Chapter 74

Capturing and Conveying Chamorro Cultural Knowledge Using Social Media

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ABSTRACT

The Chamorro people have a long history and rich cultural traditions that have survived the affects of colonization and loss of political control. However, these traditions are in danger of being lost if they are not passed from one generation to the next. The purpose of this study is to understand if information and communication technologies, specifically social media, are used to capture and convey Chamorro cultural knowledge. Two data collection methods were used to understand the type(s) of Chamorro cultural knowledge that is valued, and what social media is used by the Chamorro people today to capture and convey cultural knowledge. The results indicate that the Chamorro people today share the core Chamorro cultural values, and do use information and communication technologies, including social media to capture and convey Chamorro cultural knowledge.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to explain the importance of information and communication technologies (ICT), specifically social media to capture and convey indigenous cultural knowledge through a case study within the Chamorro people of Guam, a territory of the United States (U.S.), located in the Mariana Islands. While most of the indigenous Chamorro cultural knowledge is

past down orally from generation to generation, it is evident that the use of social media can be used and is believed to be an effective method for preserving, capturing, disseminating, and to learn about the Chamorro culture.

A significant amount of attention has been given to the capture and preservation of indigenous knowledge using ICTs. Without the capture and preservation of indigenous knowledge, cultures may be lost due to Western innovation and culture.

Hunter (2005) states that indigenous knowledge is collected to revitalize endangered cultures, improve the economic independence and sustainability of indigenous communities and to increase community-based involvement in planning and development. With an increased understanding of the value of indigenous cultural knowledge, many agree that the use of ICTs can be employed to preserve, capture, and disseminate this knowledge so that it can be past down to future generations and shared with the Western world.

This study focuses on the indigenous Chamorro people of Guam, better known as Guahan among the Chamorros. Guam has all the modern technologies found in the U.S. (World Factbook, 2012). Due to hundreds of years of colonization and loss of political control, the Chamorro culture has experienced a significant level of foreign influence, and therefore, most of the ancient Chamorro culture is lost.

The Chamorro culture is currently endangered (Cunningham, 1992), and most Chamorros believe that the culture is at risk of extinction. With the use of grants, funding provided by businesses and government, and donations, informational websites have been created to preserve and disseminate Chamorro cultural knowledge. These endeavors, and others, have been established to preserve the culture such that it can be passed down to future generations.

This paper provides the final results and discussion of this research project. Preliminary findings were presented at a conference in early 2013 (San Nicolas & Parrish, 2013). The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses indigenous and cultural knowledge. Section 3 discusses information and communication technologies, including social media. Section 4 lists the types of Chamorro cultural knowledge. Section 5 presents our methodology. Section 6 presents our results. Section 7 provides a discussion. Section 8 includes our limitations and future research. Finally, Section 9 offers a conclusion.

2. INDIGENOUS AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

2.1. Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge (IK) reflects the dynamic way in which the residents of an area have come to understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and how they organize that folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). According to (Ngulube 2002), indigenous knowledge pertains to experiential, locality-specific knowledge and practices of medicine, as well as healing, hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture, combat, education and environmental conservation developed by indigenous people over the years.

Hunter (2005) adds that indigenous knowledge has many forms. It includes potentially patentable knowledge about traditional medicines, foods, farm practices, architecture and construction, handicrafts, artwork and folk music. It includes knowledge about people, places, plants, animals, and historical events associated with a particular community. It includes cultural heritage in the form of traditional stories, songs, dances and ceremonies that reflect beliefs related spirituality, family, land and social justice.

Most IK is held in the minds and practices of people, and is commonly held by communities rather than individuals (Ngulube, 2002). Some IK, however, is kept a secret and is only shared amongst specific individuals in a community (Toukam & Wamba, 2012). Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations have been defined as those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them (United Nations, 2004; Bin Che Soh and Omar, 2012). IK isn't necessarily old. For example, recently established knowledge

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