

Use of Instagram as a Medium for Adolescence Self-Identity Construction

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ABSTRACT

As social creatures, humans have a need to interact and communicate with others. Humans have many ideas, ideas, opinions, that need to be conveyed to meet their needs. Communication becomes a bridge that becomes a link in delivering messages so as to form understanding. In the era of rapidly developing technology, the face of communication has undergone a significant evolution. Communication can not only be done face-to-face, but now it can be through social media intermediaries. Instagram is a social media with many users in Indonesia. Instagram has advantages that can attract adolescents, so adolescents are active Instagram users. Through its use, Instagram can be a medium of self-identity construction. Adolescence is a period of searching for self-identity. Instagram users, especially adolescents, tend to share photos and videos that can represent themselves in front of an audience. This study discusses the use of Instagram as a medium of self-identity construction for adolescents. The subjects of this study were adolescents with an age limit of 19 years and domiciled in Jakarta. This research uses a quantitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of surveys. The results showed that Instagram is effective in the formation of self-identity through the consistency of content and narratives made according to self-representation.

Keywords: Communication; Instagram; Self-identity; Social media; Symbolic Interactionism Theory

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a strong foundation in all aspects of human life. The term communication comes from the Latin *communicare* which means to disseminate or inform. Communication holds the key to forming relationships, understanding, and collaboration in society. As social creatures, humans have a need to interact and communicate with others. Humans have many ideas, thoughts, opinions, that need to be conveyed to meet their needs. Communication becomes a bridge that becomes a link in delivering messages so as to form understanding. Understanding means the same meaning, so communication can occur if the meaning of the message conveyed by the communicator and the message received by the communicant are the same (Paujiah, Humairah, & Az-Zahra, 2023).

Communication is vital to human life. We can use communication to overcome disputes that humans cannot avoid. Open discourse in communication helps to eliminate ambiguity and human misunderstanding. Humans can talk through open discourse, which involves the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and perspectives that tend to vary. Because of this distinction, an individual

must take decisions in the best interests of the group. Therefore, communication is key in the decision-making process.

Communication has been an integral part of human life since the beginning of time. Based on Everett M. Rogers (in Murniarti, 2019), the history of communication is estimated to begin around 35,000 years BC. Thirteen thousand years later, or approximately 22,000 BC, prehistoric experts found paintings in caves that were supposed to be the result of human communication at that time. Until now, humans have communicated with each other to convey information, share knowledge, accomplish goals, solve problems, and interact. This demonstrates how communication has complemented human life.

According to Carl I. Hovland, communication is a process that allows a person (communicator) to be able to convey stimuli, with the aim of being able to change the behavior of others (communicant). With effective communication, we are able to influence and convince others. Hence, communication holds the key in creating collaboration. Individuals can work together and share ideas to achieve common objectives through effective communication. Meanwhile, according to Harold D. Laswell (in Wahdania, Felyona Febian, 2021), communication is a process that explains who, says what, with what channel, to whom and with what effect or result. Communication does not only occur directly, but can occur nonverbally in the form of codes or signs that have received mutual agreement (Wasisto & Yudha, 2022).

Mass communication is one branch of communication studies. Mass communication is defined as communication directed at a wide audience using mass media such as print, electronic, and online media. Mass media refers to the output of modern technology as a means of mass communication (Prihatiningsih, 2017). Gerbner defines mass communication as production and distribution that are based on an institution's technology and involve a continuous flow of messages. Mass communication enables messages to be received by a wide audience at the same time, resulting in coherence. Thus, mass communication has a significant influence on the audience since the message may be adjusted to the specific target.

In the era of rapidly developing technology, the face of communication has undergone a significant evolution. The sophistication of information technology has reduced the obstacles to the communication process, especially space and time problems (Sari, 2017). Communication can not only be done face-to-face, but now it can be through social media intermediaries. In this era, mass communication through online media is one effective way to convey messages because people like to skate in cyberspace. Social media, which is one type of online media, is more dominant as a means of interaction and distribution of information (Nur, 2021). The presence of social media has also changed almost all aspects of human life. Social media is a channel that can be easily used by the public to participate, share and fill in material on social networks (Nurhadi, 2017). Now people cannot be separated from social media because social media provides convenience for human life. Technological developments stimulate a new way of human life, this kind of life is known as e-life, which means that human life has been influenced by various needs electronically (Cholik, 2021). Social media offers various conveniences for life. The development of social media is increasing every year. Social media is a media that can provide space to interact in social networks (Nasrullah, 2015). On social media, users do not only communicate through comments but can express their opinions, share thoughts, or upload photos without the intention of or being directed at a particular person (Nasrullah, 2018). Social media requires us to make connections online with the people around us, just like in the real world. Social media provides an opportunity to create their own desired virtual identity, perpetuating its users to display self-image as freely as possible (Putri, 2016). Furthermore, people use social media in everyday life for social purposes, sources of information, entertainment, to become marketing tools. Indonesia is one of the countries with

the most social media users. According to datareportal.com, there are 167.0 million or equivalent to 60.4% of the total Indonesian population using social media in January 2023.

In today's digital era, there are many social media spread. Indonesian teenagers can be said to be very domineering number of internet service users. The results of research conducted by Sekolah Tinggi Sandi Negara (STSN) Indonesia with Yahoo show, among adolescents aged 15-19 year dominates internet users in Indonesia or equivalent to 64% (Kamhar, 2019). One of the social media with the highest number of users is Instagram. Based on We Are Social data, Instagram is ranked second of the most frequently used social media in Indonesia until February 2022. In 2022, Instagram users in Indonesia reached 99.15 million users (Putri, 2023). Reporting from dataindonesia.com, there are 109.33 million Instagram users in Indonesia until April 2023 based on Napoleon Cat data.

Instagram is a type of social media that are able to attract the attention of users with very varied backgrounds and ages (Irwanto et al., 2019). Instagram has the concept of sharing photos and videos that have their own appeal compared to other social media (Yulianto, 2023). Instagram was first launched by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger on October 6, 2010, through the Apple App Store in San Francisco, United States. Instagram was initially available only to iPhone users. Noticing Instagram's success at such a rapid pace, Facebook acquired Instagram and Instagram remains operating independently with a separate team of developers. After being acquired by Facebook, Instagram released an application version for Android users that allows Android users to access Instagram, resulting in Instagram becoming one of the social media sites with the most users. Instagram is currently one of the world's largest social media networks. Instagram's monthly active user base has surpassed billions of people worldwide. This demonstrates how influential and popular Instagram is in the daily lives of the worldwide community.

Instagram is a powerful communication tool in sharing photos, videos, messages, and information. Instagram allows users to engage in interactive conversations and provides opportunities to boost creativity. Instagram users, especially adolescences, tend to share photos and videos that can represent themselves in front of society. The number of Instagram users today has a great opportunity to create various opportunities. Therefore, it is very important to build the best self-identity in front of the community. In social life, humans use symbols to present their intentions, and vice versa (Laksmi, 2017).

According to Atmoko, (in Azlina et al., 2015) Instagram has five main menus, namely:

- Home Page, which is the main page that displays a timeline of the latest photos from Instagram users
- Comments, a feature that allows users to leave comments on uploads shared by Instagram users.
- Explore, a feature that displays photos and videos that are tailored to users' interests based on their activities.
- Profile, which is user information such as profile photo, biography, user uploads, number of followers, and number of users followed
- News Feed, this feature displays notifications of various activities carried out by Instagram users.

Furthermore, Instagram also has several other features, such as:

- Stories, a feature that allows users to share short photos and videos temporarily within 24 hours.
- Direct Message, a feature that allows users to send private messages

- Live, a feature that allows users to hold live broadcasts on Instagram

Instagram as a social media that is used by almost all adolescences, has a great impact on the lives of adolescences. Adolescence is a transition period from children to adults, where they are still looking for their identity and want to form their self-image (Sakti & Yulianto, 2018). Through its use, Instagram can be a medium of self-identity construction.

Self-identity is an identity that concerns the quality or existence of an individual, which means that an individual has a distinctive personal style (Fitri, 2020). Whereas self-identity is an awareness of oneself that individuals can obtain from observation and assessment of themselves from all aspects of self-concept (Hidayah & Hurati, 2016). Adolescence is a period of searching for self-identity so that adolescences are expected to be able to maximize their potential. Adolescents are expected to be able to recognize themselves through identity formation to overcome uncertainty. The term adolescence has an even broader meaning that includes mental, emotional, social, and physical maturity (Widiastuti, 2016). Adolescents may be faced with an identity crisis if they cannot define themselves to society so that they cannot meet personal and social expectations. Identity crisis is a stage for making decisions on important issues related to questions about one's identity (Hidayah & Hurati, 2016). A prolonged identity crisis during adolescents will cause adolescences to lose direction and have an impact on deviant behavior, commit crime, or close themselves (Ramdhanu, 2019).

The symbolic interactionism theory explains communication centered on the relationship of verbal and non-verbal symbols carried out by others. The symbolic interactionism is a theory often attributed to George Herbert Mead, as the pioneer of basic theory. Mead was born in Massachusetts, United States on February 27, 1863. He is regarded as a philosopher, sociologist, and psychologist because of his work at the University of Chicago. This theory focuses on human actions and interactions as well as in its analysis of social life (Littlejohn, 2009). According to Mead, there is an important thing in understanding significant symbols, namely *Mind, Self, Society*.

In symbolic interactionism, *mind* is the way humans interpret situations with the mind (Laksmi, 2017). This interpretation takes place through the interaction of the individual with himself, such as conversations in his own mind. Therefore, the *mind* is a thought process. *Self* is a way of reflecting on each individual from the assessment of other people's points of view or opinions. The *Self* consists of "I" and "Me", where "I" is the subject and "Me" is the object. The stages of self-reflection are, namely: (1) one imagines how their behavior or actions appear in the eyes of others; (2) one imagines how others judge actions or such behavior; and (3) one builds a conception of oneself based on the judgment of others of them (Derung, 2017). Mead states that the body is not the self and will become itself when the mind has developed (Rohmawati et al., 2021). *Society* is a social relationship created by each individual in society. Society is a network of social interactions where community members give meaning to their own actions and the actions of others using symbols (Sakti & Yulianto, 2018).

Mead argued that human communication occurs through the exchange of symbols and the interpretation of the symbols used. This theory was developed in the 1920s and 1930s. Mead was a professor at the University of Chicago and had many students who helped develop this theory. Mead often expressed his ideas about symbolic interactionism to his students and his students who published many notes and lectures so that George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism began to develop (Jean-François Côté in Nugroho, 2021). Herbert Blumer, one of Mead's students, coined the term "symbolic interaction". Blumer believes that society is not static, stagnant, but rather is based purely on macrostructure. The essence of society must be found in itself and in its actions (Derung, 2017). The main essence of symbolic interactionism is to focus on studying the nature interaction, which is a dynamic human social

activity (Nugroho, 2021). The presence of Instagram is able to be a medium for humans to express who they are. Instagram users build an interaction in the cyber world. The interaction that occurs encourages each individual to construct their identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instagram is a social media that is popular among people, especially teenagers. Instagram allows users to share messages, photos and videos with various features. Users can display their self-identity creatively as well. Through features such as posting photos, videos, stories, and profile descriptions, users can design visual narratives that reflect important aspects of their lives.

This has been researched by Arisai Olga Hakase Pasaribu with the research title "*Self Identity Construction of Instagram Media Users in Medan City*" in 2016. This research aims to find out how Instagram consumption in adolescents, find out how the description of adolescent identity through Instagram, and find out how to interpret the presence of Instagram in their behavior. This research is descriptive qualitative with observation and in-depth interview methods. Researcher use New Media Theory, Identity Construction Theory, and Self-Identity Theory. The results of this study show that informants use Instagram due to peer influence to capture photos and use Instagram in their spare time. The informants present an image in accordance with their real identity when using Instagram. Instagram is able to fulfill the needs of teenagers.

Similar previous research was conducted by Auliansyah Afriantoni, Dedi Kurnaedi, and Asep Nuryaman. This research is entitled "*Self-Identity Transformation of Muslim Women with Veils Through Instagram Social Media and Reference Groups (Phenomenological Study on the Niqab Squad Bandung Community)*" and was published in 2020. This research uses an interpretive paradigm which views that an understanding of social life as an analysis must take into account the subjectivity of a meaning. Researchers used Jennifer Todd's self-transformation theory through a phenomenological approach. This research discusses that the Niqab Squad Bandung account is active in displaying posts so as to attract Muslim women to follow this account. The Niqab Squad Bandung community is a forum that can improve friendship and strengthen the transformation of Muslim women's self-identity. The role of social media and Niqab Squad community reference groups has a good impact on women who transform their identity into veiled.

Another similar study is a study conducted by Evania Putri R in 2016. This research is entitled "*Self-Photo, Identity Representation and Spectacle Society on Instagram Social Media*" with visual ethnographic method, which is a method to collect material and data specifically related to image-making or image-producing activities both visually and textually. The results showed that in the phenomenon of self-portraits on social media, self-photo performers became part of the viewing society. Photos can build identity virtually. Therefore, self-portraits on social media make photos a favorite medium to 'build reality' according to what is desired as a form of identity representation of themselves. The informants presented different visual images in establishing identity. Image diversity becomes a commodity value that acts as 'capital' in visual performances.

A similar previous study was conducted by Tuti Widiastuti in 2016. The study is titled "*Engineering Adolescent Self-Image in Achieving Social Recognition on Instagram*". This research uses qualitative descriptive methods. The results showed that individuals tend to follow Instagram trends so as not to be considered tech stutterers. Adolescents do self-engineering through photos uploaded on Instagram so that they can meet their needs. Self-

image engineering motives on Instagram are divided into two categories, namely adolescents who engineer past self-images and adolescents who engineer future self-images. Adolescents upload photos of self-image fabrications with the aim of seeking self-proofing.

Based on some of the prior studies listed above, researchers discovered research gap that enable researchers to develop and modify these studies in order to achieve objective and current research findings. A research gap is a circumstance that reveals research gaps coming from differences in previous research results (including concepts, theories, data, or difficulties in the field), which will be a gap for further research (Siregar, 2022). According to Müller-Bloch & Kranz (in Miles, 2017), the knowledge gap is a common gap in the prior research. A knowledge gap can emerge in two situations. First, knowledge may not exist in the actual field to theories and literature from related research domains. Second, it might be the case that results of a study differs from what was predicted. The absence of research discussing the use of Instagram as a medium for the construction of adolescence self-identity in Jakarta is one of the novelties in terms of research results. The results of this study have a novelty that shows how adolescence in Jakarta use Instagram to build self-identity. The difference between this research and previous research lies in the object studied, the research method used, and the theory used. This research uses quantitative research methods, while Arisa Olga Pasaribu's research uses qualitative descriptive research methods, Evania Putri R's research uses visual ethnographic methods, and Tuti Widiastuti's research uses qualitative descriptive. Auliansyah Afriantoni, Dedi Kurnaedi, and Asep Nuryaman's research uses the theory of self-transformation, whereas this study uses the theory of symbolic interactionism. Therefore, researchers have not found any research that discusses specifically about the use of Instagram as a medium for the construction of adolescence self-identity in Jakarta.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach. The quantitative approach refers to the word "quantity" itself. Quantity means the number or amount of something. A quantitative approach means an approach that is "adding up or collecting" (Donatus, 2016). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the age limit for adolescences is 19 years, hence the subjects in this study are adolescences who are active Instagram users who live in Jakarta. Researchers used surveys as a data collection technique. Survey is a method of data collection conducted to obtain information from a group of people representing a particular population. The survey distributed was in the form of a questionnaire using google form with questions using a Likert Scale of 1 to 5. Likert scale is a research scale used to measure attitudes or opinions by asking questions. Likert scale is a research scale used to measure attitudes or opinions by asking questions. Value 1 is strongly disagree; value 2 is disagree; value 3 is don't know or neutral; value 4 is agree; and value 5 is strongly agree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, researchers provided statements about the use of Instagram to respondents. From the data below, the informants used Instagram as an entertainment medium. Instagram is a social media that has advantages in spreading visual content, such as photos and videos. Instagram users can produce interesting and entertaining content on Instagram. Now there has been a lot of funny content spread on Instagram and managed to attract users. Therefore, it can be concluded that Instagram not only serves as a communication tool, but also as an

entertainment medium that allows users to consume and enjoy content that suits their interests. As an entertainment medium, Instagram allows interaction. Users can leave comments on entertainment posts and bring up symbols that other users can accept. Symbolic interactionism theory emphasizes the formation of meaning, where Instagram users can form meaning from given symbols while interacting.

Table 1. Statement on the use of Instagram as an entertainment medium

Statement	Percentage
1 = strongly disagree	0%
2 = disagree	0%
3 = neutral	0%
4 = agree	52%
5 = strongly agree	48%

Based on table 2, users use Instagram as a medium of information. The rapid spread of messages on Instagram allows for quick and easily accessible receipt of information. In symbolic interactionism theory, the way a person receives information is related to the construction of self-identity. Now there are many Instagram accounts that specifically produce news content that is packaged attractively for Instagram users. In addition, many press conferences, interviews, or important events are broadcast through the Live feature in real-time. Therefore, Instagram allows its users to get actual, fast, and easily accessible information.

Table 2. Statement on the use of Instagram as an information medium

Statement	Percentage
1 = strongly disagree	0%
2 = disagree	0%
3 = neutral	0%
4 = agree	48%
5 = strongly agree	52%

Based on table 3, the average respondent uses Instagram as a medium for self-identity construction. Self-identity construction through Instagram can be done through self-profiles. Users can write short information that reflects themselves. In addition, users can create photo and video content that reflects their identity so that other Instagram users can recognize their identity. Consistency in content selection is needed in order to create a 'differentiator' of his identity with others. Instagram allows its users to interact freely. Users can give likes, comments, and use hashtags that are relevant to the content.

This is in line with symbolic interactionism theory which emphasizes the symbols and social interactions that shape a person's meaning and identity. The use of symbols, such as photos, videos, comments, and hashtags creates a representation of their identity. Published photo and video posts reflect values, interests, preferences, and other aspects of self-identity.

Table 3. Statement about the use of Instagram as a medium of self-identity construction

Statement	Percentage
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1 = strongly disagree	0%
2 = disagree	4%
3 = neutral	16%
4 = agree	36%
5 = strongly agree	44%

Based on table 4, the average respondent wants to be assessed according to the identity they display on Instagram. Building an identity on Instagram will reflect that of yourself in real life. Moreover, most followers of Instagram accounts come from colleagues in real life. Therefore, it is important to build a self-identity that suits oneself. Not only with the consistency of posts, in building self-identity it is also necessary to take into account actions on social media. Avoiding engaging in controversial conversations, uploading useful posts, and not doing harmful things will greatly affect the process of forming self-identity. According to symbolic interactionism theory, the construction of self-identity can be done by using symbols that describe oneself so that posts on Instagram can become a symbol that is able to describe oneself.

Table 4 Statement about the construction of self-identity displayed on Instagram

Statement	Percentage
1 = strongly disagree	0%
2 = disagree	20%
3 = neutral	16%
4 = agree	36%
5 = strongly agree	28%

Based on the data in table 5, the average respondent agrees that Instagram is effective in self-identity construction. Building an identity on Instagram can open doors to available opportunities. The wide reach of Instagram access makes this social media filled with people in various parts of the world. Self-identity displayed on Instagram can be one of the keys in expanding relationships. Through content uploads, one can invite interactions and conversations that match their interests. Communication established through this conversation can open up opportunities to expand social networks. The use of hashtags or following trends also makes it easier for someone to meet individuals who share common interests. The use of hashtags serves as a symbol that can unite an identity together. In symbolic interactionism theory, these symbols can form meanings so as to create a shared reality.

Table 5. Statement about Instagram are effective in the construction of self-identity

Statement	Percentage
1 = strongly disagree	0%
2 = disagree	0%
3 = neutral	16%
4 = agree	52%
5 = strongly agree	32%

Based on table 6, Instagram is influential in the construction of the identity of each user. Instagram allows its users to form narratives about themselves through activities carried out on Instagram such as uploading content and commenting, providing feedback, and so on. Activity

on Instagram creates a representation of the user. The activity also affects a person's self-perception. Even Instagram can be a medium to get to know yourself more. Someone who knows their identity will appear high self-confidence. Know their self-motivation, interests, and hobbies so that they can develop their potential. In the end, this will have an impact on both real and digital life. Thus, it can be concluded that Instagram can be a medium to form and expand self-identity. Symbolic interactionism theory is a theory that posits about oneself and the outside world, so it is important to know oneself first.

Table 6. Statements about Instagram are influential in the construction of self-identity

Statement	Percentage
1 = strongly disagree	0%
2 = disagree	4%
3 = neutral	24%
4 = agree	44%
5 = strongly agree	28%

CONCLUSION

In today's technological era, many social media offer convenience for human life. Instagram is a social media that adolescents like to use. The results showed that adolescents consider Instagram as an entertainment medium filled with attention-grabbing content. In addition, adolescents often get information that is fast, factual, and easily accessible through Instagram. Adolescents construct self-identities through photos and videos that reflect themselves on Instagram so that other users can recognize their identities. According to symbolic interactionism theory, the construction of self-identity can be done by using symbols that describe oneself, so that posts on Instagram can become a symbol that is able to describe oneself.

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