

NATIONALIST NARRATIVES: GATHERING INSIGHTS FROM CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Nationalist Consumption, Narrative Identity, and Netnography: Gathering Insights from Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis of Social Media Posts

Abstract:

Exploring the contours of nationalism and identity within social media, this paper presents a netnography centering on the comparative analysis of narratives that sculpt nationalist identities in China, Canada and the United States. Our tricultural authored study of these three culture prioritizes the development of netnographic methods through the investigation of deep data cases, engaging multiple cultural frames to unpack cultural narratives.

The netnography begins with a bicultural analysis of recent (post 2020) posts with buy American and buy Canadian themes on Reddit, including an analysis of the r/BuyCanadian sub-reddit. Our immersion-driven interpretations of the data indicate that Canadians are generally bargain hunting and lack a political orientation when identifying as social media posting consumers. Similarly, although Americans acknowledge a nostalgic connection to a past in which American products were noticeably better, numerous posts generally affirm that American products are either overpriced or are not actually fully made in America. An individualistic, skeptical, and pragmatic tone pervades both the American and Canadian discourse—with the exception of some detectable anti-China sentiment in the American data.

Next, we examine Chinese discourse, including those of the 2021 Xinjiang cotton controversy, which also involved celebrities and fans jumping aboard a buy Chinese nationalist bandwagon. Here, a complex interplay of narratives that construct a sense of national outrage and pride among Chinese message posters. From the incendiary comments circulated by official state media to the potent hashtags that mobilized millions, the netnographic method dissects layers of narrative empathy that are largely absent from the American and Canadian discourses. The Chinese case exemplifies "moral consumption exhibitionism"—a phenomenon where national stakeholders assert their moral stance against perceived international stigmatization, leading to both consumer boycotts and buycotts, as represented by the widespread #I support Xinjiang cotton# campaign. This term captures the dual nature of expressing national identity and moral righteousness within a digital ecosystem, emphasizing the role of emotional contagion and collective sentiment in shaping public discourse.

Meanwhile, deep data from Reddit reflects a complex perspective on American and Canadian nationalism and consumer identity. Users express skepticism about the "Made in America" label, questioning whether patriotism is used to justify higher prices for domestic products. Discussions indicate a tension between nationalist sentiment and capitalist motives, where quality and affordability challenge the call for domestic purchasing. The discourse reveals a much more nuanced understanding than the Chinese context, indicating ways in which

American nationalism in consumerism is multifaceted, often intersecting with issues of global labor ethics and environmental concerns.

The study thus contributes to the advance of netnographic methods by highlighting the method's utility in comparatively analyzing culturally laden narratives from three nations, articulated in different languages and idiom, and interpreted by native speakers and culture bearers. The findings underscore the potent interrelation of social media, governance, public opinion, and national identity, leading to a reconfiguration of power relations and civic engagement.

INTERSECTING CONSUMER NATIONALIST NARRATIVES IN NETNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

