

Using New Media as Occupational Inspiration for the Disabled

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The Asian Conference on Media, Communication & Film 2019
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The objective of this research was to study the use of new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled in terms of 1) types of media; 2) content; 3) formats; and 4) approaches for developing new media. The study was based on examples of disabled people who were successful in their careers until 2016-2018 in Thailand to serve as models for the use of new media to provide occupational motivation for the disabled. This was a qualitative research based on documentary research and in-depth interviews and understanding of their feelings, life experiences with 20 key informants, consisting of 10 disabled people with successful occupations, 5 personnel of an occupational training center, and 5 parents of disabled people. The informants were chosen through purposive sampling. Data were interpreted through descriptive analysis. The results showed the use of new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled had the following characteristics : 1) types of media: Facebook and Line accounts to provide two-way communication 2) content : inspiration self-esteem and try to move beyond the disabled. 3) formats : the lessons learned from success stories. 4) approaches for development : The disabled have two important expectations, i.e. desire for social participation on an equal and sustainable manner and proactive approach to disability work.

Keywords: new media, disabled, inspiration for the disabled, occupations for the disabled

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Introduction

In the modern era new media have begun to play a major role in adding meaning to human life. New media are new forms of communication that have both positive and negative impacts on everyday life. They have become central to many aspects of communications, education, work, entertainment and leisure. Communications technology has developed very rapidly. The number of people using the Internet increases every day. Social media make communications so quick and easy that they have become the most widespread and far-reaching communications networks that reach all parts of society. New channels for sharing on the Internet have arisen that have the outstanding characteristic of enabling instant interaction between users and websites, and between users and users. With these new channels, Internet users could begin to create their own content on webpages or blogs. As more and more people read and shared content, the world of online social media was born. Now Internet users all over the world log in to social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Line, Instagram and Youtube.

Social networks are a phenomenon that links individuals via the Internet with the aim of creating online communities where people can share ideas and information, opinions and attitudes, often centered around similar interests or activities. In Thailand and elsewhere, there are public and private organizations that try to create greater social equality by providing work opportunities for the disabled. They organize various activities to help disabled people access their rights and develop their capabilities. The work of these organizations is founded on universal ideals and they strive to truly meet the needs of the disabled. They want to see the disabled gain more independence and a better quality of life, so they try to arm them with useful skills and the ability to access information. The goal is to provide opportunities for self development and to promote occupational abilities so disabled individuals have jobs and can play a full role in society with strength and dignity. Inspiration is something that has a creative influence on human thought, and it starts with imagination. Inspiration is a factor that makes people think of goals they want to achieve and can lead them to success in life if they keep reaching toward those goals. Every individual has different goals, but almost all people, including disabled people, want things like a good future, success in their careers, fame, status and social acceptance. Although individual goals might differ, everyone desires to achieve success in one area or another. Inspiration is a stimulus from a person's inner consciousness that has a productive influence to give hope and continuously lead one towards one's goals and wishes. People can find inspiration from the surrounding environment and from personal experiences and perceptions. It is like getting a persuasive message to respond to your personal happiness. Inspiration can be found in meditation, music, movies, books, encountering and overcoming one's problems or fears, being close to an optimistic person, heroes or role models and the creative thinking process (Pramote Thammarat, 2012; Sittichai Panyaroj, 2013; Kosita Butrarat, 2008; Thrash and Elliot, 2003).

These days, communication through social media networks plays a greater role for the disabled than in the past, especially for people who are receptive to using new technology. Social media networks are social forums that are not limited by time and distance. Their boundaries are limitless. Members of the social networks are free to reveal their identities as much as they want or create a new personal that may not be

the same as their real-life selves. It may be very satisfying for disabled individuals to interact with people without them seeing or knowing about their physical disabilities. Social media has made the world smaller and provided modern forms of communication, but it has also had some negative impacts. There are many debates about the negative aspects of social media, such as ethical concerns, human rights issues, online harassment or bullying, posting of inappropriate images or messages, unproductive use of information, misinformation, fraud, and issues affecting underprivileged people or harming people based on religious, political, or gender affiliations. The researcher was interested in the use of new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled so that the information gained could be put to use to guide and improve plans to promote social immunity and strength for the disabled. If they gain inspiration to pursue their careers and have more secure livelihoods, then disabled people can better contribute to the nation. With more occupational inspiration, disabled people are more likely to be independent and self-sufficient and will not be a burden to their families or society. The power of social media and modern communications technology can be used to increase the knowledge and understanding of disabled people so that they can be more productive members of society, engaged in an occupation that suits them, and they can participate in society on an equal basis.

Research objectives

1. To study the types of new media used to create occupational inspiration for the disabled;
2. To study the content used on new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled;
3. To study new media formats that can be used to create occupational inspiration for the disabled;
4. To recommend approaches for developing ways to use new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled.

Research Method

This was a qualitative research based on in-depth interviews with 10 model disabled people who were successful in their careers until 2016-2018 in Thailand to serve as models for the use of new media to provide occupational motivation for the disabled, 5 personnel of an occupational training center, and 5 parents of disabled people. The informants were chosen through purposive sampling. Data were interpreted through descriptive analysis. They were chosen based on the criteria of having been successful in developing their quality of life, in helping themselves as far as their disability permitted, in searching for knowledge for self-development and to learn an occupation that suited their abilities and inclinations, having an honest way to make a living, following their dreams, devoting themselves to helping society, and showing society that disabled people have capabilities like other people. The data collection tool used in the research was an interview form. Data were analyzed through triangulation and descriptive analysis.

Expected results

1. The findings will contribute to the body of knowledge about communications, leading to the efficient development of integrated communication concepts and theories and also specific knowledge about using communications as a tool in the process of creating inspiration for the disabled.
2. The contributions to the body of knowledge about communication arts can also be adapted and applied to other subject areas, such as psychology, medicine and social welfare.
3. The knowledge gained about communications to create inspiration for the disabled will be real life empirical data from Thai society in the present day and in the context of developing disabled people's abilities.
4. The findings will strengthen and inspire disabled people and may stimulate others in society to create more rights and social opportunities for the disabled. The research will speak to people's conscience, making them more aware of the need to respect every individual's human dignity on an equal basis. It will help the disabled develop their quality of life more completely.
5. The findings will guide the making of policies for the physical and mental development of the disabled so they can have the knowledge and abilities to keep pace with changes in society in the digital age.

Results

For research objective 1, to study the types of new media used to create occupational inspiration for the disabled, there were the following findings :

The main types of new media used were Facebook and Line. The disabled people interviewed used Facebook to search for occupations that they were able to do and enjoyed and also to follow the activities of other disabled people they admired in order to get inspiration to go beyond their own disabilities. They also used Facebook to follow the movements of prominent people or people they liked and to express their opinions, tell about their feelings, and tell about their desires to a group of sympathetic friends. They used Line for two-way communication because the Line application has many useful features and is easy to use. It can be used on a network or wifi to send text messages, photos and audio with practically no expense. Chatting on Line enables personal conversations between two people and also has groups where groups of like-minded people, such as disabled people or people who enjoy the same things or activities, can set up groups to converse or ask and answer questions. The interviewees added that the Line application has cute stickers and emoticons that make chatting more fun and can symbolize different emotions.

For research objective 2, to study the content used on new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled, there were the following findings :

Model disabled people are principled, rational and realistic. They have learned to accept their disabilities and adapt themselves to their situation. They choose to do

activities that they believe they are capable of. Self - confidence and optimism help disabled people feel their self - worth and have a sense of purpose in life. When they have a lot of time to themselves, disabled people can use social media to relieve boredom, loneliness or feeling discouraged. They can also use social media to gain inspiration. They can join in online communities of other disabled people to ask questions and find information about various career or work options that they might be good at so that they can upgrade their quality of life by themselves.

For research objective 3, to study new media formats that can be used to create occupational inspiration for the disabled, there were the following findings :

New media allow message senders and message receivers to send and receive messages at the same time in two-way communication, and many messages can be sent simultaneously. Old media can be applied to new technology to let the mass media engage in two-way communications with audiences via social media. Disabled people can use new media to communicate and to search for different kinds of information, such as articles about their rights and benefits. The thing that inspires disabled people the most is to learn lessons from other disabled people who have succeeded in making careers for themselves. Other inspiring things you can do on social media are to ask questions and get answers from real people, to look up useful information, to watch other's creative ideas, and to build up good attitudes. Although new media have all these benefits, disabled people should be equipped with the tools to be media literate, to filter the information, to be skeptical and to know how to double check to verify what is true or false. People who are not cautious in using new media may be easily led astray and could become the victims of crime. Without enough media literacy they might fall into new media traps. Not only the disabled, but everyone should be aware of their rights and responsibilities as an ethical person. They should use new media constructively for efficient communications.

For research objective 4, to recommend approaches for developing ways to use new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled, there were the following findings :

Disabled people have two important expectations. They want to participate in society on an equal basis and in a sustainable way. Disabled people who know themselves and see their own value will be receptive to new information, will be able to see problems in many dimensions, will dare to accept themselves and dare to use knowledge to change themselves for the better. They will be able to think of work to do and build a career that matches their abilities and inclinations. They will have income and be self - reliant, and they will feel proud.

Discussion

Regarding findings on research objective 1, to study the types of new media used to create occupational inspiration for the disabled :

Communication is a way to create understanding through human interaction. It can be utilized to help disabled people accept, adapt and change their attitudes through sharing ideas, exchanging thoughts, expressing opinions, relaying emotions, and describing experiences. All this can be done through new media, including websites

presenting official information, Facebook presenting news about activities, Twitter reporting on the latest movements, or Line for two-way conversations or answering questions. People use their communication skills, i.e. thinking, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and constructive touch, according to their feelings. This is consistent with the concepts of David Berlo (1960), who wrote about the importance and effectiveness of communication that successful communication has six components: message source, coder, message, communication channel or medium, decoder, and message receiver. Disabled people use communication to interact with others for survival in their everyday lives and to get encouragement to move beyond their disabilities and work for a living to be self-reliant. This is consistent with the ideas of Thrash and Elliot (2003), who wrote that a source of inspiration can be internal communication in the human mind with a creative process that brings about hope and raises morale, and from sensory experiences that are linked to the external environment, such as watching a movie, listening to music, reading a book, meditating, being with someone optimistic, thinking positive thoughts, or finding a role model. When disabled people get information and can share their feelings and exchange experiences with a community of other disabled people through new media, it helps them get past their disability and find a way to make a living with an occupation that suits them.

Regarding findings on research objective 2, to study the content used on new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled :

Knowing oneself is the basis of building self-confidence. Disabled people have to learn how to judge their own capabilities and limitations so they can determine what they can and cannot do by themselves. Getting to know oneself helps a person understand oneself and others. Sharing similar attitudes and beliefs with like-minded people will help a person accept and understand himself or herself so they can lead a normal, happy life. This is consistent with the research of Albert Bandura (1977), who wrote that awareness of one's abilities defines the behavior that is expressed. There are four aspects to such self-awareness for the disabled : first making others confident in one's abilities ; second having good role models and being a good example for others ; third observing your own behavior and other people's behavior as an incentive to practice behaviors that give good results and avoid behaviors that give bad results; fourth stimulating positive feelings like pride in one's abilities. The disabled use new media to search for information, as a learning tool, for work, and to explore other ways of making a living that might be good alternatives for them. This can enable them to raise their standard of living by themselves. Joining an online social network community of disabled people can help the disabled get inspiration. Feeling self-worth and optimism play an important part in letting disabled people change their ideas to adapt to new situations.

Regarding findings on research objective 3, to study new media formats that can be used to create occupational inspiration for the disabled :

Most disabled people use the majority of their time on social media looking up information they're interested in. If it's a topic such as how to use your free time constructively or something that leads them to work that they are able to do, then they will be especially interested. The main formats are essays, news articles, documentaries or stories that tell about disabled people who are successful in their

lives and careers. Disabled people use new media to search for information because it is modern technology that is easy to access, easy to use, quick and convenient, not limited by time or place, and the message receiver can freely choose to receive messages from the media or sources he or she wishes. This is consistent with the social construction of reality theory of Berger and Luckman, (1967) which postulates that analysis of social reality comes from the conscious knowledge, which comes from two things – inner mind factors and external reality factors. The factors of reality define the self. All other human knowledge is created by society and the collection of experiences.

Regarding findings on research objective 4, to recommend approaches for developing ways to use new media to create occupational inspiration for the disabled :

New media allow message senders and message receivers to send and receive messages in a very short time and in two-way communication. Almost every type of new media gives users freedom to transmit or receive content in many forms, like video clips, short writings or essays at any time they wish with no limitations of time and place. Fritz Heider (cited in Littlejohn, 2017) explained the search for causes to explain communications behavior that could be used to explain human behavior and a human's perception of the situation when they receive a stimulus. In psychology, perceptions are defined as attributions of causes. Those attributions are important to our perceptions and help us integrate all our perceptions and organize their causes to understand the world in all its complexity. New media are extremely easy to use and it is essential that users develop media literacy so they can filter all the messages and figure out which are true and correct and so they will act with morality in posting or sharing information. New media are very influential, and careless or negligent posting can have serious negative consequences. Disabled people want to participate in society on an equal basis and want to be able to work to earn a living. If related organizations make a sincere effort to provide more information through new media by presenting the desired content in the desired formats in an ethical way, then that will facilitate the normal functioning in society that is the hope of disabled people. It can help them achieve the independence and self - reliance they strive for so they will not be a burden on society.

Recommendations

1. Disabled people should be given equal opportunities to participate in society without stigma and the misunderstanding that they are not capable. More opportunities should be opened for disabled people to work, be self - sufficient and live independently.
2. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security should set realistic policies and plans to develop the quality of life of disabled people that can really be implemented and will promote self - esteem, create jobs and careers, inspire the disabled, and create a social environment that encourages self - sufficiency and personal development in a concrete way.
3. Families and friends of the disabled should encourage the disabled to join in social activities and demonstrate their capabilities. They should show that they can do good

for society. All parts of society, including the disabled, their families and friends, networks, and public and private organizations, should join and cooperate to encourage the disabled to interact with others. Communications technology and new media can be a tool to let the disabled explore self development and discover their aptitudes, leading to the development of careers and income-earning occupations.

Suggestions for future research

1. More qualitative and quantitative research should be done on how to create inspiration, in both rural and urban settings with different contexts. The data from different places and studies should be compared to form appropriate recommendations for each kind of society.
2. More research should be done on strategies to help families create inspiration for the disabled.

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