

Redefining Identity of People with Disabilities Based on Content Analysis of Instagram Accounts

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Abstract : The proposed paper is focused on forms of identity expression in people with disabilities (PWD) in the social networks like Instagram. Theoretical analysis widely proposes using the new media as an assistive tool for improving wellbeing and labour activities of PWD. This kind of use is definitely important and plays a key role in all social inclusion processes. However, Instagram is not a place where PWD only express their own problems, but in the opposite, allows them to construct a new definition of disability. In the paper, the problem how this different than a classical approach to disability is created by PWD will be discussed. This issue will be scrutinized mainly in two points. Firstly, the question of how disability is changed by other everyday activities, like fashion or sport, will be described. Secondly, and this could be seen as more important, the point how PWD redefining their bodies creating a different form of aesthetic will be presented. The paper is based on content analysis of Instagram accounts. About 20 accounts created by PWD were analyzed for 6 month period, taking into account elements like photos, comments and discussions. All those information were studied in relation to 'everyday life' category and 'aesthetic' category. Works by T. Siebers, L. J. Davis or R. McRuer were used as theoretical background. Conclusions and interpretations presented in the proposed paper show that the Internet can be used by PWD not only as prosthetic and assistive tools. PWD willingly use them as modes of expression their independence, agency and identity. The paper proposes that in further research this way of using the Internet communication by PWD should be taken into account as an important part of the understanding of disability.

Keywords : body, disability, identity, new media

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