

## Chapter 16

# Identity Design and Identities Exhibited in Social Networks: A Review Based on Instagram Influencers

**Mehmet Ferhat Sönmez**

*Fırat University, Turkey*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Identity emerges as a flexible, multidimensional, variable, and slippery concept that cannot be defined through the processes of discussion and understanding. The new construction area of this concept, which is regarded as a process constructed on the social plane, is the social networking platforms. This is because these platforms are the most common communication environments where people and their lifestyles are presented to the outside world, in addition to the cheap and rapid satisfaction of their needs for information and entertainment. Face-to-face communication and language practices are not sufficient enough in the identity presentation anymore. Individuals choose to design and update their identities through social networks and to perform an image-based identity manifestation. This chapter examines how identity was established and manifested through social networks, and analyzes the identities the popular people in these networks designed and exhibited.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As of 2019, 4.3 billion people are Internet users, while 3.4 billion people (about 45% of the world's population) are social media users (*Global Overview Report* <https://p.widencdn.net/kqy7ii/Digital2019-Report-en>). Even this statistic alone will suffice to determine the position and importance of social media today. These platforms, which have been integrated into everyday life with the information age, have been easily accepted by masses. Even though they do not have a long history, they have been adopted in a short period of time. Every area of social life, from politics to social movements, from entertainment to education, has been influenced by the Internet and social networks.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6307-9.ch016

## **Social Media and Social Networks**

Social networking sites are applications that provide information and interaction to users through network technologies (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, social media is defined as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).” According to Mayfield, it is a new type of online media where a high level of sharing occurs and has the following properties (Mayfield, 2008: 5):

- **Participants:** Support and encourage individuals to contribute to the content and provide feedback.
- **Openness:** Social media platforms are open to feedback, they actively allow information sharing, and users can make comments there.
- **Conversation:** They allow bi-directional communication.
- **Community:** They pave the way for the formation of communities in a very short period of time.
- **Connectedness:** They allow links to be created to other pages and media related to topics that interest users.

Unlike traditional media, social media has its own characteristics. These can be summarized as the *determination of the content by the user, lack of time and space limitations, being in an interactive structure and the fact that users are independent of any publisher* (Erkul, 2009: 3). Social networks are the big living spaces within the small “worlds” that people create. People interacting in the Internet environment create a small world of their own. The small-world phenomenon was first discovered by sociologist Stanley Milgram in a mail experiment in 1967. Milgram has proposed a theory claiming that everyone in the world is no more than 6 people away from each other, and he has tested it. According to the classification with six degrees that emerged in the experiment, a person can reach someone he does not know through a maximum of 5 people. Being inspired by this experiment, the first social networking site on the Internet has been called “SixDegrees” (Patch, 2004, p. 4 as cited in Onat ve Alikılıç, 2008, pp. 1116–1117).

## **Popularity, Popular Culture and Social Media**

The etymology of the term “popular” can be traced back to the terms “*populace, population, public, and publication*” (Batmaz, 2006, p. 19). The term, which meant “public belonging to the people” in the late medieval period, is used to mean “*loved or chosen by many people*” in the linguistic sense nowadays (Erdoğan & Alemdar, 2005, p. 9). Williams also described the concept as “highly admired by many people and something consciously done to gain appreciation” (Storey, 2009, p. 6). Popular culture is the whole of beliefs, practices and norms that are embraced and shared by a broad circle of people — that is, by almost everyone, if not everyone (Schudson, 1999, p. 169). The middle class, which has changed and thrived through urbanization, has become the strongest bearer of popular culture (Storey, 2009, p. 13). The popular culture, which Rowe (1996, p. 20) considers a leisure practice, prioritizes the elements of entertainment and curiosity. Today, most modern media have also become an entertainment tool, and public events constitute a very insignificant part of media content. Therefore, media has become the primary means in manifesting popular cultural events (Curran, 1997, p. 146).

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/identity-design-and-identities-exhibited-in-social-networks/308609](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/identity-design-and-identities-exhibited-in-social-networks/308609)

## Related Content

---

### Exploring the Diffusion of Mobile Phone among Zimbabwean Migrants in Botswana

Do Kyun Kim (2011). *Global Media Convergence and Cultural Transformation: Emerging Social Patterns and Characteristics* (pp. 200-212).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-diffusion-mobile-phone-among/49605](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-diffusion-mobile-phone-among/49605)

### At the Mercy of Facebook: A Meta-Analysis on Impact of Social Networking Sites, Teen Brain on Teenage Pregnancies

Nirupama R. Akella (2022). *Research Anthology on Usage, Identity, and Impact of Social Media on Society and Culture* (pp. 417-437).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/at-the-mercy-of-facebook/308614](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/at-the-mercy-of-facebook/308614)

### E-Migration: A New Configuration of Technological, Geographical and Social Spaces

Nihil Olivera (2013). *International Journal of E-Politics* (pp. 18-31).

[www.irma-international.org/article/migration-new-configuration-technological-geographical/76893](http://www.irma-international.org/article/migration-new-configuration-technological-geographical/76893)

### Dynamic Social and Media Content Syndication for Second Screen

Andreas Menychtas, David Tomás, Marco Tiemann, Christina Santzaridou, Alexandros Psychas, Dimosthenis Kyriazis, Juan Vicente Vidagany Espertand Stuart Campbell (2015). *International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking* (pp. 50-69).

[www.irma-international.org/article/dynamic-social-and-media-content-syndication-for-second-screen/146276](http://www.irma-international.org/article/dynamic-social-and-media-content-syndication-for-second-screen/146276)

### Social Identity in Facebook Community Life

Shaoke Zhang, Hao Jiang and John M. Carroll (2010). *International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking* (pp. 64-76).

[www.irma-international.org/article/social-identity-facebook-community-life/52990](http://www.irma-international.org/article/social-identity-facebook-community-life/52990)