

Real vs. Desired: Self-Presentation of the Stigmatized on Social Media

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Abstract

Social media allows its users to craft self-presentations. We identify that there are two competing forces/rationales behind self-presentation on social media: First, social media allows individuals to pick, choose and craft a desirable social media self- presentation, implying that it's not complete or real, may be false and inauthentic to varying extents. Second, social media empowers individuals to present their hidden self-aspect as it provides the required control because of its very nature of being distant (mediated by a screen/computer as opposed to face-to-face communication) and asynchronous.

In this research, our goal is to study how the stigmatized present themselves online. This study is in Indian context and we consider caste as the basis of stigmatization for the purpose of the study. Specifically, we intend to identify how individuals belonging to stigmatized castes in India indulge in self-presentation online. With the help of a survey questionnaire, we also intend to test the moderating role of social distance from the caste identity and user focus on self-presentation on social networking sites by individuals belonging to stigmatized castes.

Keywords: Self presentation, social media, stigmatization, caste, psychological distance.