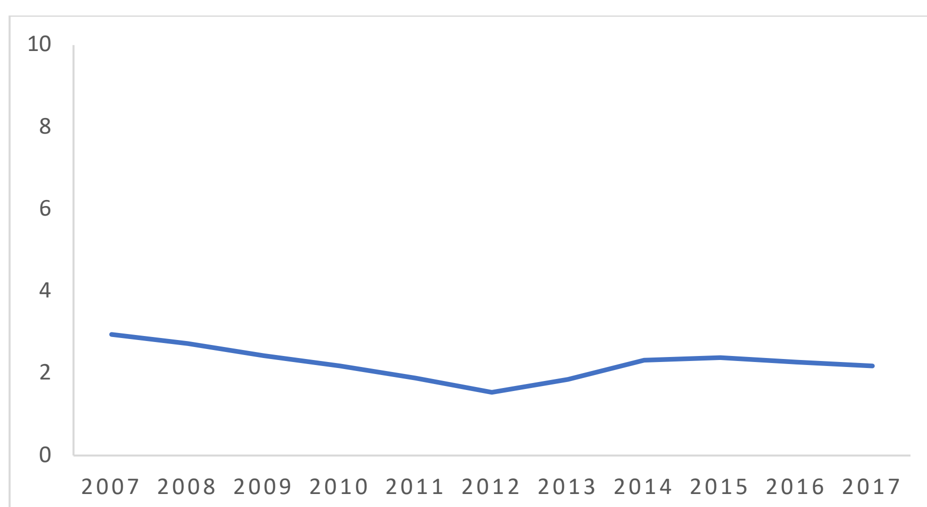
More recent political and social events have also had a huge impact on social and political trust. For example, since 2020 the entire world has had to face the challenges of COVID-19. In terms of social trust, the social isolation that people have had to endure has been significant (Anastasiou & Duquenne, 2021). This situation has had many consequences for both individuals and social groups (Anastasiou & Duquenne, 2021). The isolation created gaps between people, and particularised and generalised trust were influenced negatively. In contrast, though, the pandemic is considered to have created stronger bonds between families and the close friends, boosting personalised trust (Anastasiou & Duquenne, 2021). Studies have highlighted that the pandemic tested social relationships, in ways which included not only difficulties of trust amongst family and friends, but also the general aspects of trust through self-reporting and distrusting others in cases related to public health (Goldstein & Wiedemann, 2020). All these factors are related to public-mindedness and how willingly people respect and trust each other, and although there are also some elements of political

trust in terms of complying with policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, the social perspectives of the pandemic still show how people's trust of each other is affected (Goldstein & Wiedemann, 2020).

Political Trust in Greece

Although Greece has always been considered a country with generally low levels of trust, a few decades ago it actually had higher political trust and confidence in institutions than some other Southern European countries (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis, 2014). However, whilst political trust is declining we can observe that social trust is increasing. In fact, in 2004, political trust in Greece reached its peak, and the country's higher profile in European politics along with the fact that Greece was hosting the Olympic games brought confidence and trust in historical numbers for Greece (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis, 2014). This trust was easily dissolved by the numerous scandals which followed and were succeeded by the financial crisis, leading to a general distrust by citizens not only in politicians and parties, but institutions in general, including the EU, and a significant decrease in democracy satisfaction (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis, 2014). The extreme circumstances that Greek society experienced in the loss of one fifth of the national income (the most by any developed country in the postwar era) exerted a powerful shock that undermined the political trust of the country (Ellinas & Lamprianou, 2014). However, historically Greece represents a country with low levels of political trust or trust towards politicians, and things such as the financial crisis and the memorandums seemed impactful to the trust towards politicians as also seen in Figure 8. The figure displays the public trust in politicians in Greece between 2007 and 2017 and the vertical axis shows the level in a scale from 0 to 10.

Figure 5.4 Public Trust in Politicians in Greece (2007-2017)

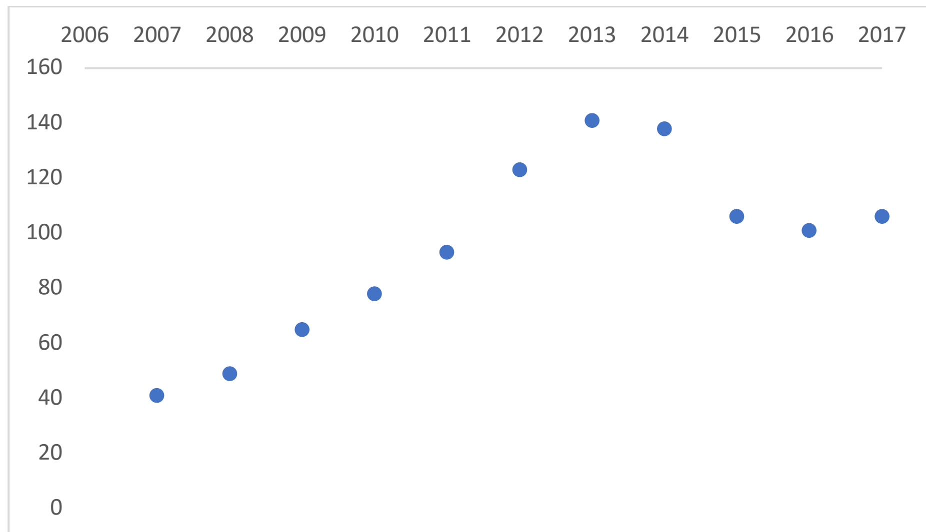


Source: World Bank (World Bank, 2021a)

In terms of trust in institutions, data in recent years has revealed that the main cause for a fall is not that people are willing to distrust, but numerous incidents which have exposed that the fundamentals of the institutions are missing. For example, a turning point in the trust of Greeks towards the police was the 2008 case of Alexis Grigoropoulos, a teenager who was shot to death by a police officer (Vatikiotis, 2011). After that happened, the police were often criticised and perceived as untrustworthy by Greek society, and social media shed light on many more cases (Vatikiotis, 2011). During routine checks in the COVID-19 pandemic, policemen sometimes used force against citizens for not following the COVID-19 measures, and this situation soon became viral on Greek social media, motivating thousands of protesters to fill the streets in order to stop police brutality (Maltezou & Simao, 2021). This outlines the importance of explaining the limitations of trust in Greece in more detail.

In Greece, confidence levels appear to drop when political agents are swayed by government surrogates, in the form of social or professional groups which permanently inflict shifting tactics and agreements leading to low attractiveness in institutions (Ervasti et al., 2019). Meanwhile, social groups show low trust in the government in relation to whether they perform to public expectations, leading to implementation failure. As a result, disenchantment and cynicism lead to political alienation and it becomes harder for people to trust the government. Greece faced a severe financial crisis in 2007-08 accompanied by social impairment which seriously reduced levels of institutional and social trust in the country (Karanikolos et al., 2013). A loss of trust towards multiple political institutions was observed, and the country experienced extreme situations such as the emergence of political parties with nationalistic and racist characters and rough political stances and statements (Ervasti et al., 2019; Ifanti et al., 2013). This also created more distrust towards the Greek political scene as most democratic people were appalled by the fact that in a democratic country an extremist party that was later considered to be a criminal organisation had been elected to the Greek parliament. Despite that, broken political promises, the failed implementation of political agendas, and the failure of institutions to keep their word towards citizens together caused far more distrust than the financial crisis itself (Torcal & Christmann, 2021). Greece is also considered one of the lowest ranked countries in terms of public trust towards politicians. As seen in Figure 5.5, its ranking fell from 41st in 2007, to 106th in 2017 to leave it one of Europe's least trusting countries. The figure displays the position of Greece in the global ranking of citizens' trust towards politicians from 2006 which was before the crisis, to 2017 after the financial crisis and the migration crisis and displays how the public trust was impacted.

Figure 5.5 Greece's global rank in Public Trust towards Politicians



Source: World Bank, 2021, TCdata360, Public Trust in Politicians (World Bank, 2021a)

The 2007-2008 financial crisis and its aftermath meant that salaries and pensions were cut and unemployment soared, especially among younger age groups, and even many small businesses were obliged to close, consequences which explain the distrust that many people developed (Arghyrou & Tsoukalas, 2011). On top of these factors, the failed implementation of political agendas and measures to tackle the crisis, in combination with continued economic instability and the failure of successive governments to find livable solutions that would also fulfil their promises to citizens, caused further disenchantment and distrust (Arghyrou & Tsoukalas, 2011). Notwithstanding all this, the results of a global survey in Greece and 17 other European countries during the crisis period showed that despite the low institutional trust levels, stable or improved social trust was developed between individuals, while the decline in political trust was intensifying (Ervasti et al., 2019).

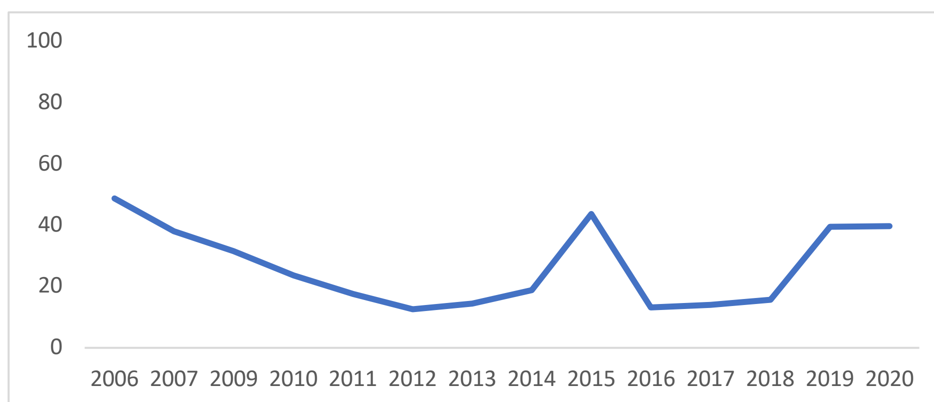
Economic conditions are found to influence levels of trust because people's wellbeing leads them to trust or distrust the government if the economic situation of the country is perceived to be an outcome of that government's performance (Ellinas & Lamprianou, 2014). In contrast, other studies have shown that due to the lack of social cohesion and significant social turmoil, Greek citizens' trust in both institutions and other individuals was impaired (Ifanti et al., 2013). The lack of trust towards financial institutions such as banks, and the decentralised monetary system offered by cryptocurrency, led many Greeks to use and invest in cryptocurrencies. This digital form of money became influential in Greece because of high taxation, the pandemic, and the financial crisis (T. Ioannou, 2021). The decentralised nature of crypto and the fact that is out of the reach of national governments and banks is what it makes it appealing to those who lost their trust in Greek

institutions (T. Ioannou, 2021). Thus, instead of investing in sovereign bonds or using the national currency, because of their distrust more and more people in Greece started to use so-called crypto for online transactions (T. Ioannou, 2021). It is argued that cryptocurrencies, and especially Bitcoin, are political projects because their founders created blockchain and cryptocurrencies exactly because they did not trust centralised systems run by national governments and banks (Volpicelli, 2021) - "Cryptocurrency was born as a political project" (Volpicelli, 2021) – and instead wanted to create an individual-to-individual process which avoided distrusted institutions. There is currently a fast-evolving community that supports crypto which comprises a double-digit percentage of the Greek population (T. Ioannou, 2021).

A different social phenomenon that has arisen in the last two decades is that of migration, which has been linked with crisis aggravation and the loss of political trust due to the mishandling of the situation by the government (Rachiotis et al., 2015; Ziller et al., 2019).

As shown in the chart below, in 2006, 48.8% of the Greek population trusted the government, but after the financial crisis and a continuous flow of corruption cases this declined to 12.6% by 2012. Government coalitions and changes of government slightly increased the levels of trust in government from 2012 to 2014, from 12.6% to 18.8%. In 2015, for the first time after over thirty years of Greek politics as a two-party system, a different political party was elected, "Syriza". This, in combination with the EU referendum in Greece, seems to have been influential in boosting trust as in 2015, 43.7% of Greeks trusted the government. Between 2016 and 2018, the levels of trust were between 13.2% and 15.7% as "Syriza" did not fulfill people's expectations. Since the last elections, when New Democracy was elected, the trust in government in 2019 and 2020 was 39.6% and 39.7%. This is also related to how the Greek government initially battled the COVID-19 pandemic, since people trusted the government and its response to the pandemic highly (OECD, 2020, 2021).

Figure 5.6 Trust in Government in Greece from 2006 to 2020 (%)



Source: (OECD, 2021), Trust in government (indicator).

In Greece, fluctuations in trust can potentially be explained and understood as an amalgam of long-term structural changes and specific short-term factors. One factor that is both a structural problem faced by Greece but simultaneously is also a short-term factor because it depends on the politicians and the government in power, is corruption. Greece has faced a great number of corruption scandals in the 21st century that have strongly influenced the levels of trust of the citizens (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis, 2014). Studies have generally found that in countries where people perceive that the system is corrupt, political trust remains low. In Greece before the political scandals that came to light between 2007-2011, the trust in parliament was at medium to high levels, before falling almost to single digits after 2011 (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis, 2014). In contrast, the less the people think the government, or politicians, are corrupt, the more trust they will have towards them – this also applies to Greece, as findings suggest (Melios, 2020).

Studies highlight that in times of crisis, the perception of corruption plays an important role in how people's trust declines, and thus for this reason trust towards political parties is even lower in countries with this characteristic (OECD, 2013). The high levels of perceived corruption in Greece are argued to be a strengthening factor for low levels of political trust, and in combination with the inequalities that persist despite all governmental efforts, this makes it hard to achieve the essentials in order to build political trust (Ellinas & Lamprianou, 2014). Clientelist networks, a politicised bureaucracy and the fact that people can gain benefits from political networks all illustrate that it is hard to build trust in a country where political efforts do not seem to improve political efficiency (Ellinas & Lamprianou, 2014). The failure to restore political trust is mainly because of these pre-existing reasons rather than solely because of the financial crisis that Greece faced. Even if there was a decline

of trust during that period, the endemic corruption in Greece and the rise of populist parties are two reasons why this recovery in trust has not happened (Torcal & Christmann, 2021).

Corruption causes the failure of political responses to the needs of citizens, and has been connected to trust in many different ways, from failure in implementing policies, to promises that were never fulfilled – and trust in Greece's governments has been deeply harmed by corruption in the past (Torcal & Christmann, 2021). This happens because corruption is not only about the political procedures which politicians engage in, but depends on citizens' perceptions of how different political actors work, which makes it even more complicated (Torcal & Christmann, 2021). It is difficult to identify exactly how best to restore political trust in Greece, but fighting corruption and the perceptions of who and what are corrupt would be a good start.

The structural changes involved in the dynamics of political trust include changes in society and among citizens, changes in government, and changes in the media in Greece. It is argued that Greece has been struggling for years in terms of political efficacy and trust; for example, in 2017, 43.3% of the population had no confidence at all in the Greek parliament, while 40% had very little confidence (Kemmet, 2020). This means that Greek citizens are generally preconditioned to the fact that a government will not fulfill their demands. It was therefore quite unexpected when, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, Greece was initially tackling the problems of the pandemic better than other EU countries (Ladi, 2020). The measures implemented by the Greek government were initially widely accepted by the Greek public and the public largely thought that a good job was being done in terms of health securitisation against the pandemic, even though Greece had small numbers of IC units and equipment at the time (Kemmet, 2020; Ladi, 2020). Greek society even seemed to be healing in terms of restoring political trust (at least in the form of specific support towards the scientific measures implemented by the Greek government). These positive strides during the COVID-19 pandemic were also considered to be influenced by the legislative shift in Greece in the policies implemented by the New Democracy government (Kemmet, 2020).

Political trust fluctuates in accordance with how the government performs (Ellinas & Lamprianou, 2014), and at the start of the pandemic the Greek government seemed to have everything under control. Optimism and trust were obvious among the people, and the means they used to show their trust at the time was to follow the measures, as a great number of Greek citizens respected the measures (Ladi, 2020). This sense of having a collective cause and fighting against a common enemy helped the Greeks to gain some trust and that was rooted in the government's performance on the pandemic in comparison with other

countries. The main key for the management and containment of the pandemic that made Greece a role model at that time in 2020 was its citizens' compliance with the measures, which had much to do with the specific support they showed towards the policies of the government against the virus (Kemmet, 2020).

That, then, was the first image that the government obtained during the pandemic, but since then many citizens lost faith in the government as they failed to fulfil their continued promises that the measures would only be in place for a short period of time. This fluctuation in trust was observed for numerous reasons, starting with the short-term belief, and the structural abnormalities that the country presents. Similarly, specific short-term factors such as unsuccessful changes in political processes and consumer confidence following economic and migration crisis framed the situation and led to political distrust. The political culture and the structure of a country, for example the legal permissiveness that exists in a country's legal system, do influence political trust, and this is considered to be amongst the reasons why Greece has low levels of political trust (Marien & Hooghe, 2011).

As the analysis above has shown, there are many different reasons why levels of trust in Greece are low. Political events, corruption, government performance, financial crisis, the political culture, and how institutions work all need to be assessed and resolved where possible in order to restore political trust among Greek society. The history of the country has not allowed it to develop a stable political structure that can be trusted by its citizens, and all the events and crises that the country goes through seem to have a deep impact on political trust.

Greece has also faced many different migration flows across the decades, from the Balkans, Asia, and Africa, and the political instability of the country in combination with the different migration crises that have occurred recently led Greece to mishandle migration (Iosifides et al., 2007). This is supported by studies that found that in multiple cases, migration has related to lower levels of political trust, or represents a reason contributing to a decline in political trust (McLaren, 2011). This happens because the effects of immigration in a community, the political consequences, and the government reaction usually have a negative impact on people's perceptions of institutional performance (McLaren, 2011). The reasons why Greece has low levels of trust are explained through situations such as migration, this also opens up the discussion on understanding the reasons why Greeks would perform digital activism.

Digital Activism in Greece

After examining social and political trust in Greece, it is of crucial importance to see how digital activism developed over-time in the country. In tracking the existence of digital activism in Greece, we can trace instances where Greek people mobilised online, such as for solidarity in Thessaloniki in 2003 (Gallis & Neumayer, 2016). This was due to a post on indymedia on 22 June 2003, where Greek citizens asked to free people who had been arrested by the police the previous day in a university demonstration (Gallis & Neumayer, 2016). On a larger scale, the lack of trust towards the country's traditional media and political institutions since as early as 2008 led to the use of social media for activism purposes (Gallis & Neumayer, 2016). The early adoption of digital activism in Greece is also related to austerity measures during the financial crisis (Gallis & Neumayer, 2016). Social media in Greece became a means of activism and mobilisation, as thousands of citizens started posting about their distrust towards institutions and the police. This was also related to the killing of a 15-year-old teenager by the police in 2008 (Gallis & Neumayer, 2016; Vatikiotis, 2011). Since 2016 in Greece, 96% of citizens prefer social media over traditional media as an information source. This means that Greeks are among the highest social media users for news, and since 2019 Greeks have used mobile phones for news more than any other device. As a result, people in Greece use social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and other platforms to perform digital activism (Karatzogianni et al., 2021; Reuters Institute and University of Oxford, 2021).

Early Development of Digital Activism in Greece

Until the early 2000s, digital activism was quite limited and the first significant reaction through online means came on 9/11, when the Internet was used to spread news and awareness and to call for collective action and solidarity (Karatzogianni, 2015). In Greece, the emergence of Indymedia Athens in the early 2000s (a site and a forum where people could organise calls for activism) and a murder in 2008 contributed to the true start of Greek digital activism (Gallis & Neumayer, 2016). While the first large-scale activism campaigns through social media are considered to have been the Arab Spring and the humanitarian crisis of 2011, members of the Greek population had been using social media such as Facebook or Twitter for activism purposes and collective action since 2007-08 (Karatzogianni, 2015; Vatikiotis, 2011). It is important to discuss how Digital Activism started in Greece. The first case observed in Greece was the one mentioned above, where a policeman killed a 15-year-old boy, and this created movements online and mobilisation through the power of social media (Vatikiotis, 2011).

Indeed, this example demonstrates the potential of social trust in Greece through digital activism. On December 6, 2008, a 15-year-old school pupil was shot to death by a police officer in Athens. This can be theorised as the turning point of offline to online activism in Greece, and in addition it brought together people from many different social backgrounds (Vatikiotis, 2011). After coordinating online through Facebook groups, posts, and forums, many people took action or protested against police brutality (Vatikiotis, 2011). Since this incident, studies in Greece have tended to seek to understand the social and political impact of social media, but no extensive studies have been done to date. It can however be said that December 2008 is considered to be a cornerstone for both social trust and digital activism in Greece because for the first time in the modern history of the country, different social actors ranging from immigrants to workers, students and parents came together in the shared social cause of stopping police brutality (Vatikiotis, 2011).

One of the main reasons behind the use of social media for activism purposes was the public need that people had to share their opinions. The financial crisis of Greece led to movements that resembled the ‘indignados’, and this was a good area in which to deploy digital activism (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Karatzogianni, 2015). As such, through social media Greeks initially coordinated in terms of organising protests, raising awareness, and creating posts and groups such as the «αγανακτισμένοι στο Σύνταγμα» which translates as “Indignants in Syntagma”.

In these terms, people were expressing their frustrations through activism posts which mainly expressed their distrust in institutions and politicians in Greece, given the financial crisis and its associated political outcomes such as large cuts to pensions and salaries. Added to that, people started to participate more and more in activism through online platforms. Another case characteristic of Greece is the closing of ERT (Hellenic Broadcast Corporation) by the Greek government in June 2013 and the dismissal of its 2,656 workers (Morikis, 2014). The magnitude of social media use led to protests, online petitions, criticism of the decision of the government, and posts and reposts identified through hashtags that contributed to the spread of information. In terms of these two cases the main platforms that impacted the protests were Facebook and Twitter (Morikis, 2014). In terms of more recent events such as the police brutality in the Nea Smirni square towards a young citizen who was not respecting the COVID-19 pandemic measures, other social media platforms including Instagram were more prominent in organising a protest of over than 6,000 people, the first protest of this magnitude in the area, and in spreading videos using metavoicing (resharing) of stories and creating original posts and stories about that incident (Maltezou & Simao, 2021; Proto Thema, 2021).

These facts led the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to state that: "Social media are bad for our democracy" ("PM Mitsotakis Says Social Media Are 'Bad for Our Democracy,'" 2021). This statement, along with the wildfires and the COVID-19 measures at the time, generated even more controversy on social media and even directly led to a loss of trust in the PM, as a hashtag was generated of #mitsotakigamiesai (an insult to the president of Greece) which thousands of frustrated users posted over Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, while also creating songs that included it as a slogan, on websites, in videos and in a wide variety of memes relating to the Greek PM.

Digital Activism and the Financial Crisis

The outbreak of the financial crisis in Greece in 2007 marked the beginning of an era of widespread political disregard for, and lack of trust towards, the national political system, which was most apparent in the younger citizens. A large section of the Greek population was confronted with the feeling that social and political injustice were dominant, as a result of the negligence towards their needs and rights on the part of their political leaders. Given the advance of Web 2.0 technologies and the broad use of social media platforms as a means of communication, a new form of collective resistance, sensitisation, advocation, and action emerged (M. Ioannou, 2019).

Social media and digitalisation are successfully deployed in relation to social movements and activism in Greece, as online activism seems to facilitate protest (Lewis et al., 2014). These new communication practices are increasingly emerging as a battleground, with a digital agenda of rights and freedoms having been created and embraced by activists, NGOs, and social movements (Cammaerts, 2015). New forms of political participation and mobilisation using social media have appeared in recent years. Greeks along with citizens of many other countries have adopted social media use more and more. At the present time, as is the case elsewhere, social media has become integrated in multiple facets of life in Greece and is used not only by people but also by public and private organisations as an effective communication tool (Reuters Institute and University of Oxford, 2021).Greece now has more than 8.39 million internet users, with 7.4 million social media users across all platforms in 2021 (Kemp, 2021).

Social media platforms such as Facebook are widely used in Greece especially by younger people, and influential events such as the recession contributed to the growth of social media users in Greece from 32.1 % to 57.85% between 2009 and 2014, because younger people in Greece tend to use social media more for informational purposes. An example of this which was also influential in terms of social movements are the so-called

“Indignados”, a movement that began in Mediterranean countries and was spread through social media as a means by which to battle the outcomes of the crisis (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) including government-imposed austerity policies. Another example was the Skouries protest, which spread through social media posts in order to raise awareness against Canadian gold mines in the Forest of Skouries in Northern Greece (Gerosideris & Ferra, 2020; Morikis, 2014). Social media contributed both to coordinating peaceful protests but also to spreading the word across Greece and the world in order to protect the natural environment against this project.

Recent Events and Digital Activism

Another element in the socio-political equation is comprised of collectivism and solidarity. Many Greek citizens have developed a belief that the collective actions and organisation of the masses can be more effective in cases where political action is insufficient or even absent, as has also been seen in movements such as the Indignados (Morikis, 2014). Moreover, it has been found that Greeks are now highly active on social media platforms, with 93% having a Facebook profile. The public opinion that is formed on social media tends to influence the Greek population more than the news on national TV and in the press (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2021; Reuters Institute and University of Oxford, 2021). In fact, Greeks state that social media helps them to work out what is true and what is not, given that they consider most national TV channels to be politically oriented and thus do not believe that they broadcast the truth (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2021). Digital activism has several forms, such as: slacktivism, metavoicing, signing online petitions, e-funding, data activism, digital assertion, botivism and hacktivism (J. George & Leidner, 2019), it will be useful to review below some cases where these activities were used in Greece.

The Greek case is of interest since the annual digital news report found that Greece is the only European country that trusts social media more than the country’s legacy media, as well as because of the apparent low levels of trust (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2021). This is important since most social media users in Greece are active on a daily basis on all the different platforms. Several social events that took place in Greece recently can be taken as evidence for the statement that public opinion is created, shaped, and shared through the use of social platforms, blogs, for a, and the Internet as a widespread channel. As a first case we will examine the outbreak of wildfires in Greece during summer 2021. There was widespread criticism in Greek public opinion of the Greek government, with the popular view being that the crisis was poorly managed, as there was no infrastructure or crisis management strategy for such an expected natural disaster, given the high temperatures and

the consequent high risk of wildfires expected during summer months in Greece (Euronews, 2020).

For example, on the island of Evia, 35,000 hectares of virgin forest and villages were burnt or besieged, and 2,600 residents and tourists were forced to evacuate the area. During the days when the disaster was occurring, public rage was expressed on social media platforms (Papadimas, 2021). Citizens expressed their anger about the disaster that they believed could have been prevented, and huge disappointment towards the authorities that did not act quickly enough, and had not invested adequately in extinguishing equipment and firefighting fleets to tackle the wildfires (Papadimas, 2021). Nonetheless, a more positive positioning also emerged from social media during those terrifying days. Motivated citizens were self-organised and developed an unprecedented sense of solidarity (Papadimas, 2021).

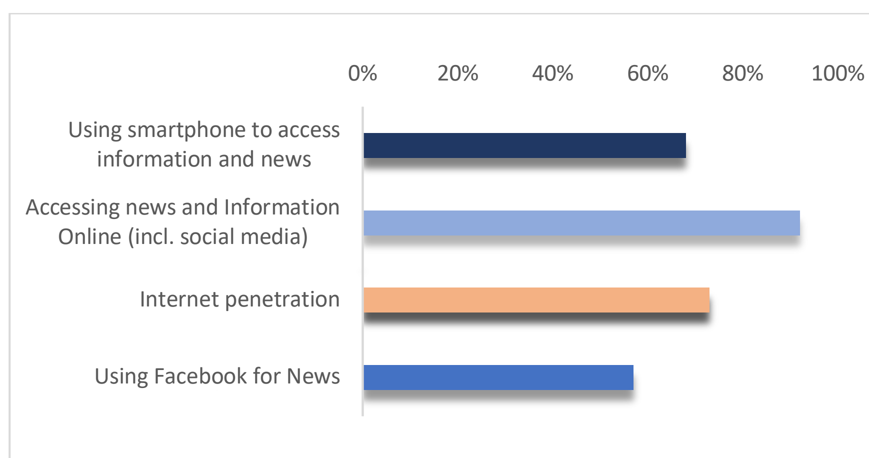
Major social media accounts on Instagram like @kanenas_monos and @act4evia sent public appeals through Instagram to fellow users to gather volunteers and collect goods and necessities to support firefighters at the front line and the people affected or displaced by the fire. It is important to state that during those days, many influencers reshared related content posted on Instagram stories and very few Greek users posted content that was not associated with the wildfires or presented snapshots of normal daily life in other parts of Greece with no fires (Papadimas, 2021). Essentially, almost every Instagram account in Greece was instantly and voluntarily converted into a sharing chain for content related to news on the wildfires and volunteering action. Another example of how people used social media for activism purposes and mobilization happened on 18 September 2013, when an antifascist rapper was killed by members of the then political party and now criminal organisation Golden Dawn (Trilling, 2020). Thousands of people were mobilised through social media groups, calls, and posts, to protest against fascism and the Golden Dawn, and even nowadays people repost and reshare (metavoicing) content related to him or his music which has taken on a symbolic meaning and create their own posts on similar events (digital assertion) or like posts with quotes by him, or regarding his killing.

Social media played an important role in the above example given that since the coverage of this situation was scarce in the traditional media, the circulation of information regarding the event had to be spread through social media, where people were motivated to talk about it and perform both online and offline activism (Katsounaki, 2018). The most recent cases of Digital Activism in Greece include the Greek #metoo movement for gender equality and accusations of sexual abuse, different social movements for environmental protection, Greek movements for protection against wildfires and for collective action for those who face the consequences of the wildfires, health activists who speak about different

perspectives, and most recently those who support the COVID-19 vaccines, and those who do not (Emmanouilidou, 2021). The aforementioned examples can all be seen through the different groups that Greek citizens create on social media in order to coordinate and find people with similar values. For example, in the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period, a Facebook group called "menoume spiti" which translates to "we stay home" was created by citizens and attracted 55,000 members in less than a year. In that group, people spoke about the COVID-19 measures and shared information as well as expressions of support or distrust towards the political measures. Different groups were created by those who did not want to take the COVID-19 vaccine and attracted around 3,000 members.

In response to the wildfires, groups were generated to send help and information, to organise and coordinate tree planting and reforestation, but simultaneously to create and share activism posts, and for online petition signing. This not only happened on Facebook groups but also on different social media platforms such as Instagram, where people posted stories and reshared content about actions that could help to battle the wildfires, as had also happened in previous wildfire crises (Theocharis, 2015). Reuters and Oxford found that the 68% of Greeks are accessing information and news through their mobile phones (namely smartphone). Since 2019, phones have even surpassed computers as the most popular device for news intake; roughly 92% use online news to get political information. Social media use in Greece is as high as 7.1 million users (Reuters Institute and University of Oxford, 2021).

Figure 5.7 Use of Digital Means in Greece (percentage of users)



Source: Digital News Report 2021, Reuters Institute and University of Oxford (2021)

The mobilization on environmental issues has a unique place in this form of activism. The Greek public was educated by massive online calls on early forms of social media, and governmental and voluntary actions were formed in summer 2007 after some devastating

forest fires, and this helped people to recover (Karamichas, 2009). This is important because further analysis might help us to understand how social media became so central in the political culture of Greece at a later stage. Despite their low direct participation in environmental organisations, South European people, along with Greek people, showed the highest tendency to participate in environmental causes online (Papanikolaou & Papageorgiou, 2020). This not only includes mobilisation, but also digital activism such as sharing, resharing (metavoicing), the creation of original posts (assertions) about wildfires as happened during the 2021 wildfires in Greece, clicktivism via posts related to environmental issues, and even in rarer cases, buycotts or boycotts.

However, although Greeks have lower levels of participation in environmental organisations, local action groups were successfully involved in the protection of different species, marine environments, coasts, seas and forestry via internet tools and media actions (Thomas, 2006). Web-bloggers can attract attention and alert and motivate other people and governments with the creation and sharing of posts. They responded to the forest fires and multiple environmental issues, and were able to gather people outside the Greek parliament to engage in protests. The protests influenced the national elections of 2007 and led to increased votes for left parties and parties that had expressed commitments to political ecology and environmental sustainability (Karamichas, 2009).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the low levels of both social and political trust in Greece. I further presented how social media use has increased over the years and how Greek society is adapting to it. This is an influential factor for digital activism since social media use is highly connected with how activism happens on social media platforms. It is also important to examine the relationship between trust and digital activism more closely. The importance of this is highlighted by the fact that Greece has low social and political trust and high social media use (Daskalopoulou, 2018). Even though different studies have suggested that the different forms of trust and digital activism might be linked, currently there are no studies that have investigated this in-depth. Every crisis is a digital opportunity (Theocharis, 2015) and Greek citizens seem to use social media both as a means of expression and as an escape from a centralised system that keeps them frustrated, as they are also adopting and using cryptocurrencies more and more (T. Ioannou, 2021). Through using original posts, hashtags, and memes, they communicate their political and social trust over different platforms, which positions Greece as a case that needs more in-depth analysis in order to draw some conclusions on how social and political trust influence digital activism.

CHAPTER 6: Social Trust and Digital Activism

This chapter will examine the extent to which the hypotheses formulated on the relationship between social trust and three different digital activism activities are supported by empirical evidence. This will be done in two steps. First, the results of the survey will form the basis of a quantitative analysis of the hypothesised effects. Second, the qualitative analysis based on 27 semi-structured interviews will seek to explain the patterns identified during the survey analysis. In terms of the survey results, the main findings highlight that social trust has a positive effect on all three forms of digital activism: slacktivism (H1), boycotts (H2) and data dissemination (H3). The interview results are then used to explain the survey results by highlighting the reasons why these positive relationships exist. In most cases, as will be expanded upon later on, a person that someone considers a close friend, family member, or co-worker does influence whether or not they will perform any of these three activities. The interviews provide evidence that based on social trust, people do perform acts of digital activism such as slacktivism, boycotts, and data dissemination.

Understanding the Survey Results

This chapter starts with an overview of the level of digital activism. This is important to understand the diversity of digital behaviour among the Greek population. Figure 6.1 depicts the use of the six forms of digital activism: how often this happens on a scale from 0 to 10 (Y axis). Overall, there is great variation between the forms of digital activism, which confirms the initial approach of this thesis to study them separately. Boycotts seem to be the most popular digital activism activity among the Greek population. There are many reasons why this might be the case, one of which might be that it is one of the most recognisable forms of activism. It is easier for someone to understand the nature of boycotts, an activity that has existed for decades, than slacktivism or data dissemination. Slacktivism is the second most popular type of digital activism, with more than half of Greek citizens engaging in it. Buycott is the third most popular form of digital activism, while data dissemination is the fourth. The two remaining forms of activism – metavoicing and assertion – are less popular among the survey respondents.

Figure 6.1 The Distribution of Respondents along Forms of Digital Activism

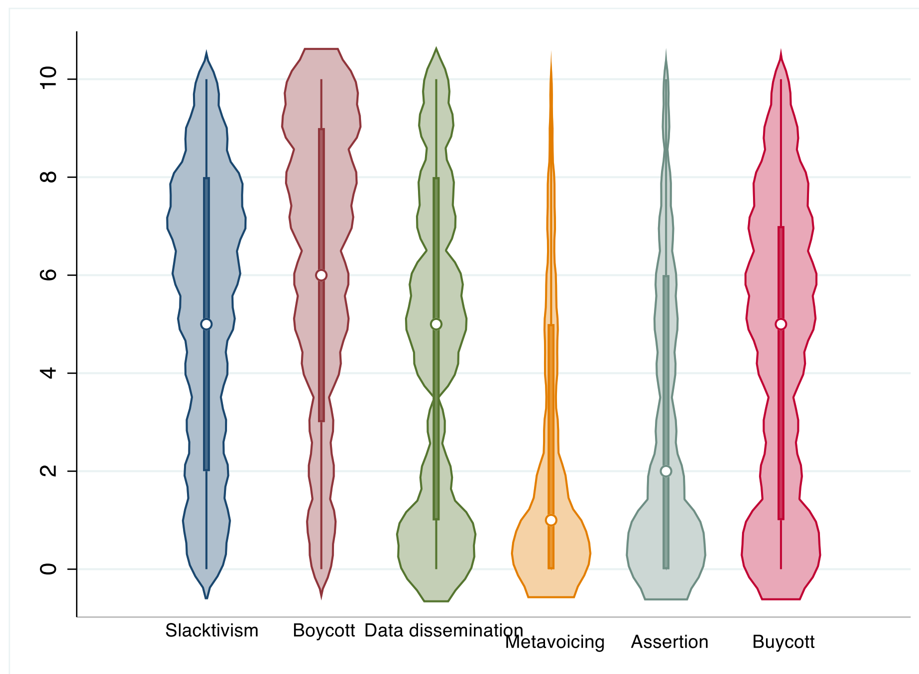


Table 6.1 presents the correlations between the different forms of digital activism. This table is designed to make it easier to understand if someone who is active in performing slacktivism performs other digital activism activities. The correlation between slacktivism and boycotts indicates that someone who performs slacktivism may also engage in boycotts, as one out of four people engage in both activities. The correlation between the two is at 0.25; this is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and shows that the correlation between the two different dependent variables is positive. Surprisingly, boycotting is the activity that is the least correlated with slacktivism, even though they are two activities that people in Greece highly engage with. This means that different groups perform different digital activities, and that even if someone performs slacktivism, that does not mean that he or she is performing other activities as well.

Slacktivism, is positively correlated at a higher level with metavoicing and assertion. The correlation indicates that one out of every two people who perform slacktivism, also perform metavoicing and assertion. Earlier, it was mentioned that the correlation between boycotts and slacktivism stands at 0.25, meaning that one out of four people who perform boycotts also perform slacktivism. The correlation between boycotts and data dissemination is positive (0.34) and statistically significant. For metavoicing and assertion, the data indicated that the correlation has a positive effect and that between one in four and one in five would also perform boycotts (0.22 for metavoicing as shown in Table 6.1, and 0.22 for

assertion). Boycotts and buycotts are highly correlated since it is more than twice more probable for those people who perform boycotts to also perform buycotts (0.54).

Table 6.1 Correlations Between the Forms of Digital Activism

	Slacktivism	Boycott	Data dissemination	Metavoicing	Assertion	Buycott
Slacktivism		0.25**	0.26**	0.44**	0.47**	0.28**
Boycott			0.34**	0.21**	0.22**	0.54**
Data dissemination				0.35**	0.33**	0.33**
Metavoicing					0.59**	0.31**
Assertion						0.30**
Buycott						

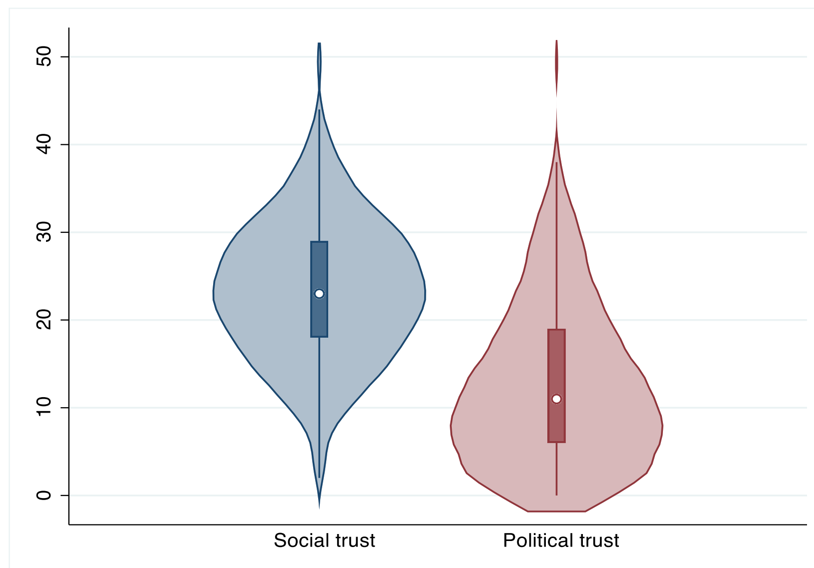
Notes: Correlation coefficients are non-parametric (Spearman)

N = 1897-1899; *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Levels of Social and Political Trust

Figure 6.2 displays the levels of social and political trust in Greece based on the survey answers. It is noteworthy that even though the levels of social trust in Greece are medium to low, the levels of political trust are low. This situation is not surprising since Chapter 2 showed that previous research and surveys illustrated that people in Greece have comparatively low levels of social trust. Similarly, the level of political trust was likely to be low in light of the previous research findings and developments discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 6.2 Levels of Social and Political Trust among Respondents



In this chapter the correlations between social trust and different forms of digital activism are analysed, whilst Chapter 7 reflects on the correlations between political trust and digital activism. Table 6.2 provides the correlations of the different variables with the different forms of digital activism. There is a statistically significant correlation between social trust and slacktivism of 0.16, at the 0.01 level. This shows that people with higher levels of social trust are slightly more likely to perform slacktivism compared to people with no social trust. Similarly, the correlation of social trust and boycotts is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, at 0.12. The positive relationship between the two indicates that it is more likely that someone will boycott when influenced by their level of social trust. The same follows for data dissemination, where one in ten people are more likely to perform data dissemination based on their social trust. The political interest and slacktivism correlation stands at 0.23, whilst the correlation with boycotts and data dissemination is 0.20. Similarly, offline political participation seems to be significantly correlated with slacktivism and data dissemination and boycotts.

The use of social media for entertainment corelates weakly with boycotts and data dissemination. This is somewhat surprising because previous research finds that the use of social media for entertainment purposes is often related to digital activism (Salman & Saad, 2015). The positive correlation between the use of social media for entertainment and slacktivism (0.17) confirms some of the previous conclusions in the literature (Chapter 2). The use of social media for information also correlates positively with slacktivism (0.23) The socio-demographic variables rarely correlate with the forms of digital activism. For example, older respondents engage slightly more in metavoicing and buycotts than younger

respondents. These are the only two forms of activism with which age is correlated. In other instances, the correlations with forms of digital activism go in different directions. For example, poorly educated respondents appear to engage slightly more in slacktivism and assertion compared to people with higher education. However, more educated individuals engage slightly more in boycotts than people with low education.

Table 6.2 Correlations with forms of Digital Activism

	Slacktivism	Boycott	Data dissemination	Metavoicing	Assertion	Buycott
Social trust	0.16**	0.12**	0.11**	0.17**	0.10**	0.24**
Political trust	0.11**	-0.02	-0.08**	0.12**	0.04*	0.11**
Political interest	0.23**	0.20**	0.20**	0.28**	0.24**	0.21**
Offline political participation	0.22**	0.21**	0.22**	0.24**	0.24**	0.24**
Social media for entertainment	0.17**	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.06**	-0.01
Social media for information	0.23**	0.04	0.08**	0.10**	0.15**	0.05*
Gender	-0.01	-0.01	-0.09**	-0.01	0.01	0.01
Education	-0.06*	0.05*	-0.01	-0.03	-0.09**	0.01
Age	-0.03	-0.01	0.03	0.08**	0.04	0.08**

Notes: Correlation coefficients are non-parametric (Spearman)

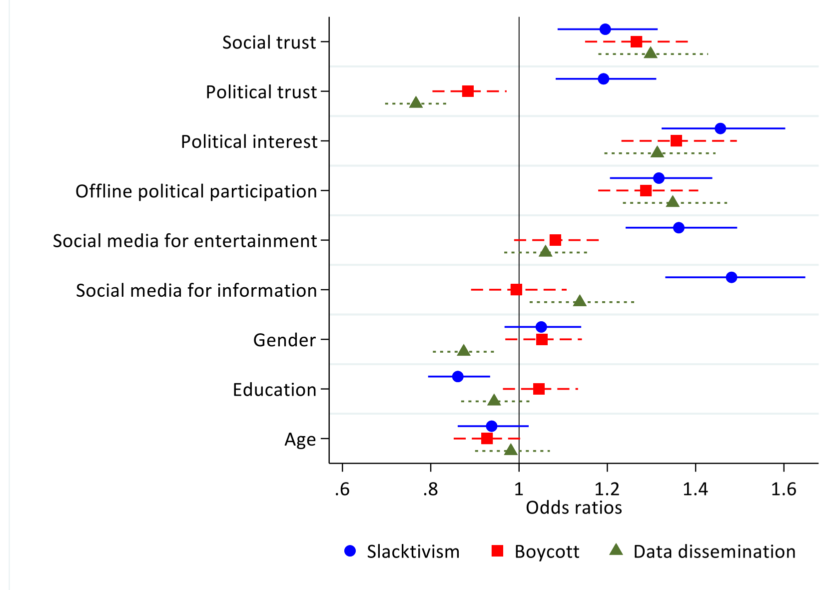
N = 1897-1899 ; $*p<0.05$, $**p<0.01$

Figure 6.3 displays the effects of social trust on the three forms of digital activism associated with hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. To begin with H1, social trust has a positive effect on slacktivism. This is comparable with the positive effect of political trust, which reflects that those who trust institutions or politicians engage in slacktivism more than those with low levels of trust. Political interest and the use of social media for information purposes are the strongest predictors of slacktivism. Offline political participation and the use of social media for entertainment have a strong positive effect on this digital activity. Education is the only socio-demographic characteristic with an effect: people with lower education engage more in slacktivism than those with higher education. One possible explanation for the negative

effect of education is that slacktivism is an easy activity that can be performed without much effort.

The effect of social trust on boycotts (H2) is positive, which confirms the theoretical expectations. There is a negative effect of political trust, which is somewhat intuitive: low trust in political institutions and politicians can make people boycott more because their targets could be issues related to the institutions or politicians that they distrust. Political interest and offline political participation have strong positive effects on boycotts. The use of social media – neither for entertainment nor for information – have an effect on boycotts. This indicates that people who use less social media have similar levels of boycotting with those who are active users. None of the three socio-demographic characteristics has an effect on boycotts.

Figure 6.3 The Effect of Social Trust on Digital Activism (H1-H3)



People with higher levels of social trust are more likely to perform data dissemination (H3). Those with lower levels of political trust are more likely to perform data dissemination. Similarly to the previous two hypothesized effects, political interest and offline political participation have strong positive effects on data dissemination. The use of social media for information purposes has a weak positive effect on data dissemination. Male respondents are more likely to engage in data dissemination than females; this was also understood through the interviews and is a very interesting result for further research to follow up. None of the other variables included in the model – social media for entertainment, education and age – have an effect on data dissemination.

Nuances and Explanations from Interviews

The interviews enabled an in-depth analysis of the patterns identified through quantitative analysis. The positive effect of social trust on slacktivism was also reflected in the interviews. Similarly, this happened for boycotts and data dissemination as the positive effects of social trust were also seen through the answers of the interviewees. To begin with, it is important to grasp how the interviewees see digital activism. Many see it as activities performed in a social media environment which can have great impact (Interviewee 3). It was also suggested that there are several limitations to the influence that digital activism might have. One of the most significant limitations identified is that most of the interviewees see themselves as having limited influence towards social and political phenomena, while arguing that people with large follower bases have a greater ability to influence change (Interviewee 3). Other interviewees argued that the main thing achieved through digital activism is spreading the word about events that are happening and to share the opinions of the public on social and political events (Interviewee 5).

Others see it as a valid method of change as governments are aware of the impact of social media, so they increasingly try to engage with it (Interviewee 11). It has further been explained that digital activism activities have sufficient influence to encourage the government to adjust their policies based on public preferences (Interviewee 16). This has particularly been seen with the current government in Greece due to its significant engagement on social media, which has been more than previous governments (Interviewees 11 & 16). Interviewees found that with the current government, the activities that people tend to engage in more are those of slacktivism and boycotts, and examples of those will be presented in the next sections.

It has also been argued that social media activism is effective because politicians do not have the same level of control over social media as they do with traditional media (Interviewee 4). Other interviewees expressed the view that digital activism can achieve great things, but it depends on the personal engagement of each social media user and how much they engage with digital activities (Interviewee 12). Interviewee 13 also expressed the belief that all digital activism engagement plays a significant role in politics, and that a ‘like’ or a repost in our era has great influence.

Social Trust and Slacktivism

At this point it is important to explain how the interviewees viewed slacktivism. Most interviewees referred to slacktivism as something that they did on a daily basis because it is an easy activity on social media. They explained that pressing the ‘like’ button is an easy

way to show agreement with something and trust for the source from which it was published (Interviewees 18 & 22). First, even the most reluctant interviewees said that 'liking' content is something that they do. One reason identified in the interviews which engages people in slacktivism is that they agree with the content or find something important (Interviewee 17).

Interviewees highlighted that slacktivism is an easy way to interact with a cause, and that someone can perform multiple 'likes' on different issues (Interviewee 16). For example, it was expressed that performing slacktivism creates interactions with diverse causes such as #metoo, stray dogs, and wildfires, and strengthens the sense of belonging to, or of being united in, a cause (Interviewees 25 & 20). Some interviewees indicated that liking a post related to a social or political cause can be done in order to support the cause or achieve a goal (Interviewees 2, 22 & 23). Other significant reasons voiced by Interviewees included that they felt they could express themselves through this like, or that they trusted the source of the post they liked.

One of the most common arguments was that the more likes a post gets, the more the audience grows; as such, it is promoted further. In the same vein it was expressed that the power of likes is that they make a post more popular (Interviewee 19). Even interviewees who explained they were not keen on expressing their views on social media or performing more complicated digital activism activities said that they would choose to 'like' to support a social or a political cause (Interviewee 14).

Regarding slacktivism, it was explained that someone who would not engage in the process of creating a post of their own might like the post in order to demonstrate agreement to their social circle (Interviewee 13). It was also argued that liking posts on social and political causes is a daily task, and that every like influences, as every single like counts in these matters (Interviewee 10). It was argued that liking content has nothing to do with self-promotion in these circumstances, and that interviewees do like something because they wish to provide support to the cause by helping it to reach wider audiences (Interviewee 4).

In these terms, some interviewees felt that whenever a post represents their values and has a broader good cause for society, liking it is important (Interviewee 4). Other interviewees argued that liking a post is an expression of their political views (Interviewee 1). Overall, most of the interviewees agreed that linking posts helps information to be spread, so liking content that you agree with and support is important for the social or political cause it contributes to. By liking a post, the person has highlighted that people can learn more about a cause and give it more recognition (Interviewees 7 & 9). An example was given that if a group on social media collects food for homeless people, then liking its posts could be important because the more likes it receives, the more people will see it, thus generating

more support for this cause (Interviewee 6). It was also expressed that liking content is a way to indicate political support towards a politician or a government (Interviewee 3), and that whilst trust in politicians can lead to a like, distrust towards politicians and trust in a cause can also lead to a like (Interviewee 15).

In the interviews, many participants explained the role of social trust towards performing digital activism in general and slacktivism in particular. In many cases this was expressed as the belief that if they personally knew someone who was involved in a social or political cause, this would make the interviewee more likely to engage themselves. One interviewee thought that her own personal network would influence her much more than a stranger, and that at the same time she responded to how her social network influenced her engagement in digital activism: "Yes, because I think that politics is the continuation of social life. So, they are somehow interconnected. My social environment is made up of colleagues, friends, and parents, so yes, they influence [me]" (Interviewee 22). To be more specific, the interviewees seemed to trust the people with whom they interact in the online environment based on their trust towards people offline. As such, emphasis was given to both online and offline social trust, which derives from the particularised trust that people have towards specific groups of people. This happens because if interviewees trust the source of the post (i.e., the user who posted it and/or the original source), it was earlier hypothesised that they may be more likely to perform slacktivism. This was also evident in the explanations that were provided earlier by interviewee 22.

She also argued that she would like a post regarding a social or a political cause if she agreed with the idea behind it. Interviewees 12, 15, 18, 19, and 21 all explained that their social networks, family, and friends exert influence in terms of their decisions to like a post or perform an online activity. These interviewees argued that the influences of their family and close friends impacted on their likelihood of positive engagement with a post due as these groups are trusted. Overall, they explained that social trust significantly influences higher engagement with slacktivism. This was displayed by interviewees 3 & 4 who expressed that when they are active and like posts in order to support a cause, this is connected with their social network.

In some cases, it was argued that in terms of performing slacktivism, the trust that your family and friends have towards you can also lead them to like your posts. For example, Interviewee 25 said that while she was not sure if she was influenced by her social network, she believed that she could see her own influence on her family. However, the most prominent opinion expressed during the interviews was that people are influenced by their social networks in their engagement with political activities or pressing the 'like' button.

This approach was summarised by Interviewee 14: “if there is no support from the inner circle or the family in general, there is no other way that someone could interact with a political cause”. The same respondent added that this is why it would be easier for him to engage with a social or a political cause if someone promoting it was a close friend or family member.

This was also seen with Interviewee 27: “Sure. My family and my environment have influenced me from an early age in my perception of the world, society and the common issues”. Additionally, she expressed that someone who is a close friend, or a family member, would be more eager to influence her than a stranger (Interviewee 27). Overall, it could be observed that interviewees placed considerable value on the influence that their family and close friends have on their online activities.

Interviewee 27, for example, explained that she would like a post if it supported her views on issues such as gender, migration, and support for vulnerable groups. This makes clear that while some interviewees believe that their social trust plays an important role in performing slacktivism, they also need to find common cause in posts in order to decide to like them.

Some of the interviewees also believed that clicking ‘like’ is one of the easiest ways to show support for a cause. Additionally, it is a straightforward way to be active online and to reveal your presence (Interview 1). This position was supported by the way the interviewees explained how their trust in family and friends influenced their engagement with social or political causes: “Yes, it's your microcosm, friends, colleagues and family, it's your microcosm, this is where the first conversations take place and begin, so any formulation of personal opinion is made by what you hear from your new colleagues and family” (Interview 4). Another interviewee expressed the view that their colleagues could be influential, highlighting experiences where she had been informed by them on environmental issues and that the trust she felt towards them had an impact. Trust therefore seems to have played an important role on this occasion, as “it is not easy to trust someone you do not know, but for your close circle you know things and trust them” (Interviewee 11). This implies higher particularised trust and low generalised trust.

Younger people tended to express the view that their social network and, more specifically, their family do not have the same influence on them as their close friends in deciding whether to like a post. This may be related to the differences in views across age groups and how younger people interact with older people on social media; further research would contribute to better understanding this pattern.

Some respondents explained that different age groups engaged in slacktivism to different extents, meaning that sometimes younger people were less active with political causes (Interviewee 25). That said, another interviewee remarked that in order to engage in this activity, they needed to know and trust the other person; otherwise they did not feel they could engage with a post. This reveals the relativity of social trust within slacktivism (Interviewee 5), and explains that based on who they trust, people are keener on performing slacktivism and engaging with their posts.

Recent studies have found that people can develop trust through interacting with their online social networks, and that social media platforms contribute to social capital (Zhong, 2022). This means that both online and offline trust in social networks can drive people to perform slacktivism. Equally, it has been highlighted that the social trust that someone has in their online network significantly influences whether they post personal views or things about their personal life and politics on social media (Zhong, 2022). Most of the present interviewees argued that overall, their social network in general, and their family and friends all influence their behaviour in the online environment. In general, the Interviewees perceived all the different groups comprising their online and offline social networks as influencing them towards engaging with social or political activities on different platforms (e.g., Interviewee 27). The main reason behind this is that someone is influenced by the environment in which they grew up. As such, the social network plays a definite a role in engaging with slacktivism (Interviewee 9).

However, some interviewees expressed the view that agreeing with the content of the post mattered more than whether it came from a friend or stranger (Interviewee 10). In addition, trust in one's social circle clearly has an influence on slacktivism, and one interviewee noted that a stranger would only play a role if he had good arguments in order to engage with a political activity (Interviewee 24). Opinions varied across the interviews and some believed that family and friends do not have a direct impact on how someone engages with digital activism, but that activities such as liking a post can influence politics as a like can increase the audience and promote the information further, and this represents an activity done in order to support and spread a cause (Interviewee 23). It was also argued that for younger people, the social network plays a role in influencing 'likes', but with maturity, personal beliefs become more salient (Interviewee 8). However, that interviewee highlighted the importance of influencing each other in this kind of activity and added that she would participate more if someone from her network was undertaking a political activity.

Interviewee 10 explained that in order to like a post it is important that the post expresses his own views, and if it does, he will press the ‘like’ button. He also said that slacktivism is almost a part of everyday activity, and added that:

> Our colleagues and relatives can certainly influence you to some extent to convey your public opinion, to tell you some views, some approaches that you may not have seen because those who deal with the politics are closed in their own environment and may not have what we call popular support.

Other Determinants

There were also instances where the interviewee did not find their social network to be as influential for sociopolitical causes and as such, they are not very active in slacktivism (Interviewee 2). Equally, one interviewee voiced the belief that with his likes he mainly shows his support for a politician or a political cause rather than it being linked to his social network (Interviewee 3). Another interviewee stated that she would be more influenced by strangers rather than someone of her own social network, because she already knows their beliefs, but the opinion of a stranger is something new. Finally, another interviewee had an interesting point of view as she explained that sometimes a social network (and especially family) might influence you to do the opposite of what they do, but she concluded that trust plays an important role when you perform slacktivism (Interviewee 13).

Some interviewees highlighted the importance of agreeing with the social or political cause in question in order to engage or press like. They explained that in general, their social network plays an important role in whether they like a post, but that they would only like the post if they agreed with it, and that this was also the case with different social media features such as commenting, reposting, or creating a post of their own. It was also explained that someone that was known personally would influence engagement more than someone they did not know (Interviewee 3). More specifically, Interviewee 3 explained: “It would probably play a role in order to be more active only if they were in the same political sphere as I am, not if they were in a different political sphere, even a little bit”. Another prominent point that the interviewees made was that the bigger the social network someone has, the bigger its influence will be, as they believe that people with more social media followers are able to exert greater influence with a like.

From a similar perspective, it was also argued that likes can have multiple benefits, and can turn something viral by boosting its views and spreading it to more social networks. For these reasons, the respondents argue that liking a post is important if there is agreement with it, as the like expresses support for something, especially if it is posted by a politician or is about something that the person considers important. In contrast, some participants

explained how the different relationships they have with different social networks impacts on the level of influence for a number of reasons. For example, many participants drew a distinction between friends and family support, saying that their friends might have an impact whilst others said that family plays a role in influencing their participation in social and political causes. For example: "I believe that certainly our social connections play a role in shaping our political views, my family not that much, but my friends influence it a lot" (Interviewee 1). Later, the same interviewee explained that a close friend would have a greater influence, especially in comparison with a stranger. The influence that a social network might have on such an activity was presented as a 50/50 situation, as it depends a lot on someone's personality whether they will be influenced or not, but the social network plays a decisive role (Interviewee 16).

The reasons why social trust influences slacktivism vary, and include factors such as that as someone grows older they are less influenced by their family and develop their own ideas through their experiences (Interviewee 6). The same interviewee also argued that friends or classmates play a greater role than the family because there is also the factor of the extent to which a family engages with politics, as he explained that his family do not take part in any political activity, but his close circle of friends and classmates more active and influence him (Interviewee 6). He also felt that his personal network does not affect whether he would engage more in political activities, because he believed that in growing up, a person shapes his own opinions (Interviewee 6). Other interviewees agreed with this statement and stated that their networks would not influence them that much (Interviewees 17 & 20). Having considered the factors influencing slacktivism, the next sub-section considers boycotts.

Social Trust and Boycotts

It is important to discuss briefly how the interviewees defined a boycott. First, it was expressed as a way to show disagreement (Interviewee 1). This means that boycotts themselves seem to be a way for people to express disapproval of how companies are operating. For example, one interviewee highlighted that if a company is using child labour, they would boycott in order to tell the company that they should be paying more attention to these matters (Interviewee 4). In many cases the interviewees explained that they would perform a boycott if something was against their morals or beliefs (Interviewees 2 & 5). In other cases they would engage in a boycott for the same reasons, but would try to avoid getting engaged with this activity (Interviewees 13 & 14).

Most of the interviewees were supportive towards boycotts as they were of the opinion that it is a way of expressing disagreement towards a product or the policies of a company. It was also highlighted that, in case of war, they would boycott products and services from the country that had waged war (Interviewee 15). However, multiple reasons were offered by interviewees for conducting boycotts; for example, interviewee 7 explained that she boycotts plastics for environmental reasons. In this vein, understanding the points of the previous interviewees who expressed that they engage in boycott in order to express their disagreement, it is understandable that people see boycott as a method to demand change. Deepening the conversation, it was explained that boycotting is a social phenomenon, as people do it collectively in order to show their disagreement (Interviewee 9). Interviewee 9 also opined that food can also be a form of boycotting, and that she personally does not eat meat and boycotts animal products because she believes that animals are tortured to produce them (Interviewee 9). She further argued that activities such as boycotts organised through social media can lead to great pressure, and referred to a specific case to support this view: "They can have too much impact as happened with the case of E-Food[2] and their miserable contracts. But, through the Internet the situation changed completely. So yes, it can change a situation" (Interviewee 9).

Moreover, other interviewees indicated that they would boycott if they believed a product or a service was against the interests of society (Interviewee 10). The policies that a product or a company has might lead someone to declare her opposition and engage in a boycott (Interviewee 11). However, someone might also take part in a boycott because of their personal values or family influence. Interviewee 11 mentioned that since she was a child, she and her family boycotted milk as a product because they knew there was a fixed price and that most companies were not respecting that. It was also argued in general that people boycott in order to change a situation or to express that they disagree with a company's policies or practices (e.g., Interviewee 12).

A great variety of answers were given to the questions in the interviews, but most people who engaged in boycotts tended to have higher levels of social trust; this was obvious both from the survey results and the interviews. For example, interviewee 1 explained that friends influence their engagement in political activities and that they would boycott something: "Because I believe in the power of the masses, in the power of the public and I believe that if I boycott something, I actively show my disagreement with a political thought or activity". This explains how collectively, trust can lead to a boycott towards something

[2] E-food is a Greek online delivery service company. In November 2021, after the company's employment policies became viral, social media pressure led the company to review its policies.

that harms society. As was highlighted earlier, this sense of collective identity derives from the fact that the majority of interviewees said they would boycott something if it was against their values or would harm society. One of the main observations that most interviewees referred directly to as linked to their decision to boycott something due to a lack of trust towards companies or policies as expected, but emphasis here will be given to levels of social trust and engagement in boycotts.

One of the interviewees stated: “If it was a product of Djokovic, I would easily boycott it”. This was a reference to tennis player Novak Djokovic’s public anti-vaccination statements, something interviewee 3 expressed disagreement with. This is an important case because the interviewee identified that in this example, his social network plays no role in the activities he engages in, and that he would only be influenced by someone in the same political sphere. Despite that, another interviewee (who identified himself as someone who would not be influenced by his social trust in undertaking social or political activities) explained that he would boycott because of certain companies’ companies and in cases where fundamental human rights had been violated (Interviewee 6). This reveals that, as was explained by interviewees 3 and 5, boycotts have a lot to do with personal choices, and with the values and the morals of each individual. As such, even in a case where social trust has an impact on sociopolitical activities, “it is a means of expressing your personal opinion and whether you disagree with the product […]” (Interviewee 12). More reasons for boycotting include cases of war, as interviewee 15 explained:

> If I think the social or political event is very important, I will boycott. Let's say they are the products of a company in a country that is at war. I will try to boycott the products. Not the products of a country that accepts the war, but from the country that provokes the war.

A recent case which illustrates the points of the interviewee is the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in late February 2022 which resulted in the boycotting of Russian products in Western societies as soon as the conflict began (Paybarah, 2022). The interviewee cited earlier explained the importance of social networks both in shaping and engaging with social and political causes and added that if someone from her social network engaged in such an activity she would participate too if she agreed (Interviewee 15).

Some interviewees explained that if the producer of a product was in direct conflict with social interests and/or their personal interests, then they would engage in boycotts (Interviewee 2 & Interviewee 10). Despite that, the levels of trust of each person varies. Interviewee 10 expressed that their colleagues and relatives play a definite role in participating in activities such boycotts, while interviewee 2 disagreed, stating that social

networks would not play a role in his engagement with such activities. Other interviewees explained that they would boycott if something hurt society as a whole, their network, or themselves (Interviewee 16). This interviewee believed that social networks are influential in undertaking or engaging with digital activism. Another interesting view of an interviewee who believed that the social trust plays a great role in engaging with political activities was as follows: “I would boycott a product of perhaps something of socio-political content that I strongly disagreed with, whether it had only financial consequences, i.e., it had no meaning, or if the consequences were only economic” (Interviewee 22).

Interviewee 11 explained how trust in her family influenced her participation in boycotts: “I have done this with regard to milk. We did it as a family for many years [as] we knew there was a limit to its price. If a product comes from another country, I might boycott it. I generally support the boycott”.

During this interview she highlighted that social trust can sometimes provide the motivation to participate in something, whilst a stranger is someone you cannot trust easily, and you therefore first have to search for information about that person’s reliability. A different point of view argued that they would boycott: “I would do this in case where there was no transparency in something and it should somehow just show the power of it, in a way. So, through social media, ‘liking’ something negative, is related to what you want to boycott, and this is one way to place importance on an issue” (Interviewee 19). Additionally, another perspective regarding boycotts was that the interviewee would boycott for important reasons, more specifically:

> I think that in order for me to do that, it would have to be something that would be opposite to my ideology to a great extent. Not that I'm against the idea of a boycott, but I know I'm personally going to do it less often than some people who are more aware of these issues than I am. So, I think I would do it for something that concerns me very directly, say if I learned that a big head of a company might be sexually harassing people, or something relevant. In such a case I would most likely boycott something (Interviewee 25).

This interviewee explained that social trust has an impact on her social and political activities, but she sees herself more as a person who would influence rather than be influenced. This indicates that she believed that the social trust her family and friends have in her motivates them in supporting activities she engages in. This also suggests that social trust influences someone to engage in an activity based both on their social trust but also in the social trust others have towards them. Another interesting view of an interviewee with high social trust was that:

> A boycott is generally a way of exerting pressure either on a company which, for example, has poor working conditions, or a company related to environmental pollution,

> or to block the profile of an abusive or annoying bullying person or [someone who] has racist behavior (Interviewee 27).

As such, it can be concluded that people who feel that they have a collective identity in relation to a social cause or particularised trust, will probably perform boycotts in order to support a social cause.

Other Determinants for Boycotts

Some interviewees had a more explanatory approach in presenting first why a boycott happens based on their perspective, and then giving their opinion. Interviewee 4 explained with regard to a boycott that:

> I could call this a kind of negative advertising. In the same sense that we say that one of our services was good or bad, in the same way I would boycott a product because child labor could be used to make some shoes or some clothes so this is a way of saying you as an ordinary person in a big company what they should do and pay a little more attention to.

In this vein, many interviewees identified boycotts as a means to communicate their personal dissatisfaction with a company or an institution. Interviewee 4 also explained the importance that social networks play since they can introduce someone to something and he or she can learn about it. Or, someone who is active in an activity can definitely influence and play a role in others getting involved. It was also said in the interviews that one of the main reasons to boycott something is if it is against a person's morals, and friends and the social network can influence this (Interviewee 5). The immorality that a product bears seems to be one of the most important reasons for boycotting; for example: "I have not done it recently, but I would have participated in a boycott if it had to do with the products of a company that has some practice that is immoral. As happened in Greece, I imagined with e-food [3], I might have done it". E-food was a case where social media users in Greece boycotted a food delivery company because of its poor employment policies. Social media pressure and criticism led the company to review its policies. Thus, boycotts through social media (a form of digital activism activity) were identified and expressed by the interviewees.

In the same vein, Interviewee 21 explained that he would only boycott a product if he did not think well of it. This means that he would boycott something if it was harmful to society. Interviewee 7 expressed that she boycotts plastic products and products which go against her beliefs, and she wishes to do something to show that she is against it. In this case

the interviewee explained that in terms of her social network, her colleagues are most influential because they share a common domain.

Interviewee 8 expressed dissatisfaction regarding the fact that products are used as a way to show support for a cause: "[…] these things have to be objective and I would neither do boycotts or buycotts". Therefore, it appears that some people do not see a connection between social or political events and policies and products. From a similar perspective, interviewee 13 explained that she would generally avoid boycotting a product, but would do so in order to show a negative attitude towards a producer or a product. Some of the other interviewees would not get into the process of boycotting, or at least not very actively, just because it is not the kind of activity that they engage in; they rely more on slacktivism and metavoicing (Interviewee 14, Interviewee 18). The main reasons for this are that they either do not see it as important, or they saw it as irrelevant to social and political causes. Interviewee 20 believed that there is no influence by others in engaging with political activities, but she would not boycott anything because it is not an activity that she finds appealing (Interviewee 20). Similarly, Interviewees 23 and 24 stated that they would not boycott something for personal reasons, whilst earlier it was noted that the social network does not play a role in engaging with political activities for Interviewee 23, but it plays a role for Interviewee 24. This implies that several interviewees do not see an influence of social trust towards boycotts.

Finally, some interviewees also referred to the possibility that a lack of political trust would lead them into political consumerism activities such as boycotts (e.g., Interviewee 1). Seven of the interviewees stated that they would not perform any boycott for personal reasons, or because they do not believe it is an activity that represents their opinions. The remaining 20 interviewees said they would boycott for several reasons such as war, misconduct of companies, harassment, sexual harassment, environmental purposes, nutrition, and immorality. Most of the Interviewees who said that they would boycott tended to believe that their social network influences whether they participate in social and political activities, and as such they can be considered people with relatively high social trust. These interviewees stated that if they agreed with something and someone from their close circle participated in a cause, this would give them extra motivation to do so too. Now that boycotts and their influences have been discussed, the chapter moves on to consider data dissemination as a form of online political activity.

Social Trust and Data Dissemination

Overall, the answers revealed that high levels of social trust might lead to higher engagement in data dissemination. Most interviewees saw and understood data dissemination as the public release of confidential information. Many argued that they would support data dissemination, but only under specific circumstances. These circumstances included reasons relating to human rights violations, the right to know the truth, public health, and public safety (Interviewees 13 & 16). Other reasons included things that would have an impact on society or things that would bring positive change (Interviewee 16). Transparency in the domain of politics was another reason highlighted as a good reason to support data dissemination (Interviewee 19). Some other interviewees were more skeptical on whether someone can really know whether the leaked information is true, or the impact of leaking such information (Interviewees 11 & 20).

Interviewee 12 stated that he supported data dissemination: “In order to inform the world of the truth, If I had the ability to press a button and publish confidential files, I would”. This participant was the only one to state not only that he would support an action of this nature, but that he would actively engage in it himself. Earlier, he said that the social network plays an important role in engaging with political activities and that he would be more influenced by someone in a shared social network rather than a stranger.

In general, most participants were selective regarding whether all information should be available to the public or not; most agreed that information should be leaked, but only in limited circumstances, noting that usually we cannot foresee the outcomes. An example of this is the answer given by interviewee 1: “I am not sure that all confidential information should be published, but I surely believe that information is something that empowers us and everybody should have it”. Interviewee 1 could be considered as having high social trust. Another interviewee who was identified with high social trust also explained that he is inclined to the same opinion, but went into more detail on cases where he would support data dissemination. The statement below indicates that many participants support the public sharing of confidential data, but only in specific circumstances that would not affect peace or the stability of democracy. It also highlights some doubts that might exist around political distrust:

> This reminds me of the case of Assange who posted a lot of information on WikiLeaks. Unfortunately, nowadays the real news get lost somewhere in amongst the fake news. In some historical events, of course I would support it, but I would not want confidential information to be made public on issues that are current and could create problems in relations between nations or people (Interviewee 4).

In some cases, the interviewees simply stated that social networks play a crucial role in engaging with social or political activities and that everyone has the right to know the truth in terms of the public sharing of confidential data (e.g., Interviewee 9). Interviewee 5 explained that social trust among friends, classmates, or colleagues influences engagement in political activities more than trust with strangers, because individuals know and trust their social network. She also explained that only for one reason would she support the public release of confidential information, and this would be for informational purposes, i.e. to let people know something important; and that she would not do it for any other reason (Interviewee 5). In another instance in which it was mentioned that colleagues have influence and play a role, the interviewee answered that she would not deal with it at all, but again overall Interviewee 7 expressed that she is keener to participate in environmental causes than other causes. Another case where the answer was along the lines of the hypothesis can be seen in this statement:

> I think it is the right of both the public and the people to have knowledge of some issues which are done a little secretly and purely in secret, and result in events and activities that concern them. This chain ends up somewhere in the people, so this information must be made known to everyone (Interviewee 8).

This interviewee also outlined that social trust has great significance in how we engage in social or political activities, as well as on how our political beliefs are shaped (Participant 8). The interviews continued with more participants claiming that social trust plays a role and that at the same time they would support the public sharing of confidential data. Specifically, it was argued that:

> Often it is necessary for some confidential information to be made known in order for the public to know what it is about, because there are some things that are not clear, and many times the use of confidential information can clarify some things in the opinion and view of society (Interviewee 10).

Interviewee 17 wanted more clarification on what data dissemination is and to have some examples of it, so I explained about WikiLeaks and then he replied that this was a situation that he had never experienced, but that he would support it. Another interviewee with high social trust referred to transparency as a reason why he would support the public sharing of confidential data, as he believed that in politics there is not enough transparency, and this would contribute to improving it (Interviewee 19). Interviewee 11 took a more skeptical view and observed that:

> This is a bit of a trap. On the one hand, it certainly has to do with the fact that something good is coming out of this case, a body to be mobilised and the culprit to be brought to justice. On the other hand, other problems may arise, especially if it concerns state secrets. I'm not sure if I would support such a disclosure.

This interviewee also explained that the social network affects involvement in social or political activities. Interviewees with this view also said that this action could lead to greater political distrust. As a general observation, some of the interviewees were quite concerned about the impact that data dissemination might have since most mentioned that problems may arise, or that engaging in such an activity can have unclear intentions under some circumstances. In a similar vein, Interviewee 13 expressed that trust in the social network is important and explained "In the event that human rights have been violated, this is a very important reason for such information to be published and for those responsible to come to the surface. But only for this, in cases where the personal rights of people and fellow citizens have been violated". Interviewee 25 also observed that with so many corruption scandals and situations, not only in Greece but worldwide, data dissemination is something they would support because it can reach wider audiences, including through social media.

Other Factors Leading to Data Dissemination

Some of the reasons that interviewees found important in order to support data dissemination were to inform the public about the truth, as exemplified by the following response:

> Because I believe that some things need to be learned by people despite the fact that the states do not want them to be learned. They have to be learned because this is how we understand the people, and the state to which those things are related. Because many times people think that the state protects them while this is not always the case (Interviewee 14).

Interviewee 18 similarly stated that he/she would engage in data dissemination for information purposes. One more answer also revealed the same position, as interviewee 15 argued that politicians should not keep information to themselves and that they should share it with the public. Equally, it was argued that for these reasons the participant would support the data dissemination to the public for information purposes, whilst she also expressed that the social network influences such activities. Another interesting and cautious view was also expressed:

> If they have any impact on public health and public safety. For such a reason. If it had an impact on society as a whole with the publication I would support data dissemination. For example, if it [relates to] a terrorist act, [or is done] for information like Snowden did, or someone who released state secrets, I would support it.

> Something that would have an impact on the rest of society and would be an issue that would concern me and the majority of citizens (Interviewee 16).

As the interviews progressed, the saturation point was reached earlier for hypothesis 3 than in relation to other questions. Interviewees with high social trust were found to be more engaged in, or supportive towards, data dissemination. The following case continues the pattern observed, as the interviewee stated:

> Clearly so that the world and simple people could know what is happening in the world. In some cases this would be good, in others not. In order for the public not to panic about issues which if we did not know, there would be no problem. But, if I were to support the publication of such information, it would be clearly so that people would know what is going on (Interviewee 21).

The same pattern was also observed by interviewee 22, who stated:

> Unfortunately, many times in the political field things are done to support interests such as economic ones, which we do not know as ordinary people. So, for someone to come out and bring them to light if she has a good intention and in order to 'save' the people or any person individually from some conspiracies or some other interests, I would support it, yes.

Interviewee 6, who earlier had also expressed the lack of influence of his social network on the political activities he would participate in, explained regarding confidential information that: "I think it should be heard. But I think my attitude would be more uninvolved because I do not know exactly what is being played behind this whole game". Interviewee 20, who also self-identified as someone who does not feel that she is influenced by social networks in order to engage in social or political activities, responded that:

> I do not know if I would ever do it or if I would republish them because objectively no one knows if what those cases are stating is true. You do not know which of the two sides is true, and on the internet, everything is monitored and you do not know how that could affect you, maybe in your work in the future (Interviewee 20).

This is yet another instance where a participant with low social trust would not support the public dissemination of confidential information. The basis for the low social trust is thus possibly evident in the answers given in the interviews. Interviewee 23 was another participant for whom social trust was lower, as even though she said that she would be more influenced by someone she knew than a stranger, she added that her friends and family would not have any influence. Interviewee 24 was one of the very few cases with high social trust who highlighted they would prefer not to be involved in data dissemination. Finally, interviewee 27, who also was identified as someone with higher social trust, expressed that she would not do it because it is something that in time can backfire on you and have

consequences, but she also stated that "[…] If there were safety nets for my security and the security of my identity, then I would do it, otherwise I would not post anything". Overall, the interviews clarified that high levels of social trust might lead to data dissemination.

Conclusions

This chapter presented the relationship between social trust and digital activism. This happened through presenting the survey results and the interpretation of interview answers. The survey results indicate that people in Greece engage the most with boycotts and slacktivism, followed by buycotts and data dissemination. Digital assertion and metavoicing are the digital activities performed the least by Greeks. The respondents have low to medium levels of social trust. The statistical analysis illustrates that social trust has a positive effect on all the forms of digital activism.

The interviews supported these findings since the majority of participants expressed that their friends, family and co-workers or those people that they consider close to them, influence them in performing digital activism. Interviewees suggested that apart from social trust other reasons for digital activism were personal beliefs, or disagreement and frustration with a social or a political event. To sum up, both the survey results and the interviews that were presented in this chapter show that social trust is an important reason and has an impact on performing digital activism.

CHAPTER 7: Understanding Political Trust and its relationship with Digital Activism

This chapter will examine the extent to which the different hypotheses for political trust that were formulated in Chapter 2 are supported by evidence. This will be done through presenting the results of the survey and examining how the interviewees responded to the questions posed to them. For each hypothesis, all the relevant answers will be presented, and examples will be offered in order to examine the extent to which political trust can be said to lead to digital activism as hypothesised in Chapter 2. This will include an analysis of how political trust can influence forms of digital activism, which will be complemented by information from 27 interviews. In most cases, the interviewees outline a connection between political trust and digital activism.

Survey Results

Similarly to the structure in Chapter 6, I discuss first the results of the survey and then I move on to the interpretation of interview answers. I start with the descriptive statistics from Figure 6.1 (previous chapter) that show Greek participants rarely engage in metavoicing: on average, 1 out of 10 do so. I then examin the correlations between the different types of digital activism. The correlation of metavoicing and digital assertion stands at 0.59 (Table 6.1), which means that more than half of the people who perform metavoicing will also perform digital assertion. Metavoicing is also positively correlated with other forms of digital activism such as slacktivism at 0.44, data dissemination (0.35), buycotts (0.31), and boycotts (0.21). In other words, around one in three people who perform metavoicing would also perform data dissemination and buycotts, and one out of five people who engage in metavoicing would also perform boycotts.

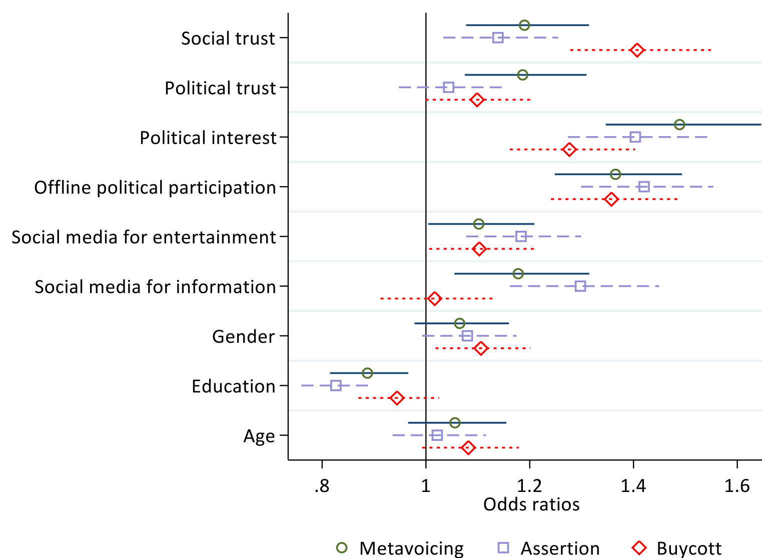
Greeks are overall reluctant to perform assertion (Figure 6.1), one in five would do so. The correlation of assertion with slacktivism stands at 0.47 (Table 6.1), so nearly one in two people who perform assertion would also perform slacktivism. The activity that correlates the most with assertion is metavoicing at 0.59, which is interesting since it was hypothesised that low levels of political trust lead to assertion, whilst higher levels lead to metavoicing. Those who perform assertion sometimes engage in boycotts since the correlation stands at 0.22 (Table 6.1). Buycotts are among the most popular digital activities in Greece: on average one in every two people are likely to perform buycotts. There is a high

positive correlation with data dissemination (0.33), metavoicing (0.31) and assertion (0.30). The digital activism activity least correlated with buycotts is slacktivism at 0.28.

Metavoicing is an activity that often requires trust in politicians, institutions, or the sources of data being reposted. The theorised positive relationship (H4) is supported by empirical evidence: those Greeks with high political trust are 1.2 times more likely to engage in metavoicing than those respondents with low political trust. Political interest, offline political participation, and the use of social media for both entertainment and information have a positive effect on metavoicing. Lower educated people engage more in this activity than higher educated individuals. One possible explanation for this negative effect of education could be that this is an activity through which individuals can express their discontent that does not require a high degree of sophistication or information.

The theoretical expectation for assertion (H5) is not supported by evidence. Political trust has no effect on assertion, but social trust has a positive effect. Other variables such as political interest and offline political participation make a person more likely to perform assertion. Similarly, using social media for information and entertainment make it more probable to engage in assertion.

Figure 7.1 The Effect of Political Trust on Digital Activism (H4-H6)



There is no empirical support for the effect of political trust on buycotts (H6) despite the statistically significant correlation in Table 6.2. Social trust has a strong positive effect on buycotts, which is intuitive considering that this activity is often performed collectively. Political interest and offline political participation influence whether someone would engage in online buycotts. For example, individuals who are politically active offline are 1.5 times

more likely to engage in online buycotts. Those respondents who use social media for entertainment purposes are slightly more likely to engage in online buycotts compared to those who do not use social media in that way. None of the socio-demographic characteristics has an effect.

Evidence from Interviews

The main survey findings suggested that people who have high political trust are keener to repost content from the institutions or politicians whom they trust. The interviews helped in fleshing out the reasons why they would do so, but they also express why in some cases involving low political trust, the interviewees still repost. We start by referring to what interviewee 10 said when he was asked whether political trust has an impact on his online activities: "Yes this is directly related. In a government that you do not trust, you will definitely not like or repost on the internet, it is directly connected, I believe, it has a direct correlation". He argued that if an important cause was involved then they would repost to spread and make something "more known" (Interviewee 10).

This leads to the assumption that when interviewees consider something important and it is posted by an institution they know and trust, they are more likely to repost. It was also highlighted that showing explicit support for a politician is a matter always related to the course of the career of each politician. This means that a politician is trusted or not trusted based on their actions and body of work, and as such, someone trusted is more likely to be reposted. Similarly, interviewee 3 expressed that political trust plays a really important role in performing digital activism such as metavoicing online - this is not something he would usually do, but:

> I would do it if it was a crucial issue of national importance, where I would not influence anyone because if we had a referendum I would suggest and say my opinion that we head towards a disaster. Not that I would influence anyone; just because I would not stand to express my opinion. In any other case, if it was for a friend of mine, a really close friend of mine that would go to the elections with a political party, probably I would do a post, or for something like the vaccine (Interviewee 3).

This interviewee thus expressed that he would be reluctant to engage in metavoicing, but that in a crucial case he would do so in order to express his opinion about a political matter. Simultaneously with his statement that he would use metavoicing to support someone from his inner circle if that person was a political candidate, this reveals how social trust interacts with political trust in certain cases and how the two factors combined could lead to activities such as metavoicing. Interviewee 11 also explained:

> I think it affects [things] because if we had full confidence in the government, I would not have entered the process on my own. I would be sure that everything works smoothly and that there is complete security around all social issues. I believe that trust plays a big role (Interviewee 11).

She highlighted that she would use metavoicing for informational purposes. This introduces the fact that some of the interviewees would use some digital activism activities in order to spread political information. In relation with the hypothesis, this stretches the expectations a bit further, as it provides alternative reasons why someone may decide to engage in metavoicing. As such, Interviewee 11 said that low political trust favours engagement with the different digital activism activities, and more specifically with metavoicing. This may be because when they are frustrated, people feel the need to express their frustration with a political situation on social media, which can easily be done through reposting and expressing their concerns. Moreover, concerning political trust, interviewee 25 expressed that:

> I think it plays a very big role. I think that if we trusted the government more, I would not feel so strongly the need to politicise [a matter] online; that is, I think that what makes the whole world more politicised and in need to express its political ideology are often negative emotions, such as resentment, lack of trust, obviously fatigue, irritability, or something else. So, I think that if there was a party in the government that represented me more, I probably would not have expressed myself as strongly as I already do.

This comment suggests that interviewees would repost if they found something relevant to what they believe and trust. The interviewee continued by stating that metavoicing is related with expressing a political view but also with spreading it in the social network (Interviewee 25). This makes metavoicing interesting for many interviewees because they can express their support or frustration towards something in a way which everyone in their social network will see. Another opinion that was expressed about metavoicing was: *"[...] if there was a politician who whoever offers solutions that have a positive impact either on entrepreneurship or on people's daily lives then it is something I would do and like and repost"* (Interviewee 4). This participant said that he participates in metavoicing since it is one of the digital activities that someone can do which has an impact by spreading something. The interviewee expressed that he would do it regardless of trust, but would repost a politician's post if he thought it would be helpful. As he expressed that if he trusted a politician then he would repost something that the politician originally posted, this is in line with the hypothesis and the survey findings. The reasons he gave for reposting included what he expressed as having a "positive impact" on people's daily lives and information

purposes regarding something that he trusts. Interviewee 15 explained that he has often reposted something and that:

> To repost something, I have to really believe it. I mean, not just agreeing. It should really be something I believe in, and it might irritate me. Something for which I would like to take some action. It's the only reason I post something because I generally do not post much anyway. So, I would post something like a very big event with which I agree or disagree (Interviewee 15).

In terms of whether high political trust can lead to metavoicing, the interviewees expressed that both low levels and high levels of political trust can lead to metavoicing. This contrasts with both the hypothesis and the survey results, which showed a positive correlation between high levels of political trust and metavoicing. Despite this, the finding remains in line with the hypothesis as he expressed that he believed that low levels of trust also lead to metavoicing. More specifically Interviewee 15 stated that:

> I believe that distrust can cause posts and likes and the rest on my part. Like trusting a politician, in one of his posts someone can click a like, I have not usually had the chance to click like because I like a politician - I mainly like content because I do not like a politician. So yes, trust or distrust affects whether you click like or repost material.

Interviewee 23 expressed that "usually because I trust the government, I would do such an activity", then added that the reason to repost something would be to spread it more (Interviewee 23). The aforementioned situation shows that as hypothesised, high political trust leads to metavoicing and that a reason behind performing this activity is to spread more political information. Interviewee 22 also indicated that the trust she has will positively influence her for as long as it exists, explaining that *"I would repost for sure on current issues. They should not be just current news for me because some issues are very serious and need a radical change, but yes, I have mainly participated in republishing such content".* The answers of these interviewees in combination with the responses that were discussed before provide some insights into the reasons why someone may perform metavoicing. These reasons include trust in specific institutions or politicians, or trust/belief in a specific cause. As Interviewee 15 expressed, in order to support a cause she has to agree with it and believe in it. This makes clear that high levels of political trust alone cannot push someone to support a cause and perform metavoicing, but they can act as an influence to encourage someone to use metavoicing both because of the levels of political trust and because of the nature of the cause.

Regarding political trust and online activities, Interviewee 1 stated that *"I believe that my online political activities are influenced by my political trust. The less I trust the government, the more I want to share my opinion and influence".* This explanation represents one of the reasons why there is a positive correlation, but also why this correlation is relatively weak. The hypothesis that high political trust leads to metavoicing is interesting because there were few cases where participants expressed something like this. Earlier, this interviewee said it was quite easy to repost content in order to spread something and bring it to wider audience (Interviewee 1). The same interviewee also highlighted the importance of engaging in such activities to make their voice heard, and the actions of citizens more obvious. The fact that the level of political trust of the participant is considered low in comparison with other participants shows that in this case there is an opposite correlation to that which was expected, since in this case low political trust leads to metavoicing.

As such, we observe a connection that goes both ways, from political trust to metavoicing and from metavoicing to political trust. In other words, interviewees with low political trust claimed that their low trust in the government was a motivating factor to perform metavoicing. Despite that, they also saw metavoicing in a broader perspective, as expressed by Interviewee 2, who said that she would repost in order to achieve a goal. This explains that even though we have a correlation between high political trust and metavoicing, it is not as strong as for other types of digital activism. This was evident both from the survey results which highlighted a very slight positive effect of high political trust on metavoicing (See Table 5.2 & Figure 6.1), and from interview statements such as the above. Interviewee 20 stated that she would only repost something related with a cause such as #metoo, which is a cause that stands up for victims of sexual harassment and encourages women to speak up. Therefore, some people place more emphasis on the cause itself rather than on whether a source of a post is politically trustworthy or not, such as the #metoo movement or environmental causes.

Some interviewees argued that trust or distrust towards a specific politician rather than the political system in general, is what compels them to participate in metavoicing. However, interviewee 24 expressed a complete lack of trust in politics but said he would not use metavoicing either, as pressing a like button would be the most he would do if he agreed with something. This connects with how active some of the interviewees are on social media, but in a way since it is the opposite of the hypothesis that high levels of political trust lead to metavoicing, it hints at a connection of low levels of political trust and **not** performing metavoicing, and a connection with high levels of political trust and metavoicing. Interviewee 21 argued that many people would be reluctant to engage in such activities and

repost things about governments based on their confidence in the government, adding that the political trust plays an important role in doing such activities but that personally he would not repost. This shows that for a couple of interviewees, metavoicing was not an activity that interested them on social media because they would feel overexposed towards who they trust or distrust. Interviewee 5, similarly to Interviewees 1 and 2, explained that:

> I think that precisely because the trust in the government has been shaken especially in the young generation, that is the reason why we republish so many things. I usually see that we republish the negatives, we will hardly publish the positives that the government does, we may not even know the good because we do not trust the government, we get into the process of staying negative and saying I will republish the mistakes the government makes. I believe I am getting into a process of becoming critical, like other people my age have become critical of the government in their posts (Interviewee 5).

A couple of participants believed that low political trust leads to metavoicing, which shows why a weak correlation was observed. It was also expressed that "I would post something if I thought that by reposting it I would affect another person and someone else who might not see it under normal circumstances. Just like if I am annoyed with this fact and I want to express it" (Interviewee 5). Interviewee 14 highlighted: "In general, I am quite influenced by each government, whoever it is. If I think it's something that upsets me, and I want to do a repost in order to publish something I will do it. Whether I agree with it or not".

Interviewee 6 also claimed that: "Trust in government affects digital activism very much because the trust in each government affects controversy" – and on reposting content he added that he does it: "Because it is very important, and it was imperative to be heard. For example, the refugee crisis that we all need to be aware of. For something so important I would do it, but for something less important I would not do it". In the same vein, Interviewee 13 explained that:

> The government always influences and no matter what we vote for or believe, it does not matter at all because governments no longer advocate something specific, they are made up of many different people. So, it always affects the government. Like the current one, it may include people from the far right to people from former centre-left parties. So yes, I would obviously repost some Far-Right view that does not suit me, to display it negatively and project it negatively.

Interviewee 17 claimed that the last posts/reposts he performed were related to a lack of trust in the Greek government, andthat he would repost something important in order to share it with his network. Finally, interviewee 18 also said she had used metavoicing on the

following occasions: “For #metoo, the movement that broke out in Greece recently. For the scandal that had taken place with Lignadis, the director. Mostly with reposts, yes”.

Interviewee 7 stated that she would repost only in order to raise awareness about something that she considered important, and that the political trust may not have a big role but “If I strongly believe the words of a politician, I will repost them, why not?” (Interviewee 7). This shows that even though people usually see trust as crucial in order to repost something, in some cases trust is just the extra factor persuading them to perform metavoicing. This might be among the reasons why the correlation is not strong, even though there is a relationship between political trust and performing metavoicing. Metavoicing respondents perceive that it can influence public opinion quite powerfully, because it reaches a wide audience. Interviewee 16 explained that he would do an activity independently of the trust he has towards a government, and added that he would engage in metavoicing in order to publish something in his social network. Interviewee 9 claimed that she would repost something if she thought it needed to be spread, and that he would use metavoicing for information purposes, while she explained that she could not see a direct correlation with political trust.

Interviewee 27 expressed the view that political trust plays a really important role in online activities and that she would use metavoicing in order to spread information and raise awareness. This was another occasion where the interviewee’s motivation to perform metavoicing was shaped by the extent to which she agrees with a cause, as happened with most interviewees - but again, it was highlighted by many of the participants that trust is important and that in some cases political trust does not play much of a role in online activities. When a participant would not use metavoicing this shows that people who do not trust politicians do not engage in metavoicing (e.g., Interviewee 19). These situations, as explained earlier, concern both the willingness of the interviewee to use social media for activism purposes, and the fact that some interviewees do not wish to expose their political views on social media because they are wary about how this could influence their personal lives.

In general, people with high political trust are more likely to perform metavoicing, whilst people with low political trust are unlikely to do so. People with medium levels of trust are divided on the issue of metavoicing. People who do trust politicians would repost something for informational purposes or because they agree with and/or feel strongly about a cause. Some interviewees explained that they need a trusted source as they would not post something from a political source they did not trust unless they were doing so to criticise it. However, the picture is more nuanced since several respondents explained that their low

trust in the political system motivates them to use metavoicing. Earlier in the discussion, numerous examples of environmental causes, human rights and equality movements were highlighted which people perform metavoicing to support, by spreading information within their own social network.

Political Trust and Digital Assertion

The survey showed no effect of political trust on digital assertion. Insights from the interviewees illustrate why that connection does not exist. In some instances, there was a negative effect of trust on assertion. For example, Interviewee 17 stated that creating an original post was directly related to a lack of trust. He spoke about several reasons why he uses digital assertion, which included the lack of trust towards the Greek government, especially in the case of Golden Dawn where he thought that they should not be outlawed and he also added that he believed that public pressure through a "social media outcry" might bring a political response to a certain event. Activities such as creating an original post, with the possibility that it will go viral and more people will start to express their indignation, was another reason why Interviewee 17 explained that he would engage in digital assertion. Interviewee 15 mainly uses digital assertion to "make people aware" of a situation, because on her social media networks such as her Facebook account she has people from all over the world and there are no barriers when you announce something. She added that political distrust is an important cause for her to post. Interviewee 12 said that in the past he had composed and shared several original posts to inform the world and raise awareness. The purpose of these posts was to protect traditions and culture as a social cause and give information on things such as nutrition in a way which would encourage people to get or stay in touch with traditions. His reason for performing assertion was to influence people for political or social purposes, and is directly related with his lack of trust in the government or politicians. Interviewee 1 argued that the less she trusts the government the more she wants to share her opinions and influence others.

Nevertheless, people with high political trust also engage with assertion. For example, interviewee 23 argued that assertion can be useful to promote causes. She explained that if she was a member of an organization or team, she would create original content in order to promote the causes that it represented, and added that she is a person that trusts the government and institutions overall, and that this would be a reason to engage in assertion. She acknowledged that posts showing the government in a negative light tend to spread more on social media through likes, thus gaining promotion, becoming more popular and affecting public opinion. As such, it is understandable that Interviewee 23 said she would

use digital assertion as a means of "promotion" of a cause or ideas she would like to share with a wider audience.

The answers of other respondents show that political trust plays no role in assertion. Some perform digital assertion to "activate" people and support own critical thinking. For example, interviewee 8 expressed that providing his own analytical and critical thinking on social media is important to him, and that there is no need for everyone to agree. People can comment on his own ideas just as he is free to do on their posts. The reasons he gave for performing digital assertion were to criticise a situation, to provide his own point of view, and to try to influence other people's opinions on a certain event. Information provision seems to be an important reason for people to pursue online activism, especially in the form of digital assertion, as Interviewee 9 explained that such actions can make people more aware of events, and encourage them to actively participate. She continued that even though she personally has no trust in institutions, this is not something that affects her decision to perform assertion. Interviewee 3 argued that (interpersonal) trust is important in performing digital assertion and that people would engage in it to influence others about an important cause or incident such as a referendum or a matter of national security. However, political trust did not guide his actions: "when I posted about the vaccination, an image of my vaccination, because I thought that even if 1 out of my 500 friends (FB) would be influenced and do it, it would be good."

Overall, many different reasons to perform digital assertion were outlined by the interviewees. Interviewee 18 mentioned that one of the main reasons to do so was to share something with a lot of people. As she stated, people nowadays communicate through social media and if someone promotes a cause on social media, many people see it and may stop being indifferent about a situation. She gave the example that she had posted several times regarding the police brutality that was on the rise in 2021 in Greece after several incidents of police violence against civilians. In doing so, even though she said that she would create a harsh original post, she noted that the lack of trust towards the specific government motivates people to engage in assertion. Interviewee 10 outlined that he would create a post in order to *"make his opinion known to the part of the society he is interested in approaching"*. In other words, he uses digital assertion to find people with similar perspectives and opinions, or to share his own views with his network:

> For example, if you make a post and you have a lot of likes, the result is that the public has the impression that the impact that a person has increases more. So, his point of view is more important and the posts he makes have more penetration and a greater approach (Interviewee 10).

Amongst the reasons why someone might create an original post are reasons or causes that they consider 'important'. This was brought forward by Interviewee 6, who claimed that to perform digital assertion, someone should have a really important reason such as a humanitarian crisis. Interviewee 14 explained that he uses digital assertion in order to show that there are people who are not actively involved with politics who have an opinion that might differ from what has been heard so far. He would do it if, for example, something upsets him. Interviewee 16 said that he has posted about things that are relevant and important such as political agreements, and gave the example of the Prespa agreement[4]. He clarified that the reason for conducting assertion is to bring "change" to influence decisions or perspectives, independently from the trust someone might have (or not) in institutions, parties, or politicians. Interviewee 5 expressed that she would post about cases concerning women or political issues such as what was happening in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021. She also highlighted that although she does not believe that she will influence people, she does it anyway for personal reasons such as expressing her anger about a situation. Interviewee 20 also explained that she would create a post for personal reasons, regardless of whether she trusts the government or not, whilst also suggesting that a political post could provoke reactions.

Interviewee 27 stated that she would post in order to promote and inform about social or political events, or even to call people to action or protest because doing so can influence others through social media. It was also highlighted that a possible reason to create an original post would be to express opposition to something. For example, Interviewee 25 described a time when she posted about sexual harassment she had experienced, and that this even reached the rector of her university and the local newspapers. For this reason, she believes that the creation of a post on social media can open up countless opportunities. She also stated that doing so is a matter of expression and communicating views on what is happening. This situation expands the discussion a little from the most prominent reasons discussed earlier, by adding the possibility that some people might present a personal situation in which they were involved because they want their story to be heard by others. This directly relates to trust, since the interviewees who want to do this lack political trust.

Interviewee 7 explained that on a personal level she would only create posts for environmental campaigns and similar things in order to support causes she believes in. Interviewee 11 expressed that although she believes that trust plays a great role in making people react to something they do not agree with and to post about it, she personally has not

[4] The Prespa Agreement is a Treaty signed by Greece and North Macedonia in 2018 resolving the long-running dispute between Greece and North Macedonia over the name of the latter.

done this, and she prefers not to post about political topics on social media. Interviewee 24 opined that such activities aim to raise awareness to those with political control over things, for example the response to the wildfires, but he would not personally engage in the process of online assertion, even trust towards politicians and institutions is shaken. Interviewee 13 also expressed that he would post something negative in order to show his opposition and that although he does not agree with far-right views, he would not perform digital assertion to enter into such a debate. Interviewee 2 also stated that lack of trust motivates her digital activities, but she has not created a post for political reasons. She would possibly use digital assertion to achieve a goal and get a positive result. Interviewee 19 similarly could not recall any posts she had made regarding a social or a political event but said that if she were to do so it would be to affirm her presence; she characterised this as "the art of social responsibility" (Interviewee 19). Interviewee 4 expressed that he would engage in online assertion in order to show his political views or to promote himself if he was actually standing in an election, regardless of the trust that someone might have towards institutions.

In conclusion, most of the interviewees did not identify a relation between political trust and the creation of posts about a social or a political event. They highlighted that their main reasons for online assertion are (or would be) to speak up and show their presence, to influence, to express their frustration, or to show that they are for or against a cause. These are explanations for which the survey did not find empirical support for H6.

Political Trust and Buycotts

The survey data shows no effect of political trust on buycotts. This is explained to a large extent through the multiple reasons – apart from political trust - to perform buycotts highlighted in the interviews. Interviewee 4, as someone with high political trust and a high degree of digital activism, expressed that in order to be implemented, a political cause needs funds, and a buycott is a great way to support a chosen cause and help financially towards its implementation. This raises the idea that buycotts can be used as a source of fundraising when people trust a cause because it matches their political ideology and approve of the source, which may be an institution selling something. Som based on their trust in the institution they would or would not support a buycott cause. Interviewee 11 earlier expressed that political trust plays an important role in performing such activities and that if a company positively contributes to society, this is a good reason to support it in relation to a cause. This interviewee gave an example of a specific brand: "[…] And buying a product that a child in Africa will get another pair of shoes like the Toms do […]".

In this case, the interviewee explained that if there was political trust there would be no reason to engage in a buycott, and that if there was security around social issues then this would suggest that politics work well. As such, this contradicts the hypothesised relationship as Interviewee 11 self-identifies as having low trust, but she nonetheless performs buycotts. Similarly, Interviewee 5 explained that buycotting can have benefits for society and at least it is not done just for profit. Despite that, he held a similar opinion to Interviewee 11 in suggesting that one of the main reasons for buycotting is that trust in governments and politicians has been shaken. As such, at first glance, the interviewees seem to contradict the survey results which found that people who trust politicians and institutions are more likely to perform buycotts. This difference between the survey and interview results highlight that even though the survey showed a positive relationship between buycotts and political trust, most of the interviewees engage in digital activism activities to a medium to high degree. These activities usually have a negative effect on political trust, in that people with a higher degree of digital activism engagement tend to have lower levels of political trust. Simultaneously, this difference in the findings means that even though there is a positive effect, it is not as strong as in other cases.

From a different perspective, Interviewee 3 suggested that he would probably not engage in buycotts, but if he did, he would be driven by his political trust. He offered the analogy of what happens with newspapers and the media; he consumes media based on whether the news outlet support the political party he supports. It is therefore understandable that political trust is a means that influences purchase decisions overall, and that interviewees wish to engage with things they believe in. The simple theory is that the more someone trusts a source, the more likely they are to get their news through it. Interviewee 3 also explained that he is someone who trusts the government, hinting at a correlation between political trust and performing buycotts. Moreover, Interviewee 13 expressed the view that trust plays a great role in online activities; more specifically she said she would perform buycotts in order to strengthen and support a cause.

In order to perform buycotts, some interviewees argued that it is important firstly to trust the source that is talking about the product and the cause that it represents. In accordance with that, Interviewee 1 said that she would perform a buycott in order to support a social or a political movement. This reveals that the reason why most of the Interviewees would perform buycotts is to actively show that they agree with a cause and want to support it. Interviewee 1 also argued that such activities are deeply connected with trust, but the main reason why someone would engage in a buycott would be a lack of trust. This is based on the idea that the less someone trusts a government, the more they may wish to act, share their

opinion, and boost causes that they consider important (Interviewee 1). When someone believes that the government or politicians are not taking enough action to address different social and political causes, this may motivate them to take part in buycotts, to support a cause which is lacking political action or solutions. This is the reason why the positive effect of buycotts in relation to political trust is not as strong as in other types, as also shown in the survey results.

One opinion that summarises the above-stated ones was expressed by Interviewee 12, who explained that he engages in forms of online activism precisely because he has no trust in politicians or institutions. That said, he continued that several factors influence his engagement in buycotts, such as the content of the cause, the cost, the time he has free, and so on, thus exemplifying someone with low political trust who is sceptical for various reasons towards buycotts. This was the first argument that included social factors such as the time and resources which are required by the interviewees to perform buycotts, and it therefore widened the perspective. Interviewee 27 was also another to suggest that she would use buycotts to express her financial support for causes. She gave the example of Zapatistas who came to Europe and sold board games in order to strengthen their cause, and she indicated that she supported their cause. Zapatistas are a political movement in Mexico who want to take control of local resources and use their own military to do so. This interviewee stated that she trusted both the cause that they represent and the group themselves.

Interviewee 27 argued that lack of trust in political institutions is one of the main reasons behind supporting groups that take political action. Interviewee 25 drew a distinction between social and political causes and said she would mainly contribute to buycotts for social causes rather than for political causes, although in extreme circumstances she highlighted that she would buy a product to support the views of favoured politicians. This comes closer to the hypothesis that high political trust favours buycotts, since through them she would express her trust in a politician. Interviewee 25 also expressed that people are reluctant to show their political beliefs through buycotts, but they are more open to contribute to social causes. Interviewee 6 meanwhile expressed the view that trust in the government affects the controversy in politics and that because of this, trust plays an important role in buycotts. This interviewee also argued that an important reason to support buycotts is to boost social causes that the individual feels strongly about. Agreeing with what the other interviewees had said, Interviewee 7 felt that engagement depends on the project and its purpose, and that although she does not believe that trust affects buycotts, she would engage in a buycott to show that she believes and supports a cause. Interviewee 24 also expressed his lack of trust, claiming that he would not perform any buycotts.

Demonstrating a similar mindset, Interviewee 22 said she would support a buycott in order to boost environmental causes and other sociopolitical causes. She added that trust has a positive relation with performing buycotts for sociopolitical purposes or other digital activities. It seems that some people, like Interviewee 22, find that high political trust favours higher engagement in buycotts. This situation was also observed with Interviewee 2, as she also said she would perform buycotts in order to achieve a social benefit. Interviewee 15 likewise said that she would use buycotts in order to support activities for the public good – she gave a great example of the company who donate a pair of shoes to children in Africa when a pair of shoes is bought from them (Toms). Distrust was cited as the main reason for engaging in digital activism. In a similar vein, Interviewee 16 also stated that he would use buycotts in order to support and strengthen a cause, and that he had done so in the past in order to support minority groups, people with special needs, and charities. He added that this activity is done independently of the level of trust in a government.

That being said, the interviewee provided a more personal essence to the reasons why someone would take part in a buycott, clarifying that it has to do with personal support for a specific cause (Interviewee 16). Interviewee 13 expressed that she engages in boycotting in order to strengthen a cause or a charity. Stretching the conceptual essence of buycotts further, she observed that there are multiple ways of boycotting, such as buying bottles and then sending the caps back to the company so that they will buy wheelchairs for people in need.

Given the data presented above, we understand that the interviewees felt that one of the main motives for performing buycotts is to support a cause that is beneficial for the public good, having made clear that in most cases they trust the source as well as believing in the cause. Interviewee 9 explained that they have supported a cause many times by buying a calendar or a t-shirt, and that in this way someone can show their support and boost the cause, which is what led her to do so. Interviewee 10 also mentioned a similar example, which was buying Christmas cards from UNICEF or "To Hamogelo tou Paidiou" a Greek NGO that protects children. He stated that trust is directly related with activities such as buycotts, and that one of the main reasons why it influences is that the career of a politician for example, his deeds and words and their consistency are things that influence on such occasions. In the same vein, Interviewee 26 confirmed that he would buy a product to support a company or institution. He emphasised that he would not make this purchase just because he wanted the product, but in order to support the idea that this product represents.

Interviewee 20 stated that she would not engage in online activism activities like buycotts, and simultaneously that trust is something that does not play a role in performing

buycotts or other digital activism activities. To get some more insight into this perspective, it was mentioned earlier that there are various reasons why some interviewees would not perform digital activism, and these are related with time, money, and level of activity in online networking platforms. Interviewee 14 showed a similar mindset in saying that he would not actively participate in any buycotts, as he would not be in a position to get involved in an activity of this level of involvement. The reasons behind this are similar this includes time, cost and lack of engagement. Another instance where the interviewee said they would not perform buycotts was Interviewee 8, who stated that overall, such activities are mainly done because there is no trust towards institutions or politicians, and that someone should be objective with these things so she would not engage either with boycotts or buycotts.

From a different angle, Interviewee 2 cited one of the main reasons to engage in online activism as being a lack of trust - she suggested that because there is not much trust towards the government, political parties or individual politicians, people find reasons to perform these activities online. As was highlighted in the same interview, the public benefit is one of the reasons to perform buycotts, and since not much action is taken by institutions and politicians to the public's benefit, people end up joining buycotts. Interviewee 17 also opined that buycotts are mostly related to the fact that people do not trust institutions or politicians. Interviewee 18 agreed, saying that one of the main reasons why she conducts online activism is her lack of trust towards the specific government and politicians, further emphasising that she would take part in buycotts in order to support a cause. Interviewee 19 pointed out that providing financial support is a motivation for helping a cause through buycotts. He also indicated that such activities are indifferent to trust, since how someone personally decides to act is a matter of personal choice rather than of trust. Some interviewees also explained that they would use buycotts, but for social reasons rather than political ones, even though they disagreed with Interview 19 on trust, indicating that trust plays an important role (Interviewee 21). This includes environmental causes, or causes such as the #metoo movement, rather than supporting politicians or institutions, thus distinguishing between social and political causes. The same interviewee also opined that most people would be reluctant to perform activities that reveal their trust towards politicians or institutions, and that is why he believes that people engage in online activism activities mostly for social causes rather than political ones (Interviewee 21). Interviewee 23 argued that trust is something that motivates people to perform online activism overall, but in terms of buycotts she would rather not get involved. Although she also expressed that she expects that the money raised through buycotts should be spent on the stated cause/reason for the

buycott, for example if it was to raise money for fire victims, then it should be spent on food and clothes for them, and so on.

In line with the survey results, most interviewees believed that trust does not much affect whether they would, or would not, perform buycotts. The reasons behind people performing buycotts are mainly because they agree with and support a cause. People do not perform buycotts for reasons related to time, the cost of the product in question, or who is initiating the buycott.

CHAPTER 8

Interpreting the results, links with the theory and practice

This chapter presents the main findings s and discusses the major contributions to the literature from three different perspectives. It illustrates how the thesis advances knowledge on digital activism, and more specifically, its relationship with social trust and political trust. Most scholars argue that digital activism is influenced by the tendency to perform offline activism and engage in political participation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; J. George & Leidner, 2019; Madden & Pevac, 2023; Ozkula, 2021b). Others argue that digital activism is offline activism with the facilitation of the internet and social media (de Bakker, 2015). However, this study shows that, in fact, completely new forms of activism have emerged through this digitalisation process such as metavoicing or digital assertion. The findings of this study reveal that digital activism is influenced by levels of social and political trust.

Earlier research shows that the performance of digital activism is influenced by social networks and interpersonal, specific, or generalised trust (Mutsvairo, 2017). The results of this thesis confirm such a relationship and provide more insights into the relationship between trust and digital activism through the case study of Greece. Both the interviewees and the survey respondents outline the key reasons why they would perform digital activism based on their levels of interpersonal trust. Similarly, early findings on political trust and digital activism predicted that institutional trust or trust towards a politician are factors likely to influence people in performing digital activism (Bourne, 2010; Stockemer, 2014). The results of this thesis show that different levels of trust drive people to participate in digital activism activities such as slacktivism, boycott, data dissemination or metavoicing. One of the most important insights brought by this thesis is that specific digital activities were caused by different levels of trust. Past research examined the relationship between digital activism and trust as a whole, without shedding light on specific digital activism activities and the different types of trust at play. This study contributes to the research by examining the different types of digital activism one by one and exploring their relationships with social and political trust.

The first contribution of this study is about the meaning of digital activism: people in Greece who are active on social media perceive digital activism as something more than a digitally enhanced form of offline activism. Although many scholars have claimed that

digital activism is a facilitator of traditional activism, they have also argued that this does not guarantee that the digital activism will be facilitated because it also depends on the degree of engagement, as happens with both online and offline political participation (Nam, 2010). Prior work has claimed that if levels of offline political participation and activism are low, then the levels of digital activism will also be low (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Others suggest that online engagement and its associated intercommunication as well as the new forms of activism that exist only in online environments are all points of differentiation with traditional forms (Anduiza et al., 2010).

The opportunities that the internet and new technology bring are great, and digital activism is not just a facilitator of offline activism. It is a whole new domain that may even generate contradictory findings to those on traditional offline activism. For example, forms of digital activism also seem to be positively influenced by higher levels of political trust, something that rarely happens in offline activism (Lievrouw, 2023). This opens up discussion and paths of future research but also extends the literature.

The second contribution is linked to social trust in online networking platforms and how this influences users to interact and engage more with digital activism activities. This means that one of the novel findings revealed here is that social trust influences different types of digital activism; for example, in relation to slacktivism, people explained that based on their social trust they might like to post activism content. This was also supported through the survey data where a positive effect was found. So, the novelty here is that the more someone trusts others, the more likely they are to engage with some or all of the following social media activities: slacktivism, metavoicing, assertion, data dissemination, boycotts, and buycotts. In the literature there are many opposing theories around why someone would perform digital activism, and what digital activism itself is. Social trust was expected to greatly influence digital activism based on the fact that previous research found that offline activism and political participation are based on participants' social trust relationships (de Bakker, 2015). As such, the theory argues that social trust can influence digital activism through factors such as social networks, group identity in online domains, and as a facilitator of communication for activism purposes (Joyce et al., 2010; Draude et al., 2018). The findings in Chapters 6 and 7 reveal that social trust has a positive effect on all these forms of digital activism.

Earlier studies connected offline activism and offline political participation and unconventional political participation with social trust. This thesis connects specific types of online political participation, and more specifically, digital activism and its typology were researched in relation to how social trust affects or is affected by them, thus adding to the

literature. As an example we can state that the more people get involved with digital activism activities, the greater their social trust and the involvement in activism causes will be (Chen, 2004; George & Leidner, 2019; Newton et al., 2018). Similarly, collective identity leads people to engage in activism (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015; Stolle et al., 2005).

On social media this activity can be understood through going viral; for example on February 28th, 2023 in Greece the Tempi train accident happened, where two trains collided on the same railway, resulting in the deaths of more than 60 people. A social media outcry arose in response to the accident, demanding that the government be held accountable for the situation. The government stated that a "human error" had caused the tragedy, possiblye due to manual operations because the digital train coordination systems that were bought in 2000 were still not in place and the trains could not see one another on GPS because it was not installed. As such, public pressure through social media resulted in the resignation of the Minister of Public Transport. The national collective identity presented on social media and the social trust between users in this case resulted in demonstrations, blood donations (over 8,500 liters in 24 hours) and calls for the government to accept full responsibility for the incident. This situation can also be explained through the findings arising from the survey results which showed that social trust can provide motivation to perform digital activism.

The third contribution to the literature made here lies in understanding how digital activism is influenced by political trust. People tend to express their political trust in online networks through a variety of activities. Some of the major reasons were highlighted in the interviews, in which the interviewees said that they would be keener to repost something from a politician who they trust and support. Nevertheless, social trust also has an important effect on this activity: if an individual trusts someone then they will be more likely to follow him or her on social media and therefore also more likely to repost something they initially posted. The findings illustrate that many digital activities are driven by both social and political trust: slacktivism, boycotts, daat dissemination and metavoicing.

Digital Activism

One of the key aims of this study was to understand how people perceived digital activism. It is notable that many of the survey respondents and interviewees were familiar with things such as likes, reposts, and posting, but they could not understand how this might connect to digital activism and why these activities were known as slacktivism, metavoicing, or assertion. For this reason this was explained to the participants many times in the interviews so that they could understand the context of the research and how a like or a repost can be an act of online activism. It was surprising that many of them could not foresee or imagine

the power or the influence of such an activity, as they apparently perform these activities on social media almost mechanically or automatically. This brings novelty to the literature through adding new perspectives in the classification of the different types of digital activism (J. George & Leidner, 2019) and the simplification provided throughout the research, the interviews, and the survey itself.

At this point it is important to summarise all the aforementioned novelties of the current research regarding digital activism. As was highlighted, the current research placed emphasis not only on past types of traditional activism that have now been digitalised, such as boycotts and buycotts, but also to disruptive new types of digital activism such as slacktivism - an activity that has often been accused of being associated with a lack of action. After understanding its benefits, it is now seen as a crucial activity within digital activism because social media users can stay up-to-date, informed, and involved through it, even by doing the bare minimum. Apart from that. the power of reposting, resharing. or retweeting is deployed through metavoicing. Digital assertion emerged as a new way of expressing frustration on social media platforms which has the power to become viral and to motivate more people to get involved. The role of social media users received particular attention, with an emphasis given to how and why people perform these activities, an area which lacked prior research.

Added to all this, data dissemination was also identified as one of the most demanding activities within digital activism. As an activity that emerged recently it still needs a lot of research. However, this thesis tried to build a foundation by identifying how and why people perform this activity and what makes them do so. This connected many dots regarding how data dissemination is seen by social media users as important to have transparency and accountability where there is no political trust, and where people trust other people over political information. In the meantime, many novel insights were introduced into the debate on how these activities can potentially be used, and indeed why they are used.

The examination of buycotts and boycotts demonstrated that the internet and social media do not simply facilitate these traditional activism activities. Instead, they bring them to a new level where more activism causes emerge, as also shown through the present results and those of other recent studies (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Illia et al., 2022). This can be illustrated through the fact that new activism activities have emerged in the digital world such as slacktivism or metavoicing, data dissemination, and digital assertion, none of which existed in the offline activism sphere. Causes that people may otherwise not pay much attention to are boosted by the circulation of information online. People who engage in high social media use to gather information, as found through the survey results, are also more

likely to perform these activities. Thus, social media and digital activism provide new opportunities to people to express their frustration and to support movements they believe in. This sums up the three major novelties presented here – this thesis's findings are challenging how people see digital activism, by changing the fact that social media is not a facilitator of traditional activism but a venture for emerging types of activism, and by changing the narrative that activism is only related to low levels of political trust.

This study also added to the conceptualisation of digital activism by focusing on how people perceive digital activism and looking at different cases where these digital activism activities were used. It also provided a clear classification of what digital activism is and why it relates to more things than traditional activism. Forms such as data activism, hacktivism, and data dissemination are all digital activism activities that did not exist before as forms of offline activism. If the internet acted only as a facilitator of all these things, then things would be more straightforward on this end and people would perhaps still be keener to participate in demonstrations that they notice in an online environment. As such it is understandable that as a first step, the clarification and differentiation of what digital activism is and is not, was much needed for the literature as it was only presented to date as a form of online political participation.

The interviews that were conducted for this study indicated that most of the participants were medium to high level performers of digital activism; this was also seen through the survey results, where the majority of respondents identified themselves as on the mid-levels of performing digital activism activities. However, the novelty in this research is that it represents one of the first studies where levels of digital activism performance are tracked in order to identify the extent to which people use digital activism based on their levels of trust or other motives. Simultaneously, the novelty brought to the literature here is that the current research represents a mixed method research that used both survey data and interviews in order to generate findings on digital activism. This means that there is extensive coverage of how people perceive digital activism and how many people are keen to use it, drawn through the results of the survey where we saw (for example) how likely people in Greece are to perform slacktivism or other digital activism activities. Previous studies mainly targeted explaining digital activism and how digital activism is defined rather than how people themselves see digital activism. In the meantime, findings on people's social media use and for which purposes were seen solely as reports on social media rather than scientific studies. For this reason, it is of crucial importance to understand that the contribution of this study endorses the literature on digital activism itself since it pays closer attention to each one of its types in line with prior work (George & Leidner, 2019).

At this point it is important to highlight the different types of digital activism and how these contribute towards the findings of this thesis. More specifically, starting with slacktivism, this is one of the first studies that seeks to build understanding of the motives behind someone pressing the like button for activism purposes. Past research has expressed that for slacktivism to take place, it was enough for someone to be active on social media and agree with a cause, but the current study brings multiple different factors to explain why someone would perform slacktivism. Political interest has previously been positively correlated with slacktivism. This shows that slacktivism is not just an easy activity that people usually do not pay attention to, as has been theorised in previous literature. Slacktivism was always seen as an easy social media activism activity that is used to promote political goals or to create interactions without too much effort (Nayar, 2018).

However, this thesis shows that in many cases people tend to press like in relation to posts that express frustration over political decisions, and if a post is created by a relative or a friend then this will influence them to press the like button. This alone shows the influence of social trust, but it also shows that the nature of such an activity is not always straightforward and has multiple dimensions, as there are two different motivators in performing this digital activism activity. The non-commitment implied by the word slacktivism has meant that it has gained negative connotations (Christensen, 2011). Also, the lack of effort, or the simplicity of such an activity, since it requires the bare minimum of personal effort, has meant that it has been quite misunderstood even in the literature (J. George & Leidner, 2019). The fact that someone follows a page or an organisation that posts information related with social or political causes sometimes acts as an individual's daily political catch-up and is how they stay-up to date with what happens in the world, which is why we can now understand more clearly why political interest and engagement is one of the variables that influence slacktivism. There have been many debates around this, but this study sheds light both on how trust is connected with digital activism.

Furthermore, on metavoicing, this research again represents one of the very first studies that highlights its importance in the digital activism literature as well as for its connection to types of trust. To stretch this further, this thesis has tried to identify the reasons why someone would repost or reshare an original post. The literature seemed to be quite concerned with how metavoicing works since so far it was mostly focused on how this could work negatively (Majchrzak et al., 2013), through the perspective that it can be used for manipulation or for marketing purposes by companies or (for example) for antifeminist purposes, rather than pro-activism purposes (Holm, 2019). However, this thesis emphasises the benefits that metavoicing can provide for social media users. One of the theorised

benefits has to do with age, as has been argued in the literature, with the argument made that the internet can reach younger audiences (J. George & Leidner, 2019).

However, this study shows that there are many other factors which are more important for metavoicing than age. Some examples are the individual's political interests and level of political participation. This form of activism joins the same category as slacktivism in being a relatively new type of activism that emerged with the rise of the internet and social media. Another novel finding of the current research is the positive effects that both social and political trust have on metavoicing, providing more insight into digital activism and how trust works in social media networks. As such, social trust has a positive effect on metavoicing: more specifically, almost two out of ten people perform metavoicing based on their level of social trust. This small positive effect shows that social trust is positively associated with digital activism but without being the sole variable of influence. Past research has highlighted that other variables are related with expressing views on social issues, frustration, and political dissatisfaction (Lievrouw, 2023).

Digital assertion can also be found in the same group of activities. So far, it can be understood that these activities are fairly new to the audience and the literature, given that the emergence of social media happened less than 20 years ago. The literature on digital assertion expresses that assertion can have a great social impact and that there have been numerous cases where it was widely used in the past in order to pursue activism goals, such as in the Arab Spring uprisings (Jen Schradie, 2018). It can also prompt other social media activism activities such as metavoicing and slacktivism whilst itself requiring a heavier involvement in social media activism since posting a photo or a video and explaining the social phenomenon by generating hashtags, comments and more takes some effort (Joyce et al., 2010).

This study brings novelty by connecting this to social phenomena and how trust can have an influence in that direction. For example, from a social trust perspective, the more an individual trusts someone the more probable it is that they will see their post and interact with it, whilst it is also true that the more frustrated they are with a political situation, the more likely they will be to create a post expressing frustration. In this way we understand that low political trust can also influence someone towards performing this digital activism activity. This was revealed by the survey data in which it could be observed that digital assertion is corelated positively with factors and activities such as offline political participation and interest in politics or the use of social media for informational purposes.

Data dissemination is one of the most directly involved and difficult activities that someone can enact on social media as confirmed in the previous literature since it requires

more effort and a higher risk (to disclose confidential data publicly) (Cammaerts, 2015; Joyce et al., 2010). It has previously been found that this kind of activity in many cases arises because of political interests and due to a wish by politicians and political parties or institutions to gain popularity or power. This public sharing of confidential information has often happened to represent the interests of one group in contrast with the interests of another, and in other cases of conflicting interests (Patz, 2016).

This thesis took one step further and identified the reasons why someone would perform such an activity. The results indicate that social trust is to a great extent a reason why someone would support or perform such an activity. In most cases the interviewees seemed to support the idea that it is important for people to know the truth, or that this information should be open to the public. Other interviewees stated that some of these things are endangering inter-states relations, and as such it is better to respect confidentiality of data. Despite the novel finding that social trust is a driving factor, it is also boosted by things like offline political participation, and using social media for informational purposes or entertainment.

In terms of boycotts, the literature claims that many groups wishing to boycott products offline have taken advantage of the opportunities and the virality that social media can provide to share their goals with a broader public (Boström et al., 2018). Such groups can be found on many different social media platforms such as Facebook, and the case of BP and the Facebook page "Boycott BP" that was referred to in the first chapter of this thesis is a good example (Zúñiga et al., 2014). The literature presents boycotts as a way to express frustration over a political behaviour or incident. More specifically, in Greece one such case was the "eFood" company where public pressure exerted through social media caused the company to change its policies; some of the interviewees also referred to this case. The novel insight brought here is that people do not just use social media only to boycott products that they would boycott either way, but they also bring new boycotting activities through it.

The other political consumerism activity that was examined here was buycotts. This activity might not be as popular or widespread as boycotts, but it is still regularly used, both offline and online. This study shows that engagement with buycotts is not related to political trust. Instead, it is driven by political interest, offline participation, and the use of social media for entertainment or information purposes. This is similar to what used to happen in the offline mode of buycotts where people engaged in them as a reward (Friedman, 1996). This was not explored in past research as much as it should have been, and when it comes to the digital forms of these activities, it has rarely been highlighted.

Social Trust

One of the key findings in this research was that social trust levels in Greece are medium to low, as has also been highlighted in past research (Ervasti et al., 2019; Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002). But here, it is important to discuss the novelties brought by the research. The first novelty has to do with social trust levels and how these influence digital activism activities. This is important because different levels of social trust influence the different types of activism in different ways. Also, in some cases low levels of social trust might lead to one activity whilst high levels of social trust might lead to a different one. This situation shows that a relationship between social trust and digital activism is apparent, and it has multiple complicated insights to provide. It was also highlighted that social trust arises as one of the most prominent reasons to perform digital activism, amongst other reasons *why* someone would perform digital activism activities, and explaining and highlighting how this occurs is another novelty that contributes to the literature.

The literature so far has highlighted that based on their social network, sense of communication or group identity, people will develop a sense of social trust on social media which contributes towards their performing digital activism (Draude et al., 2018; Verducci & Schroer, 2010). However, the relationship of social trust with digital activism in online environments seem to be more direct than that, since social trust seems to be the reason for forming or joining groups or for participating in a digital activism activity rather than the opposite, and this situation emerged through the research findings. Also, it was theorised that collective action plays a role to a great extent in the performance of digital activism activities, through common beliefs or group identities (Joyce et al., 2010). Despite that, there have been theories that collective and connective action are two distinct things, and that a broader form of social trust creates digital activism activity, such as trust in a specific cause rather than the group identity itself (Chadwick & Collister, 2014). The latest theorisation also comes closer to the results of the current study, thus confirming this theory through the results. This is important for the current study, since it provides insights into why people perform some digital activism activities, and the results show that one of the reasons is because they have faith and trust in the digital activism activity itself. Also, interviewees expressed the importance of social trust in that their personal network plays a role in their performing an online activity, since most of them referred to family, friends, or co-workers as forming an environment of influence towards performing such an activity; if someone they know is involved then they are also more likely to be involved in such an activity.

It is important at this stage to highlight that the survey results present a positive relationship between social trust and all the examined digital activism activities. This means

that the higher the level of social trust, the more likely it is that people will perform these activities. Political trust, in contrast, seems only to have a positive relationship with activities such as buycotts and metavoicing, which shows how different types of trust influence some activities differently. This is the point of differentiation with political trust, since in that case there was a contrast between types and levels of political trust, whilst the pattern of social trust remains quite stable over the digital activism types. This provides the insight that the higher the social trust, the more likely people will be to perform digital activism, even in case studies where the case study country has medium levels of social trust, as is the case in Greece.

On slacktivism, most of the interviewees suggested that in their social media network they tend to have people they trust, or who they want in their network. For this reason, they also explained that they would be more likely to like a post for supportive purposes in order to strengthen a goal. Also, the literature has highlighted that slacktivism could be among the activities where people base on their trust on their social network in performing it. This happens because a sense of trustworthiness, shared values, common traditions, and/or similar beliefs, is something that creates a bond between people and helps them to develop trust (Draude et al., 2018; Verducci & Schroer, 2010). As such, from this perspective people are more likely to like a post by someone they know, and to share common things and trust, rather than the post of a stranger. The fact that social trust leads to slacktivism, leans towards a more interpersonal form of trust and the relationship between two people rather than a generalised form of trust involving the societal structure or people (Draude et al., 2018; Verducci & Schroer, 2010). However, the novelty of this research is that people do not like a post as simply as someone might guess they would do, as trust mainly unconsciously plays an important role in whether they will press the like button or not, which might also explain why people might sometimes like a post only to unlike it later. As such, one of the key findings is that social trust is one of the main reasons why someone would perform slacktivism.

On metavoicing, we expressed earlier that it is among the activities associated with high levels of political trust. The same thing also seems to happen with levels of social trust, which makes it a really interesting case. Most of the interviewees expressed that they would rather repost something that was originally posted by someone they know rather than someone they do not know personally. It has been highlighted than in most cases metavoicing works as a way to express support for someone’s activity, whether it is related with a social cause or political campaigns (Calderon et al., 2015). This shows that people are keener to repost something that was originally posted by someone close to them, and the

analysis of the case of Greece supports this finding both through the interviews and the survey results. It has also been argued that most of the time, an activity of this nature has to do with direct trust in the person that posted in that they are regarded as a trusted source (Parmelee & Bichard, 2013). This was also expressed by the interviewees and the survey results, making it easier to understand why social trust influences people to perform metavoicing. This can also be seen in table 5.2 where we observe a positive relationship between the two variables.

Another novel finding is related to data dissemination. In this case, a more generalised form of social trust and a form of trust in the cause itself are found to lead people to perform this activity (Chadwick & Collister, 2014). Interviewees asked about this topic were a bit more reluctant to discuss it, but the majority expressed that they would perform this activity based on whether they trusted someone who initiated it. At the same time, this activity was observed to be quite related to low levels of political trust. This shows that the bond of social trust needed in order to perform an activity as committed as data dissemination could be classified, and needs to be strong and the individual engaged in it really needs to believe in the cause and to trust the people who perform this activity. Benevolence is also needed in order to engage in data dissemination, as well as trust amongst group members and those who take part in the activity (Schrok, 2016). It has been argued that social trust is crucial here, because of the sense of transparency and accountability that the activity is pursuing (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Patz, 2016). This situation provides the social incentive and the cooperation needed in order to pursue the broader goal (Zhao et al., 2019). The fact that high levels of social trust can lead to data dissemination was also expressed through the findings in that some people interviewees said they would be more likely to pursue this activity based on trust. This was also confirmed through the survey results displayed in Figures 5.1 and 5.2.

Digital Assertion is another activity related with high levels of social trust. This is explained through the survey results which found that in Greece, people are more likely to perform this activity if they trust their social network. This brings novelty to knowledge in the field, since a relatively new activism activity is correlated with high social trust, thus making it more probable that someone will perform this activity based on having higher levels of trust. Through this activity the social media user is seeking to express his or her sense of active citizenship in their online social network - and as such, a sense of community or trust is needed to be able to do so (J. George & Leidner, 2019). The novelty in this case is that there was no empirical evidence that social trust might be one of the drivers behind performing digital assertion; however, the case of Greece is something that proves the

theorisation, as can also be seen in Figure 6.1. In a surprising twist, it was also found that social trust plays a greater role than political trust for an individual to perform digital assertion, and this is noteworthy because the hypothesis around digital assertion was based on political trust. This shows that not only is the relationship between social trust and digital assertion important, but that it needs further research.

High levels of social trust also represent a driver towards performing political consumerism in its various forms. Boycotts were presented earlier as one of the most traditional activities in comparison with the previous activities. However, the novelty in this research is how the levels of social trust in our case study, that of Greece, seem to play an important role through personal networks and in combination with low levels of political trust. Through the years we have seen many cases where people with common values who trust each other have come together to engage in activities such as boycotts (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, 2015; Neilson, 2010). The results of the current study confirm this. Similarly, buycotts are widely theorised to be among the activities where people come together based on their mutual trust to support a common cause (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Countries like Greece, where buycotts are highly popular activities, the levels of political trust are low, and the levels of social trust are medium, make an interesting case. All the aforementioned factors that were discussed in relation to social trust and digital activism show that the past literature lacked sufficient empirical evidence to connect the digital forms of activism with social trust, and the current research is therefore contributing in that direction by highlighting the need for further research.

Political Trust

The novelty in the current section is to show that people with higher levels of political trust engage in slacktivism and metavoicing. Those with lower levels of political trust are more likely to perform activities like boycotts and data dissemination. The latter are often expressed by people to express their frustration, which can explain their roots in lower levels of political trust. Slacktivism and metavoicing are often used to show that they agree with something or their opinion on a political situation or statement, which makes intuitive their root in high political trust. In the literature it is widely argued that low levels of political trust or mistrust are among the main reasons for someone to perform activism (Belinda, 2007). This study shows that some forms of digital activism are also influenced by high levels of trust. The new era of activism that has emerged via the facilitation of the internet provides a wider picture and a broader perspective (Van Deth, 2016).

One of the key findings was that political trust favours slacktivism. This clarification seems to be important for the literature, as so far slacktivism has been theorised to be the laziest activity within the range of different types of digital activism, and it has been thought to have negative connotations rather than positive ones (Christensen, 2011). The interviewees said it was quite unlikely that they would press the like button on something they did not really like. They also expressed that in online environments, when someone agrees with something or likes it, he / she presses the like button because this person or institution is in their social network which means they have trust in it. The novelty here is the connection of political trust with slacktivism itself, since past research found little or no political involvement, political influence over change, and no offline effects (Joyce et al., 2010); Butler, 2011).

This finding is important for future research, since it stresses the importance of an activity both for people and the literature, that was quite misunderstood in past work, with relevance as an activity that has a deeper meaning than the one expected set out here. This relationship of political trust with slacktivism also shows that there are activism types that have a positive relationship with types of trust. This is in contrast with most forms of offline activism and social movements that tend to express frustration and lack of political trust. In this way we understand that digital forms of activism do in fact have a more complicated relationship with the levels of political trust. Political consumerism does have both a positive and a negative relationship with political trust, but this happens because it has both boycotts and buycotts as its subtypes.

The interviewees also made clear that they would only boycott for political purposes if they disagreed with policies or institutions. This shows overall that this form of digital activism is mainly associated with low levels of political trust. This observation was expected in the literature since it has been argued that most of the time, boycotts are enacted as a punishment for political decisions or as a way to express political dissatisfaction (Friedman, 1996). As such, it was also anticipated that political consumerism (that includes boycotts and buycotts) will be based on various reasons why someone would perform each of these activities, which are related with trust. People with higher levels of political trust are expected to perform buycotts, whilst people with lower levels of political trust tend to perform boycotts (Copeland, 2014). This is also relevant in the digital versions of these activities as buycotters were found both through the survey results and interviews to have higher levels of political trust, whilst boycotters have lower levels. This provides the insight that in some cases, some digital activism activities do not deviate much from their traditional forms in terms of the reasons why people perform them.

Another digital activism activity associated with low levels of political trust is data dissemination. Since this activity represents a relatively new activity there was not much prior literature on what drives people to engage in it, but as was mainly expected, low levels of political trust are amongst the drivers. More specifically, the initiation of data dissemination is due to the lack of trust towards the confidential information held by governments and a desire for its public opening; an example of this is WikiLeaks (Sifry & Rasiej, 2011). On this case also, the results of the current research as shown in Figure 5.3 express the expectation that lower levels of political trust lead to data dissemination. The novelty here is how the high levels of social trust that were found to influence this activity are also combined with the low levels of political trust that are required to initiate this activity. This means that certain digital activism activities seem to simultaneously require high social trust and low political trust in order to initiate them. This can create many debates on how some digital activities might be related at the same time with different levels of trust and across different types of trust, which makes this a complicated but interesting area for further research. For specific digital activism activities, trust and distrust seem to play a great role, since trust in people is what shapes the community to perform this activity, whilst political distrust is the main reason leading to data dissemination (Schrok, 2016). This can be understood from the results on data dissemination, where people in Greece stated that they would be more likely to engage in it if their friends, family, or co-workers were also engaged with it. Most of people in Greece are are more probable to perform these digital activism activities based in their trust. This applies to slacktivism, boycotts and data dissemination.

Social media is a place where many users seek to express both their frustration with, or support towards, causes, politicians and institutions (J. George & Leidner, 2019). Twitter seems to be the most politicised social media platform, since users tend to interact with politicians, post tweets and retweets, and express their beliefs on political affairs, as well as engaging with politicians (J. George & Leidner, 2019). This situation is exactly what brings the novelty to the current research. People express their support through social media through retweeting or reposting, in what is known in the literature as metavoicing. This digital activism activity differs from the previous ones along with buycotts since they were both associated with high levels of political trust. Who would have thought before the emergence of social media that activism can be associated with high political trust? Metavoicing itself can be used as a means of expressing political trust since users are likely to repost something from a trusted politician or an institution (Hong & Nadler, 2011). Some interviewees expressed that high political trust is one of the main reasons to repost something

related with politics on social media, but there were also some interviewees who said that they would also repost something they disagree with and would write a small personal comment on the situation. This was discussed in relation to the survey results set out in Chapter 7.

As with most traditional forms of activism, people tend to express their concerns regarding an event or a political situation by making personal comments, as also happens in traditional media. Many incidents that have happened in the past have shown that people used digital assertion in order to promote things such as frustration about police violence, political dissatisfaction, supporting gay rights, movements against domestic violence or child abuse, and campaigning for work rights - as well as political revolutions such as the Arab Spring (Joyce et al., 2010); Schradie, 2018). Digital assertion is used as an activity to express dissatisfaction and the need for change. This thesis finds that this is not caused by political trust, but by social trust.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of all the novel findings that were brought to the literature by the current research. Three major contributions to the literature were explained. The first contribution related to exploring digital activism as a concept. Most earlier scholarship argued that digital activism is traditional activism which has been enhanced and facilitated by technological means, but the latest literature seems to argue that digital activism is actually much more than that. New activism activities have emerged, thus changing the way digital activism is perceived in comparison with traditional methods of activism.

Another point was that since various forms of digital activism such as slacktivism, data dissemination, digital assertion, and metavoicing, are relatively new activities, they have not yet been examined in relation to social or political trust. As such, the second major contribution has to do with how social trust influences digital activism itself, with the present study finding that higher levels of social trust positively influence all the examined digital activism activities. It was also found that different levels of social and political trust lead towards different types of activities. Furthermore, even activities with a more traditional essence, such as buycotts and boycotts, were found to be influenced by the digitalisation of activism.

CHAPTER 9: Conclusions

This thesis has illustrated the effect of social and political trust on different forms of digital activism. The theoretical framework identified social and political trust as key drivers in performing activism in online social networks. The three main findings of the thesis are that it offers a new and precise conceptualisation of digital activism, that social trust influences those who perform digital activism, and that political trust also influences them. The contemporary forms of digital activism are discussed and analysed through a literature review, revealing both how traditional activism evolved on social media platforms and how some new types of activism emerged. However, these phenomena have been criticised for widening social gaps since age, finances and technological education mean that not everyone has the same means and equal access to get involved with an activist issue on social media (Oser et al., 2013). The thesis defined digital activism in a social network setting where conflict, resistance, or even support for a cause take place through various different activities on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media networks such as likes, posts, comments, reposts, and spreading the word. These activities were also examined in terms of how different forms of trust influence and motivate the performance of these activities. The case of Greece was chosen for study, as a context in which slacktivism, metavoicing, digital assertion, boycotts, data dissemination, and buycotts were examined one by one in relation with different forms of trust in order to establish their connections.

The first section of the current chapter discusses the main findings and the contributions. It establishes three main contributions to knowledge in the field regarding how digital activism works as a concept, how social trust influences digital activism, and how political trust influences digital activism. These comprise theoretical contributions, empirical contributions, and methodological contributions and they also provide some space for wider contributions to political sciences. Then, a discussion section identifies the current debates regarding digital activism and summarises the different forms of both social and political trust. This is important because Chapters 1, 2, and 3 confirmed the many debates around and definitions of what digital activism is and which activities should be theorised as impactful upon it. As the literature review showed, there is much scholarly work on social and political trust but it provides insufficient coherent evidence on, and discussion of, online social networks and the functioning of social media. Various limitations were found through studying the current literature, an overview of which will also enable the present study to

identify where further research is needed. Early on in the first two chapters, the theory around digital activism, social trust, and political trust was presented which permitted the identification of gaps in the literature around which the hypotheses were formed. These theoretical and methodological gaps add to the contributions of the current thesis. The three main contributions from the current thesis are: the conceptualisation of digital activism, understanding of the influence of social trust on digital activism, and understanding of the influence of political trust on digital activism. These contributions can be classified as theoretical, empirical, and methodological.

Empirical contributions

The empirical contributions of the thesis facilitate understanding of the reasons behind the performance of digital activism, including the motivating factors. The results of the interviews provide a personalised perspective of those who do and do not engage in digital activism in its various forms, and for their reasons. The most important point is that social trust leads to all the examined forms of digital activism, and both high political trust and distrust have been found to be conductive to different digital activism activities.

Limited literature has examined social and political trust in relation to digital activism, with some studies reporting their connections with offline activism or with online political participation without providing direct evidence that social and political trust are conductive to digital activism. Therefore, the current thesis makes an impactful contribution to the existing literature. There has been a vast amount of prior literature on what activism or even digital activism is (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Lundgaard, 2016; Nam, 2010; Oser et al., 2013), but most of this literature has simply conceptualised digital activism as a facilitator of traditional offline activism (Gibson & Ward, 2009; Kaun & Uldam, 2018; Sivitanides & Shah, 2011; Suwana, 2019). However, a strong contribution provided by the current study is that it focuses more on how some activities that emerged through digitisation have differentiated themselves from the traditional forms. There has been very little literature focusing on the similarities and differences between digital activism and traditional offline activism and their respective typologies, with research tending to focus on instances where either/both online and offline were used in order to achieve something. This has had the effect of undervaluing many perspectives on, and outcomes of, digital activism.

The findings of this study highlight that high social trust influences people towards performing all the forms of digital activism. This contribution is based on empirical evidence about how people perform digital activism activities based on their social trust. Most of the interviewees here expressed that trusting the people who are close to them would encourage

them to perform an activity related to activism online. Also, the data acquired from the survey showed that people are more likely to perform digital activism based on their existing social trust. Overall, high levels of social trust were found to influence all digital activism activities and to be one of the major driving factors behind them. This contribution matters for political science since it is one of the first instances where digital activism has been directly connected with social trust, and it endorses the literature on how people participate in political causes and other activities in online environments based on their trust. Political trust influences four out of six digital activism activities covered here. This is a strong contribution to the literature because prior studies have not provided enough evidence about the effects of political trust on forms of digital activism. Overall, there have been claims that low political trust might lead towards activism, and in our case digital activism activities. However, the literature has rarely claimed that high levels of political trust are conductive to digital activism.

Viewing digital activism as a completely new field of activism permits researchers to more fully understand the contemporary digital setting and the new capabilities brought through technology as well as behavioural patterns on social media and the causal mechanisms behind engaging with digital activism activities. This happens because some digital activism activities emerged that did not exist in the offline activism, e.g. slacktivism, data dissemination, metavoicing or digital assertion. Even though previous studies have argued that there is no offline effect in many of these activities (Joyce et al., 2010), the current study showed how people perform activities such as boycotts also in the offline environment, as showcased by Boycott BP (Zúñiga et al., 2014), or in the case of Greece, with efood. Additionally, by differentiating online activism from traditional forms and explaining the similarities and differences we can see the emergence of some trends and trace how people are using social media to speak out publicly about things that are happening in a society.

Additionally, although the literature has argued for decades that social and political trust are related to with activism (Christensen, 2011; J. George & Leidner, 2019; Halupka, 2014), evidence on how digital activism is influenced by these forms of trust was lacking. This thesis established this relationship since many interviewees reflected on the reasons why they perform digital activism based on trust. Trusting someone is a reason to press the like button on a social media post. This situation arises when social trust in an online network comes through personal friends and acquaintances who are known and trusted (Christensen, 2011; Halupka, 2014). The results also highlighted that social trust is conductive towards slacktivism and other digital activism activities.

The Greece case study makes an important contribution regarding social and political trust, connected with how people use their social trust in order to perform an activity. The results of the thesis show that people are more likely to perform digital activism based on their high social trust. This is the case for all the examined digital activism activities, and was supported empirically through the findings of the current research and justified by the interview data. The same situation was also observed with political trust, where numerous reasons to perform a digital activism activity were identified based on the trust or distrust people feel towards the relevant institutions and politicians.

The thesis thus challenges the traditional definitions around digital activism, connecting it with the most relevant literature and addressing most of the existing theory around digital activism. The close relationships between social and political trust and digital activism are also confirmed by the survey results and the interviews. This could have been predicted, since offline activism is also influenced by forms of trust. However, one of the novelties here is that trust does not always act in the expected ways. This is especially true for political trust, since it was found that high levels of political trust can lead to digital activism activities such as slacktivism and metavoicing.

Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this thesis add to the literature on digital activism by building understanding of the essence of digital activism, the types of digital activism that people engage in, and the overall relationship that this activism has with trust. This thesis provided a functional definition of digital activism as a range of online activities that are undertaken in order to express frustration or show political support. In Chapter 1 the typology of digital activism was presented, along with its subtypes of wider categories in political sciences, revealing the need for an adaptable framework with validity and reliability. This helped in refining the concept of digital activism since the literature lacked consensus on the set of activities considered to be digital activism. In academic research which seeks to examine an ever-changing environment such as social media and activism, the analytical framework becomes the main novelty from a theoretical standpoint.

In this case, it generates understanding that on social media platforms, there are always upcoming points of discussion and activism debates that arise based on the human habit of openly and publicly discussing issues that arise in a social context or a society. This thesis proposes that digital activism should be considered as comprising each one of the different activities, and that it should be considered as a new domain. The typology of digital activism represents an important contribution since it draws attention to the importance of

each one of the different types, while taking the analysis a step further by providing details of each type of digital activism which were scattered in the literature. Taking slacktivism as an example of these types, many different studies have previously regarded it as a simple activity without adding much insight (van Deth, 2016). However, this thesis has presented numerous debates around slacktivism and each of the other types when presenting the definition of digital activism in the earlier chapters, and this is important from a theoretical perspective because a fuller explanation of what slacktivism is and its potential use has been provided. By building around one of the most prior coherent studies on digital activism (George & Leidner, 2019), it was easier to differentiate the types and enrich them through debating the findings of other studies. The contribution on typology is that this thesis took the types one by one and set clear boundaries on what each activity represents, aspects that were quite vague in the past literature.

On the basis of the current findings, some major theoretical contributions have been added. First, this thesis has highlighted that most forms of digital activism are interconnected and that it is probable that an individual will perform more than one digital activism activity. This means that someone who performs slacktivism might also perform buycotts or metavoicing. Therefore, it is important to mention once again that one of the biggest causal mechanisms behind performing digital activism through any of the identified activities is social trust. Another important step in adding to the literature was to connect the dots on how digital activism represents an evolution of traditional theories. As such, the main contribution here is that digital activism was presented as a form of online political participation; this was highlighted based on the fact that users perform activities in order to stay politically active and/or bring change, and these aims are directly connected to political participation (Conge, 1988; Verba, 1967).

The thesis also contributes to the digital activism literature by taking the typology beyond its classic form. (J. George & Leidner, 2019; Milbrath, 1965)) typology was presented in combination with the digital activism definitions provided by George & Leidner (2019), to form a basic typology of all digital activism activities. Three main types of digital activism activities exist as defined by George & Leidner (2019), which are Digital Spectator Activities, Digital Transitional Activities, and Digital Gladiatorial Activities. Then, the present thesis explained that all the different types of digital activism itself, such as slacktivism, metavoicing, data dissemination, digital petitioning, buycotts, boycotts, hacktivism, and data activism fall under these categories. The findings also highlight something that was hypothesised in the current study, but which the prior literature had not evidenced, which was that higher levels of political trust can represent a causal mechanism

behind the performance of digital activism, through activities like buycotts, slacktivism, or metavoicing. However, in some instances this is still debated as people also sometimes repost content to criticise it and express frustration, as was illustrated through the empirical evidence presented in the thesis. Thus, the classic typology was discussed, and how these types evolved into what is known as digital activism was explained. This contribution is important from the perspective that not many studies have sought to explain the modern-day typology of activism in online networks. This current thesis therefore adds clarity to the typologies and contributes towards shaping a clearer definition.

The current case also enriched theory by presenting new theoretical assumptions and how they connect activism to the various forms of trust, but also shed light on how and why social media users perform digital activism. This was shown both through the survey results, where respondents initially highlighted that they would perform such activities, but also through the interviews, where the participants gave in-depth explanations of the reasons why they would perform digital activism, which activities, and whether or not this was connected with forms of trust. As such, from an empirical perspective we can also highlight that the different forms of activism are not only influenced by trust, but also by other digital activism activities. This means that someone who performs a digital activism activity, for example slacktivism, is more likely also to perform another digital activism activity such as metavoicing, digital assertion, boycotts, and so on. Digital activism activities have a positive effect within and between them, and someone who performs digital activism usually engages in more than one activity. Another minor contribution the results make to knowledge in the field is that there is a correlation between most digital activism activities, thus making it more likely that someone who is performing one activity will also perform more.

A theoretical model was developed in order to examine the relationship between forms of social and political trust and the different forms of digital activism. This theoretical contribution was also empirically tested, and the findings are unfolded in the empirical contributions section. Past research has not emphasised the digital aspect (Draude et al., 2018; Verducci & Schroer, 2010), whilst the theoretical model viewing activism as a form of online political participation can guide future research in understanding digital activism and its driving factors. This analytical framework developed here, which allows the study of the effects of social and political trust on digital activism, is important because it reveals the reasons why individuals may perform these activities. Overall, it will help to inform further research on both activism and trust as a starting point, as the current research provides the basis of this relationship.

Methodological contributions

Methodologically speaking, it is also important to highlight again that the current study is a crucial case study that focuses on activism via social media in the online environment in one country, Greece, and the relationship this has with forms of trust. The past literature on digital activism explored methodological contributions derived from social and political sciences and used qualitative (J. George & Leidner, 2019)or quantitative methods (Bostanci, 2019; Kirik & Cetinkaya, 2021; Ozkula, 2021a; Ratnasari et al., 2021). The current study took a step further by arguing that a mixed methods approach was a required step in order to be able to draw relevant and insightful results from the chosen case. The benefit of using the mixed method approach in the current research was that it enabled the study to discover how many people in Greece perform digital activism, how often they do so, how many times they do so based on their social and political trust, as well as the reasons why they perform this activity online and their motivating factors, all through the gathered data and sets of information. Overall, the study highlighted that a mixed methods approach is helpful in dealing with digital perspectives, as it can help to reveal the motives behind deciding to do something online rather than offline. Also, mixed methods research on digital perspectives enriches the body of work in the field with more data than a single methodology can achieve (Morte-Nadal & Esteban-Navarro, 2022).

Concerning activism as a whole, many studies have used mixed methods to do the data collection and the analysis procedures especially in recent years (Baran & Stoltenberg, 2023; Haugestad et al., 2021). In some of these studies no distinction was drawn between online and offline activism, although some referred to activism with the use of hashtags and other digital means. However, no obvious argument was made regarding how and why mixed methods are most suitable in digital activism research. The current thesis takes this reasoning one step further, and the results contribute to explaining why digital activism researchers should use mixed methods and the benefits of doing so. The use of a mixed methods approach helps to generate relevant results by providing both qualitative and quantitative data. This is useful for digital activism since through the quantitative data it is possible to see how many people engage in, and how often they perform, digital activism, while the qualitative part provides in-depth justifications and reasons why people perform digital activism. This missed methods approach is also the main point of differentiation of the current thesis from past research since it provides both qualitative and quantitative data in a research domain that is relatively new.

A single case study permits to the researcher to understand the contemporary politics of a country, and as such, it is widely used in this domain (Pepinsky, 2019). This thesis

provided a case study of social and political trust in relation to activism in a digital setting, which is a research area lacking in sufficient data or theory, which is why both qualitative and quantitative data were needed. The thesis used a mixed methods model comprising both historical and empirical data, the latter involving collecting survey data, which were then analysed along with the responses of the interviewees. The contribution here is that mixed methods research examining the relationship of forms of trust and digital activism is needed in this specific research area, since it provides both quantitative and qualitative data that help to build a deeper understanding of an understudied research area. This approach provides accurate estimations since the claims of the current thesis are examined through multiple perspectives. It also reflects the complex nature of research involving online technology, innovations, and scientific domains that are relatively new and have existed for less than 20 years. Greece is a crucial case study for two main reasons - first of all, levels of trust are traditionally low, and secondly, levels of social media use and internet penetration are relatively high.

One of the methodological contributions this study makes in terms of how the topic is approached is associated with using new items in surveys that can help in gauging causal mechanisms and be replicated in other settings. This means that the originality of the survey questions addressing "whether" and "how" social and political trust influence the performance of digital activism met the need for original survey questions operating at a different level. This can also be done in future research in order to examine the relationship between two different variables. The same happened regarding the interview questions, which were formed in such a way as to examine the influence of forms of trust towards digital activism, and again, this could be applicable in future research. Simultaneously, the way the questions were formed to gain information on online settings may also be helpful to future researchers.

Contributions to the broader field of political science

One of the major contributions this research makes to the broader field of political science is that it provided insights and empirical contributions on what digital activism is. This adds clarity to the political science literature, in comparison with past research where definitions of digital activism varied (Joyce et al., 2010; de Bakker, 2015), thus creating confusion. As such, the political science field acquires more information on the typology and the causal mechanisms behind performing digital activism. Forming this way a field of political science that is well defined along with its typology. It also brings the connection of social and political trust with digital activism. This is important because in the prior literature on

political sciences and digital activism there was insufficient evidence that social and political trust can lead to different digital activism activities.

This work represents a starting point for political science to track how things are different in offline and online politics, and the main differentiations between the two. This claim can be supported by the data collected through the surveys and the interviews, since many activities that are performed in online environments were found to be completely different to offline ones. For example, there is no way to perform slacktivism or metavoicing in the offline world. It is also clear that social media is a novel field in political sciences research and digital activism represents something that is directly influenced by that. In past research there is only a small extent to which we were able to track the influence of social media in political sciences. However, the current thesis shows how social media can influence politics from different perspectives. Politics has the potential to become more participatory and people can also develop both conventional and unconventional means of participation. As such this thesis is not only helping in understanding digital activism but provides great insights in order to start understanding the activities that people perform online, without limiting this on social media. Since people are using social media more and more for communicational purposes this highlights the importance of such insights. In this sense, it contributes towards a better understanding of the political communication in the online media and how the media are used by politicians. It provides insights on how and why people tend to be active online, what do they want to achieve and how this is related to politics.

There are also other contributions of the current thesis in. the literature. For example, it shows that both social and political trust can become driving factors to perform some online activities. This can be linked to more general participatory activities, which illustrates the multifaceted influence that online environments have. Moreover, the influence of social and political trust on digital activism can be also linked to broader issues of legitimacy or democracy. In terms of legitimacy, we can understand at a great extent how people see political authorities through the use of social media. In relation to democracy, the findings of thesis raise question marks on how people in democracies use social media as a communication tool or how they do express their frustration.

Limitations

One of the major limitations of the current research is that both the interviews and the survey were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be seen as limiting in various ways. First of all, it is important to highlight that due to the timing of the data gathering,

which was during lockdowns and distance measures, the interviews were conducted online and not in person. This is a limitation in that people who are not very familiar with technological means or phones would not be able to participate in the interviews or in the survey. The lack of physical cues in online interviews is another limitation, since it is harder to build a connection with the interviewee. It is also harder for the interviewee to do an interview through the screen and it is also harder to understand the body language. Additionally, during the pandemic it is probable that levels of social and political trust were low, given the general frustration with the pandemic, the lack of socialising, and the low trust in how governments and institutions were tackling the pandemic and the measures taken. However, in Greece, most people did believe that the government managed the pandemic in the least painful way, and trusted the measures that were imposed; some interviewees mentioned this. Despite that, on a social level Greek society was fragmented between those who believed that measures were needed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and those who believed that these things were not needed, or who even followed conspiracy theories.

Another limitation relates to the surveys, which tried to explain digital activism and how certain activities might be associated with social or political causes. However, since the survey had to be as short as possible, so detailed definitions could not be used, it is probable that some people did not entirely understand what digital activism is, or grasp all of the different activities. Furthermore, another limitation related to how many digital activism activities were presented. The survey presented selected digital activism activities and not all the possible digital activism activities that exist. The six digital activism activities presented were those that the study's hypotheses were based upon, leaving at least another four or five activities that were not examined in depth outside the discussion, such as digital petitioning, botivism, hacktivism, E-funding, and data activism. These activities were not included in the surveys and the interviews for two reasons: first, because most of them are of a more complicated nature and the study participants would have needed longer and more detailed justifications, and secondly because the activities that were presented in the current thesis were deemed to be more easily understood by the public. These excluded activities could therefore be studied further regarded whether they have the same tendencies as the activities included in the surveys and the interviews. The study relies on self-reported data regarding digital activism both in the survey and in the semi-structured interviews. This is a limitation that could have not been overcome with an objective check of respondents' digital activism.

A further limitation of the study is the questionable generalisability of its results, which is usually the case with case-study research (Rohlfing et al, 2012). Greece can be regarded as a representative case of European countries with low levels of political trust, medium- to high-level internet penetration across the country, and high levels of social media activity. It has been highlighted that in many places, people might not have good internet access for numerous reasons, such as technological education, financial capability, or even age. However, Greece has a high proportion of daily social media users, making it one of the most active countries and with the highest percentage of social media usage in Europe. This brings the limitation that some people might not have been able to participate due to a lack of technological knowledge or a lack of internet or technology access. This means that the sample is representative of Greek population and not probabilistic, and this is a limitation since the survey was done with online means and more people who are digitally active were selected.

Further Research

This thesis identified several literature gaps in addition to presenting its own findings. As was highlighted earlier, many novel insights were presented on the relationship of forms of digital activism with social and political trust. These show that this is a relatively new research domain, so it is important to discover more about it, such as why people tend to express their frustration online, or which criteria they use to trust people from online networks. One of the main focuses of future research should be to explore more the typologies of digital activism. The present research attempted to define digital activism as a form of online political participation involving collective and connective action, and presented activities such as slacktivism, metavoicing, boycotts, buycotts, digital assertion, and data dissemination; but many other activities could also be examined in depth such as e-funding, botivism, digital petition signing, hacktivism, and data activism. Those activities were not examined in relation to social and political trust in depth in the present work, and there is a gap in the literature regarding the driving factors behind these activities. It can also be highlighted that many different studies indicate different digital activism activities and more emerging activities such as hashtag activism and so on, that could also be studied more in order to understand both the activity as well as the causal mechanisms.

Additionally, social and political trust are two of the major reasons why someone may perform digital activism, but they are not the sole reasons. As such, researchers should explore other reasons which, in combination with social and political trust, may motivate people to perform these activities. Overall, since technological innovation is still

accelerating, it will be important to try to gather as many digital activism activities as possible together and find commonalities, explore emerging types, and so on, since as the previous chapters mentioned, hashtags (#) play a role in online activism, while other factors can be theorized as having an activist purpose, such as so-called “crypto currencies”. Another potential path for further research into emerging technologies and activism would be to examine how artificial intelligence may influence activism.

This thesis highlights the potential explanatory power of several other variables for digital activism such as frustration, inclusion or collaboration. Future research could look more into their potential effect and seek to understand how digital activism is enhanced by these elements. Moreover, future studies can use the Greek case as a point of departure to collect similar data in other countries for comparative analyses. An analysis that would consider the same variables in a different context, for example in a high trusting society, could identify patterns and would highlight additional important reasons to perform digital activism. Along similar lines, a future study could match the actual social media behavioural data with the users’ own reflections on their activities and motivations. This will allow understanding the extent to which social and political trust are related to objective and subjective use of digital activism.

Another possible avenue for further research would be to focus on the in-depth exploration of a specific digital activism activity. For example, slacktivism may be one relevant starting point since it appears to be relatively to perform. The impact that slacktivism can have can create awareness and make something viral, and then if something gets the public attention and the attention of politicians can change many outcomes. Finally, further research could test the extent to which the explanatory variables in this thesis – social and political trust – have an effect on offline political participation. This would contribute to the ongoing debate between the similarities and differences between offline and online participation.

Appendix 1: Guide for the Semi-Structured Interviews

1. There are several political activities that people do online and offline such as voting, protests, signing petitions, interacting with politicians. Can you give an overview of what you did in the last two years?
    a. In what activities more precisely are you active?
2. Would you say that in doing the activities that you mentioned before, you engage more online or offline?
3. Why did you do these political activities?
4. There are also other political activities such as buying a product to support a cause, clicking the 'like' or reshare button to support a cause, to which of that have you been engaging?
    a. In the last two years have you created an original post of your own related to a social or a political event?
5. What is the reason behind doing such an activity, what exactly did you want to achieve?
    a. Why would you like a post related with a social or a political cause?
    b. Why would you reshare a post that is related with a social or political cause?
    c. Why would you create an original post regarding a social or a political cause?
    d. Why would you boycott (not buy a product) that is related with a social or a political cause?
    e. Why would you buy a product that supports a social or a political cause?
    f. Why would you support the public opening of confidential information?
6. How would you say that the level of trust or distrust that you have in the government determines you to do some of these activities online?
    a. How about the trust in politicians?
    b. What about parties?
7. What exactly did you expect to be the outcome of the political activities you engage with in an online environment?
8. How do you see the political arena at the moment?
    a. How do you think the online activities that we covered will make an impact on this arena?

Appendix 2: Survey Questionnaire

1. On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much), how satisfied are you currently with the following?

    a. The way democracy works in Greece
    b. The way the Greek Government does its job
    c. The way the Greek Parliament does its job
    d. The way the local authorities do their job

2. How interested are you in the politics of Greece?

    a. Quite Interested
    b. Moderately Interested
    c. Not very interested
    d. Not Interested at all

3. How would you rate your knowledge about what happens now in the Greek Politics?

    a. Good
    b. Basic
    c. Very Limited

4. Which of the following political activities did you undertake in the last 2 years?

    a. Volunteer in electoral campaigns
    b. Participation in demonstration or protest
    c. Petition-signing
    d. Boycotts

5. On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much), how much do you use the internet daily for entertainment purposes?

6. How often do you get informed about politics?
    a. Few times a week
    b. Once a week
    c. Never

7. How often do you use / watch / read the following for political news?

    a. TV
        i. Daily or almost daily
        ii. A few times / week
        iii. Once / week
        iv. Never

    b. Radio
        i. Daily or almost daily
        ii. A few times / week
        iii. Once / week
        iv. Never

c. Newspapers (Online Included)
    i. Daily or almost daily
    ii. A few times / week
    iii. Once / week
    iv. Never

d. Social media (Facebook)
    i. Daily or almost daily
    ii. A few times / week
    iii. Once / week
    iv. Never

e. Social Media (Twitter)
    i. Daily or almost daily
    ii. A few times / week
    iii. Once / week
    iv. Never

f. Social media (Instagram)
    i. Daily or almost daily
    ii. A few times / week
    iii. Once / week
    iv. Never

g. Online news portals
    i. Daily or almost daily
    ii. A few times / week
    iii. Once / week
    iv. Never

h. Discussion Forums
    i. Daily or almost daily
    ii. A few times / week
    iii. Once / week
    iv. Never

8. How often do you use social media for:
    a. Entertainment
        i. Daily or almost daily
        ii. A few times / week
        iii. Once / week
        iv. Never
    b. Communication
        i. Daily or almost daily
        ii. A few times / week
        iii. Once / week
        iv. Never
    c. Political Purposes

i. Daily or almost daily
ii. A few times / week
iii. Once / week
iv. Never

d. Information
   i. Daily or almost daily
   ii. A few times / week
   iii. Once / week
   iv. Never

9. On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much), in general how often do you?

   a. "like" a post on social media that is related with a social or political cause

   b. avoid buying a company's product to show that you do not support its policies

   c. support groups that publish (confidential) government data in public?

   d. repost or share content that was posted by an institution or a public person such as a politician

   e. create an original post on social media to show your support or frustration for social and political causes

10. On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much), how often do you buy a company's product because you support its policies?

11. On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much), do you think that most people can be trusted?

12. Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they had the opportunity or they would try to be fair? (0 = take advantage), (10 = they would be fair)

13. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mainly looking out for themselves? On the following scale, where would you position yourself? (0 = looking out for themselves, 10 = would be helpful)

14. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is very much, how much do you trust the following groups?

   a. Family
   b. Nighbors

c. People from your Neighborhood
d. People from your work / school
e. Strangers

15. How many people are in your network of friends and good acquaintances?

a. 11 to 20
b. 21 to 30
c. 31 to 40
d. 41 to 50
e. More than 50

16. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 very much, how much do you trust the following?

a. Politicians
b. Legal system
c. Givernment
d. Political Parties
e. European Union
f. Local Authorities

17. How involved do you consider yourself to be in the life of your local community?

a. Much
b. To some extent
c. Not at all

18. In politics sometimes people talk about "left" and "right". Where would you place yourself on this scale?

19. What is your gender?

a. Male
b. Female
c. Non-bindary

20. To which age group do you belong?

a. 26-35
b. 36-45
c. 46-55
d. 56-65
e. 65 and over

21. What is the highest degree you have achieved?

a. High School
b. Vocational School
c. Bachelor studies
d. College
e. Master’s Degree
f. Doctorate (PhD)

22. In which region do you live / spend most of your time?

a. Attica
b. Central Greece
c. Central Macedonia
d. Crete
e. Eastern Macedonia & Thrace
f. Epirus
g. Ionian Islands
h. North Aegean
i. Peloponnese
j. South Aegean
k. Thessaly
l. Western Greece
m. Western Macedonia

23. In what type of locality do you live or spend most of your time?

a. Village
b. Small city or town
c. Medium City
d. Large city

24. Please state, whom you did vote in the last elections?

a. New Democracy
b. Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza)
c. Movement of change (Kinal)
d. Communist Party of Greece (KKE)
e. Greek Solution
f. MeRA 25
g. Other

Appendix 3: The Regression Models used in the Analysis

	Slacktivism	Boycott	Data dissemination	Metavoicing	Assertion	Buycott
Social trust	1.19**	1.27**	1.30**	1.19**	1.14**	1.41**
Political trust	1.19**	0.88**	0.77**	1.19**	1.04	1.10
Political interest	1.46**	1.36**	1.31**	1.49**	1.40**	1.28**
Offline political participation	1.32**	1.29**	1.35**	1.36**	1.42**	1.38**
Social media entertainment	1.36**	1.08	1.06	1.10*	1.18**	1.10*
Social media information	1.48**	0.99	1.14*	1.18**	1.30**	1.02
Gender	1.05	1.05	0.87**	1.06	1.08	1.11*
Education	0.86**	1.04	0.94	0.89**	0.83**	0.94
Age	0.94	0.99	0.98	1.06	1.02	1.08
N	1681	1681	1681	1681	1681	1681
Pseudo R^2	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.04
Log likelihood	-4105.29	-4125.58	-4078.79	-3476.09	-3794.65	-4102.08

Notes: All regression coefficients are odds-ratios. **$p<0.01$; *$p<0.05$.

Appendix 4: Robustness Test with Additional Controls for Slacktivism

	Model in the analysis	Extra controls
Social trust	1.19**	1.18**
Political trust	1.19**	1.23**
Political interest	1.46**	1.39**
Offline political participation	1.32**	1.31**
Social media entertainment	1.36**	1.39**
Social media information	1.48**	1.47**
Gender	1.05	1.06
Education	0.86**	0.87**
Age	0.94	0.95
Knowledge of politics		1.10
Area of residence		0.98
Left-right placement		0.98
N	1681	1681
Pseudo R^2	0.05	0.05
Log likelihood	-4105.29	-3926.54

Notes: All regression coefficients are odds-ratios. $^{**}p<0.01$; $^{*}p<0.05$.

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