E-whanaungatanga

The role of social media in Māori political engagement

Joanne Waitoa

Institute of Development Studies, Massey University
Research questions

- How can social media conscientize and mobilize Māori to engage with politics?

- How can social media be used to advance indigenous development?
Theory
Kaupapa Māori theory


“Intrinsic to Kaupapa Māori theory is an analysis of existing power structures and societal inequalities...exposing underlying assumptions that serve to conceal the power relations that exist within society and the ways in which dominant groups construct conceptions of ‘common sense’ and ‘facts’ to provide ad hoc justification for the maintenance of inequalities and the continued oppression of Māori” (Pihama cited in Cram, 2001, p.40).
Methodology

Facebook Engagement with Mana Party

Type of engagement

Number of participants

- Post
- Share
- Comment
- Like
- Read

13 semi structured interviews: Mana party president Annette Sykes, two Mana ki Manawatū Facebook page moderators, 10 members of Facebook pages - Mana Movement, Mana Rangatahi, Mana ki Manawatū and Mana Wairarapa
Results

- Whanaungatanga (relationships): building and maintaining social and cultural networks, increasing solidarity within and among indigenous movements.

- Tino Rangatiratanga (self-determination): maintaining control over Māori representation, space to disseminate Māori perspectives and encourage discussion.
Participants’ kōrero - Whanaungatanga

- “It’s really awesome to know that there are nations and groups of people who are going through what Māori are going through and that there’s solidarity around these issues. Not only just with indigenous people but heaps of Pākehā people out there”.

- “It helps us keep in touch with our whānau we haven’t heard from in years, or friends. That makes a person feel some self worth about themselves which is good”.

- “It’s connected me to a broader network of likeminded people...one of the things I’ve always thought about politics and Māori engagement is Māori feeling alone. So one thing that social media has is a connection with other Mana groups around the country and you’re not alone”.
Participants’ kōrero - Rangatiratanga

- “It’s a forum for you to get whatever you want to get out there which is what you never had before. It gives you more power and it takes it away from them ... They have too much power... It gives back the power to the people”.

- “We are not well represented outside of local radio and Māori television stations so [social media] is a forum in which Māori do get to speak and not be censored”.

- “Tino Rangatiratanga, by Māori for Māori, so Māori taking control of their own destinies...through social media...they’re using that avenue to pursue one’s goals and political aspirations”.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mana Tangata</th>
<th>Signs of Empowerment</th>
<th>Signs of (dis)Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Psychological Empowerment | Wellbeing and self-esteem enhanced through:  
- Native language/custom promoted and learners encouraged  
- Participation in discussion encouraged  
- All opinions valued  
- Clear guidelines of use | Wellbeing and self-esteem diminished through:  
- Exclusion due to lack of knowledge  
- Opinions not valued  
- Personal attacks  
- No guidelines for appropriate behaviour |
| Whanaungatanga | Community and solidarity enhanced through:  
- Connections to whānau, marae, hapū, iwi sites or other groups  
- Regular updates  
- Regular user interaction  
- Relevant information shared  
- All ages included | Community and solidarity diminished through:  
- Disregard of page kaupapa. For example, advertising  
- Infrequent updates  
- Inappropriate discussion  
- Uploading unauthorised information. For example, whakapapa, tapu images  
- Kaumātua excluded |
| Social Empowerment | Tino Rangatiratanga | Self-determination enhanced through:  
- Ownership of site and content  
- Access to varied sources  
- Open discussion  
- Interaction with similar groups and people  
- Raised awareness about political issues  
- Determination to change status quo  
- Online political action for example, submission making, petition signing  
- Organisation of offline action for example, protest | Self-determination diminished through:  
- No control over site content  
- Sparse networks  
- Moderator strictly controls discussions  
- Information comes from mainstream sources reinforcing mainstream ideas  
- Sites under corporate or government surveillance  
- No encouragement of online or offline action |