

TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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Abstract

Social identity, as a construct formed by individuals and society, has undergone significant changes in the digital era. The central role of social media has become a major factor in this transformation, providing individuals with the opportunity to express themselves and form social identities independently. This study uses a literature study method with a qualitative approach to analyze the role of social media in changing social identities. The results show that social media provides a space for free expression, allows interaction across backgrounds, and opens up opportunities for the formation of new communities and social identities. In conclusion, social media has a significant contribution to changing social identities in the digital era, providing individuals with space for self-expression and the formation of independent identities.

Keywords: Social Media, Digital Age, Social Identity

INTRODUCTION

Social identity is an entity formed through complex interactions between individuals and society. The process of forming this social identity is not static, but rather dynamic and continues to develop along with the life experiences and social interactions experienced by individuals. Social identity includes various aspects, including but not limited to cultural, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic aspects.¹

According to Anthony Giddens, social identity is a construction influenced by the interaction between individuals and society. Giddens emphasizes that social identity is not static, but continues to develop through the process of socialization. Socialization, according to Giddens, is a learning mechanism in which individuals internalize the values, norms, and social rules applied by the surrounding society.²

In this process, individuals do not only act as passive recipients, but also as active agents who participate in shaping their identities. Therefore, social identity does not only include personal dimensions, but is also influenced by social interactions and dynamics that involve individuals in various life contexts. Giddens summarizes that social identity is not a fixed entity, but rather the result of a dynamic process that is continuously colored by experiences and social interactions throughout an individual's life journey.³

Social identity refers to a complex concept involving an individual's perception of themselves and how they are viewed by the society around them. In terms of language, social identity encompasses various aspects that shape a person's identity in a social context. The process of forming this social identity is influenced by various factors, including social norms, cultural values, and interactions with the surrounding environment.⁴

In social and psychological terms, social identity is often formed through the process of socialization. Socialization is a process by which individuals learn and internalize social norms, cultural values, and the social roles expected of them in society. This process begins when

¹ (Alyusi, 2019, p. 76)

² (Herry-Priyono, 2016, p. 35)

³ (Herry-Priyono, 2016, p. 54)

⁴ (Sakti & Yulianto, 2018, p. 497)

individuals are children and continues throughout life, forming a social identity that continues to develop over time. During the process of socialization, individuals are exposed to a variety of influences from their environment, including family, peers, school, mass media, and society in general. Interactions with these groups and socializing agents shape individuals' perceptions of themselves and how they are viewed by others in social contexts.⁵

Social identity is also closely related to feelings of affiliation and identification with particular social groups, such as family, peers, ethnic groups, or online communities. Through identification with these groups, individuals can find a sense of belonging, security, and social connectedness. Social identity not only encompasses individual aspects, but also plays a role in shaping broader social structures, influencing how individuals interact and integrate within society. Thus, social identity is a complex and dynamic concept that forms an integral part of the human experience in social life.

Thus, social identity is not a static entity or separate from its social context. Instead, social identity is flexible and can change over time and the individual's life experiences. This concept underlines the complexity and dynamics in the process of social identity formation, which is the result of continuous interaction between individuals and society.

In the digital era, social identity has undergone significant transformation. Digital technology has made a significant contribution to community participation by opening up new means of participation in the form of political participation, policy participation, and social participation. Through online platforms, individuals can engage in political discussions, access current political information, and convey support or criticism of government policies.

In the policy realm, digital technology allows the public to provide direct input and responses to policies through online consultations or participatory platforms. In addition, social media and content sharing applications facilitate the formation of online communities, expanding social interaction and collaboration without being limited by geographical boundaries. Overall, digital technology not only increases access to information, but also expands the space for public participation in shaping and influencing various aspects of modern society. This is due to the increasingly central role of social media in the lives of contemporary society.⁶

Social media facilitates individual interactions with people from different backgrounds, allowing them to connect with individuals who share similar interests and similarities. Through these interactions, individuals can develop their social identities. In addition, social media also provides opportunities for individuals to form new communities and additional social identities. Individuals can join online communities that align with their interests and similarities, helping them form more diverse social identities.⁷

Social media has great power because it can reach a wide number of individuals. The influence of social media is not only limited to changing individual behavior but also society as a whole, encouraging awareness of sustainable behavioral changes to protect the environment. The dissemination of information through social media allows for increased public knowledge, which can ultimately result in awareness to develop self-potential and utilize media developments as a basis for personal development. Social media is not only a source of entertainment, but also an educational channel with an abundance of information, opportunities for interaction, and directions to explore further information through the links provided. For example, individuals can use social media to search for information about their daily environment.

METHOD

This study applies a literature study method with a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the research theme. This approach involves analyzing literature that has

⁵ (Alyusi, 2019, p. 65)

⁶ (M.Kom & M.Kom, 2023, p. 54)

⁷ (Tejo Sampurno, Kusumandyoko, & Islam, 2020, p. 5)

significant relevance to the topic being studied. By utilizing literature sources such as journals, books, and scientific articles, this study aims to summarize, compile, and analyze the latest findings that can contribute to a deep understanding of the issues raised in this journal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review, social media was found to play a significant role in experiencing social identity transformation with various mechanisms and diverse impacts. Social media is not only a platform for individuals to present themselves online, but also influences the way individuals view themselves and interact in social contexts.

This phenomenon includes the formation of social identity through online self-expression, the influence of digital social norms, and the unique dynamics of interactions between individuals in social media spaces. Thus, the role of social media in redefining social identity has become increasingly complex and nuanced in this digital era. Social media provides a space for individuals to express themselves freely and openly.⁸

Social media provides individuals with a space to express themselves freely and openly, allowing them to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. For example, on Facebook, one can share personal thoughts or moments with friends. Twitter provides a platform to express opinions in short tweets, while Instagram allows for the sharing of photos and videos that reflect aspects of one's life. YouTube, with its video-based content, provides a way for individuals to express themselves in various forms of creativity. With these platforms, individuals have the opportunity to shape their social identities in authentic and unique ways.

Social media in this era has united the private and public spaces of individuals. The activities of society, especially teenagers, are now inseparable from the influence of social media, and Instagram has become a very popular platform, with 59% of online users aged 18-29 using it. Through Instagram, teenagers freely upload various activities, complaints, personal photos, and short videos to share with the public, forming their self-identity. Identity, as a depiction of individuals in society, is constructed through factors such as physical appearance, racial characteristics, language, self-assessment, and perception, and the development of information technology, including the internet and social media, has changed the way individuals interact and form their social identities.⁹

Social media, as mentioned above, provides a space for individuals to express themselves, allowing them to freely share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube provide an opportunity to express their creativity in a unique way. As a result, a culture of oversharing has emerged in cyberspace, and individuals can now shape their social identities authentically and authentically through social media.¹⁰

Social media has evolved into a significant educational tool, offering a variety of information and interaction opportunities for its users. The presence of abundant information and guidance provided on this platform contributes to the development of knowledge through links to other sources of information. Thus, social media is not only a tool for social interaction, but also a platform that supports the educational process by facilitating easy access to information and directing users to deeper sources of knowledge.¹¹

Social media provides an opportunity for individuals to interact with people from different backgrounds and with similar interests. With this communication platform, individuals can connect with others who have similar interests and similarities, opening up opportunities to form a social identity. For example, someone with an interest in sports can interact with an online community that shares similar interests, helping them form a social identity as a sports fan. This interaction becomes a forum for strengthening and developing an individual's social identity through the exchange of

⁸ (Hananto, 2019, p. 54)

⁹ (Sakti & Yulianto, 2018, p. 499)

¹⁰ (Fitri, 2017, p. 12)

¹¹ (Ratnamulyani & Maksudi, 2018, p. 157)

ideas, experiences, and support between community members. Social media provides an opportunity for individuals to form new communities and social identities.

Social media also provides opportunities for individuals to form new communities and social identities. Individuals can join online communities that share interests and similarities with them. For example, an individual who is interested in photography can join an online photography community. Membership in this community can help the individual to form a social identity as a photographer.

When active on social media, users not only build networks and friendships, but also express feelings virtually in the communication process. This interaction ultimately forms a self-concept (self-definition) and provides an opportunity to develop a virtual self-image (self-invention). Every individual has unlimited freedom to express themselves in cyberspace, and the results of this creativity reflect the individual's identity when interacting on the internet. Users can choose to express their identity honestly or create a fake identity.¹²

This phenomenon, according to Tim Jordan, includes three basic elements of individual power in cyberspace: flexible identity, updated hierarchy, and information as a reality that only applies in the virtual world. Individual identities in the online world can be the same or different from offline identities, and an individual can have multiple identities with varying characteristics in the online world.¹³

Stone emphasized that in virtual communities, it is difficult to ensure that the individual's identity as read in online text reflects the full identity in real life. The development of technology allows interaction and communication between individuals from different parts of the world, but this communication can only be understood through text.¹⁴

In digital marketing strategy, social media can be an integral part of the overall integrated e-marketing strategy. Social media also acts as a means to find and form brand fans or brand evangelists. By utilizing social media, companies can enter pre-existing communities and get direct feedback from customers or audiences.

This creates an opportunity to build closer relationships with consumers, strengthen brand presence, and increase customer trust through active interactions on social media platforms. Membership in these communities can help individuals to form a new social identity. Social media not only provides an opportunity to create closer interactions with the target market, but also becomes a platform for forming online communities.¹⁵

Thus, the role of social media in redefining social identity has become increasingly complex and nuanced in this digital era. This phenomenon includes the formation of social identity through online self-expression, the influence of digital social norms, and the unique dynamics of interactions between individuals in the social media space. Social media provides a space for individuals to express themselves freely and openly, allowing them to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

With various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, each individual has the opportunity to develop an authentic and unique social identity. Social media not only functions as a means of social interaction, but also as a supporting platform in the education process by providing easy access to information and providing directions for users to explore deeper sources of knowledge.

Not only that, social media provides an opportunity for individuals to interact with people from various backgrounds who have similar interests. The formation of online communities through social media opens up opportunities to form new social identities. In the context of digital marketing strategies, social media has a crucial role as a tool to find and form brand fans or brand evangelists. By leveraging social media, companies can tap into existing communities, build closer

¹² (Nurrizka, 2016, p. 7)

¹³ (Nasrullah, 2022, p. 135)

¹⁴ (Audifax, 2023, p. 15)

¹⁵ (Manullang, 2024, p. 135)

relationships with consumers, strengthen brand presence, and increase customer trust through active interaction on various social media platforms.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the literature review shows the central role of social media in the transformation of social identity. Social media is not only a platform for online self-expression, but also shapes the way individuals view themselves and interact in a social context. The process of social identity involves online expression, digital social norms, and interactions between individuals in the social media space. With the complexity and diversity of its impacts, social media creates a free space for individuals to express themselves through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. New opportunities emerge, including cross-background interactions, the formation of online communities, and the use of social media in digital marketing strategies to strengthen brands and build close relationships with consumers. Thus, social media is not only a tool for social interaction, but also a supporter in the education process, forming the dynamics of social identity that continues to develop in the digital era.

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