

Direct Democracy - “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan”:

A Study of a Development of Online Petitions

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Abstract

In recent years, with the rise of social media, the new direct democracy- online petitions become a trend. In 2018, there is a famous internet mobilization in Taiwan. “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan”, the online petition issue which posted in Avaaz, a worldwide online petition website. This online petition was initiate by the Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan (台灣石虎保育協會); until November 1, 2020, it attracted 892,024 signatures. Although that is a convenient way for people to show their appeal. However, there are some problems with online petition. For example, some will doubt about this is just a “going viral” and “slacktivism”. This means they only follow other’s steps and do not know what is the issue about and its appeal. Therefore, this paper draws three research questions; firstly “How do the online petitions attract people to sign?”; secondly “What is the role of social media in the online petitions?” and thirdly “Is going viral a negative effect for online petitions?”

To find the answer, I made a questionnaire to know what people’s attitude to the online petition and visit the “Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan” ‘s website which is the initiator of this online petition. Hoping to find whether online petition like the skeptic said it’s just a “going viral” and “slacktivism”. In the end, this paper found that slacktivism is not a negative word for online petition. When an activity needs mobilization, it can help the issue to meet the achievement.

Keywords: online petition, slacktivism, going viral

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Background | 1 |
| Motivation | 7 |
| Research Purpose | 8 |
| Research Questions | 9 |
| Limits | 9 |
| Delimits | 9 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | 11 |
| Online Petitions | 11 |
| The Relationship between Internet and Petitions | 15 |
| Criticism on Online Petitions | 17 |
| Mining Act and Leopard Cats | 21 |
| METHODOLOGY | 23 |
| DATA ANALYSIS | 26 |
| Basic Information of Respondents | 26 |
| Respondents perspective to online petitions | 28 |
| Going viral effect on online petitions | 33 |
| Respondents' Attitude to Different Issue | 38 |
| CONCLUSION | 42 |
| APPENDIX | 47 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 55 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1 Respondents' gender and age distribution | 27 |
| Table 2 Acknowledgement of petitions | 28 |
| Table 3 Causal relation between respondents' attitudes and the signing behaviors of the online petitions..... | 30 |
| Table 4 The effect of social media to public affairs | 33 |
| Table 5 Determination in the petitions..... | 35 |
| Table 6 Comparing different issue respondents' issue of familiarity..... | 39 |
| Table 7 Respondents' willingness on different issues..... | 39 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1 Respondents' educational background. | 27 |
| Figure 2 Respondents' experience of getting information..... | 31 |
| Figure 3 Period of using social media per week..... | 31 |

INTRODUCTION

Background

Have you ever thought about whenever you click the like button on Facebook or follow a fan page, what is the effect on the post? Online petitions are a new measure for people to express their thoughts in recent years. However, there have some problems that come along with direct democracy, such as slacktivism, herd behavior, bandwagon effect, and filter bubble. Online petitions are a different form of traditional petitions. The traditional one is face to face petitions that can provide people with a way of practicing democracy when they do not use the internet. Similarly, traditional petitions also have suffered from a similar problem as what online petitions have.

“Slacktivism is the words combining “slacker” and “activism,” has gradually been used to describe the disconnectedness between people’s awareness and their actions through the use of social media.”¹

We learned that the use of slacktivism is mainly to describe those who do not understand what they do through the social media. Given this drawback, they remain to participate in public events. In recent years, many people tend to use online petitions to

¹ Cerise L. Glenn, "Activism or “Slacktivism?”: Digital Media and Organizing for Social Change," *Communication Teacher* (2015) , 29(2): 83.

change some events' results. Many online petitions websites are going on nowadays throughout the world, such as Avaaz², WE the PEOPLE-Petitions the White House on the Issues that Matter to You³, change.org⁴, and so on. In Taiwan, there is a famous petition called "Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan", posted in May 2018. This petition posted on Avaaz, a worldwide online petitions website. Avaaz was launched in 2007. According to Avaaz's website, the Avaaz community campaigns in 15 languages. They have about 60 million members around the world and issued 2,792 campaigns on their website. This petition has an aim to change the policy associated with a company Yulon Motor Co., Ltd., which has been expanding the factory to leopard cats' habitats. Since the new factory's location was criticized that would affect the living environment of Leopard Cats in Miaoli, Sanyi, some activists have decided to launch such a movement of petitions in rescuing the cute endangered animal around that area. Up to November 1, 2020, this petition already achieved 892,024 people signing this issue. The reason why this issue attracted so much attention among people in Taiwan is that many celebrities were willing to advocate people about the petitions. For example, there was a nationwide leading band, Mayday, whose lead

² "Please Sign up for Saving Last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan," Avaaz.org, last modified November 20, 2020, https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/tw_leopardcat_yulon/.

³ "Petition the White House on the Issues That Matter to You," the WHITE HOUSE, last modified November 20, 2020. <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/>.

⁴ "The World's Platform for Change," change.org, last modified November 20, 2020. <https://www.change.org/>.

guitarist Wen Shang-yi, who is known as Monster. Other promoters like YouTube content creator Holger Chen has called attention to the conservation of leopard cats by sharing an online petition on Facebook on Thursday.⁵ We might predict some of the people who join this petitions is because of their idols' appeal, or some might just attend this without real knowledge about the problem facing Leopard cats in Taiwan. although these celebrities are different from the opinion leader, they may still attract people to join the online petitions. Opinion leaders also are one of the reasons why people want to follow the issue. "People are becoming increasingly rely on others in their online social networks for news recommendations and political information, and other perspectives, opinions, and behaviors are affected by the information stream and social dynamics within these sites."⁶ Therefore, in this research to focus on those who attend the petitions while belonging to the group of "slacktivism".

The internet would be the main reason that turn people into the slacktivists. Thus, the relationship between the internet and online petitions would be the main topic cover in my research. Online petitions are highly dependent on modern media. " How complex media effects were much more than we assumed previously, and rely heavily on someone's homogenous networks and their selective informational diets, which

⁵ with CNA Staff writer, "Government Orders Local Authorities to Consider Impact on Leopard Cat Habitats," *TAPSEI TIMES*, Jun 10, 2019.

⁶ Brian E. Weeks, Ardèvol-Abreu, Alberto, Gil de Zúñiga, Homero, "Online Influence? Social Media Use, Opinion Leadership, and Political Persuasion," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* (2015) : 2-5

assisted existing point of view rather than changed them.”⁷ Since there are many media in this society, we can sign online petitions in many ways.

Given the Slacktivism phenomenon, some people doubt the efficiency of online petitions. For example, some people think it just a trend. People just follow what other people do, as a slacktivism mentioned before. However, the biggest benefit from a petition is to raise awareness, Jason Del Gandio, a professor of communications and social movements at Temple University in Philadelphia, said in an interview: “In some ways, it’s just the updated version of the letter-writing campaign to a representative that has been going on for years”.⁸ In the example of my thesis: “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan” in Avvaz, while the result of this issue has not come to an end, because Yulon company applied to suspend the environmental impact assessment in June 2019. This movement has let people know how important protecting Leopard cat from modern development project would be seen as a process of direct democracy concerning animal rights.

For example, the Miaoli council passed a bill on protecting leopard cat habitats on December 30, 2019. “The bill includes rules for areas of the county where leopard cats have been seen, such as mandatory consultation with conservation researchers prior

⁷ David Tewksbury Dietram A. Scheufele, "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models," *Communication* 57(1) (2007). :9-20

⁸ Christopher Mele, "Online Petitions Take Citizen Participation to New Levels. But Do They Work?," *The New York Times*, Dec. 28 2016.

to road expansions of 1km or more, or development projects on properties of 1 hectare or more⁹.” It is hard to count exactly how many percentages the online petitions took up in the success of the awareness of protecting Leopard cat. However, through this event, it showed the innovative way of calling up people’s engagement with internet democracy.

“Liberal individualist model is an aspect, which sees the Internet as an assisting way of the civic statement. Individual interests of citizens would use these aims to get an approach to a plethora of political messages and express their views straightly to elected representatives. This model is typical within modern governments’ policy making, commercial e-democracy action, and much social science research. However, petitions on do not go unchallenged.”¹⁰

In this complex world, people can provide multiple points of view through the internet. As shown in the Leopard cat’s example, the related group have set up a Facebook fan page, such as Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan (台灣石虎保育協會). This association was founded in October 2017, aimed to appeal to this society to protect leopard cats. Also committed to habitat preservation and environmental education. To provide the newest news on leopard cat, people can also react to the post via this page.

⁹ William Hetherington Peng Chien-li, "Miaoli Makes Push to Protect Leopard Cats," *TAIPEI TIMES*, Dec 29 2019.

¹⁰ Lincoln Dahlberg, "The Internet, Deliberative Democracy, and Power: Radicalizing the Public Sphere," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 3 (2007).

Therefore, this case enables me to explore different people's viewpoints regarding this event, and hopefully to examine those who might belong to the fore mentioned slacktivism.

According to Science & Technology Policy Research and Information Center, they analyze what issue people care about in Taiwan, and compare it. They found that different issues may be interested in different generations. Gender identity. Also, the Taiwanese mostly focus on environmental issues.¹¹ Therefore, I choose "Mining act"¹² as an example to compare whether people will sign petitions based on the topic. The appeal of this petition is to amend the Mining act, and also "protesting the extension, which was given without public consultation. Asia Cement, a unit of the Far Eastern Group conglomerate, was not required to conduct an environmental impact assessment."¹³ The reason why I took the Mining act as an example was that because comparing to leopard cats issue, Mining act may be relatively hard for people to understand. The number between respectively about 46 thousand and 890 thousand until November 1, 2020. These two petitions were posted on the same website, however, the signing number on Leopard cat is higher than Mining act. Through knowing this

¹¹ Pansci, "台灣民眾都在關心什麼？國研院調查：「環境」第一名," *CommonWealth Magazine*, last modified November 14, 2019, <https://www.cw.com.tw/article/5097677>.

¹² "守護山林，《礦業法》非修不可！" Avaaz.org, last modified November 20, 2020, https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/taiwan_mining_act_loc/.

¹³ CHRIS HORTON, "Protesters Dig in against Taiwan Mining Rules," *NIKKEI ASIAN REVIEW*, July 25 2017.

phenomenon, I could know whether those slacktivism is follow other people to sign online petitions or not.

The research's specific focus was to explore the slacktivism effect via social media. That is, I will not measure an exact number of people in regard to slacktivism. I adopted a survey and interview to investigate people who ever sign the save leopard cat online petitions. To know whether they understand the issue's progress and meaning. If not, are they just follow the trend that goes viral online.

To find out the slacktivism in online petitions. First, I made a survey to know participants who used to join the "saving last 500 Leopard Cats" online petitions in order to see their basic idea on leopard cat. Then I divided them into three groups of people according to the result. Respectively, the first one who understands what is happening on this thing, the second is those who only know a little about leopard cat, and the rest group is the targeted ones who tend to jump into other people's bandwagon signing this online petitions.

Motivation

Nowadays, many people using online petitions to tell this world what they want to change about the world and how they could work together to make it come true.

Recently, there was a famous online petition called “Take actions on supporting Taiwan for joining WHO” launched in “WE the PEOPLE”¹⁴ on January 30, 2020, that has attracted 237,468 people to sign online. According to the rule, when the petitions collect 100000 within 30 days, the American government will have to reply in 60 days. Back to my case in Taiwan, the most popular online petitions is Avaaz website’s “Please Sign up for saving the last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan”. attracting 892,024 people to sign this petition until November 1, 2020. Also, many social media report about leopard cats at that time. The reason why it attracted so many people to sign this online petitions would be the news coverage via social media. However, my point of this research is to know how many people really care about or understand the issue regarding protection of leopard cats. My concern is that whether such petitions online might make people blindly follow popular media frames or other people’s viewpoints? Therefore, the group of the latter “slacktivism” would be the main target in this research.

Research Purpose

The motivation above shows my concern about the “slacktivism” where there seems to be a curious relationship between social media and online petitions. People

¹⁴ C.C., "Take Actions on Supporting Taiwan for Joining Who," https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/take-actions-supporting-taiwan-joining-who?fbclid=IwAR19jiQpG4WR0UABJSr3JOfOagnS8Tojv55Qn_v4Gb5VLqAXkhNmPvqudEY.

are easily influenced by others via Facebook and the likes. As for such an effect, I wonder how the slacktivism might undermine the petitions.

Research Questions

1. How do the online petitions attract people to sign?
2. What is the role of social media playing in the online petitions?
3. Is going viral a negative effect for online petitions?

Limits

Since the issue “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan” is still on the procedure of examination. Therefore, it cannot tell whether the issue success complete because of the online petition. However, for the present situation, it can know online petition bring a positive effect mostly. On the other aspect, due to the time limitation and difficulties of collecting questionnaire, the distribution of age group may tend to gather on college students

Delimits

This paper using the internet to collect questionnaires to ask people from different age groups and educational background to fill a vacancy on a lack of other age groups

besides college students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Petitions

By petitions, I defined it as a formal request for something to an authority. In Taiwan, according to the constitution, i.e., Article 16, it elaborates that, “The people shall have the rights of presenting petitions, lodging complaints, or instituting legal proceedings.”

Petitions are one of the methods that people can use to advocate their thoughts when they want to change the policy or government’s decisions. Many NGOs nowadays, using online petitions as a means. Conveners can convene everyone to sign the petitions. When the sign achieves certain numbers, their voices can be listened to by the superiors. Like the traditional paper petitions, nowadays, some aspirants would post their petitions online that let more people join their direct actions. With the advent of the Internet, people can use different methods to advocate or express their thoughts or receive new ideas more efficient and directly. They take direct actions on their own. Therefore, some people use different means online to practice the so-called direct democracy. “The Internet is empowering netizens as it not only allows the public to get access to information but also implement them to make claims to various arguments.”¹⁵ For

¹⁵ Nicola Mößner and Philip Kitcher, "Knowledge, Democracy, and the Internet," *Minerva: A Review of*

example, this method of showing democracy on the internet is called digital democracy.

“Digital tools seem to provide a measure out of the issues of contemporary democracies: declining trust, disengagement from politics, or political uncertainty, for instance. This is true, in part. In many cases digitalization has definitely helped public administrations to boost inclusivity and advance engagement.”¹⁶

In Taiwan, the “Petitions Movement for the Establishment of a Taiwanese Parliament” took place in the period when Taiwan was under Japan’s rule. This movement from below was started from 1921 to 1934 and became the earliest request for having petitions rights in Taiwan. Although this first struggle for people’s petitions did not success, it aroused consciousness among some intellectuals who started to engage in public events in Taiwan.

In modern democratic societies, petitions are a common way to show that democracy could be practiced by grassroots groups and individual activists. The opposite of direct democracy is a representative democracy. Thus, direct democracy shows how all citizens come to assemble and administer the government by themselves. On the other hand, “representative democracy depends on elected governments and parliamentary representatives to fulfill people’s expectations.”¹⁷ Petitions, initiative,

Science, Learning and Policy 55, no. 1 (2017).

¹⁶ Gianluca Sgueo, "Digital Democracy," European Parliamentary Research Service, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646161/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)646161_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646161/EPRS_BRI(2020)646161_EN.pdf)

¹⁷ Amy N. Farley, "Legislating Education Policy and Equity at the Ballot Box: A Descriptive Analysis of

and referendum look similar, and they all represent different forms of direct democracy.

However, they are different in practice.

In Yannis Papadopoulos's book, "How does direct democracy matter? The impact of referendum votes on politics and policy-making", he took Switzerland's political system for example to explain a difference between referendum and initiative.

For the referendum, when voters' petitions achieve the required numbers, the bicameral Parliament will enforce the law according to the result. Yannis Papadopoulos shows that "the bill must then be approved by a majority in a referendum vote in order for the

bill to be enforced in bicameral Parliament"¹⁸. As for the referendum, Yannis describes that when once collected a certain number of signatures in a period, the issue would be proposed to form a constitutional amendment, then a referendum must be held in time.

The outcome will be binding, provided that a majority of voters and cantons support the proposal.¹⁹In conclusion, we can know that referendum could make the policy revised. Initiative and petitions can let people release new issues.

There are many online petitions, with official websites, around the world. For example, in Taiwan, the national development council set a website called

the Prevalence and Content of Education Ballot Initiatives over Time," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 27, no. 9 (2019).

¹⁸ Yannis Papadopoulos, *How Does Direct Democracy Matter? The Impact of Referendum Votes on Politics and Policy-Making* (Routledge, April, 2001).

¹⁹ Ibid.

“join.gov.tw”²⁰ which gives the general public a direct platform to interact with the government. According to the website, it aims to achieve more extent of transparency in making policies, and to allow people who live in Taiwan to provide their suggestions. Moreover, there is a case to do with the American government. That is. “we the people - Petitions the White House on the Issues that Matter to You” was launched on September 22, 2011, which is a section of the whitehouse.gov website for petitioning the administration's policy experts. Through this platform, all petitions will be replied to officially. Besides the online petitions website government set, there are non-government organizations. For example, Avaaz. - Avaaz was founded in 2006 by the founder of Anglo-Saxon non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were already pioneering web-based advocacy (among them MoveOn and Getup!). As the first of this website to go global, Avaaz quickly took the lead in membership and revenue size. Membership soared to approximately 42 million in 2014, while interests for the same year amount to US\$19.36million, making Avaaz the most resourceful example of the “movement of public opinion” existing today.²¹ The Avaaz used e-mail to let it become a site with a massive number of participants, and aim to influence government or business s’ decisions.

²⁰ “公共政策網路參與平台,” NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONCIL, last modified November 20, 2020 <https://join.gov.tw/>.

²¹ Lanka Horstink, "Online Participation and the New Global Democracy: Avaaz, a Case Study," *Global Society*, 31(1) (January, 2017) :107-14

The Relationship between Internet and Petitions

In the past when social media haven't popular in the world, people follow mass media mostly. Both traditional petitions and online petitions need many people who not only understand and support the issue, but also actively participate the advocacy. For example, in my fore mentioned case, "Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan" was launched through the website. Avaaz and Leopard Cat Association of Taiwan (台灣石虎保育協會), provide a platform and using their momentum to appeal people join this petition. When the two groups get together trying to change something can make more benefits.

"When social network sites appeared, people were given a new framework for connecting to those around them. Through the omnipresent "friends" lists, users could build social graphs that would allow them to tap into networks of people that they realized, appreciated, and found interesting."²² Social media build up a new form to meet new friends and get new information. "As social network sites evolved and the social graph turns into the basis for information access, social media emerged as the new paradigm for connecting to information, people, and ideas."²³ . Social media

²² danah boyd, "Social Media: A Phenomenon to Be Analyzed," *Social Media + Society*. 1 (1) (2015).

²³ Ibid.

empowers people to post their thoughts on it. That is a different pattern to the traditional media. In that time mass media take a big part in people's life. However, mass media only provide one-way communication, social media help online petitions become a useful tool within a critical moment. For example, by sharing, information can disseminate faster in modern society.

Social information plays a big role in the internet and the new democracy method-online petitions. Every day, we using the internet to get new information, such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and so on, and these social media may affect us unconsciously. There is research shows that a positive relationship between social media use and political engagement among young people. "Due to the role played by social media, netizens can simply load applications of all kinds and follow all information via social media. Such common using actions of social media specially make the young generation become more politically engaged."²⁴ This idea on the role of social media and activism is also the case when one looks into netizens' online practices and online petitions, which means social media provide an easily accessible platform for different generations in following the new agenda. Owing to social media, people can use online petitions as a springboard to get to know the issue. This new

²⁴ Brian D. Loader, Vromen, Ariadne, Xenos, Michael A., "The Networked Young Citizen: Social Media, Political Participation and Civic Engagement," *Information, Communication & Society* 17 (February, 2014).

direct democracy- online petitions can let people who did not know this issue before, they may want to know deeper on this issue.

Criticism on Online Petitions

Although online petitions are convenient for people to easily convey their suggestions to the world, some people still doubt about whether it is workable or not. One of the reasons why many people using online petitions is because they just need to enter their email addresses and names, and automatically they become part of petitions. “Going viral” and “viral engagement” which are exist problem in social media and online petition. Which have some traits, such as “they occurred largely on-line and that these on-line campaigns spread to everywhere within a short time.”²⁵ Owing to such convenience of becoming participants of petitions, it has led to a concern about the follow up questions, namely the “Slacktivism”.

The term “Slacktivism” is a prevalent behavior among consumers. “Slacktivism described people who willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause, with an accompanying lack of willingness to devote significant effort to enact meaningful change.”²⁶ People who are to do with slacktivism

²⁵ Jennifer Shkabatur Archon Fung, "Viral Engagement: Fast, Cheap, and Broad, but Good for Democracy?," (2013):7-14.

²⁶ Katherine White Kirk Kristofferson, John Peloza, "The Nature of Slacktivism: How the Social Observability of an Initial Act of Token Support Affects Subsequent Prosocial Action. ," *The University*

seems like a useless group to help the petitions to move to next steps. Owing to people only sign their name on the first step, and then forget about this issue or know they used to sign this petitions. However, is it possible to let the slacktivism turned out to be people who really care about the issue? Using a series of field and laboratory experiments, they found that those who engage in slacktivism can and do sometimes engage more deeply. The slacktivist critique isolates the action stage. As such, the potential of online technologies to share informational goods, as a means for symbolic participation, and as an organizational tool, is discounted.²⁷ What's the determining factor lies in the extent to which a slacktivism's activism is public or private.²⁸ The difference between public and private slacktivists are dependent on the methods of participating in online petitions. If the petitions participants spontaneously joined the petitions, they might keep following this issue. However, if they accidentally found the petitions event and joined it randomly, they might forget the issue later. The latter is not useful for advancing what the petitions activists' goal in conveying the agenda significantly. For example, those who search online petitions by themselves may care about what the thing become next. On the contrary, those who see online petitions by other people's sharing, they may not have the much passion about it.

of Chicago Press (2013).

²⁷ James Dennis, *Beyond Slacktivism (Political Participation on Social Media)* (palgrave macmillan, 2019),114

²⁸ Laura Seay, "Does Slacktivism Work?," *The Washington Post*, March 13 2014.

Herd behavior is another reason people might think online petitions is not reliable. Herd behavior means human behavior is affect by others. This phenomenon usually happens in financial market. "When investors are influenced by others' decisions, they may herd on an investment decision that is wrong for all of them."²⁹ In my research, I wonder what if when herd behavior happens in the online petitions? Although there are different voices on the internet, most people might follow the mainstream ones. Particularly, they will agree with those public opinions that are shared among friends and significant other. Therefore, they might tend to neglect other less focused or mentioned issues. If one petitions issue can gain many media attention, more and more people will be attracting.

"Since News and social media reported all the time nowadays; CNN pioneered that, way back in 1980. Instead, it arises from the much newer feeling of actively participating in it, thanks to the interactivity of social media."³⁰

As the examples "Mining Act and Leopard Cats" shows, through the social media's report there was a new train decorated with a leopard cat theme. The petitions of protecting leopard cats won more supports among family and animal lovers in this regard in comparison to less attention paid to that of other more serious agendas like

²⁹ Sushil Bikhchandani and Sunil Sharma, "Herd Behavior in Financial Markets," *IMF Economic Review* 47 (2000); *ibid.*

³⁰ Oliver Burkeman, "How the News Took over Reality," *The Guardian*, Fri 3 May 2019.

Mining Act. Therefore, people may willingly show more support to this issue.

Unlike herd behavior which is user itself find the information, “filter bubble is search engines promotes a diversity of voices by offering access to a range of point of view far broader than those form in one’s local paper, greatly expanding the messages available to citizens and their choices over news outlets.”³¹ Search engines provide not only what we usually see, but also what the other user want us to see. Filter bubbles, also known as echo chambers, were defined in Pariser’s 2011 TED talk titled “Beware online filter bubbles”. Pariser says, “your filter bubble is your own personal, unique universe of information that you live in online.”³² In the Pariser’s 2011 TED, he said that the phenomenon of personalization is sweeping the entire internet, saying “this moves us very quickly toward a world in which the Internet is showing us what it thinks we want to see, but not necessarily what we need to see” (Pariser, 5:18).³³ Journalist “Science” posted a report, “Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion in Facebook”. According to the website article –Pansci, who should be responsible for the filter bubble on the Facebook?³⁴ This article is use Facebook’s researcher, their research as an example to explain filter bubble. This report called “Exposure to

³¹ Seth Flaxman, Goel, Sharad, Rao, Justin, "Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (2016).

³² Kristen Allred, Apr 14, 2018, <https://medium.com/@10797952/the-causes-and-effects-of-filter-bubbles-and-how-to-break-free-df6c5cbf919f>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 新媒體時代 What's Next for New Media., "誰該為 facebook 的「過濾氣泡」現象負責?", last modified May 15, 2015 ,<https://pansci.asia/archives/79504>.

ideologically diverse news and opinion in Facebook”. One of the result shows that the order of the articles on news feed would affect the possible numbers of people. The researchers suggested that if users want to have the opportunities in checking different ideologies in social media, they should have the ability on control. Which means, this report showed compare to Facebook’s algorithm, user should pay more responsibility on when they see on their news feed.

(Allred 2018)

Mining Act and Leopard Cats

Amending the Mining Act has been negotiating many times. “To amend the law of mining act, it started at 2017, through 11 times examination and 4 times negations, the law still cannot be amended.”³⁵ The reason why this law have to take so much time because there have some controversial. The controversial is that the draft amendment calls for the Bureau of Mines to accept requests to renew mining permits from quarries that already have mining permits without need for another approval process.³⁶ Since some of the articles on the Mining Act are out of date. Therefore, some people have launched a petitions about revising the Mining Act. They, the environmental group-

³⁵ Lin Hui-Chen, "25 萬人連署、11 次審查、4 度朝野協商，為何修不掉《礦業法》霸王條款？," THE REPORTER, last modified December 19, 2019. <https://www.twreporter.org/a/mining-act-amendment>.

³⁶ Brian Hioe, "Proposed Mining Act Amendment Sidesteps Environmental Laws, Indigenous Rights," The News Lens, <https://international.thenewslens.com/article/87455>.

Citizen of the Earth, Taiwan. They Hope to amend before the end of Legislative Yuan session in December,2019.³⁷ In Taiwan's Avaaz website, there are two issue related to Taiwan- Mining Act³⁸ and Leopard Cats³⁹. These two issues are both belonged to environmental issue. However, the numbers of signing these two issues in Taiwan's Avaaz website showed a huge gap between these two issues. The number of signing saving Leopard cat has 890 thousand, as for amending the Mining Act, it only got about 46 thousand until 1 November,2020.

³⁷ Taiwan Association for Human Rights, "礦業法修好，台灣才會好／礦業法不修，蘇院長讓產業、環境、人權三輸," <https://www.tahr.org.tw/news/2542>.

³⁸ "守護山林，《礦業法》非修不可!", Avaaz, last modified November 15, 2020, https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/taiwan_mining_act_loc/

³⁹ "守護台灣最後 500 隻石虎的棲地", Avaaz, last modified November 15, 2020,https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/tw_leopardcat_yulon/

METHODOLOGY

This research will focus on the influence between “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan” and online petitions. The goal of this research is to figure out what is the reason that will affect the result of an online petition issue. Therefore, to start my research about saving leopard cats. In the literature review, I went to the Avvaz website to collect and interpret the newest information about leopard cats. The latest updated information on the website was on 8 June 2019. It announced that Yue Loong company applied to suspend the environmental impact assessment in June 2019. To protect Leopard cat habitat, this online petition started from September 14, 2018; and until now, the signing number of this online petitions continue raise. To know whether the different issues will affect people sign the online petition, I also use the Mining Act as an example to compare with leopard cat issue. Therefore, to find the answer about the different levels of focusing on people. I found some essays about online petitions, in order to know what reasons will affect sign the online petitions. For example, I found that slacktivism, people who belong to this group may account for a great number of online petitions. Also, research the positive and negative of the online petitions. Positive effect including fast, can collect more resources from online petitions. Negative effects including some phenomena, such as herd behavior, filter bubble, and

bandwagon effect. The common characteristic of these three phenomena is that they, they the countersigner, all sign the online petitions, not by their thought. Next, I would make a questionnaire to ask adults who ever sign the online petitions or not. I would use google forms to make my questionnaire because google forms be known by everyone, people can trust and feel safe to answer the questionnaire. Next, I will use social media, such as LINE, Facebook, and Instagram to collect my questionnaire. The questionnaire I collected can let me know if people are really understanding basic knowledge of the issue the sign, and understand people's opinions to online petitions and investigate their lifestyle on using the internet. When designing my questionnaire, I divided it into three parts. The first part is about whether they used to sign the online petitions or not? It includes their experiences on signing inline petitions and using "Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan" as my main issue to making questions. Also, ask people their thought about the mining act, which is also the online petitions in Avaaz website. The second part is the user experience about the internet. This is aiming to know what people contact social media, newspapers, or other ways to get information. These questions can ask my second research question, which is "What is the role of social media playing in the online petitions?" The third part of the questionnaire is their basic information. I totally collected 301 questionnaires through sharing from social media, Facebook, Instagram and Line. Owing to my

research topic is related to the internet, therefore, I used the internet to share my questionnaires. Next, I went to Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan (台灣石虎保育協會)'s Facebook fan page to see their attitude about "Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan" this online petitions. Therefore, I found that on 8 June 2019 a joint statement of Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan (台灣石虎保育協會) and Avaaz post in the fan page. I also found people's comments on Facebook about Leopard cat's online petitions. This can answer my research question of "What is the role of social media playing in the online petitions?" To analyze my data, I divided into four part. Respectively are: firstly, Basic information of respondents; secondly, Respondents' perspective to online petitions; thirdly, Going viral effect on online petitions; finally, Respondents' attitude to different issues. I combined respondents' responds and literature review to prove whether my respondents their attitudes are similar to the literature described.

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter aimed to present a result through the questionnaire I delivered and collected online. This has been manifested by google form, which has 301 samples, coded from 4 September 2020 to 24 September, 2020. To show the analysis result, this chapter is divided into four parts: (1) Basic information of respondents; (2) Respondents perspective to online petitions; (3) Going viral effect on online petitions; (4) Respondents' attitude to different issues.

Basic Information of Respondents

As seen in table 1 below the proportions of respondents between man and woman is 27.6% and 72.4%. For the age distribution less than 18 to 22 years old is 56.4%, and 43.6% from 23 to above 51 years old, and almost 69.1% their education level is college.

Table 1 Respondents' gender and age distribution

| Gender Age | Man | | Woman | | Total | |
|--------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | Number of people | % | Number of people | % | Number of people | % |
| Less than 18 to 22 | 26 | 8.6% | 144 | 48% | 170 | 56.4% |
| 23 to above 51 | 57 | 19% | 74 | 25% | 131 | 43.6% |
| total | 83 | 27.6% | 218 | 72.4% | 301 | 100% |

N=301

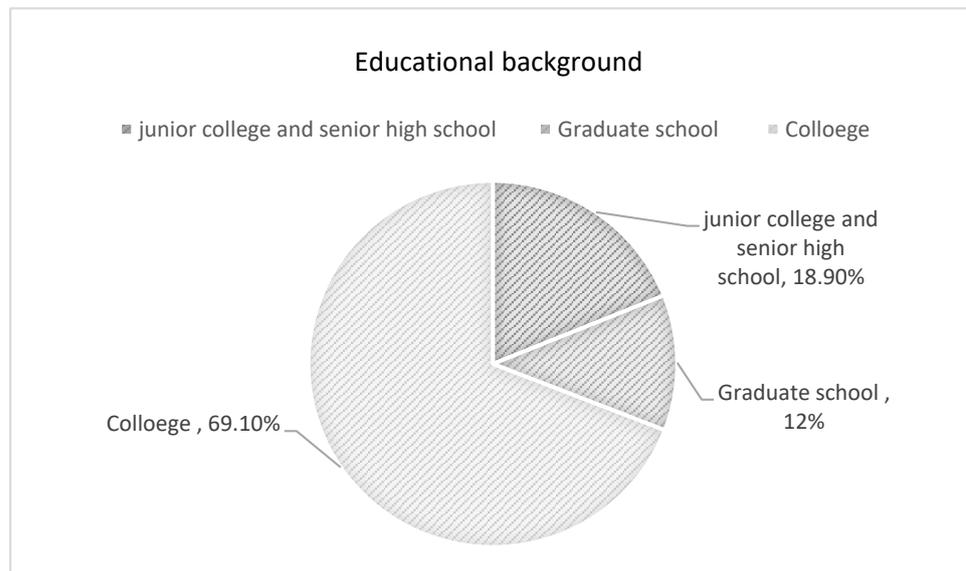


Figure 1 Respondents' educational background.

Respondents perspective to online petitions

To answer the first research question, “How do the online petitions attract people to sign?” and the second question, “What is the role of social media playing in the online petitions?” First of all, I asked them in the questionnaire, “whether they ever heard of or signed online petitions and the traditional paper petitions?”. As seen in table 2 The investigation result showed that about 84.1% of them answered yes. Moreover, people who have the experience of using paper petitions is 57.5%.

Table 2 Acknowledgement of petitions.

| | Have you ever heard of or signed the online petitions? | Have you ever signed the paper petitions? |
|-----|--|---|
| Yes | 84.1% | 57.5% |
| No | 15.9% | 42.5% |

To know why most people, sign online petitions more than paper petitions, I further raised a question, “do online petitions increase the willingness to sign the petitions?” As seen in table 3, there were 52.2% of respondents on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), they chose “strongly agree”. Furthermore, to understand why how people get information about online petitions, the result shows that, 81.7% of respondents get the information through other people’s sharing.

When I put more questions on why people prefer to using online petitions, the

result such as “I think online petitions can help change the issue” won 38.5% of respondents’ strongly agreement, and 38.2% of them also show agreement (table 3).

In addition, I also found that media take an important role in the online petitions. In another question, many respondents chose “I want to sign the online petitions because of media (such as social media)’s report”. As seen in table 3, the result shows that 43.9% of them choose “strongly agree”. This figure indicates that nearly half of my respondents agreed that they were influenced by the media to take action in this regard.

In my questionnaire’s third part, when asking respondents, “How do they get information about the petition issue?”, there were about 91% of them choosing “social media”. The rest, about 8%, were mentioning “television”, with merely 1% having information from the newspaper (figure 2).

To sum up these six questions, one can see a close line between the drive to sign the online petitions and the role of social media. Thus, the advantage on online petitions is obviously presented to do with how people have used to new forms of media, especially social media. Owing to the rising power of social media nowadays, as showed in figure 3, 88% of respondents expressed that they frequently use social media (such as Facebook, Instagram and twitter), say over 4 times per week.

Table 3 Causal relation between respondents' attitudes and the signing behaviors of the online petitions.

| Satisfaction Causal relationship | Strongly disagree (%) | Disagree (%) | Neither agree nor disagree (%) | Agree (%) | Strongly agree (%) | Mean (%) | Standard Deviation (%) |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Online petitions leads to signing | 0.7% | 2.3% | 18.6% | 26.2% | 52.2% | 4.3 | 0.9 |
| Online petitions helps change the issue. | 2% | 4.3% | 16.9% | 38.2% | 38.5% | 4.1 | 0.9 |
| Signing due to media coverage. | 0.7% | 3.3% | 18.9% | 33.2% | 43.9% | 4.2 | 0.9 |

Accordingly, a lot of people sign online petitions because of the influence of social media. As well as think online petitions can help this issue. This result confirmed the statement in my literature review (Chapter 2): “in many cases, digitalization has effectively helped public administrations to enhance inclusivity and boost engagement.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Sgueo, "Is the Future of Civic Engagement Online?".

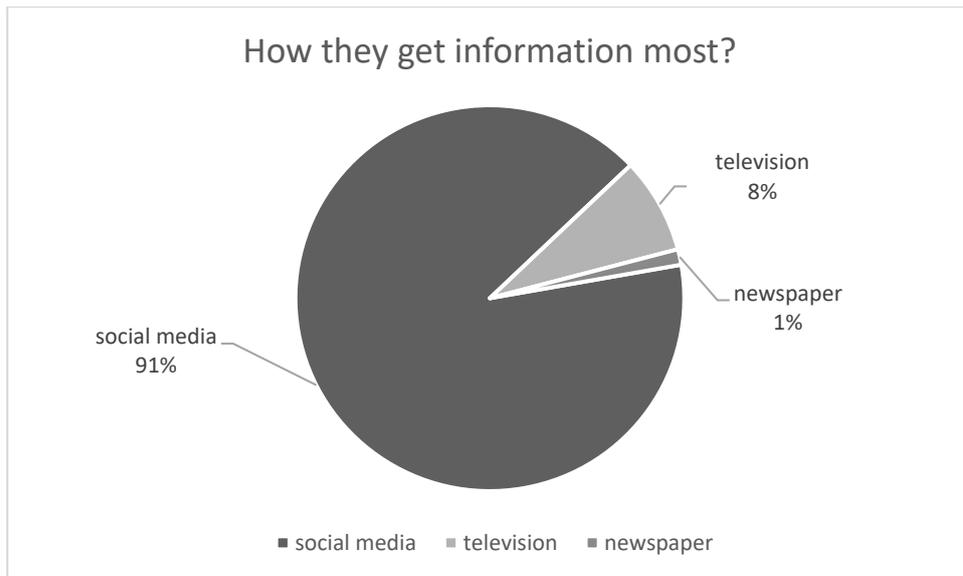


Figure 2 Respondents’ experience on getting information

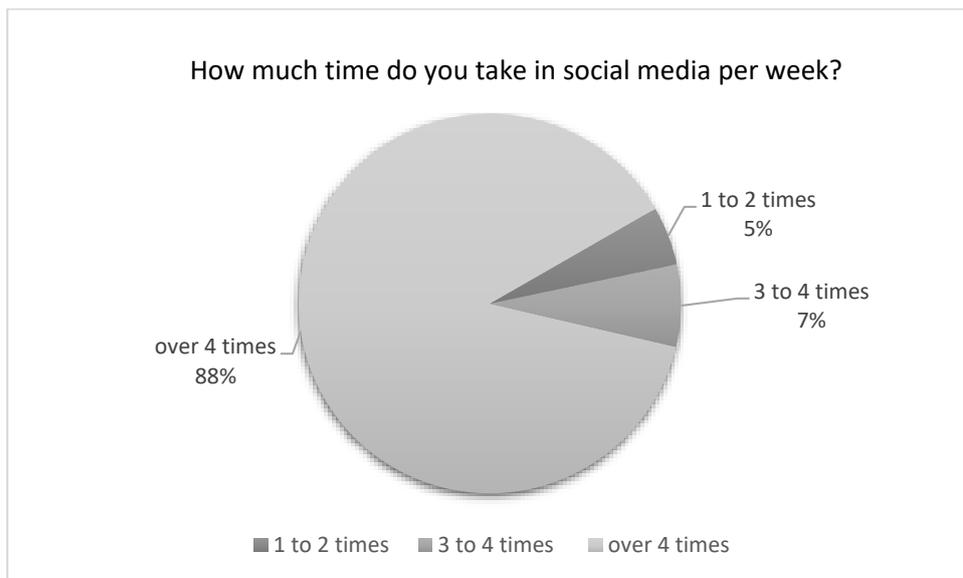


Figure 3 Period of using social media per week

Research question 2 asked, “What is the role of social media playing in the online petitions?” In a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). As seen in table 4, it showed the effect of social media to public affairs. In “Online petitions

attracts me to care about public affairs.”, 34.6% (M=3.8, SD=1) of the respondents agree that online petitions initiated their interest in public affairs. Another question, “With the rise of social media, I can have more chance to access public affairs.”, shows that there are 42.5% of them agree (M=4.2, SD=0.8) social media does provide more opportunities to them to access public affairs. “Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to build and share information beyond any geographical, social, political, or demographic border through public interaction in a participatory and collaborative way.”⁴¹ Social media’s feature bring people to get information from everywhere. Then, there were still 32.2% (M=3.5, SD=1.2) of them who neither agree nor disagree with that they always sharing post to others. In summing up what I found in the table 4, most respondents get new information and connect with public affairs due to social media.

⁴¹ Ivonne M. Torres & Miguel Angel Zúñiga Yating Pan, "Social Media Communications and Marketing Strategy: A Taxonomical Review of Potential Explanatory Approaches," *Journal of Internet Commerce* (2019):2-9

Table 4 The effect of social media to public affairs

| Satisfaction Questions | Strongly disagree (%) | Disagree (%) | Neither agree nor disagree (%) | Agree (%) | Strongly agree (%) | Mean (%) | Standard Deviation (%) |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Online petitions attract me to care about public affairs. | 2% | 6.6% | 28.9% | 34.6% | 27.9% | 3.8 | 1 |
| With the rise of social media, I can have more chance to access public affairs. | 0.3% | 1% | 15.3% | 42.5% | 40.9% | 4.2 | 0.8 |
| I always share post to other people in social media. | 6.3% | 11% | 32.2% | 23.3% | 27.2% | 3.5 | 1.2 |

Going viral effect on online petitions

On my third research questions, “Is going viral a negative effect for online petitions?”. I wanted to find out whether people using online petitions because they join the bandwagon of their social media friends? In one word, it is the so-called “slacktivism” mentioned in Chapter 2. As showed in the literature review, a main criticism of online petitions is the phenomenon of herd behavior, which means human behavior is affect by others’ opinions. Nevertheless, Table 5 showed that most people neither agree nor disagree about why they “sign the online petitions because of seeing

many people sign it.” In the line of “I understand what the petition’s appeal before signing”, as seen in table 5, 65.4% of respondent strongly agree with the go viral factor, and only 0.7 % strongly disagree this statement. After signing the petitions, there were about 37.9% and 38.2% people both strongly agreeing and agreeing that “They have a proactive approach on knowing updates of the issue after signing the petitions”. As a result of the mention above, most people do not belong to the aforementioned “slacktivism”. By slacktivism people should be those who do not understand what they really do through the social media. According to bandwagon’s definition, “In Leibenstein’s analysis, bandwagon effects are purely psychological—a quirk in the individual’s preferences. That is, a consumer may feel better doing the same as others do.”⁴² Although most people knowing online petition though social media. However, they are not really “Signing the petitions depends on the number of participants.” Therefore, in this research result, respondents’ who not all tend to jump into other people’s bandwagon signing this online petitions. Rather, my finding shows that most people have known what they signed and they did not blindly follow other people’s steps or suggestions while they decide to do the petitions.

⁴² Hal R. Varian Jeffrey H. Rohlfs, *Bandwagon Effects in High Technology Industries* (The MIT Press, 2001), 154-156

Table 5 Determination in the petitions.

| Satisfaction Questions | Strongly disagree (%) | Disagree (%) | Neither agree nor disagree (%) | Agree (%) | Strongly agree (%) | Mean (%) | Standard Deviation (%) |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Signing the petitions depends on the number of participants. | 7% | 17.9% | 30.6% | 24.6% | 19.9% | 3 | 1.2 |
| I understand what the petition's appeal before signing. | 0.7% | 1% | 7.6% | 25.2% | 65.4% | 4.5 | 0.7 |
| Having a proactive approach on knowing updates of the issue after sign the petitions | 1.3% | 5.3% | 17.3% | 38.2% | 37.9% | 4.1 | 0.9 |

Besides, I also visited Leopard Cat Association of Taiwan's Facebook fan page to examine the determination in petitions online. "Is going viral a negative effect for online petitions?" Then, I find out a joint statement of Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan (台灣石虎保育協會) and Avaaz post on the fan page on 8 June, 2019. The statement said as following:

After Miaoli County council has voted down a proposal for stronger leopard cat protections in 4 June. This has drawn this society's attention to the endangered Leopard cat. Thus, through the celebrities' promotion, the petitions for dealing with Yulon's development which was started in 2018, increase more than 480

thousand signatures within 3 days. Leopard Cat Association of Taiwan (LCAT), thanks everyone devoted themselves to protecting Leopard cat. We want to appeal to everyone that protecting leopard needs to “amend some regulations and policies, the cooperation between central government and local government, and public change their cogitation. It is hard to change the status quo only depending on a new law. The association has devoted long term efforts to the issue of Yulon’s environmental impact assessment. Yulon company needs to fulfill the demanding on environmental impact assessment. Then, according to the environment results, all stockholders should offer appropriate strategies. Meanwhile, we hope Miaoli environmental protection bureau can start a system with environment committee members and to hire professional Leopard cat committee members in deliberating this issue. Leopard cat is so important to Yulon as to what Leopard cat is to Miaoli. Miaoli parliament and government did not seize the opportunity on 4 June 2019. Therefore, Yulon company decided to suspend the environmental impact assessment one more year. Our institution will continue stand in the first line to introduce the necessary law to protect leopard cat. Also, communicate with those who are opposed to protecting leopard cat. The online petitions in Avaaz still works, as long as the environmental impact assessment of Yulon haven’t come to end.

The above statement shows the position on Leopard cat and this online petitions.

In short, this statement was to respond the online petition in Avaaz, also call for more people to join and care about leopard cat. Mention that the online petition is still works, once more people join the issue, that have more opportunities to change.

To examine more opinions on Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan (台灣石虎保育協會) of this online petitions, I found the comments below this post. Hence, such an activist group essentially care about this issue according to a point of view on this online

petitions. One netizen made a remark: “whether the Yulon will not set up a new factory, once the petitions number to over one million?” Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan(LCAT) reply:

“Since Yulon company is belonging to a private limited company. Therefore, the discretion is present among shareholders in the company. Maybe more people care about this issue, Yulon will think they should show the so-called Corporate Sustainability Report. What we can do is to influence people.”

Another doubts shows a netizen curious about the timing of this online petitions. The netizen followed a news and knew that some people thought this online petitions is started before Yulon’s environmental impact assessment. Therefore, they took this online petitions as only a symbolic activity. For Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan(LCAT), they reply this online petitions are still working and ongoing, and the environmental impact assessment has suspended for one more year. Also, Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan(LCAT) emphasize again Maybe more people care about this issue, Yulon will think they should show the so-called Corporate Sustainability Report.

Besides, one netizen asked about the online petitions only need to provide email and name these two personal information, without ID number, is the signature can be recognized by government? LCAT reply, since the Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan(LCAT) did not cheat about initiate online petitions issue before, therefore, the

online petitions started form them, the reliability is enough.

In brief, the textual analysis above showed more evidence that the “slacktivism” phenomenon did not cause the problem with going viral. Thus, there was very few clueless groups. As one of the perspective in my literature review. “The capability of online technologies to share informational goods, as a means for symbolic participation, and as an organizational tool, is discounted.”⁴³ According to Leopard Cats Association of Taiwan(LCAT) their replies on fan page, when one people sign the online petitions, it can raise the acknowledge to another people. For them, the potential on once a lot of people join their issue their voices can be heard of more for Yulon company and government.

Respondents’ Attitude to Different Issue

Comparing the similar issue people’s attitude in online petitions. Taking leopard cat and mining act for example to design questions. As seen on table 6, most respondents’ familiar with “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan” more than “Mining Act Amendment” this online petitions. Further, ask people the willingness on signing these two issues. “Compared to Mining Act, save leopard cat, this online petitions are more attracted to me.” The result for this question in a 5- point

⁴³ Dennis, *Beyond Slacktivism (Political Participation on Social Media)* 114.

Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), as seen in table 7, strongly agree taking up for 35.2%.

Table 6 Comparing different issue respondents' issue of familiarity.

| | | |
|-----|---|--|
| | Have you ever heard of " "Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan" this online petitions? | Have you ever heard of "Mining Act" this online petitions? |
| Yes | 70.8% | 30.3% |
| No | 29.2% | 69.7% |

Table 7 Respondents' willingness on different issues.

| Satisfaction Questions | Strongly disagree (%) | Disagree (%) | Neither agree nor disagree (%) | Agree (%) | Strongly agree (%) | Mean (%) | Standard Deviation (%) |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Compared to Mining Act, save leopard cat, this online petitions is more attracted to me. | 1% | 8.3% | 29.2% | 26.2% | 35.2% | 3.9 | 1 |

The different between these two issues, it can see form some aspect. First is the process of promote this online petitions. Analyzing the reports from different media, leopard cat's report is relatively acceptable for people from different age. A news describes about Russian artist draw a leopard cat illustration because of a controversial

on copyright of the design. “Russian artist behind leopard cat designs to visit Taiwan”⁴⁴ . Her design been use by the government, through this report more and more people knowing about leopard cat. Also, the mascot in Miaoli county is leopard cat, it represents Miaoli to participant many activities, that can let more children and people know about leopard cat. Another in Leopard Cat Association of Taiwan (台灣石虎保育協會) they develop up merchandise to attract people supporting their issue. On the contrary, mining act’s news, mining act seen to interesting for environmental party, outsider may not know or not care about it. From one of the title of mining act such as, “Proposed Mining Act Amendment Sidesteps Environmental Laws, Indigenous Rights”⁴⁵ the issue is relatively serious. That can be confirm in the investigation result in table 6 and 7, the majority of people familiar and interesting about leopard cat. That’s why people signing the online petitions of leopard cat more than mining act.

From the time of people sharing post, it can also found why the signing number between these two has big gap. On the Avaaz online petitions website, compare to the sharing number to Facebook, saving leopard cats is 205K, mining act is 12K. Using this comparison to answer second and third research questions, “What is the role of social media playing in the online petitions?” and “Is going viral a negative effect for online

⁴⁴ Keoni Everington, "Russian Artist Behind Leopard Cat Designs to Visit Taiwan," *Taiwan News*, 14 August 2019.

⁴⁵ Brian Hioe, "Proposed Mining Act Amendment Sidesteps Environmental Laws, Indigenous Rights," *The News Lens*, 12 January 2018; *ibid.*

petitions?” Once again, this result shows social media plays a communicator role each people. Also prove going viral is not a negative effect on the inline petitions since through sharing the post, they can get more signing number.

CONCLUSION

The study aims to research one of the direct democracy mode- online petitions. This research mainly focused on the “slacktivism” phenomenon in online petitions. Using “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan” the issue of this online petition, which is posted on the Avaaz as an example to research the related literature and designed a questionnaire. This issue was posted on 14 September 2018 which is about Yulon Motor Co., Ltd wants to expand its factory in Sanyi, Miaoli (Taiwan). The location of the new factory is in the habitat of leopard cat, so Leopard Cat Association of Taiwan (LCAT) cooperate with Avaaz to initiate this online petition.

In recently, online petitions becoming a popular method for people to change a policy or show their appeals to public. However, some critique of online petitions arising, such as slacktivism. The term slacktivism is a combination of the words of “slacker” and “activism,” has increasingly been used to describe the disconnectedness between people’s awareness and their actions through the use of social media.”⁴⁶ Some phenomena will affect the result of online petitions and cause “slacktivism”. Such as herd behavior and filter bubble. Herd behavior means people will follow others’ steps to do something. Then, after that, they would not care what they did. On the other hand,

⁴⁶ Glenn, "Activism or "Slacktivism?": Digital Media and Organizing for Social Change."

the filter bubble means the search engine will decide what you see. Like when you visit a Facebook page, the content may only contain the posts you “like” before, or another information from the echo chamber.

To realize people’s attitudes about online petitions. I found out three research questions respectively are “How do the online petitions attract people to sign?”, “What is the role of social media playing in the online petitions?”, and “Is going viral a negative effect for online petitions?” To discover the research questions’ answers, I made a questionnaire. Coded from 4 September 2020 to 24 September 2020. First part is about the experience of people contact online petitions. Second, experience of using the internet. Finally, the basic information of the respondent. Through analyzed the investigation and literature review, here have some points to react to my research questions that can be summarized as follows:

Social media is the main reason why issues in online petitions are known by everyone. “Social media in generating support for e-petitions is a powerful tool to better understand political online activism”⁴⁷. According to my investigation results, most people get information and know online petitions from social media. As the research results, it can say that social media plays a communicator role between participants and initiators of the online petition. However, some people may ask if this will cause

⁴⁷ CRISTINA LESTON BANDEIRA MOLLY ASHER, VIKTORIA SPAISER, "Assessing the Effectiveness of E-Petitioning through Twitter Conversations," (2017).

slacktivism, and then form a “going viral” phenomenon. As the investigation result, going viral is not a problem in online petitions, it is like a double face which has a positive and negative side. Since going viral is an inevitable thing within a trend. It can draw more attention to social media. “Digital technology facilitates the spread of asks through social networks, as one user who finds the ask compelling easily re-asks her friends through email, by re-tweeting to followers, sharing on Facebook, and so on.”⁴⁸

It is helpful for online petitions which need mobilization. Although most people know online petitions because of social media and other people’s sharing. However, in this research investigation, most people know about what they signed and not fully follow other people’s steps while they decide to do the petitions. Therefore, they are not belonging to “slacktivism”. From visiting the “Leopard Cat Association of Taiwan (LCAT)” Facebook fan page, the official has replied to netizen’s curious about whether this online petitions really help the issue can be summarized as follows. Some people ask the timeliness and effectiveness. LCAT replied that as much as the signing number, this online petition is still working, just the environmental impact assessment suspends a year. Also, emphasize again, maybe more people care about this issue, Yulon will think about to show the so-called Corporate Sustainability Report. Besides, comparing “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan” and “Amending the mining

⁴⁸ Archon Fung, "Viral Engagement: Fast, Cheap, and Broad, but Good for Democracy?."

act” these two online petitions which both post on the same online petitions website. To analyze why these two similar issues, have a huge difference in signing number. From their process of promoting the issue, media effect the content of the issue itself. Although it is both related to the environmental issues, leopard cats attract different age groups. On contrary, “Mining act” may only attract environmental professional or emic perspective. It can be proving from some point. First, when I asked about “Compared to Mining Act, save leopard cat this online petitions are more attracted to me.” Most respondents strongly agree to this statement, about 35.2%. Second, comparing to these two issues, found that promoting the issue there has different from each. The image of leopard cat is relatively cute so that Miaoli county uses it as a mascot. In this way, not only adults would start to care about it, but also kids. Finally, in ch1 a statement describes that “nationwide leading band, Mayday, whose lead guitarist Wen Shang-yi, who is known as Monster. Other promoters like YouTube content creator Holger Chen has called attention to the conservation of leopard cats by sharing an online petitions on Facebook on Thursday.”⁴⁹

In conclusion, from the above analyzed results, it can realize that with the help of social media, online petitions can increase their recognition to people who did not know about the issue. Owing to people nowadays mostly using social media, through sharing

⁴⁹ Staff writer, "Government Orders Local Authorities to Consider Impact on Leopard Cat Habitats."

post and other promotional methods, the number of signing number can increase fast.

Therefore, the issue can be listened by superior.

Through my research, hoping people to know the development of direct democracy- online petitions. This research is to prove online petition not only the trending topic, it can truly help the issue become famous to everyone. Although here are some problems on online petitions, such as slacktivism, in my research, it is not a problem for the initiator. In the end, hoping future researcher who want to conduct the issue about online petitions or something about social media can investigate deeper opinions in it. For example, asking people or initiators their direct thoughts. Maybe using the grass root research can get other results on slacktivism and online petition.

APPENDIX

網路連署使用經驗調查問卷

敬愛的受訪者您好:

感謝您撥冗填寫這份問卷，這是一份學術研究問卷，需花費您 3-5 分鐘的寶貴時間填寫。本問卷主要以「守護台灣最後 500 隻石虎的棲地」

https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/tw_leopardcat_yulon/

此一連署案為例，目的為了解人們對網路連署的看法及社群媒體與網路連署的關係。本問卷研究內容僅供學術研究使用，絕不對外公開，請安心填答，謝謝您的協助，並祝您順心如意。

您的寶貴意見將是本問卷是否完成的關鍵。對於此份問卷有任何問題或建議，歡迎聯絡此信箱，謝謝。

freeze777335@gmail.com

文藻外語大學國際事務系

指導教授: 李宇軒 教授

研究學生: 鄧詠心 敬上

2020 年 9 月

【第一部分】參與行動

1. 您是否有聽過或簽署過網路連署？

是 否

2. 您是否有簽署過紙本連署？

是 否

3. 您最常從何處取得連署活動資訊？

社群媒體他人分享 主動自連署網站尋找 電視新聞報導

廣播 從沒看過關於網路連署相關活動

4. 您是否有聽過「守護台灣最後 500 隻石虎的棲地」此一連署議題？

https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/tw_leopardcat_yulon/

是 否

| | 非常不同意 | 不同意 | 普通 | 同意 | 非常同意 |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. 在連署前我會先了解過該連署書所訴求的內容 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. 網路連署比紙本連署更提高我簽署的意願 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. 該事件經媒體的報導後會讓我想簽署連署 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. 簽署連署書後我會主動去了解該事件後續發展 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. 我會簽署網路連署是因為其他人也有參加 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. 我認為網路連署可以幫助改變該事件 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. 您是否有聽過礦業法此一連署案？

https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/taiwan_mining_act_loc/

是 否

| | 非常不同意 | 不同意 | 普通 | 同意 | 非常同意 |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 12. 比起連署礦業法，石虎連署案更吸引我 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/taiwan_mining_act_loc/ | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 13. 連署前我會看參與人數的多寡來決定是否要參與連署 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. 連署讓我更對公共事務產生興趣 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

【第二部分】網絡使用經驗

15. 一週使用社群網站如 (Facebook, Instagram, twitter 等) 的次數

1-2 次 3-4 次 4 次以上

16. 最常經由何管道獲得新資訊?

社群媒體 報章雜誌 電視新聞 廣播

| | 非常不同意 | 不同意 | 普通 | 同意 | 非常同意 |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17. 日常生活中，我會主動關心社會議題 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. 社群媒體的興起讓我更有機會接觸社會議題 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. 我常使用社群媒體中分享的功能 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

【第三部分】基本資料

性別

男 女

年齡

少於 18 歲 18 歲 - 22 歲 23 歲 - 30 歲

31 歲 - 40 歲 41 歲 - 50 歲 51 歲含以上

教育程度

高中職 專科 大學 研究所以上 其他_____

結束作答

Questionnaire- Experiences on using online petitions

Dear participants:

This is an academic research questionnaire; it will take 3 to 5 minutes for you to reply it. This questionnaire is mainly discussing the topic of “Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan”: A Study of the Development of Online Petitions. https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/tw_leopardcat_yulon/ Aiming to understand how people thought about online petition. Also, the relationships between using social media and petitions.

The result of this questionnaire is only for academic research, please feel free to answer the questions. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact this e-mail thank you for your cooperation.

freeze777335@gmail.com

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages
Department of International Affairs

Advisor: Professor: Yu-Hsuan Lee

Student: Yung-Hsin Teng

September 2020

【Part 1】 Participatory action

1. Have you ever heard of or signed the online petitions?
 YES NO
2. Have you ever heard of or signed the online petitions?
 YES NO
3. How you get online petitions information most?
 By others' sharing from social media Found from online petitions website
 News report Radio Never contact about any online petitions activities
4. Have you ever heard of " "Please Sign up for saving last 500 Leopard Cats in Taiwan" this online petitions?
https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/tw_leopardcat_yulon/
 YES NO

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. I understand what the petition's appeal before signing. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Online petitions lead to signing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Signing due to media coverages | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Having a proactive approach on knowing updates of the issue after sign the petitions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Signing online petitions since other people sign up. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Online petitions help change the issue | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. Have you ever heard of "Mining Act" this online petitions?

https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/ct/taiwan_mining_act_loc/

YES NO

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 12. Compared to Mining Act, save leopard cat, this online petitions are more attracted to me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Signing the petitions depends on the number of participants. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Online petitions attract me to care about public affairs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

【Part 2】 Using experience about internet

15. How many times do you take in social media per week?

(Facebook, Instagram, twitter)

1-2 3-4 over 4 times

16. How you get information most?

Television Newspaper Social media Radio

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17. I always care about public affairs actively in my daily life. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. With the rise of social media, I can have more chance to access public affairs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. I always share post to other people in social media. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

【Part 3】 Basic information

Gender

Male Female

Age

Less than 18 18 - 22 23 - 30

31 - 40 41 - 50 Above 51

Educational background

junior college and senior high school junior college College Graduate school

others _____

END

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