

E-whanaungatanga:

The role of social media in Māori
political engagement

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Research Questions

- ▣ How can social media tools advance indigenous development?
- ▣ What were the objectives of the Mana Party's social media strategy in regards to Māori political engagement?
- ▣ What were the observations of the Facebook pages' administrators on their ability to engage with users?
- ▣ How effective were the Facebook pages in raising awareness and increasing participation of political issues according to personal experiences of the page users?

Literature Review (1)

- ▣ Definition of social media = user generated content
- ▣ No literature exists encompassing Māori, social media and political engagement.
- ▣ Literature review therefore focuses more broadly on indigenous development and social media.
- ▣ A number of themes have emerged e.g. activism, education, language revitalisation, indigenous identity, advocacy, research and knowledge management.

Literature Review (2)

- ▣ Most information has come from non-academic sources such as blogs and news sites.
- ▣ The digital divide is a recurring theme in most literature on indigenous development.
- ▣ Although a number of obvious benefits are noted there are also negative implications of social media use.
- ▣ Consensus is that online media can complement traditional offline methods but cannot replace them.

Theoretical Framework

- ▣ Theories of empowerment
 - Paulo Freire (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
 - John Friedmann (1992) *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development*
- ▣ Kaupapa Māori Theory
 - Graham Smith (1997), Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), Russell Bishop (2005)
- ▣ Diverse Māori realities
 - Sir Mason Durie (1995)

Data Collection

- ▣ Recruitment issues

- ▣ In depth semi structured interviews
 - Mana Party president Annette Sykes
 - Two Mana Facebook page administrators
 - Ten Mana Facebook page users

Initial Findings (1)

▣ Facebook page administrators

- Objectives both operational and aspirational

▣ Facebook page users

- Positive aspects of social media use for Māori:
 - Whanaungatanga (solidarity/collaboration, information sharing), Rangatiratanga (autonomy, control), awareness raising, speed/efficiency/organisation, low cost, increased rangatahi (youth) engagement

“You just can’t trust TV anymore... [Social media] definitely provides Māori with a form of information dispersal that they have more control over, that’s the benefit.”

Initial Findings (2)

- Negative aspects of social media use for Māori:
 - Breach of tikanga through sharing tapu images or information, traditional intellectual property issues, not kanohi ki te kanohi, lack of respect on forums, subverts traditional hierarchy (kaumatua excluded), issues of authenticity, credibility, lack of access, digital divide

“Sometimes I wonder [if it’s right] when we are showing pictures of our tipuna (ancestors) that have passed...it’s not the way to do it but sometimes ...it’s the only way we are going to be able to share those things. So it kind of contradicts you.”

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

