Embassy of the State of Palestine

General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific

INTERN POLICY REPORT

How organisations can use social media to increase youth civic engagement in the Australian-Palestinian community

Aleksandar Basoski
May 2018

Executive summary

The General Delegation of Palestine (**GDOP**) has identified the following two key areas that require further in-depth research and examination:

1. the effective use of social media within Australian-Palestinian organisations; and
2. the unwillingness that a large amount of young Australian-Palestinian adults have to engage in civic participation on Palestinian issues.

This policy report will focus on identifying how organisations can effectively use social media to increase youth civic engagement. Information will be gathered from both leaders of organisations and the youth directly to identify key issues and factors surrounding the topic. With this report, the GDOP aims to strengthen and unify youth civic engagement within the Palestinian-Australian community.

This report proposes three recommendations for organisations to implement in their social media strategy.

1. Use social media as an information-engagement platform by allowing Australian-Palestinian youths to engage with the information provided.
2. Allow for multidirectional communication to take place and support ideas proposed by the Australian-Palestinian youth.
3. Ensure that the social media pages are easily accessible and approachable to Australian-Palestinian youths and the wider community.

Acknowledgements

Table of contents

Tables

Abbreviations

APAN   *Australia Palestine Advocacy Network*

CPC   *Canberra Palestinian Community*

GDOP   *General Delegation of Palestine*

PCA Victoria *Palestinian Community Association of Victoria*

SECTION 1: Introduction

Social media technology for organisation-youth interaction has expanded its boundaries in the twenty-first century. Unlike traditional media platforms that focus on providing information on a hierarchical basis, social media allows greater possibilities for organisations to engage with youths on civic duties. This research report seeks to identify how organisations can use social media tools effectively in increasing youth participation in the Australian-Palestinian community.

This report delivers a literature review on how the role of youth civic engagement has transformed with the emergence of social media. It applies Jenkins' concept of a *participatory culture* to outline the key properties an individual requires when engaging in civic duties. It will then delve into O'Reilly's concept of *Web 2.0* which allows organisations to use social media as a tool for interaction between its followers. After establishing an academic basis for the report, the results of this research are presented in three prominent themes – information, communication and identity. These themes will address key barriers and opportunities that were brought up in the interviews. Each organisation was then asked to highlight their biggest achievement in using social media as a tool to increase youth engagement. This report concludes with three recommendations that can guide organisations to use social media effectively. It hopes that the findings of this research will contribute to an increase in Australian-Palestinian youths engaging in Palestinian affairs.

SECTION 2: Methodology

The research conducted consists of a wide range of primary and secondary sources and data. The research topic was formulated after multiple consultations with His Excellency Izzat Abdulhadi. After some consultation, it was identified that the two key areas that required further examination from GDOP were youth civic engagement and effective social media use. This report begins by providing some context on the Australian-Palestinian demographic and a brief description of the organisations interviewed.

A review of existing research will provide a comprehensive academic structure and will frame the results of the research findings. The sources of primary data in this report are twofold:

1) interviews with organisations; and
2) young Australian-Palestinian adults aged 18-29.

These interviews offer a complete insight into the barriers facing the Australian-Palestinian youth and strategies organisations use to overcome these barriers. Below is a complete list of interviews and discussions conducted for this research:

- Personal interview with the GDOP staff #1	16 March 2018
- Personal interview with the GDOP staff #2	23 March 2018
- CPC Easter picnic	24 March 2018
- Personal interview with Khalid Elsafieen of PCA Victoria	14 April 2018
- Phone interview with Sara Sal of APAN	16 May 2018
- Personal interview with an Australian-Palestinian youth	18 May 2018
- CPC Iftar dinner	20 May 2018
- Email interview with Sara Sal of APAN	21 May 2018

While most information was derived from personal and phone interviews, the CPC Easter picnic and Iftar dinner were great opportunities to speak to the community as a whole and experience Palestinian community gatherings first-hand.

SECTION 3: Research context

1.1 Australian-Palestinian demographic

Table 1: Ancestry of the Palestinian population in Australia by birthplace of parents.[1]

State/Territory	Total responses	Both parents born overseas	Father only born overseas	Mother only born overseas	Both parents born in Australia	Birthplace not stated
Australia	13277	10788	1153	449	622	95
NSW	8254	6539	834	304	457	68
VIC	2828	2382	204	106	102	22
WA	977	860	29	24	19	0
QLD	532	434	30	15	23	0
SA	442	380	24	0	10	0
ACT	199	162	29	0	8	5
NT	24	19	3	0	0	0
TAS	21	12	0	0	3	0

The Palestinian population in Australia has increased from 9,107 in 2011 to 13,277 in 2016.[2] Nineteen percent of the population are second generation immigrants which indicates a shift in culture within the Australian-Palestinian community. This report will address this generational shift in-depth in the results of the research.

1.2 Organisations interviewed

APAN

"*APAN is a united national voice advocating for justice and peace for Palestinians. We support grassroots advocacy, are active politically and in the media.*"[3]

APAN was formed in May 2011 to connect Australians interested in advocating for the basic human rights of Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. The organisation is led by an alliance of both Jewish and Palestinian groups and seeks to influence

---

[1] "B08 ancestry by birthplace of parents," Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed 4 May 2018, http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ABS_CENSUS2011_B08_LGA#.

[2] "The people of Australia: statistics from the 2011 Census," Department of Immigration and Border Protection, accessed 4 May 2018, https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/people-australia-2013-statistics.pdf.

[3] "Home page," Australia Palestine Advocacy Network – APAN, accessed 13 April 2018, https://apan.org.au/.

Australia's public policy on Israel-Palestine related issues. APAN strives on collaboration with young members by encouraging them to create and share their own content on social media.[4]

CPC

"*Connecting the Canberra Palestinian Arab community together. Helping new people settle into Canberra and welcoming them into the community.*"[5]

The CPC is a community-based organisation committed to organising social events sharing and promoting Palestinian history and culture. The organisation is a gathering of Palestinians from all backgrounds and seeks to remove political and ideological barriers between its members. The CPC is devoted to engaging with the youth and encourage more young people to become involved in the committee board.[6]

PCA Victoria

"*Engage the Palestinian community with the wider Australian society while maintaining and promoting our Palestinian identity.*"[7]

PCA Victoria was initially formed in the 1980s to unite the Palestinian community in Victoria. The community consists of Palestinians from various backgrounds, religions and ideologies. In recent years, PCA Victoria has sought to increase youth engagement in the community by organising social events and rallies. The committee is eager to transform their social media pages into a more open and inclusive space where information is easily accessible to the Australian-Palestinian youth.[8]

---

[4] Phone interview with Sara Sal of APAN: 16 May 2018.
[5] "Canberra Palestinian Community C.P.C," Facebook, accessed 23 March 2018, https://www.facebook.com/groups/1871464376410504/.
[6] Personal interview with an Australian-Palestinian youth: 18 May 2018.
[7] "About," Palestinian Community Association of Victoria, accessed 13 April 2018, http://www.palestine-victoria.org.au/pca/about.html.
[8] Personal interview with Khalid Elsafieen of PCA Victoria: 14 April 2018.

SECTION 4: Literature review

4.1 Social media and the youth

The recent growth of social networking technologies represents new frontiers for the study of youth engagement. Unlike traditional media sources such as print and television, the internet has become an integral aspect of a young person's daily routine. A 2017 report held by Sensis stated that 84 percent of Australians access the internet on a daily basis. Young adults constitute the highest internet usage with 94 percent of the Australian population.[9] Smartphones have grown substantially as the most preferred device for social networking over the past few years, while traditional devices such as desktop computers and laptops are on the decline. [10]

Another interesting trend is that social networking media is more trusted as a news source for young people. While the majority of the Australian population still rely on traditional news sources at 83 percent, the statistics drop to 63 percent when focusing on youths.[11]

These statistics show that social networking sites have become an important facet of shaping the lives of the youth. It has also become an important context for youth civic engagement.[12] The largest challenge arising from this grand media shift is how organisations should adapt to the ever-changing nature of social networking. This stems from a misunderstanding of what youth civic engagement means within the social media context. Unlike traditional media where the management of information is controlled by the elites in a top-down fashion, social media allows a multidirectional approach which allows for user-driven production.[13]

---

[9] "Chapter 1 – Australians and social media," Sensis Social Media Report 2017, accessed 4 May 2018, https://www.sensis.com.au/asset/PDFdirectory/Sensis-Social-Media-Report-2017.pdf, 10.

[10] Ibid., 26. Smartphone usage has increased from 34 percent in 2011 to 81 percent in 2017. Meanwhile, laptops and desktops have decreased from 50 and 60 percent in 2011 to 39 and 30 percent in 2017 respectively.

[11] Ibid., 53.

[12] Petter Brandtzaeg et al., "How should organisations adapt to youth civic engagement in social media? A lead user approach," *Interacting with* Computers 28, no. 5 (2016): 665.

[13] Lance Bennett, Deen Freelon, and Chris Wells, "Changing citizen identity and the rise of a participatory media culture," in *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*, ed. Lonnie Sherrod, Judith Torney-Purta, and Constance Flanagan (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010), 124.

The role of the citizen in civic engagement has transformed over the past few decades. Traditionally, older generations feel as they have a duty to participate in formal organisational structures. Official membership was often regarded as a useful measurement for community involvement.[14] Young citizens of the twenty-first century have since experienced a fundamental shift in identity formation. Social networking has allowed for greater self-expression and self-oriented content production of the individual. Youths are more comfortable relying on crowd-sourced information flows and see traditional organisational officials as hierarchical and artificial.[15] The Australian Parliament has identified that youths see traditional forms of civic engagement unappealing, irrelevant and exclusionary to its members.[16]

With social media, young people are less dependent on the formal infrastructure of an established organisation. Rather, they are more inclined to engage in more project-oriented initiatives where a peer-to-peer networking environment is encouraged. This makes civic engagement on social networking platforms more informal where young individuals can easily interact with the organisation.[17]

Participatory culture

Due to the rise of social media, civic engagement has become entrenched in a "participatory culture". According to Jenkens, individuals in a participatory culture act as contributors to the organisation instead of just consumers. Jenkins defines participatory culture as individuals having the ability to:

- self-express their ideas;
- create and share their ideas with others;
- learn from the experienced;
- feel that their contributions matter; and
- have a social connection with one another[18]

---

[14] Robert Putnam, *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 49.

[15] Bennett et al., "Changing citizen identity," 127.

[16] "Chapter 2 young people's civic engagement," Parliament of Australia, accessed 4 May 2018, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed_Inquiries/em/education/report/chapter2.

[17] Brandtzaeg et al., "How should organisations adapt," 665.

[18] Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 5-6.

These properties of participatory culture coalesce around social media platforms which are designed to empower motivated individuals to engage with each other in current affairs.

Although participatory culture allows individuals to collectively express their thoughts and ideas through social media, two key limiting factors are preventing youths to further engage in public affairs. Firstly, many youths lack the skills necessary to utilise the digital tools available to them. Although social media is an effective tool for sharing information, converting such information into engagement is a challenging task. This leads to the second issue in which participatory skills are often exclusive to a minority of members who are most committed to the cause. Contributions from the minority are often neglected and thus do not get the credit they deserve.[19] It is therefore important for organisations to understand the benefits of treating social media as an effective tool for promoting participatory culture.

4.2   Social media and organisations

It is important for organisations to understand what social media offers and use the platform its best abilities. Social media platforms operate under Web 2.0 technology. While Web 1.0 focused on a strict producer-to-consumer approach to deliver web content, Web 2.0 allows for consumer interaction. Developed by O'Reilly, the idea of Web 2.0 was to encourage individuals to create user-generated content. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allow organisations to collaborate with its members and contributors. Web 2.0 allows organisations to:

- freely arrange information;
- enrich user experience with dynamic content; and
- increase user participation and collaboration.

The mutual exchange of ideas offered by Web 2.0 has enhanced the possibilities for organisations to interact with individuals. However, it does not necessarily lead to civic engagement.[20] Organisations must identify key barriers and limitations which prevent youths from properly engaging in civic affairs.

---

[19] Bennett et al., "Changing citizen identity," 137.
[20] "How young people participate in civic activities using internet and mobile technologies," National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (2010), accessed 4 May 2018,

SECTION 5: Results

5.1 Barriers and opportunities

This report will highlight three key themes surrounding effective social media use for youth civic engagement. It will outline barriers that were identified in the interviews followed by opportunities raised by the organisations to overcome these limitations.

5.1.1 Information

Information may be delivered through several mediums. Traditional authoritative channels such as teachers or news reports deliver information through an external hierarchical relationship. On the contrary, social media allows information to be derived from original experiences and shared peer accounts. Youths who have grown up in a participatory culture prefer to gain knowledge through personal expressions and socially networked groups. Young people more often find their learning enhanced when they are given the opportunity to become involved in how information is presented.[21]

Barriers

This research report identified three key limitations which prevent organisations from providing information in the most effective and efficient manner. The first limitation identified throughout the interviews was that many of the executive members of some Australian-Palestinian communities lacked the proper tools needed to run social networking pages. The content of information is often presented in a formal article style format with difficult-to-understand language. Facebook posts, for example, would link to long and dry articles with no visual substance. This formal and authoritative-type structure of providing information reduces youth interest in learning about Palestinian-related civic affairs. [22]

Furthermore, information about events and social gatherings are often disorganised and ineffective. The main reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, some organisations find it

---

https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/how_young_people_participate_in_civic_activities_using_internet_and_mobile_technologies.pdf, 13.

[21] David Campbell, "Voice in the classroom: how an open classroom environment facilitates adolescents' civic development," Centre for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (2005), accessed 4 May 2005, https://civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP28campbell.pdf, 15.

[22] Bennett et al., "Changing citizen identity," 139.

difficult to maintain a strict schedule for organising events. These events are often advertised informally without much prior notice. The second reason is that young people have little to no interest in attending social activities. For example, one youth at a social gathering answered that they were only interested in the food.

The third limitation is that many organisations have yet to acknowledge the shift toward visual and mobile social media. As identified earlier, 81 percent of Australians now use smartphones as their most preferred device for online networking.[23] The youths interviewed for this report mentioned that they often check their social media on smartphone devices during their free time. Some youths said they were too busy with work and university to spend too much time reading a wall of text. These answers have been supported by a similar study in which youths were uninterested in learning through traditional communication methods.[24]

Opportunities

The organisations interviewed highlighted several methods they have identified as increasing the effectiveness of providing information to youths. In regards to the first limitation, APAN has identified the benefits of each major social networking platform. While Facebook acts as an effective platform for providing relevant and timely information, Twitter is also useful for engaging with the youths.[25] The 280 character limit allows for quick conversations and promotes a networking environment based on peer-to-peer information sharing.

To overcome the second limitation, it is important to identify which events will be attractive to the youth. PCA Victoria, for example, has identified that sports, bus trips and parties attract the most youths. [26] More importantly, they have organised events which link social activities with cultural and historical teachings. One example of this is a public event called the Palestinian National Day Celebration held every November. This event includes cultural stalls and live music which celebrate Palestinian culture and heritage.[27]

---

[23] Sensis, "Australians and social media," 26.

[24] Simon Hosio et al., "From school food to skate parks in a few clicks: using public displays to bootstrap civic engagement of the young," in *Pervasive computing*, ed. Judy Kay et al. (Newcastle: Springer, 2012), 430.

[25] Phone interview with Sara Sal of APAN: 16 May 2018.

[26] Personal interview with Khalid Elsafieen of PCA Victoria: 14 April 2018.

[27] "Palestinian national day celebration," Facebook, accessed 20 April 2018, https://www.facebook.com/events/1708193569199552/.

The evening is concluded with four hours of nightclub music which has proven to interest many youths.[28]

In recent years, several Australian-Palestinian organisations have identified the importance of creating a visual representation of their community. One youth member mentioned that the CPC was committed to improving the overall graphic design on their social media networks. An official logo, for instance, was designed to help give the CPC a uniform identity.[29]

5.1.2 Communication

While engagement in civic duties has traditionally been associated with rallies and donations to formal organisations, social media has transformed civic engagement into supporting grassroots initiatives and online activist activity. Youth are less dependent on formal structures and rely on themselves and their peers for civic engagement.[30] However, one major issue has emerged from this shift in communication pattern. While social media does enable youths to be better informed about civic issues, the majority of young people do not translate their online support into an active role in real life.[31] An important implication is that the youth need opportunities to experiment online civic participation.[32]

Barriers

The first limitation is the clash of interests between the older generation and the younger generation. Traditional organisations operate under an authoritative and hierarchical structure where the executive members are the sole providers of information. This inhibits young people from engaging with topics of civic importance. The GDOP identified this issue as a recurring theme for many regional Australian-Palestinian organisations.[33] Australian-Palestinian youths are interested in becoming more involved in building the

---

[28] Personal interview with Khalid Elsafieen of PCA Victoria: 14 April 2018.
[29] Personal interview with an Australian-Palestinian youth: 18 May 2018.
[30] Brandtzaeg et al., "How should organisations adapt," 665.
[31] Dana Nicolae, "Social media and social change: the 2011 campaign for stopping the massacre of the Danube Delta wild horses," in *Social media and social movements: the transformation of communication patterns*, ed. Barış Çoban (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), 97.
[32] Bennett et al., "Changing citizen identity," 137.
[33] Personal interview with the GDOP staff #1: 16 March 2018.

community. However, a division of interests develops between the two generations which prevents organisations from opening up more to their younger members.

Moreover, efforts of the youth often go unrecognised. Many young people feel that their contributions do not mean much. In association with the previous limitation, the GDOP believes decision-making and power should take a multidirectional approach.[34] The youths should feel that they are more than just a member of an organisation. Any contribution towards civic affairs should be recognised.

The final limitation refers to the disregard of connecting with external communities and organisations. Some members of their Australian-Palestinian community believe that there is a lack of openness and transparency of the group. Some organisations are closed off to their members only and do not circulate information outside of their group. Building genuine relations with the Australian-Palestinian community and other communities encourages information exchange and a greater appeal for civic engagement. When communities are isolated from other groups, the potential for spreading information and increasing engagement is hindered.

Opportunities

The primary goal for all organisations interviewed was increasing cooperation with the youths. The CPC particularly have been calling for more youths to be involved in organising social events and activities.[35] Furthermore, APAN has adopted a grassroots teaching initiative in which members personally teach the youths to "think global and act locally."[36] APAN has teamed up with universities to upscale engagement among the Australian-Palestinian youths and their friends.

By offering feedback, youths become the focus of attention and are ensured that their contributions matter to the organisation and the wider cause.[37] PCA Victoria has acknowledged the importance of recognising the works of Australian-Palestinian youths. For instance, PCA Victoria ran a program called Discover Palestine in which young members of the community would present a display of Palestinian culture and tradition.

---

[34] Ibid.

[35] Personal interview with an Australian-Palestinian youth: 18 May 2018.

[36] Phone interview with Sara Sal of APAN: 16 May 2018.

[37] Peter Levine, "A public voice for youth: the audience problem in digital media and civic education," in *Civic life online: learning how digital media can engage youth*, ed. Lance Bennett (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 120.

Participants were awarded medals and many other youths were interested to learn about Palestine.[38]

The CPC has encouraged outsiders to attend events and social gatherings. Events such as the Easter picnic and the Iftar dinner evening were open invitations and saw many people from outside of the community attend. This was a perfect opportunity for young people to invite their friends and normalise the Palestinian topic.

5.1.3 Identity

Identity plays a major role in boosting youth civic engagement. There are two different types of identity which must be considered when conducting civic affairs. The first type is a youth's individual identity. Young people are very conscious in how they shape their online appearance on social media. Many youths do not engage in civic affairs online and accordingly would not engage offline.[39] The second type is recognising a set identity for the organisation. Outlining a set of goals and ambitions allows youths to identify what the organisation seeks to achieve and whether joining the group would benefit them.

Barriers

In regards to individual identity, some Australian-Palestinian youths have often been conflicted between identifying themselves as either Australian or Palestinian. Many of them were born and raised in a traditional Palestinian family while attending school with other Australians. One youth mentioned that he would avoid telling people about his Palestinian heritage due to the sensitivity of the topic. Overall, most youths said they would avoid sharing Palestinian content on social media. This is in line with a previous study which identified organisational association as a private matter and should not be shown to the public sphere.[40]

Correspondingly, some organisations do not have a clear collective identity. There are several Palestinian-related organisations in Australia each with different goals. While some groups focus on community development, others cater towards advocacy and lobbying. In some instances, young members often find themselves confused as to what

---

[38] Personal interview with Khalid Elsafieen of PCA Victoria: 14 April 2018.
[39] Brandtzaeg et al., "How should organisations adapt," 672.
[40] Katie Davis, "Tensions of identity in a networked era: young people's perspectives on the risks and rewards of online self-expression," *New media & society* 14, no.4 (2011) 637.

an organisation is trying to achieve. In some cases, members would often bring in political issues to organisations that purely focus on promoting Palestinian culture.

Opportunities

A strategy to reduce the stigma around Palestine is to normalise Palestinian culture. APAN, in particular, have recently been interested in encouraging young Australian advocates from all backgrounds to acquire knowledge of Palestinian culture and arts. Their aim is to reinforce Palestine in reality and normalise Palestinian topics. The works of youths in APAN involve spreading Palestinian culture alongside their work on advocacy.[41]

The GDOP made an interesting point that organisations should respect their core values but cooperate with other groups. For example, youths of community-based organisations might want to experience some advocacy activities. In this instance, different organisations should collaborate with each other by offering young people the chance to engage various activities and events. The Palestinian National Day Celebration in Melbourne was supported by both APAN and PCA Victoria and also featured the Ambassador giving a speech commemorating the special day.[42] Events like this exemplified the importance of solidarity between the organisations and the people of Australia.

5.2   Strategies and achievements

The next section highlights the major achievements of each organisation. The following three case studies display potential strategies to circumvent the aforementioned barriers.

Social events to gain youth involvement: PCA Futsal League

The biggest achievement outlined by PCA Victoria was their futsal league held annually.[43] The idea of the League was to reintroduce young Australian-Palestinians to their culture. The PCA Futsal League is well organised with weekly articles and highlights of the games.[44] Seven teams are currently involved in the tournament with the names of each

---

[41] Phone interview with Sara Sal of APAN: 16 May 2018.
[42] Personal interview with Khalid Elsafieen of PCA Victoria: 14 April 2018.
[43] Ibid.
[44] "PCA Futsal League," Facebook, accessed 20 April 2018, https://www.facebook.com/PCAFutsalLeague/.

team referencing Palestinian towns and villages.[45] The PCA Futsal League is also committed to collaborating with partnered organisations to support Palestinian causes. For instance, the League raised $10,000 in 2016 to support Palestinian children at the Aida and Al-Awda refugee camps in Palestine.[46]

The PCA Futsal League is organised within a participatory structure. It strengthens social connections with fellow Australian-Palestinian youths and rewards players for their contribution to raising funds for Palestinian causes. Furthermore, the League has used social media effectively by enriching youths' experiences with well-produced photo and video content. Overall, the PCA Futsal League is a great example of community-building where youths participate and engage in events promoting and supporting Palestine.

Implementing a grassroots approach to civic engagement: APAN's election strategy

APAN's commitment to a multidirectional approach has allowed youths to become the centre of activism. APAN has encouraged youths to produce their own content, such as 30-second videos and creative short and informative articles. This allows young people to engage in the political process speaking out about a cause they are passionate about. The production of creative content allows young individuals to address a message in a way that would attract other young like-minded people.[47] APAN's efforts to get young people involved fits well within the participatory cultural framework. Youths are able to express their concerns while gaining valuable skills from their experience. The emphasis on self-creating content allows youths to exchange ideas and encourage other youths to take action. As a result, social media acts as the primary platform for exchanging information and reaching out to other enthusiasts.

---

[45] "Uniting the Palestinian community through futsal," SBS – The World Game, accessed 20 April 2018, https://theworldgame.sbs.com.au/uniting-the-palestinian-community-through-futsal.
[46] "PCA futsal tournament raises $10,000 for Aida camp," Palestine News Network, accessed 20 April 2018, http://english.pnn.ps/2016/11/29/pca-futsal-tournament-raises-10000-for-aida-camp/.
[47] Phone interview with Sara Sal of APAN: 21 May 2018.

Networking with the wider audience: CPC at the Multicultural Festival

The National Multicultural Festival in Canberra is held annually and is considered one of the most important cultural events, attracting over 300,000 visitors across Australia.[48] According to a Canberra youth, one of the biggest achievements of the CPC is their showcasing of Palestinian history and culture in the multicultural festival. Australians were given the opportunity to learn more about Palestine and the heritage of Jerusalem with the "I am Jerusalem" stall. Furthermore, young Australian-Palestinians performed the dabke, a Palestinian national dance, which enabled them to tell the history of Palestine through dance. The CPC's involvement in the multicultural festival allowed Australian-Palestinian youths to express themselves and share their culture with the wider audience. Preparation for these types of social events is often organised on the CPC WhatsApp group which allows all members to exchange ideas.

In general, the multicultural festival is a great platform for expressing and sharing one's culture. The festival provides the youth with a pleasant environment to share their Palestinian heritage with friends and family.

---

[48] "Jerusalem and Palestine celebrated at Canberra multicultural festival 2018," General Delegation of Palestine, accessed 18 May 2018, http://www.palestine-australia.com/highlights/embassy-activities/2018-2/jerusalem-and-palestine-celebrated-at-canberra-multicultural-festival-2018/.

SECTION 6: Recommendations and conclusion

Taking into account the opportunities and strategies outlined by each organisation, this report has identified three recommendations which would assist organisations in increasing youth civic engagement through social media.

Use social media as an *information-engagement* platform

Social media has reaped the benefits of Web 2.0 innovation by expanding on the traditional producer-to-consumer method of delivering information to allow creativity and interactivity. Young people expect content to be well-organised and reliable. In an age where real-time information is constantly provided, organisations must ensure the youth are kept up to date on important matters. Organisations must provide information that is shareable and appealing to the passive observer. Closed Facebook groups, for instance, prevent organisations from sharing information and expanding the community. Posts relating to events and activities must be consistently well-organised. By establishing a proper schedule and providing updates on social media, youths will be more inclined to put effort into an event they know will be properly organised. The PCA Futsal League is a great example of using social media as an information-engagement platform.

Allow for *multidirectional communication* to take place

For online networking to be successful, organisations must implement social media as the overall strategy to collaborate with the youth and put their ideas in the centre. Traditional authoritative and hierarchical organisations limit the amount of self-expression and self-content production an individual can create. In a participatory culture, youths value peer-to-peer engagement and are eager to contribute to the cause. Organisations must realise the full potential of social media by communicating with young people and providing feedback to their contributions. Multidirectional communication is particularly important in the Australian-Palestinian context where a cultural divide is evident between the two generations. The older generation has the responsibility to teach the youth about Palestinian history and culture, but they must also listen to what the youth have to say. A multidirectional approach to communication is vital to ensure youth interest is maintained. APAN's grassroots approach to promoting

the Palestinian cause illustrates the benefits of multidirectional communication in increasing youth civic awareness and participation.

Ensure that the social media pages are easily *accessible and approachable*

The final recommendation is using social media to present the organisation in an accessible and approachable manner to both youths and the wider audience. Smartphones have become the dominant device among youths for accessing social media. Organisations must captivate the audience with useful and relevant information that is visually pleasing. Reading a long wall of text on a smartphone is impractical. Youths gather their content from photos, videos and even comments from their peers. A visual experience could be supported by allowing youths to submit and share their own media content. The smartphone has significant implications for how to engage the youth. Social events and campaigns require content to be displayed in a micro context. Sharing and promoting content is also imperative to increasing youth participation. By opening up to the wider community, Australian-Palestinian youths can engage their friends on Palestinian topics which would help normalise discussions about Palestine. The CPC values openness towards outsiders who are eager to learn about Palestinian history and culture. Their social events such as the Easter picnic and Iftar dinner are both informative and open to the public.

Conclusion

This research report has sought to identify key barriers and provide recommendations to improve youth civic engagement in the Australian-Palestinian community. It is evident based on this research that both youths and committee members of the organisations share a mutual interest in improving youth engagement. A larger sample size of youths and organisations would offer further integrity to the results. This research would have particularly benefitted greatly with research on the Sydney Palestinian community which has the largest Palestinian population compared to other cities in Australia (see Table 1). Nonetheless, the three recommendations given in this report provide organisations with a general context on how social media can be used effectively.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics. "B08 Ancestry by Birthplace of Parents." Accessed 4 May 2018. http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ABS_CENSUS2011_B08_LGA#.

Australia Palestine Advocacy Network – APAN. "Home page." Accessed 13 April 2018. https://apan.org.au/.

Bennett, Lance, Deen Freelon, and Chris Wells. "Changing citizen identity and the rise of a participatory media culture." In *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*, edited by Lonnie Sherrod, Judith Torney-Purta, and Constance Flanagan, 123-152. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010.

Brandtzaeg, Peter et al. "How should organisations adapt to youth civic engagement in social media? A lead user approach." *Interacting with Computers* 28, no.5 (2016): 664-679.

Campbell, David. "Voice in the classroom: how an open classroom environment facilities adolescents' civic development." Centre or Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. 2005. Accessed 4 May 2018. https://civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP28campbell.pdf.

Davis, Katie. "Tensions of identity in a networked era: young people's perspectives on the risks and rewards of online self-expression." *New media & society* 14, no.4 (2011): 634-651.

Department of Immigration and Border Protection. "The people of Australia: statistics from the 2011 Census." Accessed 4 May 2018. https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/people-australia-2013-statistics.pdf.

Facebook. "Canberra Palestinian Community C.P.C." Accessed 23 March 2018. https://www.facebook.com/groups/1871464376410504/.

Facebook. "Palestinian national day celebration." Accessed 20 April 2018. https://www.facebook.com/events/1708193569199552/.

Facebook. "PCA Futsal League." Accessed 20 April 20017. https://www.facebook.com/PCAFutsalLeague/.

General Delegation of Palestine. "Jerusalem and Palestine celebrated at Canberra multicultural festival 2018." Accessed 18 May 2018. http://www.palestine-australia.com/highlights/embassy-activities/2018-2/jerusalem-and-palestine-celebrated-at-canberra-multicultural-festival-2018/.

Hosio, Simon et al. "From school food to skate parks in a few clicks: using public displays to bootstrap civic engagement of the young." In *Pervasive computing*, edited by Judy Kay et al., 425-442. Newcastle: Springer, 2012.

Jenkins, Henry. *Confronting the challenges of a participatory culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Levine, Peter. "A public voice for youth: the audience problem in digital media and civic education." In *Civic life online: learning how digital media can engage youth*, edited by Lance Bennett, 119-138. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

National Youth Affairs Research Scheme. "How young people participate in civic activities using internet and mobile technologies." 2010. Accessed 4 May 2018. https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/how_young_people_participate_in_civic_activities_using_internet_and_mobile_technologies.pdf.

Nicolae, Dana. "Social media and social change: the 2011 campaign for stopping the massacre of the Danube Delta wild horses." In *Social media and social movements: the transformation of communication patterns*, edited by Barış Çoban, 97-107.Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016.

Palestine News Network. "PCA futsal tournament raises $10,000 for Aida camp." Accessed 20 April 2018. http://english.pnn.ps/2016/11/29/pca-futsal-tournament-raises-10000-for-aida-camp/.

Palestinian Community Association of Victoria. "About." Accessed 13 April 2018. http://www.palestine-victoria.org.au/pca/about.html.

Parliament of Australia. "Chapter 2 young people's civic engagement." Accessed 4 May 2018. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed_Inquiries/em/education/report/chapter2.

Putnam, Robert. *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

SBS – The World Game. "Uniting the Palestinian community through futsal." Accessed 20 April 2018. https://theworldgame.sbs.com.au/uniting-the-palestinian-community-through-futsal.

Sensis Social Media Report 2017. "Chapter 1 – Australians and social media." Accessed 4 May 2018. https://www.sensis.com.au/asset/PDFdirectory/Sensis-Social-Media-Report-2017.pdf.