



Review Article

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Digital Communication and Indigenous Cultural Identity: Emerging Trends, Challenges, and Future Directions

Sonali Subba

Amity University, Madhya Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The digital sphere has emerged as an increasingly important space in which Indigenous peoples are negotiating their cultural identity, sharing their cultural knowledge, deepening social bonds and opportunities for self-representation. This narrative review critically explores existing research on the intersections of digital communication and Indigenous cultural identity, namely, self-representation, cultural and linguistic preservation, social media engagement, digital knowledge practices, platform power, and new issues in data and digital governance. Reviewed literature highlights opportunities for digital technologies to allow Indigenous communities to develop and share their own stories, to communicate culturally, and to help language and cultural revitalisation, even in spread out geographical locations but the reviews also says that digital participation does not equal communicative power, cultural control or meaningful sovereignty. Platform structures, unequal access, algorithmic systems, commercial interests and broader issues of whose knowledge, who controls knowledge, who circulates knowledge and who governs knowledge all continue to shape indigenous visibility in digital environments. The review thus focuses less on the technologically optimistic readings of digital communication and more on its enabling features as well as its structural tensions and paradoxes - such as the commodification of culture, platform dependency, unequal visibility, and contestations to Indigenous authority over cultural knowledge and digital materials. Informed by research from a range of indigenous and cultural backgrounds, the study posits that the contemporary interplay between digital communication and cultural identity is contested and negotiating representations, participation, visibility and control in a continuous process. The article addresses a central issue within communication scholarship: the difference between digital participation and digital power, and the need for community-driven, culturally enabled and ethically concerned communication strategies to Indigenous digital communication.

INTRODUCTION

The use of digital communication has become an ever growing space where cultural identity is expressed, negotiated, represented and circulated. The advent of social media, mobile communication, digital archives and online communities has opened up new possibilities for individuals and communities to share cultural stories beyond geographical barriers. Over the past few years, research on digital media and cultural identity has gained momentum, focusing on the relationship between digital media and the construction of cultural identity,

how digital communication constructs cultural identity, and the cultural identity of digital communication. In recent years, scholars have increasingly studied the relationship between digital media and cultural identity, including the relationship between cultural identity and digital communication, the relationship between digital communication and cultural identity, and the cultural identity of digital communication. (Yao, 2025; Rawat et al., 2025) These changes are especially important to the Indigenous communities since cultural identity is deeply linked to language, oral history, collective memory,

*Corresponding Author: Sonali Subba

Address: Amity University, Madhya Pradesh

Email ✉: sonalisubba13@gmail.com

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storytelling, ritual and knowledge systems that are passed down through generations. Evidence from various Indigenous contexts indicates that digital environments can facilitate cultural and social engagement and afford increased space for community to engage in the representation of their experiences and identities (Rice et al., 2016; Titifanue et al., 2018; Nault, 2025).

Self-representation and representation are then key concepts in thinking about the communication of Indigenous people in the digital world. Since Hall's (1997) theory of representation offers an important foundation for the consideration of cultural meaning production and circulation, this theory will be examined here. Digital technologies have given individuals and communities greater power to produce and distribute their own content, making it more challenging to make traditional notions of producers and audiences more precise. Digital technologies have created new opportunities for people and communities to produce and share their own content, making traditional notions of producers and audiences less clear. More recent debates around digital content production also emphasize the connection between self-representation and broader processes that involve the representation and interpretation of identity (Sadoun, 2026). Digital communication has also opened up significant opportunities for the preservation of culture and language. Digital platforms can be used to facilitate the transmission of Indigenous languages, stories and knowledge beyond the boundaries of place. Digital technologies have been found to play a role in Indigenous language revitalisation and Indigenous knowledge systems (Rice et al., 2016; Meighan, 2021; Ajani et al., 2024). Technology access does not, however, equal cultural continuity and community control. The digitisation of cultural materials can also raise new issues about who owns what, access, reproduction and the dissemination of knowledge outside of community control.

This is especially critical in modern platform contexts. Digital participation happens in algorithmic, commercial, platform-governed and unequal technological systems. As in algorithmic and platformised communication, visibility and circulation of information is now shaped by structures that do not necessarily belong to the user (Filk, 2025; Hastuti et al., 2025; Suherman, 2025). Such work is not always Indigenous-specific, but it can give a good context of the broader frameworks in which Indigenous digital communication exists. Previous scholarship has explored the many aspects of Indigenous digital communication, such as cultural preservation, language revitalisation, engaging in social media, expressing identity online, and forming community online. Often these themes are studied in isolation, however. They need to be brought together in a more comprehensive communication framework that

not only considers the possibilities afforded by digital technologies, but also the power relations that shape digital participation. In this narrative review, I seek to fill that deficit by critically engaging with the scholarship on digital communication and Indigenous cultural identity on the interrelated legacies of representation, participation, cultural preservation, platform power, and digital sovereignty. Digital technology is not automatically empowering, but rather the review looks at the tensions between participation and the ongoing constraints on visibility, ownership and control.

The main notion of this article is that the participation in the digital world does not necessarily mean digital power. Indigenous people might be more engaged in the production and dissemination of cultural communication but still reliant on external platform, algorithm, and technological infrastructures and governance. Digital communication and Indigenous cultural identity need to be viewed not just from the perspective of technology access, but also in relation to questions of representation, participation, visibility and control. The article represents a contribution to the study of communication scholarship, bringing together these interwoven debates and accentuating the difference between participation and dynamic digital power. It calls for more focus on community authority, cultural knowledge governance, and culturally responsive to Indigenous digital communication.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The framework for this review is an integrated concept of representation, participative culture, and Indigenous data and digital sovereignty. These are not presented as distinct theoretical traditions but rather as a central theme to be explored: How does Indigenous community engagement through digital communication lead to 'real' control over representation, culture and digital space?

Language and Discourse

The first dimension is based on Hall's (1997) theory of representation which conceptualized representation as a process of generating and transmitting cultural meanings. This view is crucial for Indigenous communication, as the representation of cultural identities has always occurred through institutional and media frameworks that are not completely Indigenous. However, the opportunities for communities and individuals to produce and share their own cultural narratives have been increased through the use of digital communication. The connections between digital communication, cultural identity and self-representation have also been recently emphasized (Sadoun, 2026; Yao, 2025). But not everything that is created takes inequalities in representation out of the equation. Digital platform continues to impact on Communication visibility, circulation, interpretation, and

amplification. Representation is therefore explored here not just as the visibility on the web, but as the production of cultural narratives and the conditions of their rise to visibility.

Participation and Its Structural Limits

The second dimension is based upon Jenkins' (2006) idea of participatory culture, which emphasizes the growing influence of users in the production and dissemination of media content. Digital technologies have been shown to be effective at supporting Indigenous expression of identity, connection to others, and participation in culture and communication across distance (Rice et al., 2016; Titifanue et al., 2018; Nault, 2025). But, participation does not necessarily mean power. Digital communication happens within algorithmic, commercial and technocratic platformic environments. The scholarship on platformisation and algorithmic communication shows that these systems shape visibility and the context in which communication circulates in general (Filk, 2025; Hastuti et al., 2025; Suherman, 2025). This view then recognizes the difference between participation and influencing conditions of participation.

In this chapter, we examine the cultural aspects of the digital world and the concept of digital sovereignty.

Digital technologies have the potential to be used to document, circulate and revitalise Indigenous language and cultural knowledge (Meighan, 2021; Ajani et al., 2024). However, questions of authority, ownership, access, reproduction and distribution of cultural knowledge outside of community control are also raised by digitisation. Preservation of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions are also linked to issues of protection and commercialisation of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as questions of authority (Ramesh, 2026; Acharya, 2026). These concerns are directly related to Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Walter et al. (2021) highlight Indigenous authority and interests when it comes to data about Indigenous people. These debates have been extended by emerging scholarship towards questions of technological governance and concepts of digital sovereignty more broadly (Hurst et al., 2026; Morris, 2026). This dimension thus questions how Indigenous people still have meaningful authority over the content of their work, as well as the data, knowledge, and technology through which it flows.

Integrated Analytical Framework

These views are used to give an analytical framework for this review

Representation → Participation → Control

Representation involves who makes and creates cultural narratives. Participation is about being active in the

creation and circulation of communication. There is a problem of control over cultural knowledge and information, platforms, and digital systems in general.

These dimensions are related but should not all be considered as identical. Digital communication can increase representation and participation, but not necessarily meaningful control over communications technology environments in which they occur. In this sense, this review is framed in the context of Indigenous digital communication, as a space of negotiation regarding representation, participation, cultural knowledge, visibility and control. This structure helps to organize the analysis as the article unfolds and underpins the main thesis that digital participation does not necessarily lead to digital power or to meaningful sovereignty.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of digital communication on the connection to Indigenous cultural identity through a qualitative narrative review. The review is not conducted in order to gather empirical data, but rather to summatively bring together existing scholarship, to highlight key themes, theoretical approaches, issues of concern, and gaps in research for the field of Indigenous communication and media studies. The literature used was identified by conducting a search on academic databases and scholarly platforms such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis Online, SpringerLink, Sage Journals, and Routledge. Scholarly books, edited volumes, conference proceedings and other credible academic sources were also included if they made relevant theoretical or contextual contributions. The search included various combinations of the following terms: digital communication, Indigenous communication, Indigenous cultural identity, social media, cultural preservation, language revitalisation, digital storytelling, Indigenous media, digital archives, and community participation. Studies were considered relevant and included if they had a focus on Indigenous communities and digital communication, and offered relevant information about cultural identity, preservation, language revitalisation, media representation, or community participation. Records and non-scholarly materials of solely technological development without communication or issues of Indigenous cultural issues were not included.

Thematic synthesis was used to analyse the selected literature, which includes comparing common ideas, themes and variations within the examined scholarship. The analysis was structured on the interweaving themes of cultural representation and participation, digital preservation and language revitalisation and platforms and structural issues in cultural knowledge and digital governance. The review pieces a together a scholarship

from a variety of Indigenous contexts. The study draws on some literature from the Eastern Himalayan area, but does not restrict itself to any particular Indigenous community. This wider perspective allows for a study of Indigenous digital communication to be connected to broader discussions on cultural identity and representation, participation, platform power, and digital sovereignty.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION, REPRESENTATION AND INDIGENOUS CULTURAL IDENTITY

Digital communications have increased opportunities for Indigenous communities to share their cultural identities and tell their stories. People and communities can be more directly involved, not just through traditional media, but through social media and other online communities, in cultural communication. A range of studies in various Indigenous communities indicate that digital technologies can help with cultural connection, expression of identity and participation in community communication (Rice et al., 2016; Titifanue et al., 2018; Nault, 2025). In this regard, the link between digital communication and representation is of major importance. Hall (1997) has suggested that representation is the process whereby cultural meanings are created and disseminated in communication. Digital technologies have helped communities to have more capacity to create and share their stories and participate in this process. In recent years, the significance of digital communication in identity building and self-presentation has also been exposed (Sadoun, 2026; Yao, 2025). The increase in self-representation should not be understood as a total elimination of representational inequalities, however. Content production does not always lead to its spread, understanding, or meaningful recognition. Digital representation is not just about Indigenous voice on the web, but also the conditions of the cultural narratives appearing and being recognised.

Digital communication can also reinforce ties within the community beyond physical boundaries. Online communication might help people stay connected, do part of the cultural conversation and experience cultural narratives even when they are physically separated from another community. The potential of social media to be effective in supporting cultural connection and identity processes has been shown in studies of Indigenous digital communities, especially where migration or geographical dispersal has impacted on traditional ways of engaging with community (Rice et al., 2016; Titifanue et al., 2018; Botangen et al., n.d.). These opportunities might be especially important to the younger generation. A digital space can create venues for the interaction with culture and narratives, language and audiovisual content, as well as conversations about collective identity. It can also

help young people to engage in cultural communication in modern media production and interaction. But, to equate digital engagement with cultural continuity is not always correct. There are other relationships, practices, responsibilities, and contexts that are not easily replicable online through which cultural knowledge is traditionally passed on. So type of participation is important. While passive consumption of cultural material can be distinguished from active engagement in cultural communication, content production, and community engagement, there is a continuum between the two. Digital platforms can contribute to both, but the cultural significance of digital platforms rely on the cultural practices of the communities themselves and the cultural links and responsibilities of digital practices.

The literature also shows that there is a need not to regard Indigenous communities as monolithic. The digital experiences vary across regions, language, age, access to technology, historical context and wider political and institutional factors. Therefore, the results from one Indigenous community can not necessarily be extrapolated to other Indigenous communities. A wider comparative lens can help to detect patterns, but this comparative lens should be culturally sensitive. One additional conflict is between individual expression and collective cultural responsibility. Personalised communication and content creation via social media might differ from collective knowledge and shared responsibilities in Indigenous cultural practices and culturally specific protocols about what can be communicated. Digital participation can thus involve an ongoing negotiation between the individual and collective cultural responsibility. Overall, the literature suggests that digital communication has the potential to increase opportunities for Indigenous self-representation and cultural engagement, and can foster regional linkages. However, these changes do not necessarily result in cultural control or empowerment. The potential for digital participation to boost communication may pose significant challenges for theories of visibility, authority, and digital governance that remain largely unexplored.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION, CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND LANGUAGE REVITALISATION

Digital communication has opened new avenues for Indigenous peoples to record, share and maintain their language and cultural knowledge. Language is strongly linked to collective identity, oral traditions, cultural memory and knowledge systems for many Indigenous peoples. Digital technologies can thus create extra opportunities for cultural communication, language learning, documentation and dissemination of cultural material. Digital technologies have been identified as

having potential to preserve and revitalise Indigenous languages. Meighan (2021) points out the need for critical analysis of technology in Indigenous language revitalisation and Ajani, Tella and Dlamini (2024) and Ajani, Tella and Dlamini (2024) explore the potential of digital technologies in the promotion of Indigenous language and the revitalisation of Indigenous knowledge systems. The findings from these studies indicate that digital communication may enhance the places and spaces languages and cultural knowledge is documented and shared.

Digital technology could also help to bridge the gap between older and younger people in the community who live far apart. New opportunities for cultural language and story can be gained through online platforms, AV materials, digital storytelling, interactive communication. Similarly, Rice et al. (2016) shows the significance of digital technology in Indigenous youth's social and communicative lives but digital preservation is not just a technical process. Decisions on what is recorded and who is involved in the documentation process, how knowledge is structured, and who makes decisions about how it is accessed and circulated are part of the digitisation of cultural knowledge. The loss of relationships, practices, languages and places in which cultural knowledge is historically transmitted can remove the context needed to understand it. This brings a key difference between preservation and authority. Digital technologies can be used to preserve and circulate cultural materials, but can also lead to their reproduction, extraction and use outside the community's control. Not all cultural knowledge is to be shared freely and some may be subject to specific cultural duties and customs.

Preservation and protection is thus an increasingly significant issue in digital contexts. Ramesh (2026) talks about the issue of the 'commodification of Indigenous knowledge' and Acharya (2026) discusses the protection of folklore and traditional knowledge. The issues raised here indicate that cultural preservation is inseparable from an examination of issues of ownership, authority, and conditions of circulation of cultural materials. The literature then suggests that digital preservation is more than just a technological issue or a digital storage solution. Indigenous peoples need to be involved in the documentation, representation, access and dissemination of cultural knowledge. Community involvement is thus at the heart of the creation of digital cultural materials but also of the management of these materials. Digital communication can therefore be used to help maintain cultural and linguistic continuity and to pose new issues of access and control. It is not just whether or not Indigenous cultural knowledge should be digitised, but how and who should control the cultural resources created through digitisation.

DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY, CULTURAL COMMODIFICATION AND PLATFORM POWER

Digital communication opportunities need to be recognized in tandem with the institutional frameworks within which digital contexts are shaped today. Along with this externally owned and operated technological and corporate control, there is a growing possibility for participation of indigenous groups in the production and dissemination of culture. The algorithm, platform policies, commercial interests, and technological infrastructures thus also influence digital communication. Platformised communication shows us that visibility is not neutral and not equal. Algorithmic systems shape the type of content that is recommended, prioritized and circulated (Filk, 2025; Hastuti et al., 2025). This scholarship is not specific to Indigenous communities but is important in understanding the structural conditions of the Indigenous digital communication. The difference is crucial because making content and making it show up aren't necessarily the same thing. Indigenous communities can share their own cultural stories with others, but continue to be subject to system(s) that determine distribution of these stories, when and how. Local constraints on communicative power can therefore be joined by digital participation. There could be additional conflicts of interest where commercial considerations are taken into account. The example of platform monetisation shown by Suherman (2025) shows how monetisation can affect media practices and communicate priorities. In such contexts, cultural content can be subject to pressures to be adapted to meet the attention, engagement or commercial value of formats. This creates concerns that culturally meaningful communication may be simplified, changed, or abstracted from its context for greater visibility.

The rising visibility of Indigenous cultural work also provokes questions around the issue of commodification. Ramesh (2026) points out that Indigenous knowledge is also undergoing a wider shift in the context of globalisation, and Acharya (2026) mentions the ongoing difficulties in the protection of traditional knowledge and folklore. Digital environments can both expand cultural opportunities for visibility and facilitate easy copying, reproduction, redistribution, or commercial appropriation of cultural resources. The issues highlighted here are proof that visibility does not equal empowerment. Cultural material can be circulated to a great degree without being centered and meaningful within communities and contexts. This is because the significance of Indigenous digital communication cannot only be measured by reach or visibility, but also by the extent of community control over the circulation and representation of culture. Issues of authority are especially important when talking about Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Walter et al. (2021) highlight

Indigenous interests and authority over data about Indigenous peoples and communities. This view moves the focus to the right of access to technology to the question of who controls the collection, management and use of information. These concerns continue in the evolving dialogue about technological development. Hurst et al. (2026) address Indigenous views on data and emerging technologies and Morris (2026) considers the broader issues of Tribal Digital Sovereignty. These perspectives collectively indicate that meaningful digital participation needs to be addressed not only in terms of access to platforms, but also in terms of authoritativeness over data, culture knowledge, technological infrastructures, and systems of governance.

Therefore, the difference between digital access and digital sovereignty is key to this review. Access is one matter, and sovereignty is another of the questions that arise when considering entering digital worlds with an ability to be in control and bring some advantage. It may be the case that indigenous peoples are very active in the digital world but have weak control over the platforms, infrastructures and institutions of communication. The literature reviewed in this article then suggests a core tension: This central tension then emerges from the literature studied throughout this article: Digital technologies have the potential to increase opportunities for representation, participation, cultural connection, and preservation. All the while these opportunities are integrated into technologies and enterprises that might restrict community control. The analytical difference is therefore between participation and power, the most important. You don't always have control over visibility because you can communicate. Not everything that is visible is authoritative with respect to cultural knowledge. Similarly, having access to digital platforms does not ensure the influence over data or technological governance.

DISCUSSION

The review explored the intersection of digital communication and Indigenous cultural identity in terms of representation, participation, cultural preservation, platform power and digital sovereignty. The totality of this literature indicates that digital technologies have provided opportunities for Indigenous communities to share cultural stories, to connect with one another socially and culturally and to ensure the continuity of Indigenous language and culture. Meanwhile, these opportunities continue to be influenced by broader technological and institutional frameworks.

The central premise of this review is to recognize the difference between digital participation and digital power. Digital platforms can provide opportunities for Indigenous communities to develop and share their own content, fostering greater opportunities for self-

representation and communication of culture (Rice et al., 2016; Titifanue et al., 2018; Nault, 2025). But, it is not always an equal opportunity to be visible, to have data, to allow for governance of platforms, or to shape the circulation of cultural knowledge in a community. There is a distinction between this, to bring together the various themes found in the literature. Digital communication can open up opportunities for representation, thereby enhancing community participation in the production and communication of cultural narratives. In addition, it can enhance involvement through geographical and cultural communication and interaction by the community. But the issue of meaningful control is one on which there is an additional dimension: control of cultural knowledge, data, technological structures, and the contexts of communication.

This can therefore be interpreted as the relationship between these dimensions

Representation → Participation → Control

The dimensions are linked together and not the same. Communities can be "online" without having the power to regulate circulation of cultural content. They can be engaged in digital communication, but they also rely on external platforms. Likewise, knowledge of culture can also be digitally captured without communities having meaningful control over its access and use. This is especially important when it comes to Indigenous cultural knowledge. The literature indicates that use of digital technologies has the potential to assist in communications between generations, cultural preservation and language revitalisation. But there are also issues of cultural practices, ownership, access and the potential for knowledge being produced or disseminated outside of community jurisdiction and control (Meighan, 2021; Ajani et al., 2024; Acharya, 2026). Preservation in the digital/technical sense must then be seen as a question of cultural responsibility and authority.

The review also emphasizes the need to consider the digital communication in today's platform-based context. The visibility and circulation can be affected by algorithms, commercial interests, and systems of platform governance (Filk, 2025; Hastuti et al., 2025; Suherman, 2025). Thus, an increase in the use of communication technologies does not eradicate structural inequalities. Indigenous communities can be afforded more possibilities for expression, but still be constrained by technologies that they have little control over. An understanding of this limitation can be gained from Indigenous Data Sovereignty and digital sovereignty discussions. Walter et al. (2021) highlight the importance of Indigenous authority over data pertaining to Indigenous people, and more recent debate moves the focus towards new technologies and broader digital governance (Hurst et al., 2026; Morris, 2026). This moves the debate from the technology access to questions about meaningful authority and control.

Thus, the findings of this review indicate that the importance of digital communication for Indigenous communities cannot be defined solely on the basis of access, participation or online visibility. It's important to pay more attention to who is governing digital environments, who is controlling cultural knowledge and data, and whether communities have any meaningful control over the conditions under which their communication circulates. More broadly, communication scholarship needs to be more critical of technologically optimistic assumptions. Digital technologies can definitely be used to facilitate cultural communication and self-representation, but they have effects that depend on the social, cultural and technological contexts they are placed in. The development of digital communication has opened up new avenues for Indigenous cultural knowledge to be captured, shared, conserved and disseminated. Meanwhile, cultural content is being transferred into digital contexts, which poses significant questions about ownership, authority, access, reproduction and control. Digital technologies can contribute to cultural preservation and may also raise the likelihood of the loss of Indigenous knowledge from its traditional community, relationship and cultural contexts. This tension gains extra importance in the context of the commodification of Indigenous knowledge. A cultural knowledge might have collective, historical, spiritual, and community-based values which are not necessarily apparent within a traditional commercial context. But in a digital context, cultural materials have the potential to be even more easily copied, reproduced, extracted and circulated commercially. Ramesh (2026) draws attention to the link between globalisation and the commodification of indigenous knowledge, and discusses more general issues of turning culturally based knowledge into resources that can be traded for economic gain. Digital technologies could exacerbate these fears as information can be shared quickly across geographical and institutional lines. With the growing availability of cultural materials, the issue is quite a complex one, therefore. Access can be a boon to cultural education, visibility, and preservation, especially for younger members or those living further away in the community. But the same accessibility can also provide conditions where there is the reproduction or use of cultural knowledge outside the sphere of origin. Traditional knowledge and traditional folklore are areas of cultural knowledge where questions about protection of knowledge are specifically relevant. Acharya (2026) warns about the scope of traditional rights laws to protect TK and suggests methods that take into account the unique nature of folklore and collective cultural resources. This is important because Indigenous cultural knowledge does not always align with the traditional frameworks of IP, which are largely defined by authorship, commercial ownership and/or specific time frames of protection.

Digital communication therefore presents questions beyond the question of copyright. Another important question is whether communities still have a role in how their cultural knowledge is documented, circulated, reproduced and interpreted. A cultural resource can be technically associated to a specific community and at the same time be accessible, and hard to be controlled by the community. These issues are directly related to Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Walter et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of Indigenous authority and interests in relation to data concerning Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty is a way to move beyond the technical view of data as a tool and considers questions of power, governance, ownership and responsibility, as well as community authority. These concerns are made even more interrelated with cultural representation in digital communication environments. Digital platforms are not only the medium for cultural communication, they also gather, structure, process and relay information created by users' actions. Indigenous involvement in digital communication can thus generate data that uncannily resides inside the technological frameworks of governments, institutions or private corporations. Digital participation in turn is then complicated. Communities can produce and distribute culture, but have less control over technological systems that store, process, classify and monetise information related to the culture. But the ability to participate meaningfully is not just about communities having access to digital platforms. More recent scholarship has taken these concerns into account with new technologies and other aspects of digital governance. In this, Hurst et al. (2026) remind readers of Indigenous thinking on data and new technological systems and the need to take Indigenous authority into account in rapidly changing technological contexts. With the growing incorporation of artificial intelligence and other data-based technologies in communication systems, the issues of collection and application of cultural and community related information are becoming more critical. Similarly, beyond just data, Morris (2026) extends discussions on Tribal Digital Sovereignty. This wider lens focuses on the interaction between Indigenous communities and wider digital systems, such as infrastructure, technology capacity, governance and institutional authority. This is because control of cultural knowledge can't be divorced completely from control of the technological environments in which that knowledge moves. A clear understanding of the difference between data sovereignty and digital sovereignty is therefore relevant analytically. Data sovereignty directs one's attention to the authority over information and data about Indigenous communities. Digital sovereignty takes the conversation further into broader issues of technological infrastructure, platforms, governance and the ability to have meaningful sovereignty over digital spaces. These views all support the main thesis

of this review. Digital technologies can be used to enhance cultural communication within Indigenous communities, but at the same time, they can also lead to forms of dependency that are related to external technological systems. Communities can become more visible online, but not necessarily more visible over the infrastructure(s) that create the visibility. The question of cultural preservation and digital sovereignty should thus not be taken as a straightforward technological issue. Preserving cultural knowledge by digitising it can improve its preservation, but preserving it without the proper authority can make it vulnerable.

Digital cultural materials can live and move on, and become more and more removed from the communities that create their cultural significance. A community-based approach, therefore, calls for consideration of issues of consent, access, cultural protocols, governance and authority. Indigenous peoples should not be treated merely as repositories of information on culture to be captured on digital media and stored. A deep understanding of communities as stakeholders with a right to participate in the management of their knowledge, cultural resources and digital information is essential for meaningful digital engagement. Technological access is therefore not enough to constitute digital empowerment, as suggested in the literature reviewed in this area. Empowerment on a meaningful level needs some level of influence over who represents, how we circulate knowledge, the data we acquire, and the systems of technology through which communication occurs. This insight links the key themes that have been elaborated during the review. Digital communication can amplify self-representation and cultural engagement; digital technologies can help in the language revitalisation and cultural maintenance; and social media can deepen community bonds beyond geographical limitations. But these opportunities are still constrained by issues of visibility, platform-governance, cultural commodification, knowledge ownership, and technological authority.

CONCLUSION

The creation of digital communication provides opportunities for Indigenous expression of cultural identity, circulation of cultural narratives, community connection, and language and cultural knowledge preservation. This literature review shows that digital technologies can be used to provide opportunities for self-representation and participation, especially in communicating across geographical barriers. The results, however, also show that the digital participation does not inevitably lead to cultural empowerment or communicative power. Indigenous peoples can produce and share cultural resources on platforms, algorithms, technological infrastructures and governance regimes which are, to a large extent, outside their control. The central contribution of this review, then,

is the separation of representation, participation and control. Digital technologies might provide communities the means to represent themselves and take more active role in communication, but real control means having greater authority over cultural knowledge, data, visibility and the technologies that enable communication. The review also confirms that issues of cultural authority cannot be divorced from digital preservation. Digitisation can aid language revitalisation and the continuity of cultural knowledge, but also raise the potential of being reproduced, commercialised and circulated outside of community control.

Cultural protocols, ownership of knowledge and community authority must be acknowledged in community-based Indigenous digital communication. Finally, digital communication's meaning for Indigenous cultural identity is not just based on access to digital tools, but on the context in which digital participation takes place. The study of online access and participation should be expanded in future research and prioritize the study of platform governance, algorithmic visibility, cultural knowledge protection, indigenous data governance, and digital sovereignty. The main claims of this article are that digital participation is an opportunity for Indigenous cultural communication and that participation equals digital power. Empowerment must be paid more attention to community authority over who represents them, cultural knowledge, data, and how that knowledge is communicated through digital spaces.

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