

# The Influence of Social Media Platforms on Self-Identity In the New Media Environment: the Case of TikTok and Instagram

Siyao Chen\*

Media, Culture & Society, University of Glasgow

**Abstract.** With the advent of the digital age comes a plethora of new media platforms through which individuals can exhibit themselves, offering a fresh angle from which to shape the formation of individual identities. However, new media has both beneficial and detrimental consequences on the self-identity development of individuals. This research will examine the positive and negative effects of new media platforms on self-identity construction, investigate the causes and characteristics of the self-identity crisis caused by inappropriate use of new media, and offer concrete recommendations for addressing relevant issues by combining the cases of TikTok and Instagram.

## 1 Introduction

In this age of rapid Internet expansion, new media, with its interactive and open elements, has emerged as a crucial venue for people to keep in touch with one another and shape their sense of identity. Individuals' sense of who they are in the world as well as their conception of society as a whole combine to form a person's sense of self-identity [1]. Free and unfettered expression of personal experiences and commentary on current events are hallmarks of the new media platform. It facilitates greater social participation, offers a venue for individual growth, and lessens the burden of establishing one's own unique identity. Simply said, the new media's unconstrained and open information environment provides a wealth of chances for people to learn about themselves, their place in the world, and how to better themselves and others. Some problems have emerged as a direct result of the proliferation of new media. People in today's ever-evolving media landscape have more opportunities than ever before, but they also lack a solid basis upon which to build their sense of self. It's no secret that two of the most popular social media platforms nowadays are Tiktok and Instagram. This research will use these cases to investigate the link between the rise of digital media and the identity crises that certain people experience, and then propose concrete strategies for dealing with these problems.

## 2 New media: an important way for people to construct their self-identity.

The emergence of new media has resulted in its widespread use as a medium through which individuals can communicate, form relationships, and form their sense of

self. As new online media continues to permeate both private and public spheres, and as new media platforms continue to evolve, we may expect to see a rise in the prevalence and regularity with which they are used. Therefore, in the present era, new digital media channels are essential for people to construct their identities.

### 2.1 New media is an important source of information for forming self-awareness

Self-awareness refers to the perception and evaluation of oneself, including one's psychological tendencies, personality features, and mental processes [3]. Only those who are conscious of themselves as individuals can learn to manage their thoughts and actions to create a whole character. When it comes to social media, platforms like TikTok and Instagram are particularly popular because of the ease with which users can share their thoughts and engage in two-way communication with others through tools like the "like," "comment," and "re-post" functions. Instantaneous feedback from other users and examining the visual features of other users can help people build a reflective understanding of themselves, which can have beneficial implications for the construction of self-identity.

### 2.2 New media is an important platform for self-presentation

"Self-presentation," as defined by Hernandez-Serrano et al. [2], refers to measures taken to ensure one's own safety. People are able to more fully express themselves and take pride in their individuality when they use new media to promote their own profiles. The need for people to show themselves to the world as respectable human beings were first recognized by Goffman [10]. He explained how people might strategically control their outside appearance by

\*Siyaochen28@gmail.com

tapping into the performer's intrinsic desire. Many people show themselves to the world in a way that differs from how they actually feel or what they truly want others to think of them. When creating content, everyone does so with their own unique goals and interests in mind [4]. Examples include Instagram and TikTok. Instagram is based on the "pictures first, text second" principle, and users can choose to make their postings permanent or temporary (i.e., Instagram stories). In order to "rehearse" each post, users select images, tweak text, and use beauty tools to enhance photos in accordance with public aesthetics. Thus, a post typically features a collection of selfies alongside some more picturesque shots. Users can curate their responses in the comments section to show an enhanced version of themselves, whether that be in terms of image or taste. Therefore, Instagram provides its users with a unique setting in which to establish and explore their own identities through the use of self-described profiles and carefully prepared material. The social media app TikTok, on the other hand, is tailored toward the production of short movies shot and edited entirely on mobile devices. Using this service, its users can stage their own individual presentations in accordance with their own scripts [5]. TikTok's great content suggestion system is another factor that encourages its user base to consistently produce innovative and engaging videos. As a result of this technique, users are encouraged to employ their imaginations in new ways. When users' content becomes viral, it's because it perfectly reflects who they are in their own minds, and that helps them form their identities [6].

### **2.3 New media provides a meaningful environment for self-integration**

The final phase of growth is self-integration, and it is at this point that individuals are able to fully realize their individuality [7]. At this time, people should evaluate themselves in relation to their surroundings and consider the opinions of those around them [7]. Self-integration can be aided by the openness and interactivity of new media platforms. By comparing their own profiles to those of others and reading the advice and criticism offered in the like and comment areas, users internalize the social norms that are prevalent on these platforms [8]. The ability to self-evaluate, course-correct, and ultimately become more fully and holistically integrated into society is facilitated by this knowledge of self and others. Through doing so, individuals can better assimilate into society and become aware of the processes by which their identities are formed.

## **3 Representation of self-identity crisis in the new media environment and its influence mechanism**

As a result of the increased freedom of expression and access to more knowledge made possible by the proliferation of new media, people have developed a broader understanding of themselves and a more nuanced understanding of their own identities. The virtual, open, and accessible character of digital media has dissolved the physical barriers between people and information. The new media

platform has brought together people from all over the world, of all different ages, backgrounds, and cultures, expanding their own sense of who they are and where they fit in the grand scheme of things. The independence and openness of new media have helped increase the field's information diversity, but they have also brought new challenges. Negative comments and misinformation can have a significant impact on how individuals see themselves. Because of the mixed nature of the new media environment, they are open to being manipulated by the virtual network, which might lead to an identity crisis.

In the modern media landscape, people utilize platforms like Instagram and TikTok to interact with one another and pass the time, and this activity progressively evolves into a stage upon which individuals can display themselves. But there are always two sides to a story in the age of alternative media. One negative effect is that some people's sense of aesthetics is warped. As a result of being influenced by "net stars" and "entertainment stars," their online personas don't always match up with who they are in real life, and the content they share may no longer be an authentic representation of who they are but rather a carefully curated and processed version of themselves. Most of the girls' online profiles, according to Kapidzic and Herring's [11] research, featured the women dressed provocatively and posing in a sexually suggestive fashion (with their legs or shoulders exposed) (showing cleavage). Teenage boys were more likely to choose images that showed them at a greater distance from the camera and looking away from the viewer than their female counterparts, and they were more likely to choose photos that depicted dominant, idealized, and affiliative behaviors as well as attractive ones. Some of the male participants, however, posed in a sexually suggestive manner, including in shirtless images. In this hypothetical and idealized self-representation scenario, people's online and offline personas are very different from one another. Consistency in one's own self-representation across time and geography is an impossibility [9]. On the other hand, people cannot fully know others' genuine status based on the image portrayed in social software because self-representation is unreal and inconsistent. Therefore, when there is a large disparity between the two states, it not only boosts people's confidence in their outward appearance in the real world, but also makes them feel inferior and frightened.

### **3.1 The Impact of multiple accounts**

#### **3.1.1 Role-playing as a way to meet the expectations of different community groups**

G-H Mead believed that role is developed by the self through learning and playing the role of others on the basis of reflection, and that role is not only given to individuals by society or others, but also a product of individuals' self-evaluation in order to meet the expectations of others. In the original concept of role expectations, scholars were more interested in expressing a symbolic role with actual status, which contains complex factors such as behavior, cognition, and attitude that are framed by social groups, i.e., people have stereotypes about roles. However, in the

new media context, the plurality of roles and the mixing of audience groups make role expectations complex and blurred. Some images that break the established impressions, even those considered deviant and non-mainstream, can be sought after and loved by some people. At the same time, the ease of creating a persona makes users no longer look deeper into whether the real user behind the account is completely unified with the persona, and the expectations of other users will be satisfied simply because the media behavior and activities are in line with the persona. Such ambiguity and ease of creation lower the threshold of meeting others' expectations, and the cost of role-playing decreases, so that users can move freely between different accounts, releasing their inner desire to play and maximizing their multi-directional recognition. "I hope that the content of my account is liked and recognized by others" is the psychological state of most users when they use social software. "Identity does not exist in isolation, it must be recognized by the other party" is the most intuitive expression of role expectations. The Internet has symbolized material and spiritual products, and users are vulnerable to bad orientation. In such an atmosphere, the Internet shows a trend of pan-entertainment, and users who deviate from mainstream values are reduced to tools of capital.

### **3.2 The anxious "self" in connection**

According to the sociologist Giddens, in the post-traditional order, self-identity is self-reflexive. One's identity is not found in one's actions or in the reactions of others, but in narratives, so that individuals are constantly incorporating what is happening in the external world and combining these stories with the story of the self to explore who we are and who we want to be. But such social interactions also bring about social anxiety. Social anxiety is defined as a state in which people show inhibition in their interactions with others in order to avoid social interactions. Social anxiety develops for a variety of reasons. In terms of biological instincts, people assess their situation based on the information they gather about others. And in doing so, social comparisons tend to develop. Social anxiety may stem from social comparison. In their research study, Weeks et al. found that social comparison was positively associated with social interaction anxiety and fear of public scrutiny. When more social comparisons are made, people are more likely to be concerned about what others say about themselves. And this concern about self-evaluation, no matter who they are comparing themselves with, they will try to shape their behavior to conform to certain standards or norms.

### **3.3 The "self" that is restricted under surveillance**

With the spread of technology, it is possible to disseminate personal information to online audiences. According to Elon, social media rules and initiatives in terms of sharing, visibility, and exposure further immerse people in a "surveillance culture" under the default form of surveillance, and social media makes surveillance a part of life. Under surveillance, the ongoing engagement of young people in

social media also reflects changes in how individuals reflect their sense of self. Young people today have learned how to present themselves in social media, reshaping and re-expressing themselves in this digital space. The practice of self-monitoring, triggered by external surveillance, has important implications for young people's self-expression.

## **4 How to properly guide people to use new media platforms to build a good self-identity**

### **4.1 Cultivate Netizen's healthy media literacy and critical ability**

Users of the Internet need to cultivate a healthy media interpretation and critical ability to make the most of the Internet's media resources, while also protecting themselves from their own illogical virtual selves and the dangers of a pluralistic media environment. An optimistic perception of oneself is helped forward by this. To be more explicit, users of the new media platform should take the initiative to create high-quality, ethical works. Second, it is incumbent upon the public to exercise discretion when evaluating the information presented to them in the context of the new media landscape. Netizens, in the end, should be consistent in their online and offline personas.

### **4.2 Raise the awareness of the responsibility of new media practitioners to guide the construction of good self-identity of netizens**

Increased efforts by gatekeepers in the new media industry are needed to protect the public from harmful content and allow for the positive growth of online communities and individual identities. At the same time, experts in the field of new media should focus on the aggregation of online public opinion, zero in on trending subjects, and steer public opinion so that its negative content doesn't hinder netizens' capacity for self-awareness and self-integration. Practitioners of new media should always be cognizant of the influence they have in the media, act professionally to preserve objectivity, fairness, and composure, uphold a high regard for the truth, and be transparent about the value judgment standards of online gate-keeping in order to prevent the spread of false information and promote the dissemination of accurate data.

To stimulate social media users' intention to identify false information, we should focus on digital literacy for all people, cultivate citizens' awareness of digital ethics and privacy protection, and strengthen the government's security governance of the digital intelligence environment; prevent social media users from falling into the self-constructed information filtering bubble due to cognitive bias. By improving digital literacy, social media users are cultivated to have the digital awareness to break the "echo chamber". Second, improve users' risk perception of the cybersecurity environment and help social media users develop good risk awareness and risk vigilance. The level of risk perception of social media users can be improved by strengthening education on the risk of false information

through popularizing the science of the hazards of false information. Establish a mechanism for social media users to co-construct and promote the risk perception of false information and digital literacy, strengthen the implementation of social correction mechanism through thematic education, and improve social media users' profound understanding of the falsity of false information content, the misleading nature of intentions and the organization of actions.

Finally, since subjective norms and perceived behavioral control can shape social media users' attitudes toward disinformation identification, social media users can be effectively guided to consciously identify their behaviors by increasing publicity efforts to make them fully aware of the value and significance of disinformation identification; combined with the significant positive effect of perceived behavioral control variables on identification intention, it shows that "The significant positive effect of perceived behavior control variables on the intention to identify shows that "having the ability to do" is crucial to the intention to identify false information, therefore, the motivation of social media users to implement false information identification behavior should be stimulated by developing incentive mechanisms and improving the security of the online information environment.

## 5 Conclusion

As digital technology evolves rapidly, new media platforms become more accessible and interactive, giving users greater freedom of expression and access to information. They've also grown in significance as a way for people to share their thoughts and feelings with others and discover who they are as individuals. Of course, there are negative aspects to using modern media as well. For example, when developing a sense of identity, internet users are bound to be influenced by both positive and negative feedback and misinformation. Another issue is that people on the internet can start to see themselves in a more positive light. These will lead to contradictory descriptions of oneself and make it difficult to develop a robust sense of self. Therefore, it is important for internet users to develop strong media literacy and critical thinking skills. Professionals in the field of new media should take on a greater sense of accountability in order to steer the growth of people's self-awareness in a positive direction. According to the findings, it is crucial to know how to use social media properly in the current media landscape.

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