



Bachelor Thesis

Social Media and the Mexican Feminist Movement —

Leading or Impeding the Fight Against Gender-Based Violence?

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Abstract

The internet has shaped democratic structures and especially the sphere of protest organization, leading to the emergence of social (media) movements like *Me Too* and *NiUnaMenos (Argentina)*. The present work seeks to contribute to existing research by filling a knowledge gap on social media use of feminists fighting gender-based violence in Mexico. Gender-based violence and rising numbers of femicides lead to increasing activism in Mexican cities and are discussed to have created a so-called ‘fourth wave’ of feminism. This work operates under the main question of “*How does the Mexican feminist movement use social media to address gender-based violence in Guadalajara?*”. An inductive approach leads the qualitative research design of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with feminists and experts from the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara addressing purpose, use and evaluation of their social media utilization. The study has found that the main purposes of social media use are to inform, share and interconnect. Feminist activists and experts perceive social media as “very useful” in their activism, especially in times of social distancing and the Covid-pandemic, as well as a security aspect has to be taken into account in the attempted application of Western theories since feminists receive threats from antifeminist groupings, on- and offline.

Keywords: feminism, social media, gender-based violence, Mexico

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

ICT – Information and Communications Technology

SM – Social Media

ZMG – Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara (Zona Metropolitana de Guadalajara)

- Hashtag

“We’re using the internet and social networks to hack the patriarchy. But that’s not enough! We feminists are taking over public spaces. [...] Internet, the virtual space, is also a public space.”

María Florencia Alcaraz, Argentinean feminist
(DW Documentary, 2018, 0:25-0:45)

1. Introduction

Hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo on social media platforms have shaped online activism and raised worldwide awareness to discriminations and harassments (Anderson et al., 2018; Mendes et al., 2018). Furthermore, social media platforms have been used extensively in protest mobilization and information dispersion in phenomena like the Arab Spring (Khamis & Vaughn, 2013) or current protests in Belarus. Hence, civil activism on social media is a widespread topic and of great interest for social sciences, politics, and society. In the context of online activism, it seems valuable to study the relationship of social media activism and feminism. The feminist movement is a social movement that has existed for decades fighting for women’s rights and equality. The topic of digital feminist activism in the Western world has achieved great public and media attention through the hashtag ‘#MeToo’. *Me Too* addresses sexual harassment and sexism in the workplace and private life and uses social media for public debates since 2017. It was used 12 million times in the first 24 hours online after US-American actress Alyssa Milano responded to allegations of sexual assault by a movie producer (Mendes et al., 2018). Mendes et al. define a hashtag as “the # symbol followed by a thematic word or phrase” (p. 237).

It seems like research has lost interest in the feminist movements of the Western world. Since it has achieved great change and attention in the 1970s, Western countries already socialized a feminist generation (Shorrock, 2018). In Latin America however, the feminist movement is recently growing and thus, highly debated. Scholars claim that due to development and increasing access to information, women take up their voices to fight injustices they are confronted with. Debates on the fourth wave of feminism in Latin America describe it as a ‘tsunami’ of millions of women who react on the violence, oppression and discrimination against them in the 21st century (Varela, 2019). Varela (2019) further states that the fourth wave is nurtured by the three waves before them, social media, and an increased consciousness of young generations. Previous research has consistently found that hashtags and online activism have raised substantial attention to gender violence in the past decades in Latin America, resulting in a massive feminist movement (Varela, 2019; Revilla Blanco, 2019; Accossatto & Sendra, 2018).

The present study thus aims to pose an unknown example of online activism in the context of violence on women. The non-Western experience displayed in the context of development and digital generations can add valuable insights to the current knowledge. Therefore, the experiences of women using social media to oppose the violence they are suffering in contemporary Mexico are the main research interest. This thesis applies existing theories of modern social movements and online activism to evaluate specific movement, the feminist movement in the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara (ZMG).

Regarding social media use and feminist movements, existing research has focused on Latin America as a whole or in the context of hashtags, mostly on the Argentinean movement *Ni Una Menos* (Not one less) which resulted from the hashtag “#NiUnaMenos”. The hashtag reached global attention and is used by feminist movements all over Latin America since journalists used it to mobilize against the misogynist killing of women in Argentina in 2015 (Terzian, 2017). Some literature discusses the term ‘cyberfeminism’ as an interplay between feminism and online activism, i.e., cyberactivism. However, there is little research on the use of social media by feminist groups in other countries which are classified as developing nations. This classification adds curiosity since former investigation has shown that discriminated groups can gain influence through the internet in developing states (Gray et al., 2017).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, numbers of gender-based violence reports have dramatically increased all over Latin America (International Rescue Committee, 2020). In Mexico, women killings have risen 7.7% in the first half of 2020 compared to last year, and women shelters have reported a stark increase in domestic violence victims reaching out for help (Agren, 2020). García and Rojas (2020) have reported that more emergency calls were registered by the Mexican Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (SESNSP) and Google Tendencies have shown an increase in searches for help when suffering domestic violence since COVID-19 lockdowns.

Therefore, it is a timeliness topic this research seeks to explore by looking into the use of social media to assess its role in activism against-gender based violence. It intends to discover if feminists in Guadalajara use social media in the same ways and to the same end as theory and research on other movements suggest. Therefore, it will examine this specific movement to determine if they make use of social media as implied by studies of other social or feminist movements. The knowledge gap of social media use by feminists in the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara will be assessed to contribute to existing research. The topic aims to contribute to the quest of Garrido and Roman (2006): “The opportunities for women to harness the potential of ICTs to advance their rights must be analyzed within the context of these diverse social justice movements taking place in Latin America.” (p.167).

2. Research Question

To fill the beforementioned research gap and assess the issues addressed in the introduction, this research will be conducted under the main question of *How does the Mexican feminist movement use social media to address gender-based violence in the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara (ZMG)?* Hashtags which broach the issue of gender-based violence and femicides as the most serious crime of violence against women, will be part of the research. In order to study this specific case, three sub-questions will be addressed.

Firstly, to descriptively enter the topic area, it is asked *1) Which social media platform(s) and, if applicable, hashtag(s) are mainly used by the feminist movement in the ZMG?* As literature has shown, Twitter and the Hashtag of Ni Una Menos are widely discussed and expected to be central.

Secondly, *2) With which purpose do feminists in the ZMG use social media and hashtags?*

This second sub-question examines the intention of social media use by feminists. Through the examination of used platforms and hashtags, the reasons for their utilization will be investigated. Drawing on existing literature's findings, it is expected that women who are active in the feminist movement pursue goals such as media attention, mobilization or Latin-America wide connection, coordination and information exchange through the use of social media (Garrido & Roman, 2006; Anderson et al., 2018). However, purposes can differ from organization to organization or between individuals. Therefore, the interest is especially on the ZMG feminist activists, taking into account the limitations of this study's representation.

Lastly, *3) What are the effects of social media use on feminist activism against gender-based violence?*

The third sub-question addresses gender-based violence as the latter part of the research question in connection with social media. After a description of the feminist's social media use in this specific context, it is asked for perception of usefulness and an evaluation of social media in their activism. Since social media is broadly believed to be a positive asset for activism due to possibility for rapid organization and interconnection, it is of this thesis' interest to understand if activists believe social media could also hinder their activism and goals. Therefore, as social media is widely characterized as an essential tool for modern activism (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014; Khamis & Vaughn, 2013; Ramírez Morales, 2019) it is expected to be perceived as positive and useful. The concept of 'perceived usefulness' in the context of the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) will serve as a base to understand why feminist activists are receptive to the new technology of social media, or not. On this behalf, a study by Schuster (2013) has found that "the young women valued new media for its flexibility, accessibility and ability to reach large groups of people. Moreover, they appreciated its easy and low-cost use" (p. 8). Further, it is aimed to examine if social media is perceived as having

negative effects on reaching the goal of eradicating and fighting gender-based violence, further discussed through the concept of slacktivism.

Due to the broad formulation of the third sub-question, further versions help to assess it further. If social media play a role in the feminists' activism, it is asked:

- a. How do feminists in the ZMG describe their social media activism against gender-based violence, further do they follow the cyberactivism-model by Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia (2014)?
- b. How do the activists experience social media use– does it hinder their activism to achieve set goals or is it perceived to be useful for their activism?
- c. Which critiques do the activists pose against social media?

3. Background

3.1 Means and Goals of Feminist Waves

Subsequent to the Suffragettes, the radical feminist movement in the Seventies highlighting that 'the personal is political' and the third wave introducing intersectional feminism, today's feminist movement is a global phenomenon driven by the internet (Munro, 2013). Globalization, digitalization, economic development and democratization - various factors have played a role in the construction of feminist representation and groupings all over the world. According to Cobo (2019), globalization of feminism is what characterizes the fourth wave of feminism as well as its intergenerational character of participants and social media connection. The main goal of fighting injustices, violence and oppression have remained since the birth of feminism. The historical background on feminism shows that its movement originated from a public perspective (right to vote and political participation) and moved to the private sphere (reproduction-, intra-family – and sexual rights) to public and private nowadays taking into account the diversity of gender and feminisms. Means of international connection, enabled through the internet and access to information from almost everywhere have changed feminist means and goals as well. In 1992, a Mexican activist was first to use the internet to connect with feminists in the South, who felt isolated and had little access to information, via email (Sabanés Plou, 2004). Email correspondence via the internet was adapted as a frequent means of communication, a cost-effective medium compared to traditional communication tools. Mexican feminists continue to fight the patriarchal structures and political under- or misrepresentation as well as structural gender inequalities in connection with sexual violence in the private sphere and oppression through the misogynist culture. Through the utilization of the public sphere, as introduced by Habermas (1964), the feminists as citizens behave as a public body to assemble and express their views on matters of common interest, especially for women. Habermas points to the importance of means that transmit information and achieve impactful influence, for example by transmitting information to traditional media such as newspapers, television and radio.

In the contemporary fight for justice the internet is expected play an integral role. The revictimization of those who suffer gender-based violence or the prohibited access to abortions are state interventions on a Mexican woman's private life, still occurring today. Nowadays, the feminist movement addresses both the government in their fight for justice for gender-based violence and femicides and society to change the misogynist culture and to bring awareness to the masses. Sabanes Plou (2004) points out that the use of social media is not only instrumental, but also promotes a strategic use of ICT tools to achieve common objectives in terms of virtual and real participation and impact on public policies to change discriminatory legislation and create an inclusive society with equal opportunities.

3.2 Femicides and Feminist Movement in Latin America

Feminist activism on the internet is an increasing phenomenon in Latin America. Activism is defined as a set of actions that invite social participation and are aimed at generating change or achieving common goals (Oliver, 1984). Ramírez Morales (2019) explains that internet activism “is considered a non-conventional form of political participation that uses technology as an open field of action through different digital platforms” (p. 4). This research shares the believe of Sally Burch (1998) that

Information technology obviously will not solve the world's problems. But wisely deployed and developed, it has proven to be a powerful tool for advancing social causes. One of the social groups that has been most dynamic in using this technology innovatively for social progress, is the women's movement; and in many aspects, the South has exerted leadership in this process. (p.4)

In Latin America, feminist online activism makes use of hashtags like #YoSiTeCreo (I Do Believe You¹; topic: rape crimes and revictimization), #NiUnaMenos (Not One Women Less; topic: killings of women), #8M (standing for 8th of March – International Women's Day) or #SeraLey (It Will Be Law; topic: legalization of abortion) on social media platforms like Twitter (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019).

#NiUnaMenos is a hashtag that has been studied by various scholars (Accossatto & Sendra, 2018; Revilla Blanco, 2019; Terzian, 2017). The hashtag #NiUnaMenos (Not one less) is a response of the feminist movement to the high number of cases of violence against women and femicides. The concept of femicides was first introduced in Russell's and Redford's book “Femicide: The Politics of Women Killing” in 1992 as “the misogynist killing of women by men” mostly after a long period of violence and because they are female (Campbell and Runyan, 1998, p.348). #NiUnaMas (Not one more) relates to femicides and is commonly used since a 2007 CEPAL report on violence against women was titled “Ni Una Mas” (Revilla Blanco, 2019). Its release was followed by various protests.

Femicides are a pressing issue in Mexico: solely in the first four months of 2020, 308 women were killed as a result of gender violence according to the Executive Secretary of the National System of

¹ Free translation from Spanish to English by the author herself

Public Security (SESNSP). Accossatto & Sendra (2018) studied the communication strategies of the Argentinean *Ni Una Menos* movement and found that it is a representative case of political online activism using ICT to facilitate their activism. Rapid interaction, the multiplication or ‘viralization’ effect, intra- and interorganizational communication and organization, as well as facilitated access to mass media, media coverage and attention of political elites are the main benefits found.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Social Movement Theory

In this section, selected insights from theory on social movements will be introduced and theoretically applied to the discussed case to further ground the following work on this theory and classify the movement under study.

Following Bourdieu’s theory, a social space is created to locate a social movement within society: class questions of education, income and profession play a role which form internalized patterns, a habitus. Similar habitus are favored in a created field with rules and a collective identity of protesters (Schmitt, 2016). The economic, cultural and social definitions of a Mexican woman, her roles and behavior, form the field. These factors influence her actions that can lead to a redefinition of her habitus, when reaching a critical mass, it can become an enduring change (Uppalury & Racherla, 2014).

According to classical social movement theory, a connection with an existing conflict is key for the persistence of a movement. Therefore, the agents of conflict must be identified (Touraine, 1985). In the case of the feminist movement, it is violent men or broader those who uphold the patriarchic structures. A radical view on the agent of conflict would be men in general claiming they are naturally violent, and no justice for women can be obtained under such patriarchal structures.

Kusche (2016) states that the non-existence of a hierarchy of values allows a flexible decision-making referring to distinct values per decision within function systems. However, a fundamentalist social movement insists on one value of absolute priority and “modern movements demand absolute respect for certain values and attribute respect and disrespect accordingly” (Kusche, 2016, p.83). From the fundamentalist perspective there is a clear distinction between allies and opponents, and strategies are formulated to shift the existing order. In contrast to the fundamentalist strategy for organizing a movement, the realist approach of resource mobilization is concerned with resources, linkages with and dependence on other groups (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Realists formulate fewer radical demands and aim for change within function systems (Kusche, 2016).

Following the understanding of new social movements by Judith Butler, the dispute between protesters and opponents is influenced by the question of recognition. Movements concerned with feminism, gay rights or racial injustice are therefore called identity movements as “People with a feeling of injury, humiliation, or disrespect confronted societies with the claim to recognize the specific identity of a

group or an individual person” (Reinmuth, 2016, p.146). Identity and the societal norms pose a dilemma to the feminist movement as they claim to be recognized based on the prevailing societal norms but on the other hand, contest the norms, not wanting to be reduced to the identity frame (Reinmuth, 2016). Research on feminist movements is fruitful in understanding collective identities as the interactions of oppressor and oppressed are highly intimate like gender which is based on cultural processes (Jasper, 2010).

4.2 Cyberactivism

Social media activism is a broadly discussed topic in political and communication sciences. There is an ongoing discussion about how social media shapes the participatory culture in established democracies within the field. Further, after the use of the internet in revolutions during the Arab spring, cyberactivism became an important research topic in the connection with political transformation towards democracy (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014). Khamis and Vaughn (2013) express that “through the process of cyberactivism, social media can serve as channels for expressing collective consciousness and national solidarity” (p. 70). This research follows the definition of cyberactivism as ‘internet activism using electronic communication technologies such as social media’, complemented by a citation from Howard (2011) which claims that “the goal of such activism [*cyberactivism*] is often to create intellectually and emotionally compelling digital artifacts that tell stories of injustice, interpret history, and advocate for particular political outcomes” (Khamis & Vaughn, 2013, p.70). Accossatto and Sendra (2018) distinguish between two different meanings of cyberactivism. First, as a form of political mobilization that has recently been made available to the public through digital technologies, computers and smartphones. Secondly, it has been interpreted from the "security" approach, which refers to possible sources of cyber-attack through hacking. This thesis solely refers to the first interpretation of cyberactivism.

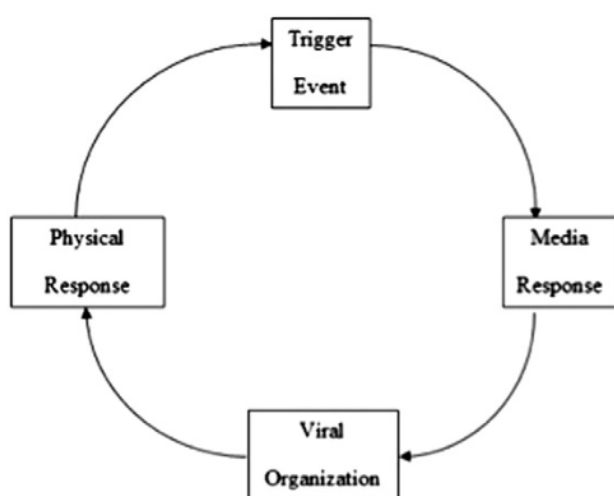


Fig. 1. Model for political movements using social media.

According to Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia (2014), the most important tools of cyberactivism in the context of social movements and protest are facilitating communication, organization and sharing information to empower citizens. Further, they introduce a model for political movements’ utilization of social media, illustrated in Figure 1. The model “attempts to systematize some of the social causes and consequences of online tools into a theoretical framework to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between information technologies and social and political

activism” (p. 366). Drawing on the model and evidence on gender-based violence in Mexico, it is expected that a specific case of a femicide displays a ‘trigger event’, which is followed by media coverage, viral organization making use of new and established hashtags, to finally an organized physical response in the form of a traditional street protest. Whether this model can be applied to social media strategies of activists and in the context of existing experiences of feminists, will be assessed in the further analysis. The model forms basis for sub-question 3a) and will be assessed through questions on the process and social media use after a ‘trigger event’ such as a femicide.

Moreover, the key feature of social media is the co-creation of content by its users; thus, it encourages the principal tools of social movements. It is supported by literature that the internet has an effect on the identity of a social movement and its strategies making it a “place for resistance” (p.367). In the context of feminism, Matos (2017) even states that access to the internet and social media have shaped ‘cyberfeminism’. Cyberfeminism is introduced as a “crossroads of feminist theory, media art and online networking” and “synonymous with feminist studies of new media that investigate interconnections of gender, embodiment and technology” (Paasonen, 2011, p.336). Paasonen’s (2011) discussion refers to Western examples of cyberfeminism striving for visibility through creating art content online and positioning themselves in a ubiquitously technological world. They address female sexuality, empowerment and independence, and celebrate their online participation. Whether these experiences coincide with the Mexican feminist movement will be ascertained in the following analysis.

4.3 Slacktivism

Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia (2014) discuss a possible cyberactivism 2.0 which mostly takes part online, is detached from any organization and has a constant flow of data, affecting traditional protest and activism as well as how cyberactivism is understood in this paper. Not only the positive effects of the internet such as mobilization and dissemination of information, have been debated in the context of social movements. In 2009, the concept of slacktivism arose in an article by Evgeny Morozow which was titled “The brave new world of slacktivism”. Since then, it has been cited by academic papers which define slacktivism as “political activities that have no impact on real-life political outcomes, but only serve to increase the feel-good factor of the participants” (Christensen, 2011). The issue of ‘liking’ or sharing social media content and perceiving it as activism with absence of further involvement has been discussed by various scholars (see Christensen, 2011; Skoric, 2012; Lee & Hsieh, 2013). If the ‘physical response’ of political movements is omitted, the social media model (shown in Fig. 1) is incomplete. Hence, social media activism can be beneficial for a social movement due to rapid distribution of information and mobilization, media coverage, and ability to raise awareness to their cause, however, negative impacts have also been discussed through the concept of slacktivism. If this concept applies to the experience of feminist activists in the ZMG will be assessed in the further research process through the sub question 3c), addressing social media criticism.

4.4 Feminist approach

Feminist theory is led by paradigms that point out aspects of social life from a woman's perspective, focusing on "gender differences and how they relate to the rest of social organization" (Babbie, 2007, p.38). This research aims to give women a voice and to reveal the ideas and strategies of women in a particular context and setting. The academic culture is still dominated by middle-class white men with often Eurocentric or Western approaches. Therefore, this research follows the feminist approach of drawing attention to oppressions and inequalities of women, connected with the force of fighting these and using different means to improve the life of women in today's societies.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The introduction has shown that the use of social media in social movements is a widely studied phenomenon. However, the specific research question assessing the feminist movement in Mexico is a new interest within this field of study. The movement allows for insightful research from several perspectives and lacks a general theory on the social media use wherefore this study aims to learn more about it. Therefore, the abovementioned research question leads an exploratory study. This research follows the three most typical purposes of exploratory studies introduced by Babbie (2007): "(1) to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding, (2) to test the feasibility off undertaking a more extensive study, and (3) to develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study" (p.88). It is a descriptive exploratory study since it seeks to describe a new phenomenon and develop variables for further research. Hence, its purpose is to describe the societal subgroup of Mexican feminist activists in Guadalajara. By providing an insight into first-hand experiences of social media use and communication strategies, it is aspired to gain knowledge on the formulated questions. As per Babbie (2007), this means following an inductive approach.

5.2 Data Collection Method

This research is interested in exploring the use, perception and possible criticism of social media within feminist activism. Since it seeks to provide an insight into personal experiences and in-depth research, a qualitative approach seems suitable. Furthermore, this research follows a qualitative approach since feminist researchers advocate this method due to the importance of a social context and non-hierarchic relations which is often ignored by traditional research methods (Wilkinson, 1999). To identify whether feminist activists in Guadalajara use social media in the expected ways and to the commonly supported purposes, interviews were conducted. With the help of interview questions addressing each sub-question, it is aimed to answer the general research question.

The interviewees took part in semi-structured in-depth interviews. According to Legard et al. (2003), "in-depth or unstructured interviews are one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research" (p.138). In order to ensure 'good in depth-interviewing' questions were as clear, open, varying

and not influencing as possible (Legard et al., 2003). The interview process was led by interview guides, adapted to activists and experts and contained broad and specific questions related to the research interests. Through the semi-structured approach, openness to the answers and adaptability was preserved (Kvale, 2007). Interview questions for activist focused on their use, perception and experience whereas the expert interview guide included a historical comparison and neutral evaluation based on knowledge and research. The respective guides can be found in the appendix. Before actual interviews were conducted and recorded, participants were handed an informed consent form which they agreed upon before the recording was initiated. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the geographical distance, the interviews were conducted via Zoom. All the recording methods introduced by Kvale (2007), namely audiotape recording, videotape recording, note-taking and remembering, were used to document the data appropriately and facilitate later analysis.

5.3 Case Selection and Sampling

This study is interested in individuals who are part of the feminist movement in the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara (ZMG) since they are expected to give the best insight in their use of social media. Hence, the unit of analysis, and consequently unit of observation, are individuals, most of them feminist activists. The activists were contacted through personal relations, by being a member of a feminist organization in the ZMG or through recommendations in further snowball-sampling. To categorize the social media use of different individuals, this research is interested in their time being active as feminists to assess possible differences of age and social media use, as well as the affiliation with a specific feminist organization to see if organizational strategies influence their social media use. It follows the approach of a cross-sectional study observing each sample at a time, which is why its representation and therefore, generalization is limited (Babbie, 2007). To add a different perspective and objective knowledge, two experts in the area of feminism and gender studies in the ZMG were interviewed. The focus laid on including an angle of comparison between the different waves of feminism experienced in Mexico, and the role social media has played in this context. However, due to the qualitative approach and limitations in time and resources, the selected sample was relatively small. The interviewees were selected to give an insight into the ZMG movement, its strategies, history and personal stories to create a first grasp of it. An overview of the participants can be seen in Table 1.

The movement in Mexico has been chosen since Mexico's classification as a developing state adds further curiosity in relationship with the internet as a democratizing force. In the context of developing states, Gray et al. (2017) state that those who are discriminated and thus disadvantaged in the country's system can gain influence and political power through the internet. One ought to ask, if a lack of access to the internet is problematic, leading to further disadvantages of discriminated groups, in this case women. However, this question and intersectional feminist approach, exceeds this research's scope, time and resources. Further, Mexico was chosen as the author has gained personal insights and interest

in the feminist movement during her study year abroad and has personal contacts to feminist activists and academics concerned with gender issues in Mexico's second biggest city Guadalajara.

Table 1.

Overview of Interview Participants

Name	Profession	Years active	Approach (besides street activism)
Expert 1	Sociologist, Politologist	35	Political and structural work, Gender studies professor, Various organization memberships
Expert 2	Sociologist	10	Work in social justice and political rights organizations, organizing events about feminism and sexual diversity, Municipal Institute
Activist 1	Sociologist	7	Social media use, organization membership
Activist 2	Student	2	Social media use, organization funded and membership
Activist 3	Psychologist	5	Social media activism, (online) psychological support, accompaniment of violence victims and abortions, organization membership
Activist 4	Student	2	Organization membership
Activist 5	Student	<1	Personal blog, association of female entrepreneurs
Activist 6	Student	5	Organization funded, social media activism

5.4 Operationalization

The concepts introduced in the theory chapter and addressed in this research, need operationalization to make them measurable in the specific context. The use of social media platforms and hashtags as a symbol for social media activism were assessed through interview questions openly asking activists about their experience and personal use of hashtags. With regard to the second sub-question, addressing the 'purpose' of social media use, literature has mentioned mobilization, communication or information sharing, among others. In the further course of research, the concept of 'purpose' has been applied in the present context by developing interview questions that were coded into general purpose of use as well as purpose to use certain platforms and hashtags. The third sub-question discusses, inter alia, 'perception of usefulness' of social media activism. Perceptions are complex concepts since they are based on individual opinions and no actual 'influence or usefulness'. Perceived usefulness was introduced by Davis (1989) as a fundamental determinant of user acceptance of information technology.

Perceived usefulness and personal experience were used as determinants of a variable in a questionnaire study by Horst et al. (2007), but since it is hard to measure in a qualitative study, it has been explored through interview questions, considering its limitations. This work explores if social media is perceived to be a positive or negative tool for feminist activism by using the concept of slacktivism as an example. Sandoval-Almazan's and Gil-Garcia's model on social media use by political movements has been applied to test its applicability in the case of the feminist movement in the ZMG. Hence, the four parts of the model have been integrated in the interview questions.

6. Data Analysis

The basis of this research's conclusions will be an analysis of the data obtained in the interview process. The aim of the data analysis is to understand the overarching research questions upon the creation of categories. Categories are orientated towards the interview questions, which in return follow the research questions underlying this study. Nine interviews were scheduled out of which eight were actually carried out. Six feminists all active in the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara as well as two experts in the area of gender studies and Mexican feminism participated in the study. The participants voluntarily agreed to a semi-structured, guideline-based interview which was conducted via Zoom. The interviews were recorded with the record-function of Zoom, audio- and video files were stored on an encrypted external hardware, transcribed with the software 'Amberscript' as well as manually improved.

The data was analyzed by applying and adapting the qualitative content analysis introduced by Mayring (2000). Mayring proposes to define categories that stem from research questions, elaborate definitions and combine them with examples in a coding agenda. This research's coding agenda can be found in the appendix. The information obtained was further reduced and selected for analytical purposes but while preserving the original meanings. For this purpose, a qualitative coding method has been employed to exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive ideas (Gibbs, 2007). By coding repeated answers and concepts, which are potentially adding up to existing concepts and expectations, a clear overview of results can be accomplished. Codes were used to organize the data and examine it in a structured way, also by assessing relationships between the codes or applying comparisons (Gibbs, 2007). As indicated in the operationalization part, the introduced theory will be part of the analysis which is why concept-driven coding seemed most fitting for this research. The software ATLAS.ti was used to structure the coding process. The categories and coding agenda were constantly revised during the analysis and lead to the interpretation of the results and quantitative steps of analysis such as frequencies (Mayring, 2000). According to the introduced steps of data analysis by Swanson & Holton (2005), the last step is to generate meaning which has been accomplished by generalizing and theorizing the data by putting them in relation without speculating.

7. Findings

This chapter presents the data obtained during interviews with activists and experts to answer how the feminist movement uses social media to bring awareness to and fight gender-based violence. It is divided into different parts led by the formulated sub-questions. In the displayed results, the information on different waves of feminism will constantly play a role in the comparison of expert's and activist's statements. In the interview process, feminist activists were asked to briefly explain their experience with social media and activism. Some of them have joined the movement through social media and are mainly active online, others see social media as part of their activism and still others stopped sharing on social media for mental health reasons (Activist 4). In the following, the main findings related to the overriding questions and theoretical concepts will be presented.

7.1 Use

The first sub-question of this research asks for the social media platforms and hashtags that are mainly used by feminist activist or seen as relevant by experts in this area. The two main social media platforms used by the interview participants are **Facebook** and **Instagram** while **WhatsApp** is the most widely used social communication platform. A difference in platform use could be seen between ages, younger feminists mentioned Instagram as the most important media whereas feminists who are comparatively older only mentioned it as a strategy to reach out to younger girls. The platform **TikTok** was named as a recently introduced platform to reach out to teenagers and address topics related to sexual education and violence (Activist 6). Further results can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Overview of Social Media Platform Use

Social Media Platform	Frequency	Communication Platform	Frequency
Facebook	4	WhatsApp	4
Instagram	4	Signal	2
Twitter	2	Telegram	1
TikTok	1		

In the context of hashtag usage, diverse experiences were found. Various women **do not use hashtags** and projected **little importance** on their use, at least in the ZMG. However, one activist uses them strategically to point out the topics she focuses on, create a community and specify who she wants to reach out to (Activist 5). Generally, it was found that only the activists who form an active part of **feminist organizations use hashtags more frequently and for strategic reasons**. Feminists who do not make use of hashtags, expressed that their use on private social media accounts (e.g. Instagram) is not useful since it will not be publicly seen or traceable (Activist 4). As theoretical implications suggest, the participants referred to the hashtags **#NiUnaMas** (Activist 1,2,4,5; Expert 2) and **#NiUnaMenos** (Activist 1,2,4; Expert 2) as broadly used by feminists in the context of gender-based violence and femicides, however, the use of these broadly known hashtags was also criticized due to overuse and following invisibility of content as well as organized weakening of feminist contents by antifeminist groups (further in the section on critique). Activist 1 points out the fact that both hashtags are connected and address something similar since *“we are all talking about the fact that in Mexico there are 11 women [a day] killed for being women, because of violence against women, right? A claiming hashtag is ‘not one less’: Stop!”* (Transcript 1, p.7, ll.263-265). The hashtag **#Feminismo** (Activist 3,5,6) was repeatedly brought up in the context of making general topics visible or bringing their postings under the masses since the movement has gained attention from various parts of society. Therefore, the results show that the use of social media and hashtags differ between feminists. Their use depends on their personal strategy or organization membership and approach as well as the purpose to use certain platforms and hashtags which has been assessed and will be displayed in the following.

7.2 Purpose

As discussed earlier, the purpose of social media use within activism can be summed up as mobilization, coordination and information distribution. During the interviews, participants were asked for the purpose of their social media use, then more specifically about their reasons to use certain platforms and hashtags.

7.2.1 Social Media

Initially, the participants were asked for general purposes to use social media. The two responses that were given by respectively seven out of eight women were to **inform** and **to share events, meetings and conferences**. After that, the **contact with other movements** as well as **sharing security strategies for protests, strategic communication** and **political reflection and action** were brought up. It was expected that the purpose of political pressure through hashtag-movements would have been stronger, whereas ‘political reflection and action’ was only indirectly named by two activists and one expert. Moreover, ‘media attention’ was an expected purpose which has not been mentioned.

The following quote from an activist allows for more in-depth understanding of the importance of social media use:

I don't envision an activism without social networks because we weren't born in this era of activism without a digital era, right? I think it's a fundamental and important part. Why is that? Well, if we analyze it from the digital divide, not all women in Mexico and not all women in Guadalajara have access to social networks, but those who can do something, have access, and those who can motivate themselves and cause a change, have access. We believe that we are not the change, that we are there to develop, to inform and to accompany as far as we can. But activism in social networks is important because it gets messages across faster. (Transcript 6, p.4, ll.148-156)

Therefore, also the **rapidity of information distribution and communication** which the new media allow, play a part in their cyberactivism. An expert who was asked for the purposes and differences between the contemporary movement and the feminism in the past responded that social media has enabled a diversification of the movement (Expert 2). She further explained that there are more spaces, get-togethers and collectives and that social media plays a fundamental role for the new generations and feminism's diversity. Hence, social media is seen as a characteristic of the modern feminist movement to allow information sharing and gatherings of likeminded activists.

7.2.2 Platforms

The results on platform purposes are displayed in the following Figure number 2. The respective social media platform and the main purposes mentioned are shown as well as who mainly uses these platforms as well as the users who feminists intent to address, according to the interview data.






	Purpose: inform, share (events, pictures of victims, disappearances) Users: "older" generations
	Purpose: share visual and graphic content (aesthetic) Users: young people
	Purpose: create trending topics, political and urgent sharing Users: communication between feminist and political sphere
	Purpose: sex education and inform on violence and help Users: teenagers
	Purpose: security (strategies; send live locations), share events Users: all

Figure 2. Platform purposes.

By author (logos retrieved from Google.com)

7.2.3 Hashtags

As shortly indicated in the earlier section on hashtag utilization, hashtags are an ambivalent question in feminist activism in the ZMG. When asked for purposes of hashtag use, regardless of frequency of use, the interviewee's common answer (5 activists, 1 expert) was to **make topics viral/public**. From a rather passive angle, hashtags were also mentioned **to seek specific information** or **to trace certain topics**. Activists 3 and 6, who are directly generating content for organizations or their job, describe the hashtags' function as helping to **become a trending topic** and use certain hashtags such as **#feminism to reach out to non-activists/non-feminists**. Activist 1 creates her own hashtags depending on the topic she discusses in a posting, saying that "*for me, the hashtag is like a premise or a concrete message*" (Transcript 1, p.6, l.251). Activist 4 explained that it does not play a role on her personal page since it is private but as part of an organization, she uses them to spread their posts and information. Hashtags do not seem to have a personal value or big role in personal activism. It is mostly used by organizations to share their information or in pressing situations like disappearances or femicides.

7.3 Context of Gender-Violence

Femicides and gender-based violence have been mentioned by all feminists and experts as a problem they fight against and all participants mentioned a specific case or personal story that affects them. In this section, the objectives, usefulness and critique regarding the fight against gender-based violence on- and offline will be illustrated. In this course, the theoretical implications discussed in chapter 4 will form part to the extent that they were discussed during the interviews.

7.3.1 Objectives

When asked for their activism's objectives, almost all participants emphasized the creation of **awareness**. Activist 2 illustrated this goal by saying: "*I very much like this idea of seeing everything through 'gender-lenses' and therefore being able to unmask many things that happen and that are perceived as normal but are actually violent*" (Transcript 2, pp.1-2, ll. 43-46). Another activist made clear that her objective is to be part of the process to change patriarchal mentalities and the social relations under this patriarchal perspective (Activist 4). Generally, three activist and one expert mentioned **ending the patriarchy as a dominant societal form** as a main objective. Through protesting and forming allyship with other feminist groups and women, the activists seek to change the patriarchal structures (Activist 4). Since the fight for change is in its roots, the feminist's activities focus on becoming stronger from the inside and create awareness instead of addressing the political sphere. Furthermore, politicians are expected to be corrupt (Activist 3) and the government has not been supportive of feminist activism which is why a cooperation on this behalf has not been considered. Their activism focuses on social media positioning for practical reasons, Activist 1 mentions:

It works because they read you, they question you, they question us, you know? And that way you also build activism or political reflection, which is the purpose of using

social networks or a motion, isn't it? To generate awareness among all of us as to the 'why'. For example, in our context there is a political structural violence against each and every one of us under the different intersectionalities that exist. (Transcript 1, p.4, ll. 162-166)

Activist 1 further mentions that even though social media is an instrument of the capital and patriarchy itself, they have to make use of it since there are not many alternative means. As rates of justice and fair investigations are low, the women prefer to help each other out instead of integrating state structures in the process. Therefore, **building support networks** between and for women was another repeatedly mentioned objective. As the feminists view themselves confronted with the practical problem of systemic violence, they concentrate on private networks. However, they also mention public and organized work. Expert 1 mentions a 'pulse of life' device with a location system and panic button calling authorities, handed out by the government to 160 women who have a protection order. Activist 3 and 6 have initiated their own social projects to accompany women in danger which they have made public through the internet.

According to expert 1, the objectives have changed over time since the possibilities and strategies of feminists have developed. She states that due to the fact that they were just a small group of feminists being active in the 1980s,

we did not generate strategies of participation that had to do with mobilizing people or society. What we dedicated ourselves to was rather the strategy of advocacy, political participation and the elaboration of regulations that would undermine this patriarchal attitude in the law. (Transcript 7, p. 2, ll. 68-71)

Expert 1 keeps using this strategy by participating in an organization that accompanied the re-creation of a Secretary of Gender Equality, by teaching on the issues and the feminist movement and by supporting the young feminist's protests. Moreover, she perceives a generational gap between the young and old feminists due to the social media use and new strategies to organize protest, notwithstanding, they march together (Expert 1). As a woman involved for many years, expert 1 recognizes that the young feminists do not accept and easily detect violence, openly declare themselves feminists and are inventing new activisms, new ways to defend women's rights. Therefore, there seems to be a switch of objectives over time and generations, from a political and structural to a cultural approach.

7.3.2 Application of Model

As part of the third sub-question, a model on cyberactivism by Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia (2014) was introduced. Participants were asked about the movement's reaction and strategies on a trigger event (such as a case of femicide) that becomes public. Activist 4 claims there is a twofold role of social media after a case of gender-violence gets known. On the one hand, the patriarchal sense in connection with communication media that revictimize the victims and reproduce the violence. On the other hand,

the feminists counterpart to this violence and fight its reproduction on social media by means such as publishing a reverent drawing of the victim. She further states that it is a protest and reaction from the feminist movement to show the traditional media: “*you others give that, but we will remember them this way*” (Transcript 4, p. 5, ll. 173-174). **Fighting tabloid media and revictimization** as blaming the woman for the violence she suffered, was brought up as part of the happenings after a femicide by more than half the activists. Furthermore, out of the fear of revictimization through mainstream media, feminists do not promulgate cases at times (Activist 6). **Criticism and mistrust in media** were mentioned by four activists. Therefore, the model which projects a media response as a second step, does not regularly apply to the participants’ experience. If the feminists are in contact with the families and offer their support networks, **street activism planning** in accordance with the relatives plays a role. Additionally, in the absence of state measures, feminist groupings **fight for justice** on- and offline. In this process of street activism planning, social media play an essential role. This process is underlined by activist 6 saying:

If it then begins to convene, the place of the demonstration or rally is fixed, and the security strategies begin to be created. In my ideal, I would like that beyond the concentration and beyond the physical movement, it would get pressure in the legal way. (Transcript 6, p.6, ll.240-243)

Since the trigger event in question is highly delicate and brutal, other factors have to be taken into account when applying the cyberactivism-model. Moreover, the problematic relationship between media sources and activists adds factors to the circular relation as displayed in the model.

7.3.3 Perceived Usefulness

Another theoretically discussed concept was the perception of social media usefulness mentioned as part of the third sub-question. As the results in Table 3 show, social media is broadly perceived as **very useful** to reach their activism’s goals. Two respondents found social media to be an essential root for making activism possible due to its low cost- and time exposure. The factors time and money were integral for perception of usefulness for half the participants. Furthermore, usefulness was perceived in connection with creating awareness, organizing themselves and making movement through outreach (Activist 5). Activist 5 reiterated that if it wasn’t for social media, she herself probably would not have become active or joined the movement and presently she is mostly consuming online content on activism and feminism. Talking about the use of social media, Activist 6 emphasized:

I also think it is something necessary, that it is a jump that activism needed. For reasons of promptness, for reasons of dissemination, but also for the sake of eliminating the digital divide of women, it brings us closer to knowing how to use technology to defend ourselves- It brings us closer to finding ways to defend ourselves and take care of each other. (Transcript 6, p.4, ll.162-166)

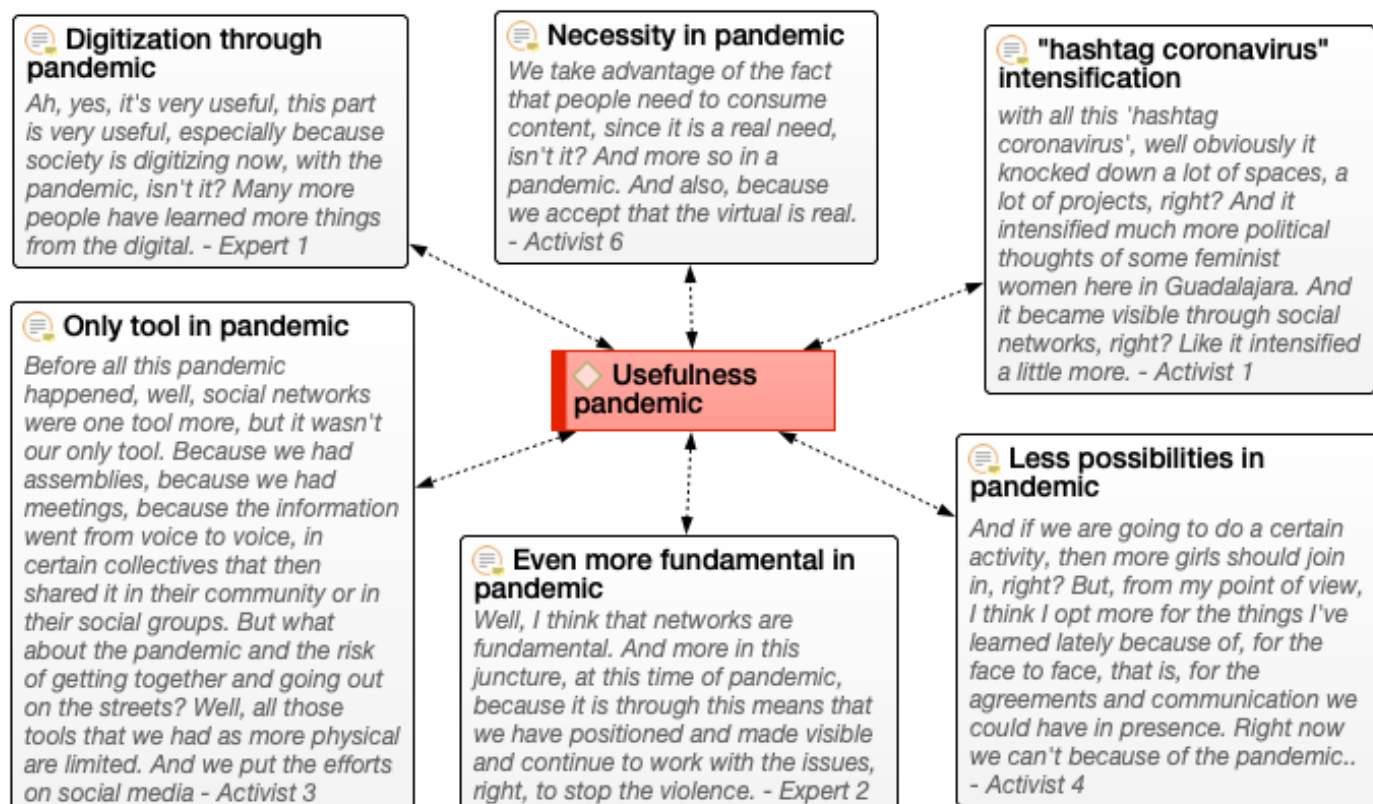
Furthermore, due to the recency of developments and circumstances, the theory-based expectations did not discuss the current situation of a worldwide pandemic. In the context of online activism, it was remarkable that almost all activists and experts mentioned the pandemic as a reason for increasing usefulness and importance of social media in feminist activism. Therefore, a code on the usefulness due to the situation of a pandemic was created (see coding agenda: 'Usefulness pandemic'). The statements made on this behalf are clustered in Graph 1 in their translated version. The suspension of activism-tools are examples that reflect the general tenor of pandemic-related usefulness.

Table 3.

Overview of Perceived Usefulness

Code 'Usefulness'	Frequency
Very Useful	7
Useful	1
Activism not possible without social media	2
Saves time and money	4

Graph 1.



Overview of Quotes on Social Media Usefulness in Times of the Covid-Pandemic

Created with Atlas.ti, free translation of Spanish quotes by author

7.3.4 Disadvantages

Apart from the perceived usefulness and virtues of social media activism, it was asked for impediments provoked by social media use. Participants responded to the question of which disadvantages they apprehend. On the one hand, a **security aspect** was reiterated as feminist activists see their personal life restricted and endangered since several weakening-strategies have been employed against them. By reason of the feminists' demands, such as legalization of abortion or international help on achieving justice for gender-based violence, some participants have expressed that **anti-feminist groupings** organized by church, politicians or private persons, seek to hinder feminist activism. Bots, understood as computer algorithms that automatically produce content (Ferrera et al., 2016), as well as other tools created and paid by anti-feminist groupings have been mentioned by four participants. Ferrera et al. (2016) state that "social bots populate techno-social systems: they are often benign, or even useful, but some are created to harm, by tampering with, manipulating, and deceiving social media users" (p. 96) and are used to infiltrate political discourse through spam, malware or misinformation such as fake news, which was emphasized by three activists and one expert. Activist 3 clarifies this point by saying that bots are paid by powerful groups, such as the church, to destroy publications or harass and violate feminists if they publish something regarding the Mexican state on social media, especially on Twitter. Activist 6 explains this behavior through hatred against women and the feminist movement in which politicians, pro-life activists or Catholics invest to hinder their battle. Therefore, activist 3 affirms: "*I believe that in matters of security and intimate and private life, social networks have been one of the biggest factors in terms of the risk we run*" (Transcript 3, p.12, ll. 494-496). One activist also put strong emphasis on the fact that "*inequality, discrimination, machismo and sexism exist everywhere, but when they exist in the digital realm they are empowered because we have no control over the virtual reality*" (Transcript 6, p. 4, ll. 167-169). Moreover, both experts pointed out that the threats feminists receive pose a great risk and have consequences for the movement.

Another disadvantage that was brought up by feminists and experts was the **polarization** created through social media. As information access is personalized, debates between feminists (Activist 1,2,4) as well as between feminists and non-feminists (Activist 2,5; Expert 1) on social media get rigorous and reflect on real life behavior. The issue of disinformation was further mentioned in the context of criticism and will be assessed in the following section.

7.3.5 Critique

Regarding the theoretical assumption that slacktivism could be a common criticism expressed by activists and experts, no clear result could be extracted. As far as the position of the interviewed experts is concerned, they do **criticize the sole act of posting and sharing on social media without real-life political outcomes**. Nevertheless, expert 1 affirmed that slacktivism occurs in all contemporary social movements. In contrast to the experts, the activists do not perceive slacktivism as an issue in the ZMG. Furthermore, activists have repeatedly said that **being online is as important as offline activism and at times, the only possibility for a woman to participate in activism** (Activist 1,3,5). For them, slacktivism does not clearly apply to the feminist movement given that sharing one's identity on the internet is dangerous and confronts oneself with threats as the previous section on disadvantages has shown. In this context, state corruption and the insecurities it implies have been discussed. Some see solely protesting online as a problem but emphasize that most of their activism does not consist of exclusive online engagement (Activist 2). Others clearly respond that they do not perceive slacktivism in Guadalajara, but that **modern feminism has achieved major progress**. To say it with the words of activist 2:

"I feel like, yes, it is a very fruitful activism. And also, because many laws have been passed. For the last two years or so, we've been working on a law called Olimpia, the law on digital violence, or the law on Ingrid Escamilla [the latter prohibits public servants to leak pictures of the bodies of femicide victims to publishing media, named after a woman who was killed brutally in February 2020 and whose body was disseminated in media and social media and created an outrage of public opinion and feminist activism to dignify the victim's memory]." (Transcript 2, p. 8, ll. 330-333)

Activist 6 clearly states that online activism is valuable and should not be criticized: "the activism on Facebook, the activism on Twitter, on Instagram, is also real and also spreads and organizes. And making this contact between people is real and does not have less validity than activism done in the streets" (Transcript 6, p. 4, ll. 158-161). Activist 3 agrees and points out that "Putting your female body on social networks is as exhausting as putting it in physical space. And that's very true. We're taking away a lot of the importance of social media" (Transcript 3, p. 12, ll. 509-511). When talking about critique of social media use in feminist activism, three women applied a Marxist perspective on the contemporary movement by pointing out the class differences between Mexican women. They describe the feminist activity to be **academic and centric by leaving out women in peripheries** (Activist 1,3; Expert 1) and underline the problematic of access to the internet and/or electronic devices to postulate or inform oneself (Activist 6). Social media does not seem to be a platform for indigenous women talking about the violence they experience as no such posts are seen by activists (Activist 1). In general, several women mentioned the structures of capitalism to be in stark connection to the patriarchy leading to violence against -and oppression of women.

Criticism posed by experts towards the contemporary movement is connected to the importance of historical feminism (Expert 1,2). The **limitations of only receiving information from social media** has been mentioned by activist 6 and expert 1 as a critical face of modern activism. Expert 1 further described that she does not like or trust the fact that young feminists do not read the theory and history of feminism which they need to debate and position themselves. She states that this behavior is not fair to the movement and that: *“the girls need to review themselves. They have to see what feminism is about. And feminisms are about that, they are about strategies”* (Transcript 7, p.4, ll.158-160). Thus, experts claim the current feminist activity should regard the past achievements and knowledge to be more strategic and effective. This result was not expected by theory but seems coherent.

7.4 Theoretical Classification of the Movement

With the help of the aforementioned findings and further knowledge from interview transcript, the feminist movement in the ZMG can be classified as a fundamentalist and separatist movement. This is rooted in the fact that misogynist and antifeminist structures are protected and promoted by the main actors in Mexico. Church and government, as important pillars of Mexican society, are highly intertwined and define the social norms. Since the feminist movement is fighting for their right for abortion, criticizing state structures, and trying to change its order (Activist 1), they have a strong enemy impeding collaboration with other social groups. Their fight therefore focuses on women, especially young women, having a separatist approach led by their fury against men representing these institutions and their perpetrators. The feminist movement is therefore originated in protecting their own position and creating a survival strategy instead of establishing strategies for outreach to other societal groups. Furthermore, the movement is still in its roots, starting to build allyship amongst themselves, before reaching out to other spheres of society. Therefore, the current movement is strongly normative, and their street level activism is difficult to observe since their means and goals are under threat. The use of social media to mobilize and raise their voices is thus a convenient means for a group with little resources. Being at the early stage of becoming a mass movement in addition to the hostile environment it faces, are characteristics that classify the feminist movement in Guadalajara. The feminist movement is an identity movement as they fight for the recognition of their rights and liberties and contest the existing social norms. It is a cyberfeminist movement since the perceived importance and usefulness of ICT is high and social media is used strategically. However, it is movement applying fourth wave means, the internet and social media, to address earlier wave's objectives and fundamental rights. The Mexican movement uses graphics and art like Western cyberfeminism, but to address violence or paint and share the face of a femicide victim and not mainly to address female sexuality and empowerment.

8. Conclusion

In the previous chapter, the research findings have been descriptively presented to create a clearer image and deeper understanding of the social media use by feminist activist in the ZMG. In the following, these findings help to answer the posed sub-questions. The limitations that occurred in the research process will be addressed subsequently.

Pursuant to theory, hashtags have played a pivotal role in social media activism on Twitter and the hashtag ‘#NiUnaMenos’ was expected to play a key role in feminist activism against gender-based violence. However, when asking for the social media utilization, the experts and feminists solely confirmed that hashtags are used but most participants do not find them essential or find personal use for them. Nevertheless, activists who create social media content for an organization do use hashtags like ‘#NiUnaMenos’ and ‘#NiUnaMas’ or they are seen on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and sometimes Twitter, whereas they mainly communicate via WhatsApp. Overall, Facebook and Instagram are used to share, while Twitter and WhatsApp serve to organize and exert political pressure.

The second sub-question asks for the purpose of social media and hashtag use and this research has found support for the expected purposes of informing about feminism, sharing or coordinating events, meetings or conferences, as well as connecting with other movements and countries. The theoretical assumption that feminists would seek media attention was not verified by the feminist activists on account of their skepticism and criticism of mainstream media. On the contrary, feminists mentioned the refutation of media publications and fighting the revictimization by mainstream media as one of the main purposes for their social media activism. Moreover, due to insecure situations and anti-feminist threats, sharing security strategies for demonstrations, strategic and encrypted communication as well as planning political action have transpired as further purposes. The two descriptive sub-questions have been answered in the first course of research, whereas the third question and its subordinated parts require more discussion by virtue of its exploratory nature.

The third sub-question on how social media plays a role in feminist activism, specifically against gender-based violence, can be answered by assessing the objectives, cyberactivism-model, perceived usefulness, disadvantages and criticisms. Throughout research, the women have mentioned unifying and supporting each other by building networks or private contacts as an objective to further achieve the overarching aim of fighting the patriarchy and gender-based violence. On the behalf of objectives, differences amongst generations of Mexican feminism could be extracted. In line with the theoretical assumptions of social media’s essential role in that regard, its usefulness was unanimously perceived as very useful ($gr=7$) or useful ($gr=1$). This result as well as the added usefulness in times of the worldwide pandemic, supports the assumption, social media has created new tools of activism and a cyberfeminism. Through the already mentioned missing importance of hashtags, the use of social media is a means to reach certain goals and people faster and with lower costs. However, theoretical

implications such as the cyberactivism model, could not be fully verified by the activists' experience as the collaboration with media does not occur, but fighting revictimization by mainstream media is an item that influences the circle. Additionally, the displayed model does not regularly proceed seamlessly as many influences and insecurities such as threats from the outside can occur. The viral organization is at times omitted if the family wishes to guard the victim's privacy which is now protected by a law that feminists have fought for. As the further course has shown, the physical response in terms of street protest is not commonly taking place, either due to security issues connected with the perception that simply online activism is essential and can lead to change as well. However, from time to time, the process of the model occurs and could be partly supported by the results.

The question of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of feminist cyberactivism was not directly and broadly discussed by theory yet played a big role. On the one hand, social media activism can be inclusive for women living in the periphery who do not have access to the street protests but are able to join the movement online through liking and sharing. On the other hand, its exclusivity is debated as a criticism from inside the movement and it being a class-question to join the activism, since most fourth wave feminists are students living in the urban area. The digital gap between men and women was mentioned as decreasing athwart social media feminism, however, new intersectional divides come up due to poverty, class, age or affiliation with an indigenous group. Disadvantages such as exclusivity through online activism were repeatedly mentioned by feminist activist and present the problem of a digital divide. Not all women are privileged enough to have the time and/or money to be active on social media which leads to the contemporary movement's exclusiveness. Nevertheless, due to the center-periphery problematic that has also been mentioned and plays its part, women in peripheral conditions have always been more excluded from urban movements and past feminisms.

The central role the internet plays in the fight of the public sphere is questioned since it poses a new criticism and disadvantage through being an all-available and capitalist medium which is manipulatable. By means of the internet, new forms of violence such as digital harassment and the use of bots came to life. These 'new forms of violence' lead to the outcome that slacktivism does not fully apply to the current movement in the ZMG. It is perceived to be happening, though, several activists mentioned that showing their body, voice or identity on the internet is as important and dangerous as street activism. Therefore, slacktivism seems to be a concept applicable to Western democracies which leaves out questions of security and violence enacted by the state or powerful interest groups. Almost all activist as well as the two experts stressed the event of 8th of March 2020 when the biggest feminist protest until then, with approximately 35.000 women took place, which speaks against the theory of slacktivism as well. The real-life protest and political outcomes have been reached through new laws, rising awareness and numbers of protesters. A significant part of the interview results has also been that almost all women tell personal stories or talk about personal connections or a specific case of gender-based violence that

moved them. Thus, it becomes visible how personal their fight is. The omnipresent violence fuels their activism and is the most mentioned topic, regarding the question of general goals of their feminism.

Since Mexico is a centralized state, some also mentioned their surprise and gratitude for interest in their work and not only the mostly covered Mexico City feminist movement. Thus, the role of social media activism against gender-based violence is a topic with numerous facets. The participants have emphasized certain aspects as clear results but the personal approach within the system of social media and online activism continuously came up during the interviews. The activism of ZMG feminists is an ongoing process on which this work has aimed to shed light on.

Concluding, social media is an essential element in modern feminist activism in the ZMG. Both activists and experts share commonalities, see similar advantages as well as disadvantages in social media activism, however, their approach and criticisms differ due to generational differences. The assumptions from theory could be partially supported. However, it seems important to take external influences and conditions into account when applying theories and models to a developing region. The understanding of democratic processes such as social movements and protest are distinct in Mexico as a result of corruption, state and church interventions, according to interview participants. Thus, assumptions from theory require extension.

Furthermore, this research's results are limited by the small sample size (N=8). By applying the research method of conducting interviews, objectivity understood as freedom from bias can be achieved, whereas it cannot outline intersubjective knowledge (Kvale, 2007). Another limitation occurred as the interviews have been conducted in Spanish and were translated into English language which leaves the possibility of translation errors. Moreover, due to the translation of quotations and concepts, some expressions went missing since the colloquial language cannot be translated literally. The Spanish translations have been added accordingly to the appendix directing more clarity, at least for Spanish-speaking readers. Reliability and validity cannot be guaranteed as well as the generalization is limited. However, the qualitative approach aims at exploring initial knowledge, which could be followed by a larger-scale or quantitative study. This research gives a tendency and first insight on current social media use by this specific feminist movement and has continuously followed this interest.

9. Discussion

The present study aimed to find an answer to the question of how feminist activists in the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara use social media to address gender-based violence. The interplay of social movements and social media have created new forms of feminism all over the world. Especially in developing regions, access to the internet has enabled growing participation in activism. In Guadalajara, the feminist movement has experienced a stark increase of protesters and online activism. High numbers of gender-based violence have driven Mexican women to raise their voices, on- or offline. Social media has been and continues to be one means of gaining attention from politics, traditional media and society, however, due to the current pandemic, its importance rose. Common tools such as assemblies, street protest or conferences cannot take place to safeguard the participants' health, which is why activists have developed digital alternatives. The feminist activists in the ZMG therefore use social media since it is the most convenient tool in current times. Feminists perceive social media to be very useful and partly essential for the movement's latest success. Their use is led by the objectives to connect themselves, inform, organize, share and create their own community of living safely. The various dimensions of violence affect the women's everyday life and even standing up on social media can pose a threat to their lives or physical and mental integrity. However, by creating awareness through online campaigns and various tools of on- and offline activism, women seek to fight the patriarchal structures and gender-based violence it entails. Their work with the aim to make cases visible and accompany victims in the fight for justice is aggravated by revictimization, antifeminist threats and actions as well as polarization on social media. Nevertheless, they make use of common social media platforms and partly of hashtags to continue the fight and keep creating the fourth wave of feminism.

The practical implications of this study can be derived from the interviewees' critique on social media use or the movement's current approach in this matter. The movement and its digital tools are in the initial period which is why reflections on disadvantages and criticism could be of use to further fight for gender equality and less violence in the future. Above all, participants have mentioned the exclusiveness of the current movement. It is centric, focusing on urban areas and consists of mainly academic and young women. Issues such as access to the internet or devices play an essential role and consequently, campaigns should also include demands for further disadvantaged women or direct help.

As the experts emphasize, the risk of young feminists not being sufficiently informed due to sole online participation and education is another implication that could lead to additional measures by feminist organizations and experienced individuals. However, since social media is influenced by economic interests, bots, and algorithms, feminists can hardly work against disinformation and polarization it generates. These deeply integrated structures of social media have to be worked with and used to their own benefit while creating alternatives to not fully depend on social media as a tool to advance their activism.

The expected critique and disadvantage of slacktivism was not broadly perceived due to the repeatedly mentioned security aspect that has to be taken into account. The expectations or comparisons to Western movements cannot be fully applied since state and criminal structures affect the democratic will of protest. The movement sees itself confronted with various challenges rooted in the systematics of gender-based violence and oppression.

This study's findings fill the existing literature gap on this specific movement and its current approach and challenges by giving an insight into first-hand information on use and evaluation of social media in feminist activism. However, it is questionable if these findings apply to other Mexican feminist movements or even individuals and groupings forming part of the feminist movement in the ZMG. Therefore, further research shall look into the social media use, strategy and critique of feminist activists and experts to increase the reliability of this study and assess if support can be found for present findings. In that sense, more interviews could be conducted, or similar studies carried out with different individuals or in different regions to compare how the approach varies depending on the locations or individuals. Additionally, a quantitative or mixed-method approach could be useful to reach out to more people and draw a bigger picture. Feminist activists all over the world have been fighting for equality and against gender-based violence to achieve equal living standards regardless of gender. Their fight and activism deserve the attention from science and academia for support and new priorities on the research agenda.

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Appendix

I. Original Quotes (in order of appearance)

Page 16

- Activist 1: “ambos hablan de algo muy parecido porque todas estamos hablando de que en México matan a 11 mujeres por ser mujeres, por violencia en contra de mujeres, no? Un hashtag reivindicativo es ‘ni una menos’: ¡Paren!” (Transcript 1, ll. 263-365)
- Activist 6: “Yo no visualizo un activismo sin redes sociales porque no nacimos en esta época de el activismo sin era digital, no? A mí me parece que es una parte fundamental e importante. Por qué? Pues si lo analizamos desde la brecha digital, no todas las mujeres en México y no todas las mujeres en Guadalajara tienen acceso a redes sociales, pero tienen acceso las que pueden hacer algo y tienen acceso las que se pueden motivar y pueden causar un cambio. Nosotras creemos desde la organización que nosotras no somos el cambio, que nosotras estamos ahí pues para formar, para informar y acompañar hasta donde podamos. Pero el activismo en las redes sociales es importante porque hace llegar mensajes más rápido” (Transcript 6, ll. 148-156)

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- Activist 1: “Entonces para mí el hashtag es como una premisa o un mensaje concreto” (Transcript 1, l. 251)

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- Activist 2: “Me gusta mucho esta idea de verlo todo con esos lentes de género y pues de poder como que desenmascarar muchísimas cosas que pasan y que son normales pero pues que realmente son violentos” (Transcript 2, ll. 43-46)
- Activist 1: “Funciona porque te leen, se cuestionan, nos cuestionan, sabes? Y así también se va construyendo activismo o reflexión política, que es el fin de utilizar redes sociales o una ponencia, no? Generar conciencia entre todas del por qué. Por ejemplo, en nuestro contexto hay una violencia estructural política en contra de todas y cada una de nosotras bajo las propias interseccionalidades que hay” (Transcript 1, ll. 162-166)

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- Expert 1: “No generamos estrategias de participación que tuvieran que ver con movilizar personas o a la sociedad. Lo que nos dedicamos fue más bien a la estrategia de incidencia, en la participación política y en la elaboración de normativa que fuera minando esta actitud patriarcal en la ley” (Transcript 7, ll. 68-71)
- Activist 4: “Y es así como que ustedes dan eso, pero nosotras las recordamos de esta manera” (Transcript 4, ll. 173-174)

Page 20

- Activist 6: “Si entonces empieza como a convocar, se fija el lugar de la manifestación o concentración y se empiezan a crear las estrategias de seguridad. No? En mi ideal me gustaría que más allá de la concentración y más allá del movimiento que se hace físico, pues se metiera como presión en la vía legal” (Transcript 6, ll. 240-243)
- Activist 6, second quote: “También creo que es algo necesario, que es un salto que le hacía falta al activismo. Por cuestiones de rapidez, por cuestiones de difusión, pero también por cuestiones de la eliminación de la brecha digital en las mujeres, nos acerca más a saber usar la tecnología para defendernos. Nos acerca a buscar maneras de defendernos y cuidarnos entre nosotras.” (Transcript 6, ll. 162-166)

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- Activist 3: “Creo que en cuestiones de seguridad y de vida íntima y privada, pues las redes sociales han sido como uno de los factores más grandes en cuanto al riesgo que corremos” (Transcript 3, ll. 494-496)

- Activist 6: “La desigualdad, discriminación, machismo y sexismo existen en todos lados, pero cuando existen en lo digital se potencializa porque no tenemos control sobre la realidad virtual” (Transcript 6, p. 4, ll. 167-169)

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- Activist 2: “siento, si es un activismo muy fructífero. Y también porque pues han salido muchas leyes. Desde hace como dos años para acá sobre una ley Olimpia, la ley de violencia digital, la ley sobre Ingrid Escamilla” (Transcript 2, ll. 330-333)

- Activist 6: “el activismo de Facebook, el activismo de Twitter, de Instagram, pues también es real y también difundir y organizar. Y pues hacer este contacto entre personas es real y no tiene menos validez que el activismo que se hace en las calles.” (Transcript 6, ll. 158-161)

- Activist 3: “poner la cuerpa en redes sociales es tan desgastante como ponerla en el espacio físico. Y eso es muy cierto. Le estamos quitando como mucho a la importancia de las redes sociales” (Transcript 3, ll. 509-511)

Page 24:

- Expert 1: “[...] las chicas tienen que hacerse revisión. Tienen que ver de que va el feminismo. Y los feminismos van de eso, van de estrategias.”(Transcript 7, ll. 158-160)

II. Interview Guides (English Version)

WITH ACTIVIST

Topic	Input and Questions
Introduction	<p><i>Aim of study: Find out how the feminist movement in Guadalajara uses social media (purpose, usefulness)</i></p> <p><i>Setting: open questions about personal experience</i></p> <p><i>Consent on recording; Information about anonymity of data, possibility to stop recording or interview at any time</i></p> <p>Could you shortly introduce yourself, please? (age, profession, years active, part of organization(s), main reason to join movement?)</p>
<p><i>General: Use of Social Media</i></p> <p>Focus: purpose and platforms used</p>	<p><i>Overall interest: How does the activist use social media in the context of feminist activism?</i></p> <p>Could you shortly tell me about your experience with social media in feminist activism?</p> <p>Do you personally use social media in your activism? If so, which platforms do you mainly use?</p> <p>To what purpose do you use it? (<i>social media and hashtags</i>)</p>
<p><i>Specific: Use of Social Media in the context of gender-based violence</i></p> <p>Focus: hashtags, cyberactivism-model</p>	<p>What role do social media play in your activism against gender-based violence (if applicable)?</p> <p>How would you describe the process of using social media in feminist movement in the context of gender-based violence? <i>For example, in the case of a femicide. (trigger event, media response, viral organization, physical response)</i></p> <p>Which part does a hashtag play in this process of activism?</p> <p>Which hashtags do you use in your activism? <i>Possible follow up: Do you use hashtags such as #NiUnaMenos?</i></p> <p>Why do/don't you use hashtags?</p> <p>Which influence do they have?</p>
<p><i>Specific: Usefulness of social media to reach goals</i></p> <p>Focus: perceived usefulness and slacktivism</p>	<p>What would you describe as your main goal(s) in your activism and specified on gender-based violence?</p> <p>Do you use social media to reach these goal(s)?</p> <p>How do you perceive the usefulness of social media to reach these goals?</p>

What do you criticize on social media use in feminist activism?

Do you see disadvantages of the influence of social media on feminist activism in the ZMG, if so, which and why?
(*'slacktivism': no real-life political outcomes or protest, feel good factor of sharing and liking*)

Detailed follow up questions	You mentioned... could you explain it more in detail, what exactly/what sort of... <i>Link to theory (if not responded beforehand)</i>
Coming to an end	Is there anything else you would like to say regarding the topic? <i>Snowball: Can you think of another activist who is active on social media and could participate in my study/knows a lot about the topic of social media activism and feminism?</i> <i>My contact details for questions or if they would like to know more about the research and its outcomes</i> <i>Email: l.m.f.kraeh@student.utwente.nl</i> <i>WhatsApp: +49 17663423165</i>

WITH EXPERT

Topic	Input and Questions
Introduction	<i>Aim of study: Find out how the feminist movement in Guadalajara use social media (purpose, usefulness)</i> <i>As an expert on gender-based violence and feminist movement, neutral/personal view on the current movement</i> <i>Setting: open questions about personal experience and knowledge</i> <i>Consent on recording; Information about anonymity of data, possibility to stop recording or interview at any time</i> <i>Could you shortly introduce yourself, please?</i> <i>(age, profession, years active/working on the topic, part of organization(s), main reason to study the movement?)</i>
<i>Specific: Contemporary feminist movement in the ZMG</i>	<i>What makes the current movement distinct to past feminisms? (4th wave literature, comparison)</i> <i>How do social media and hashtags influence this generation of feminist activism?</i>

<i>Specific:</i> Social media activism and gender-based violence	Gender-based violence is a huge issue in Mexico, how can social media help to fight it?
Focus: hashtags	Are hashtags important in this context?
<i>Specific:</i> Process of social media use to real-life activism	How would you describe the process of using social media in feminist movement in the context of gender-based violence?
Focus: femicides	<i>For example, in the case of a femicide. (trigger event, media response, viral organization, physical response)</i>
<i>Specific:</i> Usefulness of social media to reach goals	What would you describe as the main goal(s) in contemporary feminist activism in the ZMG? <i>Follow up:</i> And specified on gender-based violence?
Focus: slacktivism	What role do social media play to reach these goal(s)? What do you criticize on social media use in feminist activism? Do you see disadvantages of the influence of social media on feminist activism in the ZMG, if so, which and why? (<i>'slacktivism': no real-life political outcomes or protest, feel good factor of sharing and liking</i>)
Detailed follow up questions	You mentioned... could you explain it more in detail, what exactly/what sort of... <i>Link to theory (if not responded beforehand)</i>
Coming to an end	Is there anything else you would like to say regarding the topic? <i>Snowball:</i> Can you think of another person who knows a lot/has studied online activism in the context of feminism and could take part in my study? <i>My contact details for questions or if they would like to know more about the research and its outcomes</i> <i>Email:</i> l.m.f.kraeh@student.utwente.nl <i>WhatsApp:</i> +49 17663423165

III. Coding Agenda

Category	Sub-Category	Definition	Code	Quote (abstracted)	Frequency
Use	Platforms	Social media platforms	Platforms	Facebook	A1,2,4,6
				Instagram	A2,3,5,6
				TikTok	A6
				Twitter	A3,6
		Social communication platforms	Platforms	WhatsApp	A1,3,4,6
				Telegram	A3
	Hashtags	Generally used hashtags	Hashtag-general	Signal	A3,4
		Hashtags used in the context of gender-violence	Hashtag-violence	#Feminismo (<i>Feminism</i>)	A3,5,6
				#25N, #28S #8M (<i>[(Inter)national Theme Days]</i>)	A2,
				#MeCuidanMisAmigas (<i>Mi female friends take care of me</i>)	A5
				#NiUnaMas (<i>Not one more</i>)	A1,2,4,5, E2
Purpose	Social Media	General purposes mentioned	General purposes	#NiUnaMenos (<i>Not one less</i>)	A1,2,4, E2
				#JusticiaPara + Nombre (<i>Justice for + Name</i>)	A4
				#NoEstasSola (<i>You are not alone – directed to a female person</i>)	A3, E2
		To what purpose are certain sm platforms used?	Platform purposes	Form inclusive community(periphery)	A1,2,3,5,6
				Inform	A1,2,3,4,5,6,E2
				Share events, meetings, conferences	A1,2,4,5,6,E1,2
				Political reflection and action	A1,2, E1
				Share security strategy for protest	A1,3,5,6
				Contact with other movements	A1,2,3, E1
				Strategic communication	A3,4, E1
				Facebook: share information, events	A1,2,4,6, E2
				Instagram: visual content, young	A2,3,5,6
				Twitter: trends, hashtags, politics, organization	A3,6

Agenda:

A1-6 = Activist 1 to 6. E1-2 = Expert 1 and 2
sm = social media

Category	Sub-Category	Definition	Code	Quote (abstracted)	Frequency
Objectives	Hashtags	To which purposes are hashtags used in activism?	Hashtag purposes	To trace certain topics	A2,3,4
				To seek specific information	A2,4,5,6
				Make topics viral/public	A2,3,4,5,6, E2
				#feminismo used to reach non-activists	A3,6
				Become a trending topic	A3,6
	Feminist activism	What are the main objectives of feminist activism?	Objectives general	Specific premise of post's content	A1,4,5
				Awareness	A1,2,4,5,6, E1
				End patriarchy	A1,3,4, E1
				Support networks	A3,5,6, E1
				Gain attention of (inter)national organisms	A2,3, E1
Social Media Model	Activism against gender-based violence	What are the objectives in the context of violence against women?	Objectives violence	To make violence visible	A1,2,3,4,5,6,E2
				Accompany families and victims	A1,2,3,5,6,E1,2
				Security of victim is priority	A3,6
	Organizational response to femicides or cases of gender violence	Theoretical expectation: trigger event media response viral organization physical response	Case handling	Criticism and mistrust in media	A2,4,5,6
				Fight revictimization	A3,4,5,6
				Publish illustration of victim	A4,6
				Contact with family	A6
				Fight for justice	A1,2,3,6, E1
Usefulness	Perceived usefulness	From not useful to very useful	Usefulness	Street activism planning	A1,5,6, E2
				Activism not possible without sm	A5,6
				Very Useful	A1,2,3,4,5,6,E1
				Useful	E2
				Save time and money	A1,2,3,6
	Pandemic	In times of the global Covid-pandemic sm gain importance	Usefulness pandemic	Useful tool in increasing digitization	A6, E1
				"The virtual is real" (A6) or similar	A6, E1
				"before, social media were not the only tool" (A3) or similar	A1,3,4, E2

Agenda:

A1-6 = Activist 1 to 6. E1-2 = Expert 1 and 2
sm = social media

Category	Sub-Category	Definition	Code	Quote (abstracted)	Frequency
Critique	Slacktivism	Defines no real-life political outcomes or protest, feel good factor of sharing and liking	Protest stays online	Being active online just as important “All one can do”/security aspect	A1,2,3,5,6, E1
			Protest stays online - negative	Slacktivism	A3,4,6, E1,2
	Disinformation	No information control on sm which can be used against the movement	Disinformation spread	Misleading information or missing information on sm	A3,5, E1
	Exclusiveness	Feminist movement = urban, academic and dependent on internet access	Critique-exclusive	Feminist activities in center	A1,3
Not all access to internet/devices				A1,3,6, E1	
Dis-advantages	Security	Due to state interventions or threats, feminists see their personal life endangered	Antifeminist threat	Academic feminists– question of class	A1,3, E1
				Paid bots of anti-feminists (church, politicians, private persons or groupings) or similar	A3,4,6, E2
	Polarization through sm	Many different opinions and debates on sm	Polarization	Risk of being a feminist, threats	A3,5,6, E1,2
				Between feminists	A1,2,4,
Comparison	4 th wave	Growth of feminist movement nurtured by sm	Mexico’s 4 th wave	Between feminist and not-feminists	A2,5, E1
				Fourth wave of Mexican feminism digitalized	A2,6, E1
	Intergenerational differences	Older women are not using digital media	Intergenerational differences	Criticism of missing information through sm use only	A6, E1
Importance of historical feminism				E1,2	
Additional	Anti-monument	Action against femicides – “we do not forget the victims”	Anti-monument	An anti-monument was recently installed in Guadalajara	A1,3, E1
	Femicides	Misogynist killing of women	Femicides-numbers	11 women are killed every day	A1,3, E2
	8 th of March 2020	Protest of International Women’s Day	8 March 2020	First time 35k women participating, possible through sm	A2,3,5, E1,2

Agenda:

A1-6 = Activist 1 to 6. E1-2 = Expert 1 and 2
sm = social media

IV. Interview Transcripts