

**DIGITAL IDENTITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TECHNOLOGY
BASED SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS**

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Abstract: *Studies on digital identity on social media are extensive, but the specific problem remains that the literature is fragmented in explaining how identity construction is shaped simultaneously by user meaning-making and platform design. This study addresses that problem by systematically synthesizing prior findings through the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) lens. Using a systematic literature review guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), 15 peer-reviewed articles published between 2016–2025 were selected and analyzed thematically. The results show three consistent patterns: (1) digital identity is constructed through ongoing negotiation between users and audiences under cultural norms; (2) platform affordances and governance (e.g., visibility mechanisms, interaction features, and moderation rules) constrain and enable identity performance; and (3) identity construction is recursive—users adapt to platform structures while their practices also stabilize or reshape how technologies are used and interpreted. These findings indicate that digital identity on social media is best understood as a socio-technical outcome produced by reciprocal interactions between social contexts and technological arrangements.*

Keywords: *Digital identity, social media, Social Construction of Technology (SCOT), Systematic review, Self-representation.*

Abstrak: Kajian tentang identitas digital di media sosial sangat beragam, tetapi masalah penelitian yang menonjol adalah literatur yang masih terfragmentasi dalam menjelaskan bagaimana konstruksi identitas dibentuk secara bersamaan oleh pemaknaan pengguna dan desain platform. Penelitian ini menjawab masalah tersebut dengan mensintesis temuan-temuan penelitian sebelumnya melalui lensa Social Construction of Technology (SCOT), yaitu pendekatan yang menekankan bahwa teknologi terbentuk melalui proses sosial. Metode yang digunakan adalah tinjauan pustaka sistematis yang dipandu oleh Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), yaitu pedoman pelaporan untuk tinjauan sistematis dan meta-analisis. Sebanyak 15 artikel peer-review periode 2016–2025 dipilih dan dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan tiga pola utama: (1) identitas digital dibangun melalui negosiasi berkelanjutan antara pengguna dan audiens dalam kerangka norma budaya; (2) affordance dan tata kelola platform (misalnya mekanisme visibilitas, fitur interaksi, serta aturan moderasi) sekaligus membatasi dan memungkinkan performa identitas; dan (3) konstruksi identitas bersifat rekursif—pengguna menyesuaikan diri dengan struktur platform sekaligus praktik mereka turut menstabilkan atau membentuk ulang cara teknologi digunakan dan dimaknai. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa identitas digital di media sosial merupakan luaran sosio-teknis yang dihasilkan dari interaksi timbal balik antara konteks sosial dan pengaturan teknologi.

Kata kunci: Identitas Digital, Sosial Media, Konstruksi Sosial Teknologi (SCOT), Analisis Sistematis, Representasi Diri.

A. Introduction

The digital age has revolutionized how humans formulate and comprehend their identities. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook function not only as communication channels but also as cultural arenas where individuals showcase themselves, pursue social approval, and create meaning for online audiences¹. In these contexts, identity is increasingly perceived as dynamic and relational, arising from ongoing negotiation among users, their audiences, and the technical systems that facilitate connection².

In digital communication contexts, social media redefines the distinction between private and public life³. Individuals can curate narratives about themselves using visual media, written expression, and interaction patterns, creating self-presentation forms where authenticity and performativity are crucial in constructing a digital identity⁴. Simultaneously, identity construction on platforms is not only dictated by individual intention⁵. The design of platforms and their technological capabilities determine what can be shown, the manner of their presentation, and which modes of expression get social endorsement or disapproval⁶. Elements such as likes, comments, shares, filters, and tales provide a distinct "social logic" that organizes the performance, maintenance, and consumption of identity⁷. Thus, comprehending digital identity necessitates consideration of both user behaviors and the socio-technical frameworks that influence visibility, interaction, and interpretation.

This research examines the formation of digital identity utilizing the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework established by Pinch

¹ Dea Cindi Amelia Ginting et al., "Analisis Pengaruh Jejaring Sosial Terhadap Interaksi Sosial Di Era Digital," *Pusat Publikasi Ilmu Manajemen* 2, no. 1 (2024): 22–29.

² Jinghuai Lin and Marc Erich Latoschik, "Digital Body, Identity and Privacy in Social Virtual Reality: A Systematic Review," *Frontiers in Virtual Reality* 3 (2022): 974652; Jill Walker Rettberg, "Self-Representation in Social Media," *SAGE Handbook of Social Media*, 2017, 429–43.

³ M M Terras, J Ramsay, and E A Boyle, "Digital Media Production and Identity: Insights from a Psychological Perspective," *E-Learning and Digital Media* 12, no. 2 (2015): 128–46.

⁴ Faridah Lesmana, Cindy Satika; Faridah, "Penggunaan Bahasa Gaul Generasi Z Perspektif Komunikasi Islam (Studi Pada Mahasiswa Fakultas Dakwah Dan Komunikasi UIN Sumatera Utara)," *Jurnal Peurawi: Media Kajian Komunikasi Islam* 8, no. 1 (2025): 97–118.

⁵ Precious Mokwala, "Selfies as Self-Representation Tools during the Construction of Narrative Identities" (University of the Free State, 2020).

⁶ Huimin Xu, Csilla Weninger, and Der-Thanq Victor Chen, "Microcelebrities' Identity Construction on Social Media: A Systematic Review and Synthesis," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (2025): 493–518.

⁷ Bagus Santoso et al., "Representasi Kehidupan Ideal Dan Tekanan Sosial Di Instagram: Terhadap Strategi Pencitraan Diri Dikalangan Anak Muda," *Socius: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 2, no. 12 (2025).

and Bijker⁸. The Supreme Court of the United States refutes the notion that technology is neutral or self-evident; instead, it underscores that technological creations are influenced by social interactions, negotiated interpretations, and power relations among pertinent social groups⁹. Social media platforms should be regarded as artifacts whose purposes and values are perpetually interpreted and challenged through social activity. Due to varying interpretations by distinct groups, a platform's significance and "appropriate" application are not static; instead, they develop through interpretive processes and become established when a prevailing interpretation prevails¹⁰. Utilizing SCOT in the context of social media contextualizes identity formation amid extensive discussions regarding the purpose of platforms, their intended usage, and the normalization of specific interpretations.

This study, in conjunction with SCOT, utilizes Baym's theory¹¹ of digital identity, which defines identity as a social process developed through interaction and perpetually redefined by external feedback. Baym differentiates between personal identity, which encompasses individual attributes such as values, traits, preferences, and biographies, and social identity, defined by self-conceptions based on group affiliation, while underscoring that both are influenced by communicative practices and feedback¹². In digital environments, identity construction develops when people create meaning and curate impressions within technology-mediated situations. Digital platforms facilitate unique modalities of identity construction, encompassing the emergence of "disembodied identities" that do not necessitate physical presence, alongside diverse and fluid self-representations that fluctuate across different settings¹³. Due to the often ambiguous and undefined nature of audiences, individuals frequently depend on conceptualized audiences when formulating messages, regulating information dissemination, and ensuring coherence in interactions¹⁴.

⁸ Trevor J Pinch and Wiebe E Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other," *Social Studies of Science* 14, no. 3 (1984): 399–441.

⁹ Kirsti Margaret McGregor, "Defining the 'Authentic': Identity, Self-Presentation and Gender in Web 2.0 Networked Social Media.," 2015.

¹⁰ Wiebe E Bijker and John Law, *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (MIT press, 1994); Christina Prell, "Social Network Analysis: History, Theory and Methodology," 2011; Rettberg, "Self-Representation in Social Media"; Pinch and Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other."

¹¹ Nancy K Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

¹² Baym.

¹³ Allucquère Rosanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age* (MIT press, 1996); Sherry Turkle, "Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet," *Literature and History* 6 (1997): 117–18; Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*.

¹⁴ Marx Wang et al., "Understanding the Relationship between Social Identity and Self-Expression through Animated Gifs on Social Media," *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer*

Collectively, SCOT and Baym's digital identity theory establishes a framework for examining social media as a socio-technical milieu in which identity is generated through reciprocal interactions among users, viewers, and platform architectures. Identity formation is influenced by interpretive processes within pertinent social groups and by the affordances and governance principles inherent in platforms. At the same time, user activities concurrently affect the comprehension, stabilization, and social valuation of technology. This study aims to elucidate the construction of digital identity through social interaction and technical dynamics, utilizing the SCOT framework and Baym's¹⁵ concept of digital identity. This research synthesizes existing understandings of how people and social groups develop, interpret, and negotiate identity within social media contexts through a systematic review of 15 scientific works.

B. Research Methods

This study employs a systematic literature review approach, a structured method designed to summarize, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize previous literature in a systematic and comprehensive manner¹⁶. This method not only organizes existing knowledge but also enhances transparency in the information gathering process and produces a more objective and replicable synthesis.¹⁷

To ensure accuracy and transparency throughout the review process, this study adopts the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, as recommended by Patole and Athikarisamy¹⁸. The PRISMA structure used in this study consists of three main stages: identification of publications; screening based on inclusion and exclusion criteria; and the final inclusion or selection of relevant publications. In addition, the PRISMA checklist is applied to ensure conformity with key reporting components, including title, abstract, objectives, search strategies, study selection, risk of bias assessment, synthesis procedures, and final result reporting.

Interaction 8, no. CSCW1 (2024): 1–30; Alice E Marwick and Danah Boyd, “I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience,” *New Media & Society* 13, no. 1 (2011): 114–33; McGregor, “Defining the ‘Authentic’: Identity, Self-Presentation and Gender in Web 2.0 Networked Social Media.”; Chi-hua Hsiao, “Authenticating Discourses of ‘Being Oneself’ on Monetary-Motivated Livestreams,” *Discourse, Context & Media* 47 (2022): 100592; Nancy K Baym and Danah Boyd, “Socially Mediated Publicness: An Introduction,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56, no. 3 (2012): 320–29.

¹⁵ Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*.

¹⁶ Xu, Weninger, and Chen, “Microcelebrities’ Identity Construction on Social Media: A Systematic Review and Synthesis.”

¹⁷ Lin and Latoschik, “Digital Body, Identity and Privacy in Social Virtual Reality: A Systematic Review.”

¹⁸ Madeleine Marcella-Hood, “Instagram versus Reality: The Design and Use of Self-Curated Photo Elicitation in a Study Exploring the Construction of Scottish Identity amongst Personal Style Influencers on Instagram,” *Qualitative Research* 21, no. 6 (2021): 865–89.

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases and registers only

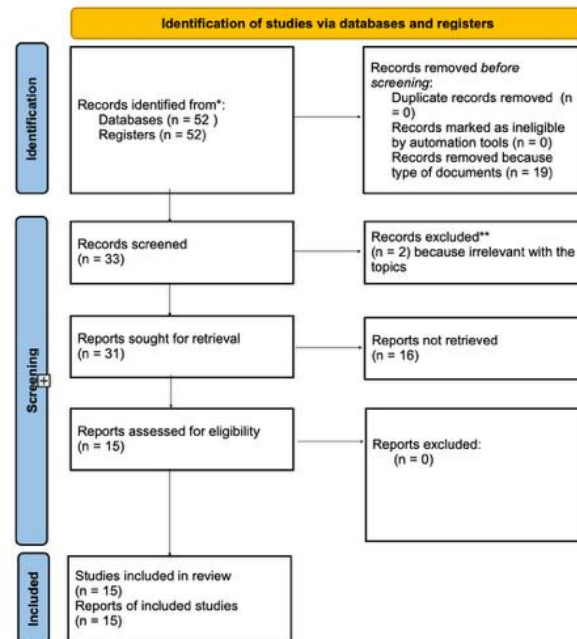


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram for Scientific Journal Selection Process

For data collection, this study conducted a curation of academic literature sourced from the Scopus database, covering publications from 2016 to 2025. The search process employed Boolean operators “OR” and “AND,” along with keywords such as “self presentation,” “self representation,” “self identity,” “digital media,” “expression,” and “online persona.” The search was limited to English language journal articles to ensure scientific quality and relevance. The initial assessment of relevance was conducted by examining publication titles, followed by a review of basic bibliographic information such as author names, year of publication, titles, and abstracts. This step aimed to ensure that selected documents aligned with the research focus on digital identity within social media environments. The study adopts a structured review typology, which emphasizes conceptual development within theoretical frameworks, models, constructs, methodologies, or specific contexts¹⁹. To strengthen the accuracy of the selection process, inclusion criteria were applied by considering peer reviewed studies that explicitly address digital identity in social media spaces.

¹⁹ Isabel C.P. Marques and Maria Ceu Alves, “Hospital Costing Methods: Four Decades of Literature Review,” *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 16, no. 10 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm16100433>; Delila Putri Sadayi and Suswanta Suswanta, “Dampak Kampanye# AyoVaksin Pada Media Sosial Twitter Terhadap Ketahanan Sosial Masyarakat Indonesia Di Masa Pandemi COVID-19,” *Jurnal Ketahanan Nasional* 28, no. 3 (2022).

C. Results and Discussion

Research Results

The results of the journal search conducted through a systematic literature review were classified based on several key criteria, including the year of publication, the geographical location of the studies, and the research methods employed. In addition, this study also considered the specific digital platforms examined in each publication to provide more contextual relevance. By identifying 15 journals that met these criteria, the review aims to offer a deeper understanding of how individuals construct their digital identities as social media users. This approach is intended to yield a more structured and comprehensive analysis.

Table 1
List of Selected Journal Articles

No.	Writer	Title	Year	Method	Platform	Location
1	Harwood, T.	The Self in the Digital Space: Exploring the Implications for Young Adults in Defining their Self on Social Media	2019	Qualitative (interviews & thematic analysis)	Instagram, Facebook	Inggris
2	Ryan & Xenos	Who Would Pay for Facebook? Self-Esteem as a Predictor of User Behavior, Identity Construction, and Valuation of Virtual Possessions	2018	Quantitative (survey)	Facebook	Amerika Serikat
3	Andalibi et al.	Exploring Self-Presentation Posts of People with Depression: Themes, Stigma, and Identity Construction	2021	Thematic content analysis	Reddit, Twitter	Amerika Serikat
4	Al-Saggaf	Exploring How Social Media Usage Shapes Self-Presentation Strategies among Saudi Young Adults	2020	Qualitative (interviews & online observations)	Instagram, Snapchat	Arab Saudi

5	Davies & Hara	Performing the Scientist Credibly and Authentically: Understanding How Scientists Manage Their Self-Presentation on Social Media	2022	Semi-structure d interviews	Twitter, Instagram	Inggris
6	Döring, N.	“Girls Are Addicted to Likes So They Post Semi-Naked Selfies”: Peer Mediation, Normativity, and the Construction of Identity Online	2021	Discourse analysis & FGD	Instagram	Jerman
7	Cox, J.	From Youthful Experimentation to Professional Identity: Understanding Identity Transitions in Social Media	2019	Qualitative (15 in-depth interviews)	Facebook, LinkedIn	Inggris
8	Zhang, Y.	Online Discourse and Chronotopic Identity Work: A Longitudinal Digital Ethnography on WeChat	2022	Longitudinal digital ethnography	WeChat	China
9	Kavanagh et al.	Selfie Scores: A Scoping Review of Research on Athlete Social Media Self-Presentation	2023	Scoping Review (99 articles)	Instagram, Twitter	Global
10	Highfield & Leaver	Understanding the Relationship Between Social Identity and Self-Expression Through Animated GIFs on Social Media	2020	Quantitative experiments	Twitter	Amerika Serikat
11	Lundgren, S.	Super Equestrians: The Construction of Identity and Impression Management	2021	Qualitative (observation &	Instagram	Swedia

		among Young Equestrians in Upper Secondary School Settings on Social Media		interviews)		
12	Zarei, N.	Professional Identity Conflict and Re-Construction among English Teachers in Iran	2020	In-depth interview	Tidak spesifik (reflektif)	Iran
13	Kang & Wei	Let Me Be at My Funniest: Instagram Users' Motivations for Using Finsta (Fake Instagram)	2020	Online Survey (N=149)	Instagram (Rinsta & Finsta)	Amerika Serikat
14	Stenberg, E.	Developing a Carer Identity and Negotiating Everyday Life through Social Networking Sites: An Explorative Study on Identity Constructions in an Online Swedish Carer Community	2019	Digital ethnography	Forum daring komunitas caregiver	Swedia
15	Carr & Hayes	Identity Shift Effects of Self-Presentation and Confirmatory and Disconfirmatory Feedback on Self-Perceptions of Brand Identification	2019	Experiment (2 studies)	Forum chat, media sosial merek	Amerika Serikat

Table 1 illustrates the results of a systematic review of seventeen journals, from which it can be concluded that studies on digital identity construction demonstrate significant diversity in context, methodology, and theoretical orientation. In general, most studies employed qualitative approaches such as in depth interviews, online observation, and digital ethnography to explore the social meanings underlying self representation on social media. This approach is evident in works, which emphasize the importance of individuals' subjective experiences in constructing their

identities through everyday online practices²⁰. Meanwhile, other studies adopted quantitative or experimental approaches,²¹ to examine relationships among psychological variables, social affect, and digital identity behaviors. These methodological variations indicate that digital identity is a multidimensional phenomenon that integrates social, psychological, and cultural aspects.

From the platform perspective, the majority of studies focus on highly visual and interaction-driven social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. These platforms allow users to express themselves through a combination of images, text, and social reactions such as likes and comments²². Such features serve as crucial tools for impression management, enabling individuals to strategically shape how they are perceived by digital audiences. For instance, Kathryn²³ demonstrates how adolescent girls use visual posts as a form of negotiation between social norms, the pursuit of recognition, and self image construction. Similar findings emerge in Mascheroni²⁴, which examines how users with experiences of depression

²⁰ Wenjing Zhang, "The Construction of Digital Self-Identity: With the Focus on Chinese Social Media Platform," 2023; Kerry Mallan, "Look at Me! Look at Me! Self-Representation and Self-Exposure through Online Networks," *Digital Culture and Education* 1, no. 1 (2009): 51–66; Nadia A J D Bij de Vaate, Jolanda Veldhuis, and Elly A Konijn, "Ethno-Racial Identity and Digitalisation in Self-Presentation: A Large-Scale Instagram Content Analysis," *Behaviour & Information Technology* 42, no. 13 (2023): 2210–25; Lin and Latoschik, "Digital Body, Identity and Privacy in Social Virtual Reality: A Systematic Review"; Marcella-Hood, "Instagram versus Reality: The Design and Use of Self-Curated Photo Elicitation in a Study Exploring the Construction of Scottish Identity amongst Personal Style Influencers on Instagram."

²¹ Zhang, "The Construction of Digital Self-Identity: With the Focus on Chinese Social Media Platform"; Mallan, "Look at Me! Look at Me! Self-Representation and Self-Exposure through Online Networks"; Bij de Vaate, Veldhuis, and Konijn, "Ethno-Racial Identity and Digitalisation in Self-Presentation: A Large-Scale Instagram Content Analysis"; Lin and Latoschik, "Digital Body, Identity and Privacy in Social Virtual Reality: A Systematic Review"; Marcella-Hood, "Instagram versus Reality: The Design and Use of Self-Curated Photo Elicitation in a Study Exploring the Construction of Scottish Identity amongst Personal Style Influencers on Instagram"; Annie Li Zhang, "Performing 'the Scientist,' Credibly and Authentically: Understanding How Scientists Manage Their Self-Presentation on Social Media," *Information, Communication & Society*, 2025, 1–21; Giovanna Mascheroni, Jane Vincent, and Estefanía Jimenez, "'Girls Are Addicted to Likes so They Post Semi-Naked Selfies': Peer Mediation, Normativity and the Construction of Identity Online," *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace* 9, no. 1 (2015): 5; DanilleJanse Van Vuuren and Meghan Simpson, "The Self in the Digital Space: Exploring the Implications for Young Adults in Defining Their Self on Social Media," *Myres. Net* 7 (2024); Wang et al., "Understanding the Relationship between Social Identity and Self-Expression through Animated Gifs on Social Media."

²² Muhammad Husni Versiansyah, Abdi; Ritonga, "Komunikasi Politik Pemenangan Pasangan Bobby-Surya Dalam Membentuk Loyalitas Gen Z Pada Pilkada 2024," *Jurnal Peurawi: Media Kajian Komunikasi Islam* 8, no. 2 (2025): 32–46; Muh.Ruslan Maryam, Maryam; Ramli, "Penggunaan Media Sosial Instagram @mardanielisera Dalam Meningkatkan Elektabilitas Di Pemilihan Legislatif 2024," *Jurnal Peurawi: Media Kajian Komunikasi Islam*, 2024, 1–22.

²³ Kathryn M Orzech et al., "Opportunities and Challenges of the Digital Lifespan: Views of Service Providers and Citizens in the UK," *Information, Communication & Society* 21, no. 1 (2018): 14–29.

²⁴ Mascheroni, Vincent, and Jimenez, "'Girls Are Addicted to Likes so They Post Semi-Naked Selfies': Peer Mediation, Normativity and the Construction of Identity Online."

construct their identities through posts that reflect vulnerability while simultaneously seeking social support.

Geographically, these studies span a wide range of cultural contexts, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Germany, China, Sweden, Iran, and South Africa. This diversity underscores that digital identity construction cannot be separated from the social and cultural environments in which users are situated. In Western contexts such as the UK and the US, digital identity is often linked to performativity and authenticity in online public spaces. Conversely, in Middle Eastern and Asian contexts such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, social media becomes a site of negotiation between traditional values, religious norms, and modern self expression²⁵.

Several studies also highlight professional identity and online communities as important dimensions of self construction in digital spaces. Research studies²⁶ illustrates how scientists and young professionals use platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and blogs to project academic credibility and professional authority. Self representation in this context is not merely personal but also strategic, as it relates directly to reputation and legitimacy within digital professional environments. On the other hand, highlights the construction of community identity through online forums, where users share emotional experiences and support to strengthen a sense of belonging and solidarity²⁷.

Overall, the findings reveal a reciprocal relationship between humans and technology. Technology is not merely a medium of communication but also acts as a social agent that shapes how individuals perceive and present themselves. Platform design, algorithms, and feedback systems such as likes and comments play a significant role in constructing users' digital identity experiences. The experimental study demonstrates that both positive and negative audience feedback can trigger identity shifts, illustrating that digital interactions have a direct impact on individuals' self concept²⁸. Collectively,

²⁵ Samaneh Eslamdoost, Kendall A King, and Zia Tajeddin, "Professional Identity Conflict and (Re) Construction among English Teachers in Iran," *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 19, no. 5 (2020): 327–41.

²⁶ Rob Cover, *Digital Identities: Creating and Communicating the Online Self* (Academic Press, 2015); McGregor, "Defining the 'Authentic': Identity, Self-Presentation and Gender in Web 2.0 Networked Social Media."; Mallan, "Look at Me! Look at Me! Self-Representation and Self-Exposure through Online Networks"; Bij de Vaate, Veldhuis, and Konijn, "Ethno-Racial Identity and Digitalisation in Self-Presentation: A Large-Scale Instagram Content Analysis"; Marcella-Hood, "Instagram versus Reality: The Design and Use of Self-Curated Photo Elicitation in a Study Exploring the Construction of Scottish Identity amongst Personal Style Influencers on Instagram."

²⁷ S Gellar, "Conceptions of Digital Self: Understanding Identity Formation, Performance and Online Social Reality" (University of Kent, 2019).

²⁸ Louise de Azambuja Elali, "Temporary Identities and Fixed Profiles: International PhD Students' Self-Representation on Social Media" (University of Sussex, n.d.); Bij de Vaate, Veldhuis, and Konijn, "Ethno-Racial Identity and Digitalisation in Self-Presentation: A Large-Scale Instagram

these synthesized findings reaffirm that digital identity is the result of a complex process of social negotiation between individuals, audiences, and the technological structures that frame their interactions.

Discussion

This discussion interprets the findings synthesized from fifteen peer-reviewed articles on digital identity construction on social media through the combined lenses of the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) Pinch & Bijker²⁹ and Baym's³⁰ theory of digital identity. Across the reviewed studies, digital identity consistently appears as a socio-technical outcome rather than an individual attribute expressed online in a straightforward way. Identity is produced through reciprocal interactions among users, relevant social groups, and platform structures—where social norms shape what is considered legitimate self-presentation, and technological arrangements shape what becomes visible, rewarded, and sustainable. The following discussion, therefore, focuses on how meaning is negotiated within communities, how platform affordances and feedback systems direct identity practices, and how users manage stability and multiplicity across different audiences.

1. Negotiating the Significance of Identity Within Pertinent Social Groups

The analysis of fifteen articles reveals that digital identity is predominantly established through social negotiation rather than solely through personal expression. The Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework posits that the significance of social media usage is shaped by pertinent social groups—such as youth, professionals, particular online communities, and virtual audiences—that collaboratively establish norms regarding what is deemed appropriate, appealing, authentic, or credible³¹. These standards serve as methods of social selection: users discern appropriate "identity formats" through observation, audience reactions, and iterative modifications. Identity relies on social legibility, prompting users to not only construct self-narratives but also to convert the self into symbols that align with group norms (visual style, language, subjects, and limits of disclosure).

Content Analysis"; Zhang, "The Construction of Digital Self-Identity: With the Focus on Chinese Social Media Platform"; Valeska Berg et al., "Young Children and the Creation of a Digital Identity on Social Networking Sites: Scoping Review," *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting* 7, no. 1 (2024): e54414; Mokwala, "Selfies as Self-Representation Tools during the Construction of Narrative Identities."

²⁹ Pinch and Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other."

³⁰ Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*.

³¹ Pinch and Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other."

This process demonstrates interpretive flexibility across cultural settings, as analogous actions may possess distinct meanings and ramifications when viewed through diverse value systems. Some studies³² demonstrate that the boundaries between privacy and publicity are negotiated through visual selections, linguistic choices, and posting frequency, all of which are influenced by socio-cultural norms. The analytical implication is that digital identity encompasses not only "who I am" but also "how I should present myself" to conform to locally defined moral parameters and societal standards. Consequently, identity work transforms into normative work: individuals navigate social hazards (stigma, rejection, loss of belonging) while seeking acknowledgment (approval, status, community connection). At this stage, digital identity represents a negotiation between self-representation and the necessity for societal acceptability.

2. Technology and the Visibility Economy as Catalysts for Identity Practices

The synthesis suggests that technology is a dynamic medium that shapes identity practices through its affordances, interface design, and systems of feedback and visibility. Features such as likes, comments, tales, and visual editing tools have a dual purpose: they facilitate expression while simultaneously functioning as mechanisms of social assessment. Audience feedback serves as a vehicle for meaning-making; digital responses can either confirm or amend users' self-presentation and may even catalyze identity transformations³³. This creates a loop of identity calibration: users upload representations, the platform mediates visibility and feedback, users interpret feedback according to group norms, and users modify subsequent performances.

This cycle partially quantifies identity formation: self-esteem and representational achievement are frequently assessed by attention metrics. In SCOT words, this underscores that feature meanings are not solely embedded in technical design, but are socially constructed through practice and can crystallize into prevailing platform logics (e.g., seeking exposure or matching content with rewarded elements). Platforms consequently transform into venues that allocate attention, which in turn becomes a social

³² Bijker and Law, *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*; Pinch and Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other"; Lin and Latoschik, "Digital Body, Identity and Privacy in Social Virtual Reality: A Systematic Review."

³³ Marwick and Boyd, "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience"; de Azambuja Elali, "Temporary Identities and Fixed Profiles: International PhD Students' Self-Representation on Social Media."

commodity³⁴. The primary implication is that digital identity is influenced not just by users' desired expressions but also by what is likely to be perceived and socially reinforced within the platform's framework. Consequently, technology facilitates the sustenance of certain identity forms that resonate with feedback systems, while rendering others more challenging to uphold due to diminished recognition or imposed limits.

3. Stabilization, Audience Segmentation, and the Tension between Authenticity and Performativity

The review indicates that identity building oscillates between two tendencies: stabilization (pursuing consistent, convincing forms) and segmentation (dividing personas for distinct audiences). Research studies³⁵ indicates that users in professional settings seek to establish stable digital identities that are perceived as credible. In SCOT terminology, this parallels closure: professional communities diminish interpretive variation over "appropriate" presentation and converge towards consensus on professional identity formats. Stabilization does not imply that identity remains fixed; instead, it becomes routine and standardized through a focus on competency, uniformity in communication style, and selective personal revelation. Credibility is attained by communal acknowledgment, rendering professional identity online highly contingent upon conformity to community standards and institutional expectations.

Simultaneously, Baym³⁶ elucidates the rationale behind users frequently cultivating numerous personas in the context of ambiguous audiences (perceived audiences). Marwick³⁷ elucidate audience segmentation via Finsta (Fake Instagram), which comprises a public persona (Rinsta) and a more intimate platform for expression regarded as more "authentic" (Finsta). The essential analytical observation is that authenticity and performativity do not function as a mere contradiction; instead, they are navigated as a continuum through audience regulation. Users engage in performativity within high-risk environments (public forums, professional reputational contexts) while reserving more candid speech for settings with more audience regulation (privacy settings, follower management). This indicates that "authenticity" on social media is frequently generated by

³⁴ Caleb T Carr and Rebecca A Hayes, "Identity Shift Effects of Self-Presentation and Confirmatory and Disconfirmatory Feedback on Self-Perceptions of Brand Identification," *Media Psychology* 22, no. 3 (2019): 418–44.

³⁵ Sarah Florini, "Tweets, Tweeps, and Signifyin' Communication and Cultural Performance on 'Black Twitter,'" *Television & New Media* 15, no. 3 (2014): 223–37; Wang et al., "Understanding the Relationship between Social Identity and Self-Expression through Animated Gifs on Social Media."

³⁶ Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*.

³⁷ Marwick and Boyd, "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience."

contextual and relational design rather than solely being an intrinsic personal attribute.

Lovisa Broms³⁸ demonstrate that identity can operate relationally, such as conveying fragility to elicit social support. The results of such expression are contingent upon response structures: community norms dictate acceptance, while platform feedback systems determine whether vulnerability is either encouraged or stigmatized. At this stage, digital identity manifests as a multifaceted negotiation: individuals curate their online personas for various audiences, communities assess and standardize identity expressions, and platforms influence recognition processes through strategic visibility.

Overall, the reviewed evidence suggests that digital identity on social media is constructed through a layered negotiation process: users transform themselves into socially legible forms, communities establish and enforce norms that define what constitutes an acceptable or credible identity performance, and platforms structure recognition through affordances, metrics, and visibility mechanisms. SCOT explains how these meanings remain open to negotiation yet can stabilize through closure within particular groups (exceptionally professional communities). At the same time, Baym's³⁹ framework clarifies how identity is experienced as an ongoing interactional process shaped by imagined audiences, feedback, and relational needs. Consequently, digital identity should be understood not as a direct mirror of offline selfhood but as an evolving socio-technical settlement—continuously adjusted to audience expectations and platform logics, and periodically stabilized when specific identity formats gain collective acceptance.

D. Conclusion

Based on the systematic review of seventeen scholarly articles, it can be concluded that the construction of digital identity on social media is a complex, dynamic, and continually evolving social process shaped by technological developments and socio cultural contexts. Digital identity is formed not only through an individual's personal expression but also through interactions with relevant social groups and the affordances and algorithms embedded within each platform. Consequently, digital identity emerges from an ongoing negotiation between human and non human actors, including individuals, online communities, and technological artifacts that mediate social interaction.

³⁸ Lovisa Broms, Susanna Hedenborg, and Aage Radmann, "Super Equestrians—the Construction of Identity/Ies and Impression Management among Young Equestrians in Upper Secondary School Settings on Social Media," *Sport, Education and Society* 27, no. 4 (2022): 462–74.

³⁹ Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of both the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) and Digital Identity theory as complementary frameworks for understanding the relationship between humans and technology in the era of social media. SCOT highlights the socially constructed nature of technology as a site of negotiated meanings, whereas Digital Identity theory emphasizes the interpersonal and reflective dimensions of self representation. The integration of these two perspectives helps explain how technology operates not merely as a medium of expression but as an integral part of the social processes that shape and are shaped by its users.

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