

From Traditional Media to WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram: Engaging the Lebanese Diaspora during the Israeli War of 2024 on Lebanon

LARA CHAMIEH*

Lebanese University, Lebanon

ALI EL TAKACH

Al Maaref University, Lebanon

ABSTRACT

The study explores the pivotal role of digital platforms in shaping the Lebanese diaspora's engagement with homeland issues during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data, the research investigates how these platforms were utilized for real-time information, emotional support, and political mobilization amid the conflict. The findings reveal that 89% of respondents relied on WhatsApp and 76% on Telegram for immediate news updates, highlighting the centrality of instant messaging tools in crisis communication. Additionally, a substantial trust deficit emerged, with 59.1% of participants expressing scepticism toward traditional media, prompting 72% to engage in active verification practices when consuming news. Digital platforms served as conduits for emotional bonding (82%) and political action but also reproduced religious divisions and facilitated the spread of misinformation. These dynamics reflect both the empowering and polarizing capacities of digital technologies during times of war. The study underscores the adaptive strategies employed by diasporic communities to remain connected and informed while navigating complex media ecosystems. Ultimately, the findings offer critical insights for policymakers, media practitioners, and scholars in transnationalism, diaspora studies, and crisis communication, emphasizing the dual-edged nature of digital engagement in politically volatile contexts.

Keywords: *Crisis communication, digital platforms, homeland engagement, Lebanese diaspora, misinformation.*

INTRODUCTION

Lebanese emigration is a deeply rooted historical phenomenon, with communities dispersed across all continents. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Lebanese individuals have emigrated in substantial numbers to North and South America, West Africa, and Northern Europe. Lebanese have constantly represented one of the most significant and politically active diaspora communities in the Middle East (Féron & Baser, 2024).

For the past few decades, the Lebanese diaspora has not only preserved transnational familial and cultural connections but has also played a crucial role in the homeland's political, humanitarian, and economic life. Academic research has documented their sustained involvement in development initiatives, peacebuilding activities, and post-conflict reconstruction (Danish Refugee Council, 2024; Leonardsson, 2023). However, the modalities of this engagement

*Corresponding author: lara.chamieh@ul.edu.lb

E-ISSN: 2289-1528

<https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2025-4104-33>

Received: 3 August 2025 | Accepted: 12 November 2025 | Published: 12 December 2025

have been profoundly changed by the rapid growth of digital communication technologies and the globalization of media consumption.

Through remittances and charitable donations to lobbying efforts and diaspora media outlets, the Lebanese diaspora has traditionally exercised influence through both formal and informal channels. Yet, the advent of social media and instant messaging platforms has introduced new dynamics for the new generation (Shiratuuddin et al., 2016). These technologies allow for instant communication, foster the creation of transnational digital publics, and offer alternative spaces for political expression and community organization. Scholars refer to such practices as constitutive of a “*digital diaspora*” (Ansar & Khaled, 2023; Ansar & Maitra, 2024; Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022), a concept that identifies the growing centrality of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in nourishing diaspora-homeland relations.

Between the two Israeli wars of 2006 and 2024 on Lebanon, the communication practices of Lebanese expatriates have significantly transformed. Although previous engagements were principally in the form of personal communication and remittances, the rise and proliferation of new social media – like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram – have revolutionized the way that diasporic communities interact with the situation in Lebanon. These platforms are today not only used for maintaining familial ties, but also for real-time news consumption, digital activism, and coordinated humanitarian actions.

The Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon marked a critical moment in the digital mobilization of the Lebanese diaspora. As traditional media infrastructures inside Lebanon were strained and trust in official news sources declined, the diaspora turned in masse to digital platforms for the purposes of staying connected, showing emotional solidarity, and mobilizing support and relief action. This war not only exacerbated the need for transnational solidarity but also emphasized the complex interactions between media trust, immediacy, misinformation, and digitally mediated engagement.

Existing literature on diaspora mobilization and digital communication during crises is evolving (e.g. Adzmi & Bahry, 2020; Tabar, 2010), but most existing studies focus on well-established diasporas in the Global North or on long-term remittance and return behaviour (Ali, 2024; Gevorkyan & Issa, 2024). Few have focused on how diasporas respond in real-time to crises in their homeland, particularly from the perspective of digital media. The Lebanese case remains underexplored in this regard, despite the country’s intricate media ecology, its sectarian media landscape, and transnational networks.

This study attempts to empirically examine communicative behaviours, trust perceptions, emotional solidarities and political actions among members of the Lebanese Diaspora during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon. Using a multi-strategy approach that combines surveys, interviews, and digital communication space observation, this study seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role that digital platforms play as diaspora engagement infrastructures during the time of war.

The analysis with the ongoing literature together with the original events data confirms the value of this study for interdisciplinary issues on media studies, political communication and migration studies. It provides a grounded exploration of the digital diasporic experience during a high-stakes geopolitical crisis, as well as interrogates the ambivalent role of digital platforms as both enablers and disruptors of reliable communication.

Finally, the study has practical implications for policymakers, media institutions, and humanitarian actors seeking to better understand and engage diaspora populations during emergencies. As digital platforms increasingly mediate relationships between states and their diasporas, understanding the logics of trust, platform choice, and emotional mobilization becomes essential for inclusive communication strategies and diaspora-informed governance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper seeks to explore these dimensions mentioned earlier guided by the research questions as follows,

1. How did members of the Lebanese diaspora use digital platforms to engage with the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon in terms of sharing information, expressing emotions, and urging action?
2. What levels of trust did diaspora users attribute to digital platforms versus traditional media during the conflict, and what factors influenced these trust perceptions?
3. How did digital platforms function as emotional infrastructures for the Lebanese diaspora during the war?
4. What types of transnational political or humanitarian action emerged through digital engagement, and how were they organized across platforms?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Diasporic engagement with homeland crises is increasingly shaped by digitally networked infrastructures that mediate emotions, information flows, and political mobilization. In the context of Lebanon, where migration is historically entrenched, media ecosystems are highly fragmented, and digital communication plays a central role in everyday life, the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon offers a critical moment to examine how diasporas mobilize across borders through online platforms. To analyse these dynamics, this study introduces an integrated theoretical framework that combines four complementary pillars: Transnationalism, Digital Diaspora Theory, Hybrid Media Systems, and Socio Technical Platform Affordances.

Each pillar contributes a distinct analytical layer, including structural, identity based, media ecological, and technological dimensions. Together, they offer a comprehensive lens for understanding how diasporic actors interpret conflict, engage emotionally and politically, and navigate an increasingly hybridized information landscape.

a) Transnationalism: Structural Embeddedness and Emotional Obligation

Transnationalism provides the macro-structural foundation for understanding why diasporas remain deeply connected to their homelands. Levitt and Schiller's (2004) concept of simultaneity emphasizes that migrants participate in multiple social fields at once, maintaining political, familial, economic, and emotional ties across borders. Lebanese expatriates exemplify this phenomenon (Harb, 2011; Féron & Baser, 2024). Their long-standing transnational practices, including remittances, humanitarian support, political engagement, and continuous communication, form the structural basis for digital engagement during crises.

Crisis moments amplify these transnational attachments. As Yener-Roderburg and Toivanen (2024) argue, diasporas often interpret violent homeland events through moral and affective frameworks, activating feelings of responsibility, solidarity, and protection. The Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon triggered exactly this dynamic: Lebanese abroad intensified communication with family, monitored events closely, and mobilized emotional and political support. Thus, transnationalism explains why diaspora members remain engaged and emotionally invested in wartime events.

b) Digital Diaspora Theory: Mediated Belonging and Online Connectivity

Building on these structural ties, Digital Diaspora theory examines how digital technologies mediate identity, belonging, and engagement across distance. Scholars note that diasporic actors increasingly form “*digitally mediated communities*” that extend cultural memory, sustain long-distance nationalism, and facilitate real-time interaction (Ansar & Maitra, 2024; Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022). Such platforms allow dispersed populations to maintain daily presence in the homeland’s public sphere.

In Lebanon’s case, digital platforms compensate for the polarized and often unreliable domestic media environment. As Abouyassine (2023) argues, diasporic consciousness is shaped not only by interpersonal ties but also by the media infrastructures through which homeland information circulates. WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook have collectively become transnational “*lifelines*” enabling Lebanese expatriates to participate in political conversations, share emotions, and coordinate humanitarian assistance during crises. Digital Diaspora theory therefore explains how digital infrastructures re-embed diasporic actors into homeland public life, transforming physical distance into mediated proximity.

c) Hybrid Media Systems: Cross-Platform Information Navigation in Crisis

While Digital Diaspora theory focuses on mediated belonging, the Hybrid Media Systems framework illuminates how diasporas navigate complex information ecosystems where legacy media, digital platforms, and user-generated content coexist and interact (Barnard, 2024).

Lebanon exemplifies a highly hybridized media environment. Surveys show that 85% of Lebanese rely on social media for news, and 91% use instant-messaging apps such as WhatsApp for communication (Northwestern University in Qatar, 2019). Diasporic communities mirror these patterns but add a transnational layer by combining:

- Lebanese satellite TV (LBCI, Al-Jadeed)
- Pan-Arab outlets (e.g., Al Jazeera, Al Mayadeen)
- Diaspora-specific Facebook groups
- Telegram channels, and WhatsApp voice notes or eyewitness videos

This layered consumption produces a hybrid model of crisis navigation in which credibility is assessed through cross-checking, emotional cues, social proximity, and immediacy. As Melki (2025) notes, hybrid trust practices become increasingly important in conflict settings where misinformation is rampant and institutional trust is low. Hybrid Media Systems therefore show how diasporas combine institutional and informal information sources to construct meaning during fast-moving crises.

d) Socio-Technical Platform Affordances: Technologies as Catalysts of Crisis Behaviour

The final pillar examines the technological dimension: platform affordances. Suokas et al. (2024) argue that platform architectures shape, though do not determine, how users behave, interact, and mobilize. Different platforms afford distinct modes of engagement, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Platform Affordances for Digital Engagement during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon

Platform	Key Affordances	Resulting Practices
WhatsApp	Intimacy, encryption, small-group networks	Emotional support, family coordination, fundraising
Telegram	Speed, anonymity, large channels	Unfiltered news, real-time conflict updates
Facebook	Visibility, reach, public narration	Advocacy, community mobilization, political expression

Rahim (2018) highlights that platform design mediates civic behaviour by enabling specific participatory forms while constraining others. During the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon, these affordances shaped Lebanese diaspora behaviours such as the circulation of eyewitness videos, rapid verification, organized fundraising, and political messaging.

Thus, the socio-technical affordance perspective explains what specific digital platforms allowed users to do during the crisis, and why different platforms served different emotional and political functions.

e) An Integrated Four-Pillar Logic for Analysing Diasporic Crisis Engagement

Bringing these four theoretical dimensions together enables a holistic analysis of digital diasporic engagement during wartime:

1. Transnationalism explains the *structural and emotional motivations* for engagement.
2. Digital Diaspora theory explains the *digitally mediated belonging and identity practices*.
3. Hybrid Media Systems explains the *complex information flows and verification patterns*.
4. Platform Affordances explain the *technological conditions shaping behaviour across platforms*.

Together, these pillars produce a unified, multi-layered model that accounts for persistent emotional and moral attachments to Lebanon, new forms of digital connectivity and solidarity, cross-platform crisis navigation and trust negotiation, and platform-driven differences in engagement. This integrated framework reflects the complexity of diasporic communication during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon, a space where structures, identities, media systems, and technologies intersect to shape real time emotional, informational, and political mobilization across borders. The four pillars were selected because each addresses a distinct analytical layer—structural motivations (transnationalism), mediated practices (digital diaspora), system level media interactions (hybrid media systems), and platform level mechanisms (affordances). Removing any one of these dimensions would produce an analytically incomplete explanation of diasporic crisis engagement.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a multi-strategy approach to investigate how the Lebanese diaspora engaged with digital platforms during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon. The aim is to examine patterns

of platform use, political and emotional engagement, and forms of diasporic participation in real-time conflict communication.

The decision to adopt a mixed-methods approach is rooted in the study's objective to capture both the breadth and depth of diasporic engagement. The quantitative component allows for generalizability of media usage patterns across different diasporic regions, while the qualitative dimension provides deeper insights into emotional, political, and social practices associated with digital communication. This triangulation enhances the validity, richness, and interpretive power of the findings (Clark et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the empirical phase of this study was conducted in real time during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon and after the ceasefire on 27 November 2024, enabling researchers to access immediate, unmediated experiences of digital engagement and emotional responses.

For the purposes of this study, *traditional* or *legacy media* refers to institutional and professional news outlets such as television and radio channels (e.g., LBCI, Al-Jadeed), including their digital extensions such as official websites and social media pages. In contrast, *digital platforms* refer to interactive social and messaging platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook) used primarily by non-professional actors (including individuals, grassroots groups, and community-led networks) for real-time information sharing, emotional expression, and coordination of engagement.

A structured, bilingual (Arabic-English) online survey was administered between November 1, 2024 and December 6, 2024. The survey was distributed through WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, Facebook diaspora communities, and targeted diaspora mailing lists. In total, 150 valid responses were collected from Lebanese expatriates residing in three key regions: the Arab Gulf, North America, and Europe.

The questionnaire included 40 questions distributed among four factors. The first factor included demographic factors like age, gender, country of residence and the level of education. The second dimension investigated the media consumption habits of respondents, in terms of their platforms and frequency of use, and where they obtained news. The third dimension measured trust and credibility on traditional and digital media providers. And the fourth dimension investigated affective and political engagement (degrees of solidarity, activism, emotional connection, diasporic participation) during the war.

Responses were analysed using descriptive analysis, with emphasis on usage frequencies, cross-regional habit distribution, and trust behaviours.

In addition to the survey data and gaining deeper interpretive insight, this study conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with Lebanese expatriates. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring diversity in terms of gender, geographic location, platform use, and levels of political engagement.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom or WhatsApp calls, in Arabic or English, depending on the interviewee preference. Discussions have addressed various analytical themes, including the underlying motivations shaping participants' choices of communication platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, or Facebook; the psychological and emotional impact of media use during the war; the extent to which such practices contributed to a sense of unity and belonging towards

the homeland; and how interviewees engaged in political expression and humanitarian work as well as exercised forms of diaspora agency.

All interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim; and analysed thematically, allowing the main themes to emerge inductively from the data. Simultaneously, researchers conducted observations on digital communication spaces actively used by Lebanese expatriates, focusing on specific key war events during the war, from November 1 to December 6, 2024, the period corresponding to the peak of the Israeli offensive, which officially ended with a ceasefire agreement on 27 November 2024.

Researchers worked on data collection respecting the highest levels of academic responsibility for online and diasporic research protocols. Participants were advised about the anonymous nature of their responses and were told that the survey was being conducted to learn more about the target market. All interviews and digital data access were provided with consent. Personally identifiable information was anonymized or excluded from reporting.

FINDINGS

This study, which was conducted in real-time during and immediately following the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon, reveals the critical and complex role of digital platforms in mediating the Lebanese diaspora's engagement with homeland issues. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, including a structured online survey of 150 Lebanese expatriates across the Arab Gulf, North America, and Europe, 10 semi-structured interviews, and observations of digital communication spaces, the findings illuminate distinct patterns of platform use, emotional and political engagement, and trust and information navigation. These results respond directly to the research questions by explaining how digital platforms shaped Lebanese diaspora engagement during the conflict.

a) Pervasive Digital Platform Use and Differentiated Digital Practices

The study reveals an extensive dependence on digital platforms for news and communication during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon. Survey data shows that 89% of respondents used WhatsApp (see Figure 1), 76% used Telegram, and 71% used Facebook during the conflict, with nearly two-thirds (63%) reporting increased usage compared to pre-war periods. This widespread use was homogeneous among all surveyed diaspora regions (Arab Gulf, North America, Europe).

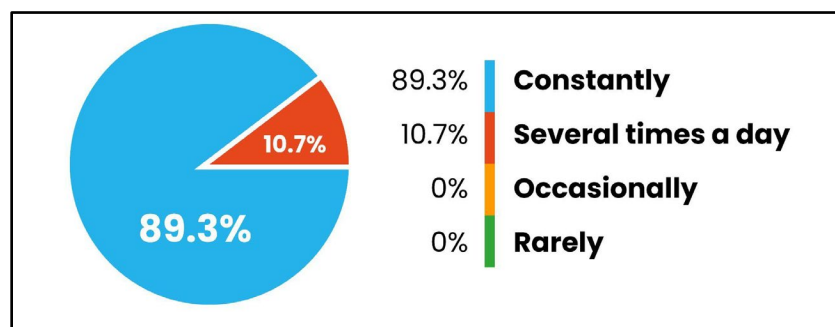


Figure 1: Frequency of WhatsApp use among Lebanese diaspora respondents during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon

Qualitative data from interviews and digital observations further supported a differentiation in platform use based on their specific affordances and the diaspora's needs. Respondents reported using WhatsApp primarily for family check-ins, emotional sharing, and direct financial/logistical support to families in Lebanon, supporting grassroots efforts. Telegram was favoured for unfiltered and rapid war updates, with 42.9% finding it *"very important"* and 28.6% *"somewhat important"* for accessing breaking news (see Figure 2). Facebook, conversely, was used for public expressions, news consumption, fundraising, and calls to action, amplifying collective action and fostering participation in protests and solidarity demonstrations. As one North American respondent noted, *"WhatsApp was where I found comfort, but Telegram gave me speed. Facebook was how useful I felt"*.

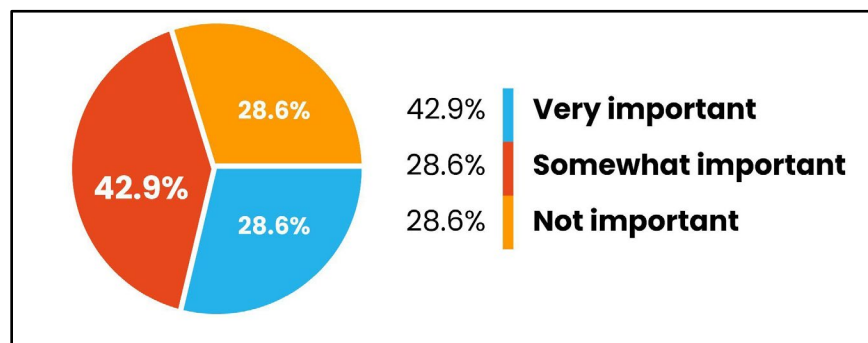


Figure 2: Perceived importance of Telegram for accessing unfiltered or breaking news during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon.

b) Heightened Emotional and Political Engagement:

The study reveals a strong emotional attachment to Lebanon, significantly mediated by digital participation. About 82% of survey respondents reported feeling a heightened emotional connection with Lebanon during the war, while 67% indicated that digital interaction served as a coping mechanism. Emotional expressions observed included prayer circles, symbolic sharing (flags, martyr images), and voice messages of support. Many participants described these interactions as essential to their sense of belonging and obligation. A respondent from the Gulf stated: *"I couldn't be there in person, but being active online was a way of being there spiritually and politically."*

However, digital platforms were deemed important to mobilizing specific initiatives such as fundraising efforts, medical aid coordination, and advocacy campaigns aimed at raising international awareness according to 82.1% of the respondents (see Figure 3). Some respondents also said that they used WhatsApp and posted on Facebook to share links for donations, plan relief materials with local NGOs, and to mobilize online campaigns that target diaspora abroad. This active mobilization process demonstrates the power of multimedia gateways not only as channels for information and emotional attachment but also as tools opening outlets for real-time, transnational mobilization (see Figure 3).

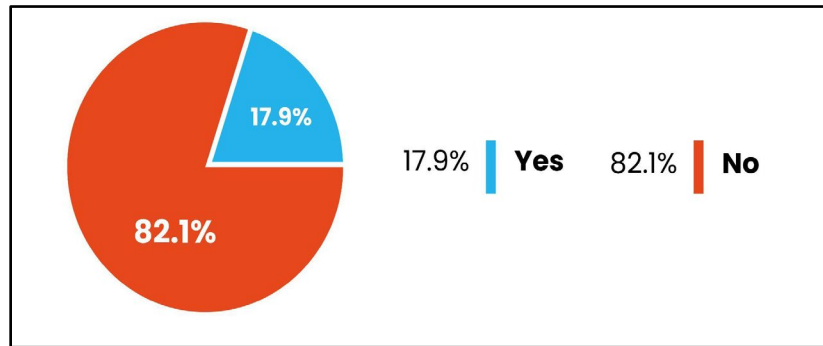


Figure 3: Use of digital platforms by diaspora respondents to coordinate humanitarian aid for Lebanon during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon.

Facebook became an important platform for political engagement, including campaign coordination, digital protests, and the circulation of petitions and ceasefire demands. This confirms the research emphasizing the role of digital diasporas in political mobilization and emotional solidarity (Harb, 2011; Koinova, 2018). Thus, this online participation was crucial to the consolidation of diasporic identity.

c) *Nuanced Trust and Information Navigation*

Findings indicate varying levels of trust towards media among the diaspora populations from Lebanon. Although 58% of participants preferred traditional Lebanese media (LBCI, Al-Jadeed) over user-generated content, only 34% claimed to trust only those sources. Most respondents (85,7%) indicated that they trust information shared by traditional media on digital platforms partially (Figure 4). Thus, interviewees reported using cross-verification strategies, comparing news between Telegram, Facebook pages, and traditional outlets' digital extensions. This exemplifies a proactive, hybrid, multi-source model that is so characteristic of information consumption.

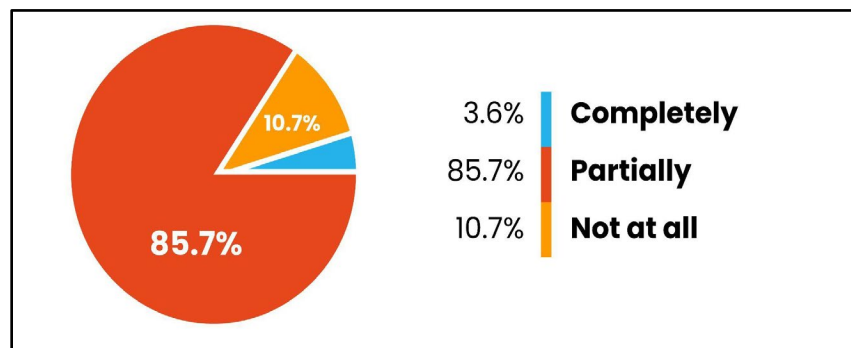


Figure 4: Trust in information shared by traditional media outlets on their digital platforms among Lebanese diaspora respondents during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon.

64% of the respondents believe traditional media fail to capitalize on digital platforms to engage diaspora during crises (see Figure 5). This relates to an emphasis on “*relational trust*” over institutional authority, with many reporting that they would trust news “*shared by a cousin in Beirut*” over the headlines. This hybrid pattern of trust is also well recognized in both media

studies literature on hybrid media systems (Barnard, 2024) and diaspora communication (Abouyassine, 2023). Similarly, Melki (2025) highlights that during crisis contexts, people often seek immediacy, emotion, and familiarity more than formal verification.

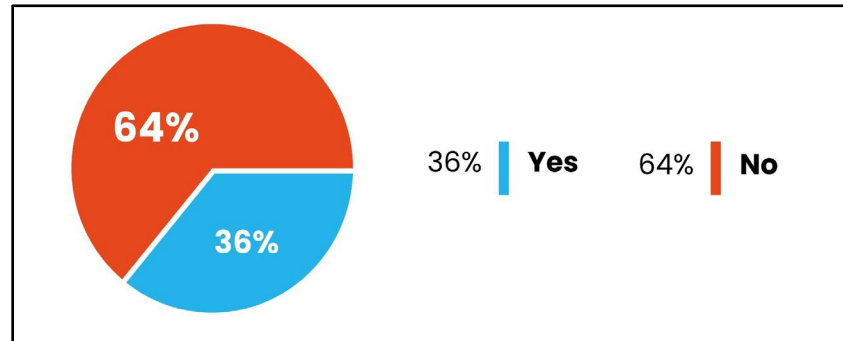


Figure 5: Perceptions of the effectiveness of traditional media outlets in using digital platforms to engage the Lebanese diaspora during crises.

d) Regional Variations in Engagement Modalities

While high digital use and conscious media use were observed in all regions, the mode of engagement varied:

i. Gulf States (e.g., Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia):

Respondents showed high use of messaging apps and Arabic news outlets, with many checking updates "constantly" and primarily through Arabic-language media alongside WhatsApp. For instance, a respondent in Qatar listed Al Mayadeen, Al Jazeera, and Al Jadeed among continuously tracked online outlets. However, public political expression was relatively lower, with no Gulf respondents indicating joining local protests (given legal restrictions) and most describing social media's impact on their political participation as "not applicable" or "no impact". Engagement focused on private solidarity, such as sharing safety information and expressing support in closed groups. Trust levels did not significantly differ, with scepticism towards social media content and moderate trust in traditional media. The Gulf diaspora experience was characterized by intensive information consumption and constricted digital networking within conservative or surveilled public spheres.

ii. North America (e.g., United States, Canada):

North American diaspora respondents similarly took full advantage of digital media, benefiting from freer environments to voice opinions. They reported heavy reliance on social media and news apps, often waking up to catch up on overnight developments via WhatsApp or Telegram alerts due to time zone differences. They frequently followed both Lebanese and international coverage for a well-rounded picture. A distinct point was engagement with the broader community, with participants sharing video clips and updates to inform non-Lebanese friends or colleagues, acting as informal ambassadors to amplify Lebanese perspectives in the West. Some participated in demonstrations or advocacy campaigns (e.g., campus teach-ins), facilitated by the permissive environment. North American respondents also showed a tendency to engage in

online discussions and debates about the war's politics, feeling at liberty to challenge narratives and provide context or fact-checks.

iii. Europe (e.g., France, UK, Germany):

European diaspora members demonstrated a mix of behaviours. Many consumed a wide array of Lebanese and regional news sources (often in Arabic or French) and remained highly engaged with messaging apps for updates. They were also very active in information verification, possibly owing to higher media literacy or scepticism in their environments, stressing cross-checking news and consulting multiple sources. While having more opportunities for outward engagement than those in the Gulf, and some joining diaspora humanitarian drives, the survey suggests moderation, with engagement primarily digital and informational. Some Europe-based Lebanese also followed host country media to understand international portrayals of the war and shared translated news pieces, indicating a dual concern for both homeland events and their international representation.

e) Persistent Challenges: Sectarianism and Digital Repression

While digital platforms have the potential to empower citizens, the research also reveals persistent obstacles. Online settings and interview responses also revealed that the political fragmentation among Lebanese diaspora-descent members was reproduced and perpetuated within their respective diaspora community online, restricting true transnationality and the mobilization of a coherent collective action (Al-Ississ & Zoughaib, 2023; Nakhle, 2021; Nakhle & Schwebel, 2021; Sengupta, 2024). This continuing receptiveness to the partial alliances along linguistic, religious, and political lines was apparent notwithstanding efforts to rise above such cleavages. In addition, the widespread problem of mis- and disinformation, much of which was politically motivated and disseminated through platform algorithms, eroded public trust and intensified an already precarious information space (Al-Hammouri, 2023; Darwich, 2024).

Taken together, these findings reveal that the digital engagement of the Lebanese diaspora during the 2024 Israeli war on Lebanon was an interface of fast mobilization, changing levels of trust, and ongoing socio-political problems, emphasizing the double character of digital interfaces in crisis situations. Lebanese around the world experienced the war through digital channels, piecing together fragmented information and supporting one another online.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined how the Lebanese diaspora engaged with digital platforms during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon, revealing a complex interplay between emotional attachment, media hybridity, digital affordances, and transnational identity. Taken together, the findings illustrate that diasporic engagement during crises cannot be understood through a single theoretical lens. Instead, it emerges from the layered interaction of structural ties, mediated belonging, hybrid information practices, and platform-specific affordances as articulated in the integrated four-pillar framework guiding this research.

A key insight of this study is the intensity and immediacy with which diasporic individuals responded to the conflict. Rather than passive observers, Lebanese expatriates engaged in continuous monitoring, emotional expression, verification, and mobilization. This behaviour

reinforces transnationalism theory, particularly the idea of simultaneity (Levitt & Schiller, 2004), but also extends it by demonstrating how crisis moments activate long-standing familial and political ties through digital infrastructures rather than physical ones. The centrality of WhatsApp for emotional reassurance and family coordination exemplifies how everyday technologies become conduits for “*digitally mediated intimacy*,” while Telegram’s raw, unfiltered content fostered a sense of informational urgency and proximity.

The findings also reveal tensions and contradictions within diasporic crisis communication. Although traditional Lebanese media retain symbolic authority, trust in these institutions was partial and conditional. Participants engaged in hybrid verification, cross-checking news across Telegram channels, institutional outlets, international media, and peer networks, which aligns with the logic of the hybrid media system (Barnard, 2024). This demonstrates that diasporas do not simply consume information but actively curate and arbitrate between competing narratives. The combination of emotional proximity and informational scepticism complicates assumptions about passive media audiences, revealing a more critical and discerning diasporic public.

Another significant dimension is the role of platform affordances in shaping distinct forms of engagement. WhatsApp enabled small-scale emotional exchanges and humanitarian coordination; Telegram enabled rapid monitoring of battlefield updates; Facebook provided visibility, narrative framing, and mobilization for protests or advocacy campaigns. These differentiated practices illustrate how socio-technical affordances do not merely facilitate communication but structure the types of participation that become possible during a crisis (Rahim, 2018). In the Lebanese case, platforms effectively segmented diasporic behaviours into private emotional support, semi-private information vigilance, and public political expression.

At the same time, the findings highlight enduring structural and sociopolitical constraints. Sectarian and political cleavages remained deeply embedded in diasporic digital spaces, reproducing the fragmentation characteristic of Lebanese domestic politics. Misinformation, algorithmic amplification, and partisan media ecosystems further complicated attempts to construct a unified diasporic narrative. These dynamics align with prior research on the persistence of cleavages across transnational networks (Al-Ississ & Zoughaib, 2023; Nakhle, 2021), suggesting that digital platforms can simultaneously foster solidarity and reinforce division.

Importantly, the regional comparison points to contextual differences in digital activism and expression. Participants in the Gulf exhibited more private forms of engagement due to political constraints, while North American respondents expressed greater political visibility and advocacy, and European respondents showed stronger verification behaviours. These differences underscore the importance of attending to host-country conditions when analysing diasporic communication and challenge the notion of a singular, homogeneous Lebanese diaspora.

In a nutshell, this study demonstrates how the Lebanese diaspora’s engagement during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon was shaped by a dynamic interplay of structural attachments, mediated emotions, hybrid information flows, and platform-specific affordances. The findings show that diasporic publics acted not merely as distant observers but as emotionally invested, politically responsive, and critically discerning participants in a rapidly evolving crisis.

By integrating transnationalism, digital diaspora theory, hybrid media systems, and socio-technical affordances, the study offers a multi-layered framework for understanding digital engagement during homeland conflicts. Practically, the results highlight opportunities for media institutions, humanitarian actors, and policymakers to better align crisis communication strategies with the expectations, verification habits, and emotional needs of transnational communities. While the study carries limitations in scope and representation, it provides a foundation for comparative and longitudinal research on digital diasporic mobilization in times of upheaval.

Ultimately, the Lebanese case underscores the growing centrality of digital platforms in sustaining diasporic solidarities, shaping crisis narratives, and redefining the boundaries of political and emotional participation across borders.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study offers important insights into the digital engagement of the Lebanese diaspora during the Israeli war of 2024 on Lebanon, several limitations should be acknowledged in order to contextualize the findings and guide future research.

First, the sample is not fully representative of the global Lebanese diaspora. Although participants were drawn from three major regions (the Arab Gulf, Europe, and North America), other significant diaspora hubs, particularly in West Africa, Latin America, Australia, and the Caribbean, were not included. These communities may have distinct media habits, socio political environments, and levels of digital access that could produce different engagement patterns.

Second, the online snowball sampling method inherently privileges digitally active individuals, younger participants, and those embedded in WhatsApp, Telegram, or Facebook networks. As a result, older diaspora members, less technologically connected individuals, and those outside networked circles may be underrepresented. This is particularly relevant in crisis research, where digital visibility does not necessarily capture the experiences of the entire community.

Third, the self-reported nature of survey responses introduces the potential for recall bias and emotional bias. Because the data collection occurred during and immediately after a high-intensity conflict, participants may have provided responses shaped by stress, fear, uncertainty, and proximity to unfolding events. Emotional amplification during war may also influence perceptions of trust, solidarity, and digital participation.

Fourth, the qualitative interview sample was small (N=10) and selected through purposive sampling. While efforts were made to capture diversity in region, gender, and media use, the sample does not allow for broad generalization. Interviews nevertheless provide depth but should be interpreted as contextual narratives rather than universal diasporic experiences.

Fifth, the study relies on observations of social media spaces, which are limited by algorithmic visibility, private group access barriers, and platform opacity. Researchers could only analyse accessible channels, meaning that some critical networks, especially encrypted or politically sensitive groups, may have remained undocumented.

Finally, the study does not systematically explore researcher positionality. Researchers' linguistic, cultural, and national proximity to Lebanon may have influenced interpretations, rapport with interviewees, and thematic emphasis. Future studies may benefit from explicit reflexive analysis to strengthen transparency and methodological rigor.

Despite these limitations, the study lays the groundwork for several promising avenues of future research. Comparative studies examining other conflict affected diasporas (such as Syrian, Palestinian, Ukrainian, or Armenian communities) could reveal how different historical trajectories, media ecologies, and political contexts shape digital engagement. Additionally, platform specific analysis, such as the role of TikTok, Instagram Reels, or AI driven content curation, may help uncover how newer algorithmic environments influence crisis communication and diasporic mobilization. Longitudinal research would also be valuable to assess whether heightened wartime engagement persists, diminishes, or transforms after the end of conflict. Finally, deeper investigation into misinformation ecosystems, platform governance, and transnational political mobilization could further advance scholarship at the intersection of digital media, diaspora studies, and crisis communication.

BIODATA

Lara Chamieh (PhD) is an Assistant Professor at Lebanese University, Faculty of Information, UNESCO Palace, P.O. Box 6573/14, Beirut, Lebanon. Email: lara.chamieh@ul.edu.lb

Ali El Takach (PhD) is an Associate Professor and the Dean of the Faculty of Mass Communication and Fine Arts at Al Maaref University, Beirut Campus, Ghobeiry, P.O. Box 5078 0025, Lebanon. Email: ali.takach@mu.edu.lb

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