Communicating with International Students: How do their social networks impact on where they go to for information?

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Nearly all institutions that attract international students provide crucial information — particularly in relation to non-academic issues (e.g. access health services, food, accommodation, and leisure activities) — to these students while they are in Australia. However, this information is not well accessed by the students because of the lack of understanding on how international students search, access, use, rely on or share information. This paper therefore investigates how international students access information related to non-academic issues and provides insights into way institutions can engage with their international students in the online environment. Through analysing interview data from a series of 8 focus groups, this early research shows that international students display different information seeking behaviour depending on the social networks they belong to while in Australia. By mapping the social networks of international students, this paper suggests some practical implications to effectively provide information to international students.

Key Words

International students, social networks, information sources, social media, health, accommodation, lifestyle