

Assignment 1: Conference Paper

Title:

Representation of Indigenous People on Social Media Platforms

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Abstract

Social media has been used as a platform for communication, news, and cultural content since it was created. Researchers have proven that people tend to be biased on social media platforms for trending topics; therefore, people believe the content they see on mass media is the true source of information. Within cultural factors, this leads to misconceptions about culture, misrepresentation, and prejudice toward a particular group of people. The Indigenous people of Australia communities are victims of these factors on social media platforms, which this paper will specifically focus on the Aboriginal People of Australia. This paper will explain who the Indigenous People of Australia are and the reason why we should focus on these Aboriginal communities.

Additionally, the misrepresentation and how they occur on social media platforms by the users targeting the Indigenous People of Australia. The different kinds of social media platforms that are taking place for this topic and the results of these representations towards the Aboriginal People of Australia. This paper has proven a negative representation of the Indigenous people of Australia on social media platforms.

Keywords: Indigenous people, Aboriginal Studies, Stereotypes, Social media platform, Online diaspora.

Introduction

The Indigenous people of Australia represent the oldest known culture in the world (Raphael et al., 1998) and one of the most vulnerable communities and individuals in the world, both physically and mentally (Varma et al., 2021). In terms of healthcare, there is inequality between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Australia, which puts the Indigenous people of Australia at a disadvantage when receiving healthcare and is more vulnerable to chronic diseases, which lower their life expectancy (Peiris et al., 2008). Regarding mental health, the Indigenous people of Australia receive racism, discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes, and traumas from past experiences (Mercer, 2022). Hence, this paper aims to shed light on this social issue and raise the importance of discussing and investigating the representation of

the Indigenous people of Australia on social media platforms. Because the Indigenous people of Australia are already at a disadvantage compared to the non-Indigenous people, they don't need more problems on social media, which will affect them mentally. The thesis of this paper is that there are different kinds of social media platforms that have been used to target or represent the Indigenous people of Australia negatively and how this has affected them.

When communicating on social media platforms, it is very important to take into consideration of intercultural communication because this will determine the success of your communication and will provide you with disciplines that will allow you to achieve interaction (Holliday et al., 2016). This consist of community, genders, nationalities, belongingness, class, etc. However, most of the time in social media the intercultural communication has been ignored and the users on social media platforms have done the opposite of this intercultural communication (Byram et al., 2020), by targeting or misrepresenting a particular group of people, which in this paper will specifically focus on the Indigenous People of Australia. This is a major social issue on social media platforms as people tend to believe what they see and hear on online platforms as the true source of information thus creating cultural biases within those communities and misrepresenting them (Carrascosa et al., 2015). Intercultural communication is about cultural appropriation. This is communicating appropriately about cultural, values, beliefs, religions, practices, etc. (Holliday et al., 2016). Within cultural appropriation, there are two functions: the knowledge that is present in the interaction of cultural appropriation and the presence of contestation within the interaction for cultural appropriation (Lenard & Balint, 2019). Misrepresentation of culture is the interaction of the act or statement that is portrayed negatively or disingenuous about a group of people; furthermore, misrepresentation will consist of factors such as stereotyping which is the most form of misrepresentation, discrimination, prejudice, and racism (ibid., p. 332). Misrepresentation can be portrayed in a way that is insulting and humiliating about a particular culture; therefore, it often misleads and problematic representations of that specific culture.

The Aboriginal People of Australia have their presence on social media ever since the start of online networks, which the study found go back to 2013 (Rice et al., 2016), 60% of Indigenous People of Australia in remote locations are frequent users

of social media and even more in populated locations and the Indigenous people have more users of social media than the non-Indigenous People of Australia (Carlson & Frazer, 2018b). When social media presence for Indigenous People of Australia was available, they were designed, documented, curated, and digitalized negatively (Thorpe & Joseph, 2015). The representation of the communities of the Indigenous People of Australia is not authentic or valid, and the representation of the Indigenous Peoples' heritage is not accurate; therefore, because of this misrepresentation has created stereotypes and has given the wrong impression about the Indigenous People of Australia (Stichel et al., 2019). The negative representation of the Indigenous People of Australia has created a lot of bias against the Aboriginal People. In a study, they have found out that 75% of Australian people are biased toward the Indigenous People and Torres Strait Islander communities (The Guardian, 2020). Because of these biases against the Indigenous People, it has caused many interactions that are racist, prejudiced, and discriminatory towards the Indigenous People (Paradies, 2018). This is a continuous reoccurring social issue within Australia about the Indigenous People of Australia on social media platforms (Carlson et al., 2017). Not only the misrepresentation, but Indigenous People also have been experiencing social inequality, racism, and injustice. Within the criminal justice system, there is a lot of inequality and discrimination against the Indigenous People of Australia; due to this, they have been represented on social media negatively (Cannon, 2018).

Representation of Indigenous People of Australia on a news platform

Even though the misrepresentation of Indigenous People of Australia is a major issue, the mainstream media in Australia, specifically the news, will try to deny or ignore these topics (Whyte, 2016). Not only does the news try to put these issues on social media platforms down, but also the basic human rights issue within the Indigenous people's Communities as well (Korff, 2022). Findings of Korff's (2022) research indicate that the perspectives that have been presented about the Indigenous People on the news are whitesplain; they would say that the Indigenous People of Australia are inferior to the non-Indigenous People of Australia, and they would state on the news that these issues regarding the Indigenous people are a thing of the past. Statistics show that 74% of Indigenous People say that the

healthcare situation has been negatively represented, only 40% of Indigenous People say that the media presents a balanced view of the Indigenous People of Australia and 50% of the Aboriginal People say that they have been negatively portrayed on social media platforms (Korff, 2022). The findings of Korff's (2022) research indicate that the news writes about the Indigenous People on the news in a way that discriminates, and stereotyping is because by using this method, it attracts the audience; they don't care if it's wrong or misrepresenting the Indigenous People. Another misrepresentation of Indigenous People of Australia on the news is the cartoon comic created by Bill Leak which is published by The Australian newspaper and has breached the 'Racial Discrimination Act' (Westmore, 2017). This cartoon was portrayed in a way that is targeting the Indigenous communities, in the comic, there is a drawing of an Indigenous boy who has been escorted by an Indigenous policeman to the boy's dad, who is not wearing decent clothes and is holding a beer which he seems to be drunk (ABC Radio Melbourne, 2016). In ABC Radio Melbourne (2016) findings have shown in the speech bubble, the policeman said to the father to sit down with his son and teach him about personal responsibility, which it seems that the boy has done something bad, and the father replied: 'Yea, sure, and what's his name?'. This is directly targeting the Indigenous males, representing them as drunker who don't take responsibility for their kids and don't teach them how to be responsible, which this representation is not valid and authentic. This comic was based on stereotypes towards the Indigenous People; rather than doing good, it can create lots of racism against the Indigenous People and attack their past trauma (Carlson et al., 2017).

Representation of Indigenous People of Australia in films

Aboriginal People of Australia have been negatively portrayed in films, and they were represented as threatening, primitive, and inferior to the white settlers (Mason et al., 2016). These films were made from the European viewpoint of Indigenous people. Relating to the 'Aurukun, we're happy, strong people, the film shows the crisis within the Indigenous community and portrays the Indigenous kids as having weak bodies, meek, cowering, and always needing protection from the authority (Slater, 2008). This is demeaning towards the Indigenous kids, and it doesn't portray the true environment in which the Aboriginal People and their kids' lives are.

Online diaspora

For online diaspora, there are various groups on social media for the Indigenous People to network with the Indigenous online community, and culture, helping them to identify the people within the community that is at risk of suicide or self-harm. (Carlson & Frazer, 2020). Providing the communities with a platform where they can communicate their powerful outlet for political engagement and addressing racism against the Indigenous People of Australia (Carlson & Frazer, 2020). The social media platforms that are used within the Indigenous communities are Facebook which is more for family and community-related posts and Twitter is used as a platform for political activities, and younger Indigenous People use social media platforms like Snapchat and Instagram (Carlson & Frazer, 2018a). Even though there are online communities for Indigenous People to communicate with each other and support one another, it is still public, and there are still many outside people who can still access and interact with these communities. A study has shown that there is a misrepresentation of the Indigenous People's online communities (Al-Natour, 2020).

In a research performed by Carlson & Frazer, 80% of Indigenous People participants said they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander on social media openly; however, the other half were “selective” about what they post online because they fear attracting racist or violent responses and Over 50% stated that sometimes they don't identify as an Indigenous person online (Carlson & Frazer, 2018a). They feel safer not identifying as Aboriginal due to discrimination and prejudice that they might receive. This negative side of being part of the communities will lead people to not connect with these social media groups online. The Indigenous People will also question whether the people on these online groups are really Indigenous people or not. Due to this misrepresentation and the factors that have affected the Indigenous People, it has consistently increased the rate of suicide for the Indigenous People of Australia (Syme, 2020). On the social media communities, 40% of them stated that they could likely identify the Indigenous People who are likely to commit suicide or self-harm (Carlson & Frazer, 2018a). Another misrepresentation of Indigenous communities can be the young Indigenous People within higher education, where a study has shown that the Indigenous students have been identified and denied

academic success, which later on got reinforced to fix the sustainability of education (Hollinsworth et al., 2020). Even though the Indigenous student receives prejudice against them, they were able to gain opportunities from social media platforms like Facebook; there are organization and events groups that help Indigenous students to connect with their communities (Hollinsworth et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Literature sources indicate that there is a misrepresentation of Indigenous People of Australia on some of the social media platforms and how it has affected them. The paper has identified who are the Indigenous People of Australia and why it is important to focus on these particular cultural aspects. As well as what social media platforms are and what is a negative misrepresentation of culture from social media users. It has shown different social media platforms that have misrepresented the Aboriginal People and how this discrimination, racism, stereotypes, and prejudice have affected the Indigenous communities. For the news platform, it has been identified that some of the news platforms have the tendency to misrepresent the Indigenous communities; it has been mentioned in the cartoon comic how it is created from the stereotypical perspectives of Indigenous People, which misrepresents the Indigenous males. The representation of Indigenous People in films is usually portrayed negatively for example in the film shown in the paper. Another aspect is the online Indigenous communities. Due to negative factors evolving around the online Indigenous communities, the Aboriginal People tend to stay away from these online networks as they are afraid of getting attacked. Due to this misrepresentation, the rate of suicide within Indigenous communities are still high. Therefore, we should come together to discuss this issue regarding the misrepresentation of Indigenous People of Australia on social media platforms and end this social issue to create a better living lifestyle for the Indigenous communities.

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