

Consumer Society and Identity Formation on Social Media: Baudrillard's Theoretical Reflection

Mohd Nizar Mohd Mokhtar^{1*}, Saiful Akram Che Cob @ Ab Ghafar²,

Mohd Hafnidzam Adzmi³

^{1,2,3}*Faculty of Art And Design, UiTM Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 23 April 2025

Revised 23 August 2025

Accepted 29 June 2026

Online first

Published 30 June 2026

Keywords:

Hyperreality

System of Sign

Social Media

Consumer Society

DOI:

10.24191/ijad.v10i1.5ntfxz18

ABSTRACT

This paper critically analyses how identity is formed on social media through Jean Baudrillard's theories of simulation and simulacra, framing digital selfhood within the context of consumer society. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Facebook are viewed as hyperreal environments where users curate selective lifestyles and consumption practices. In these spaces, users embedded their self-presentations within symbolic systems shaped by commercial influences and algorithmic logic. From a Baudrillardian perspective, identity is not an authentic expression, but rather a simulation, an assemblage of signs increasingly detached from lived experience. However, this study also acknowledges counterarguments that challenge Baudrillard's deterministic view. Drawing on Stuart Hall's Reception Theory, it highlights users' agency in negotiating meaning, strategically performing authenticity, and incorporating local cultural values into digital practices. This suggests that while social media may intensify simulation, it also serves as a contested space where representation is actively shaped and reinterpreted. By integrating Baudrillard's critique with reception-oriented perspectives, this narrative review contributes to media and visual communication scholarship by addressing the intersection of hyperreality and user agency in digital cultures.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook has fundamentally changed how people construct, represent, and interpret their identities in today's digital culture (Baym, 2015; Boyd, 2014; Turkle, 2011; Yau et al., 2019). Initially created as tools for communication and social interaction, these platforms have now developed into complex symbolic environments where users actively curate and perform their identities through both visual and textual representations (Gunduz, 2017). In these environments, identity is no longer solely based on lived experiences. It is increasingly shaped by mediated signs, aesthetic choices, and algorithmically determined visibility.

^{1*} Corresponding author. E-mail address : nizar11@uitm.edu.my

This transformation is closely tied to the rise of consumer society, as described by Baudrillard (1970), where meaning, status, and identity are constructed through systems of consumption rather than production. In digital contexts, this idea extends beyond physical goods and encompasses the consumption and circulation of images, lifestyles, and symbolic representations. Social media platforms serve as spaces where individuals engage in the production and exchange of sign-values, embedding their identities within broader cultural narratives that are influenced by branding, visual aesthetics, and platform economies (Wilska et al., 2023). Practices such as self-branding, influencer culture, and curated lifestyles demonstrate how identity becomes increasingly commodified and aligned with consumerist logic (Khamis et al., 2017; Kim & McDonald-Liu, 2023).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

From a theoretical perspective, Baudrillard's (1981; 1994) concepts of simulation and simulacra offer a critical lens for understanding changes in contemporary society. He argues that today's society is characterized by an abundance of signs that no longer represent reality. Instead, they create a state of hyperreality where the distinction between what is real and what is simulated collapses. Within this framework, identity is not a genuine expression of the self but rather a constructed collection of signs that are continuously reproduced through systems of representation detached from any original reference. Social media exemplifies this condition as users selectively create idealised versions of themselves through filters, narratives, and algorithm-driven trends. This often results in identities that align more with symbolic expectations than with lived realities (Moris, 2021; Scott, 2023).

While Baudrillard's perspective offers a compelling critique of simulation and consumer culture, it has faced significant challenges due to its deterministic approach, which often downplays human agency. In contrast, Stuart Hall (1973; 1997) emphasises that meaning is not passively consumed but is actively constructed through the process of encoding and decoding. His reception theory suggests that audiences can negotiate, resist, or reinterpret dominant meanings in light of their social and cultural contexts. In digital environments, this means that users are not merely subjects of simulation; rather, they are active participants who strategically perform authenticity, remix cultural codes, and incorporate localised meanings into their digital practices (Abidin, 2023; Jenkins, 2006).

Empirical studies support the idea that digital identity is not merely a byproduct of simulation but rather a complex aspect of negotiation, shaped by cultural specificities and relational dynamics. For example, research conducted in Malaysia reveals that social media influencers' perceived authenticity is linked to factors such as credibility, relatability, and transparency, rather than being completely overshadowed by simulation (Abdul Hamid et al., 2022; Norazman et al., 2023). Furthermore, trust, credibility, and reputation significantly impact how Malaysian youth perceive and engage with influencer-driven identities (Abdul Rahman et al., 2025; Ahmad et al., 2024; Che Wan Mohd Khair, 2023; Taher et al., 2022). These findings indicate that while social media amplifies the dynamics of simulation, it also creates opportunities for agency, resistance, and cultural expression, thereby challenging Baudrillard's theoretical assumptions.

Despite the extensive literature on social media, identity formation, and digital consumption, there remains a significant gap in integrating the ontological perspective on simulation with reception-oriented understandings of user agency. Existing studies tend to focus either on the psychological and sociological aspects of identity or on the structural influences of media systems. They often overlook how identity functions as both a simulated construct and a negotiated cultural practice. This gap is particularly evident in the limited exploration of how hyperreality and agency coexist within everyday digital interactions.

This study aims to critically review existing literature to investigate how consumer society and simulation influence identity formation on social media. It will also consider the role of the user agency in negotiating meaning and authenticity. Specifically, this paper seeks to: (i) explore how consumerist logics embedded in social media impact identity construction, (ii) analyse how simulation and simulacra operate within digital self-representation, and (iii) examine how

users negotiate, reinterpret, and perform their identities within hyperreal environments. By integrating Baudrillard's theoretical framework with reception-oriented perspectives, this study contributes to media and visual communication scholarship, offering a more nuanced understanding of digital identity as both a product of simulation and a site of cultural negotiation.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a narrative literature review designed to critically examine and synthesise existing theoretical and empirical research on identity formation within digital consumer societies. Unlike a systematic literature review, which focuses on comprehensive quantitative aggregation, a narrative review was chosen for its flexibility in integrating complex sociological theories with contemporary empirical findings. This approach provides a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon.

To ensure a thorough synthesis, a targeted literature search was conducted using prominent academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Google Scholar. The search strategy utilised specific keywords and their combinations, such as “hyperreality,” “simulacra,” “social media identity,” “consumer society,” “algorithmic curation,” and “influencer authenticity.”

Specific inclusion criteria guided the selection of literature. First foundational theoretical texts, particularly the classical work of Baudrillard (on simulation and hyperreality) and Stuart Hall (on reception theory), were included to establish the primary analytical framework. These were supplemented by secondary concepts, such as Erving Goffman's dramaturgical performance, to provide context for online self-presentation. Second, contemporary empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals, with a strong emphasis on digital youth culture, micro-celebrities, and influencer dynamics, were selected to ground the theoretical discourse in current realities. Attention was given to recent studies conducted in Southeast Asia and Malaysia to highlight local cultural nuances and the active negotiation of digital authenticity. Non-academic sources and literature entirely unrelated to digital or media identity were excluded from the analysis.

The collected literature underwent thematic synthesis. The selected articles and texts were critically analysed, compared, and categorised according to recurring patterns and conceptual intersections related to digital selfhood. This process led to the identification of four primary themes that form the Results section of this paper: (1) consumer society in digital media, (2) identity formation as simulacrum, (3) commodification of selfhood, and (4) algorithmic mediation of identity in platform environments. By mapping these themes, the study connects the deterministic media theories with the lived experiences of user agency in digital environments.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the findings from a narrative literature review that thematically synthesises existing research on digital identity in social media environments. The analysis reveals that identity construction in today's digital culture is influenced by a combination of interconnected structural and symbolic processes. Together, these processes reflect the transformation of selfhood within the framework of consumer society and mediated communication.

Based on the theoretical framework established by Baudrillard (1970; 1981/1994), the literature analysed indicates that sign-value, simulation, and symbolic exchange are increasingly influential in shaping identity practices. Social media platforms function not just as communication spaces but also as complex systems in which identities are constructed, shared, and assessed through visual representation, cultural codes, and algorithmic visibility. In these environments,

identity becomes intertwined with processes of consumption, performance, and reproduction, reflecting broader changes in how meaning and selfhood are formed in digital contexts.

The thematic analysis identifies four key dimensions that characterise the formation of digital identity. First, the logic of consumer society provides the structural foundation for identity construction through symbolic consumption and mediated representation. Second, identity emerges as a simulacrum, in which selfhood is produced through systems of signs detached from any stable reference point. Third, the commodification of selfhood emphasises how individuals transform their identities into marketable entities within platform economies. Finally, algorithmic mediation introduces a structural layer that regulates visibility, influencing which forms of identity are amplified and sustained.

It is important to understand that these themes are not separate or isolated processes; they are interconnected aspects of a larger system for constructing digital identity. Consumerist logics influence how symbolic identities are created, simulation determines how representation is shaped, commodification affects the perceived value of identity, and algorithms govern how identities circulate. Together, these processes create a recursive and dynamic system in which identity is continuously produced, reproduced, and reconfigured.

The literature suggests that these structural dynamics do not function in a completely deterministic way. While identity is influenced by systems of simulation, commodification, and algorithmic control, users actively engage with and reinterpret these structures through their daily practices of self-presentation and content creation. This indicates that digital identity emerges from the interaction between structural forces and user practices, a tension that will be further explored in the following discussion section.

4.1 Consumer Society in Digital Media

The rise of social media has amplified the characteristics of consumer society, reshaping digital platforms into arenas where identities are created, shared, and accessed through symbolic consumption. Drawing on the work of Baudrillard (1970), we understand consumer society as one where sign-value prevails. In this context, goods, images, and representations serve not only practical purposes but also carry symbolic meanings that help shape social identities. In today's digital landscape, this concept extends beyond just the consumption of physical products to include the adoption of lifestyles, aesthetics, and mediated experiences.

Users of social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook actively create and share content that showcases aspirational lifestyles and curated identities. These platforms serve as symbolic marketplaces where images, stories, and visual codes are exchanged as forms of cultural capital, a process deeply rooted in the concept of symbolic exchange (Baudrillard, 1976/2017). Previous studies have highlighted that individuals increasingly shape their identities through the selective display of their consumption practices, embedding personal meaning within the broader systems of branding and representation (Wilska et al., 2023). This trend indicates a shift from identity based on ownership to identity based on representation, emphasising that visibility and perception are vital to self-definition.

The rise of influencer culture highlights how consumerist ideas are woven into the formation of digital identities. Influencers and micro-celebrities serve as cultural intermediaries, shaping norms related to desirability, authenticity, and belonging through their curated content and strategic self-presentation (Khamis et al., 2017). Their self-branding practices illustrate how identity has become commodified, turning individuals into marketable entities that thrive within platform economies. Additionally, Kim and McDonald-Liu (2023) emphasised that micro-celebrities use visual storytelling and aesthetic consistency to engage their audiences, reinforcing the notion that identity functions within a system of symbolic exchange. These carefully curated self-presentations significantly impact audience purchasing intentions, demonstrating how identity performance can translate into economic value in digital consumer societies (Leong et al., 2024; Renganathan & Teh, 2023).

This phenomenon is not limited to influencers; it has become normalised among everyday users as well. Social media platforms encourage individuals to engage in practices of curation, performance, and aesthetic optimisation, aligning their self-presentations with dominant cultural trends and the expectation of algorithms. As a result, identity formation is integrated into a broader system of consumption, where individuals simultaneously act as both consumers and producers of symbolic content. This aligns with Baudrillard's (1970) assertion that, in a consumer society, individuals are embedded within systems of signs that shape their desires, behaviours, and social relationships.

Platform features like hashtags, filters, and engagement metrics enhance the symbolic nature of consumption in digital environments. These tools help circulate and validate specific identity forms. As a result, users can project a sense of authenticity while also conforming to mainstream aesthetic standards. This creates a paradox where individuality is conveyed through standardised representations. Consequently, identity becomes less about genuine self-expression and more about strategically aligning with culturally and algorithmically valued symbols.

The literature clearly shows that consumerist logic significantly influences the formation of digital identity. However, this process is not completely deterministic. Users actively engage with and reinterpret these symbolic systems, negotiating their identities within the limitations set by platform structures. This suggests that consumer society in digital media should be viewed not only as a system of commodification but also as a dynamic space where meaning is continually constructed, contested, and reconfigured.

4.2 Identity Formation as Simulation

A central theme in the literature is the conceptualisation of identity on social media as a form of simulacrum. This means that identity is no longer rooted in an authentic reference but exists as a constructed system of signs. Drawing on the work of Baudrillard (1981/1994), simulacra are representations that have become detached from reality, functioning within a self-referential system where meaning is generated through the circulation of signs rather than through any connection to lived experience (Barroso, 2020; Damayanti & Hidayat, 2019). Recent conceptualisations extend this idea of hyperreality to modern visual formats and to emerging spaces such as the metaverse (Durani & Eckhardt, 2024; Mohamed & Bukhari, 2023). Within this framework, identity in digital environments is not merely represented but is actively produced as a simulation.

Social media platforms exemplify a modern condition in which users create highly curated, idealised versions of themselves through visuals and textual content. Features such as filters, staged images, aesthetic composition, and algorithmically curated feeds contribute to the development of identities that prioritise appearance, coherence, and desirability over authenticity. A significant aspect of this phenomenon is the emergence of virtual influencers, fully simulated digital entities that foster real audience engagement, blurring the line between authentic human likeness and complete simulation (Ju et al., 2024). Research has shown that users actively engage in impression management strategies, crafting representations that conform to platform aesthetics and audience expectations (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Lang, 2019). These practices illustrate how identity becomes a performative construct, continuously shaped and reshaped through acts and representation.

The concept of "curated self" emphasises the idea that identity functions as a simulacrum. Instead of representing a stable, inner self, identity is shaped through selective sharing, visual styling, and narrative construction. Papacharissi (2010) argues that social media encourages a kind of self-presentation where identity is determined by visibility and appearance, often becoming more important than the actual reality beneath it. In this scenario, the perceived self holds more power than the lived self, aligning with Baudrillard's claim that in hyperreality, simulations can develop and influence reality itself.

Empirical research supports the idea that digital identities are often formed through imitation, repetition, and adaptation of existing cultural codes. For example, studies on Instagram and TikTok show that users tend to replicate

popular aesthetic trends, lifestyle narratives, and visual formats that are widely shared across these platforms (Christanti et al., 2021; Firmansyah et al., 2024). These practices suggest that identity is not created in isolation. Rather, it emerges through interactions with pre-existing symbolic systems. This reinforces the notion that identity operates within a network of signs instead of being a purely original expression.

Furthermore, the logic of simulacra is further emphasised by the recursive nature of digital media, where representations are continuously reproduced, shared, and reinterpreted. Content is not only consumed; it is also re-encoded into new forms, contributing to an ongoing cycle of simulation. As noted by Morris (2021) and Scott (2023), social media environments create a culture in which representations gain legitimacy and authority through circulation rather than authenticity. This recursive process leads to identities that are increasingly detached from real-life experiences, existing instead as hyperreal constructs sustained by visibility and engagement.

The literature closely aligns with Baudrillard's concept of identity as simulacrum, but it also suggests that this process is not entirely devoid of meaning. Even within systems of simulation, users attribute personal, social, and cultural significance to their representations. This implies that identity as simulacrum should not be viewed as a complete loss of reality. Rather, it represents a transformation in how reality is constructed and experienced. Thus, identity operates within a complex interplay of representation, perception, and cultural interpretation, where simulation becomes the primary mode through which the self is expressed in digital environments.

4.3 Commodification of Selfhood

A prominent theme in the literature is the growing commodification of self-identity within digital consumer culture, where personal identity is transformed into something marketable and exchangeable. According to Baudrillard (1970), consumer society is characterised by the circulation of sign-values. In this context, individuals derive meaning and social standing not from their intrinsic qualities, but from their engagement in symbolic systems of consumption. In social media environments, this logic applies to personal identity as well, where selfhood becomes intertwined with processes of branding, visibility, and value creation.

Social media platforms encourage users to create and present themselves as curated identities that align with specific aesthetic, cultural, and commercial expectations. This is evident in the widespread adoption of self-branding practices, where individuals strategically design their online personas through visual consistency, lifestyle narratives, and symbolic associations. As highlighted in existing studies, the rise of micro-celebrities and influencers signifies a shift in which identity is not merely expressed but deliberately produced as a form of cultural and economic capital (Khamis et al., 2017). In this context, identity operates similarly to a brand, requiring continuous maintenance, optimisation, and audience engagement.

The commodification of selfhood is reinforced by the features of social media platforms, which influence user behaviour through metrics like likes, shares, comments, and follower counts. These metrics serve as forms of symbolic validation, turning visibility into a measurable currency within the digital economy. As a result, users are encouraged to construct identities that maximise engagement, often aligning their self-presentations with popular trends and content favoured by algorithms. This scenario reflects Baudrillard's (1970) assertion that, in a consumer society, value is increasingly determined by meaning rather than substance.

Empirical research supports the idea that individuals adopt marketing-oriented strategies when presenting themselves. For example, Bull (2022) illustrates how micro-influencers shape their identities in ways that resemble commercial branding practices, which blur the line between personal expression and economic activity. Similarly, studies on influencer culture show that what is perceived as curated authenticity is often strategically performed to build trust, reliability, and connections with audiences, rather than occurring as a purely spontaneous or genuine expression (Abidin, 2023). This indicates that authenticity itself becomes commodified, functioning as a performative resource within digital economies.

Moreover, the commodification of identity extends beyond individual users to encompass broader cultural practices. Lifestyles, values and experiences are packaged and shared as consumable content. Social media feeds are filled with representations of wellness, travel, fashion, and luxury. These representations are not only displayed but also imitated by others in a cycle of aspiration. This ongoing process leads to a standardisation of identity, as users adopt similar visual styles and narrative structures to remain visible and relevant within the platform ecosystems.

While the literature strongly emphasises the commodifying tendencies of digital culture, it also suggests that this process is not entirely homogenising. Users maintain a degree of agency in how they construct and negotiate their identities, selectively engaging with consumerist logics while incorporating personal and cultural meanings into their representations. This indicates that the commodification of selfhood should not be viewed as a totalizing condition, but rather as a dynamic process shaped by the interaction of platform structures, cultural expectations, and individual practices.

4.4 Algorithmic Mediation of Identity in Platform Environments

A prominent theme in the literature is the influence of algorithmic systems on identity construction within social media environments. Unlike traditional forms of identity formation that rely on interpersonal interaction or lived experiences, digital identity is increasingly shaped by platform architectures that control visibility, engagement, and circulation. These algorithmic systems act not just as technical tools, but as cultural mechanisms that determine how identities are created, recognised, and valued.

Drawing on the theoretical insights of Baudrillard's (1968/2020), the concept of the "code" is particularly significant for understanding digital identity. Baudrillard defines the code as a system of rules and signs that shapes meaning and social relationships. In today's social media context, algorithms act as an extension of this code, organising content based on engagement metrics and predictive modelling. As a result, identity formation becomes embedded in a coded environment, where visibility depends more on conformity to platform logic than on individual expression.

The influence of algorithms is clearly seen in how content is prioritised and shared on platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. These systems selectively highlight certain identities while marginalising others, based on factors such as user interactions, popular formats, and audience engagement. Scholars argue that algorithms shape user behaviour by encouraging the creation of content that matches dominant aesthetic and narrative trends (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2014). As a result, individuals adjust their self-presentation strategies to meet algorithmic expectations, crafting identities that are optimised for visibility and circulation.

This process adds a structural element to how identities are formed, where individuals negotiate their agency within the limitations set by platform design. Users do not have complete freedom to express themselves. Instead, they function within a system that rewards certain types of representation. For example, content that is visually appealing, emotionally engaging, and aligned with current trends is more likely to be promoted. This leads to the replication of similar identity expressions among users. As a result, digital identities often become standardised, with individuality expressed through pre-designed templates that adhere to specific aesthetic and performative norms.

The literature emphasises that algorithmic mediation does not lead to total determinism. Users actively engage with and sometimes resist these structures through practices like remixing, parody, and hashtag manipulation. Papacharissi (2010) notes that digital environments facilitate forms of network self-expression, allowing users to reinterpret dominant narratives and create alternative meanings. Similarly, Jenkins (2006) discusses participatory culture, which suggests that users are not merely passive subjects of algorithmic systems. Rather, they are active contributors who influence the circulation of content through their interaction and creative practices.

The relationship between algorithms and identity is closely tied to the principles of platform capitalism, in which visibility and engagement are directly tied to economic value. As identities gain prominence through algorithmic amplification, they become integrated into systems of monetisation, sponsorship, and branding. This process reinforces the commodification of identity while simultaneously increasing the pressure to adhere to algorithmic standards. In this way, algorithmic systems not only shape identity but also convert it into a measurable and tradable asset within digital economies.

Overall, the existing literature indicates that algorithmic mediation is crucial in shaping digital identity. It functions as a modern form of symbolic code that influences visibility, meaning, and value. While these systems impose certain limitations and encourage conformity, they also create opportunities for negotiation, creativity, and reinterpretation. As a result, identity in digital spaces is formed through the dynamic interaction between algorithmic structures and user practices, reflecting both the influence of platform systems and individuals' agency within these environments.

5. DISCUSSION

This section provides a critical interpretation of the findings presented in the earlier results by placing them within broader theoretical discussions about digital identity, simulation, and user agency. The thematic analysis shows that identity formation on social media is profoundly influenced by consumerism, simulation, commodification, and algorithmic mediation. However, these structural dynamics alone do not fully capture the complexity of digital selfhood. A more nuanced understanding emerges when we consider how users actively interpret, negotiate, and reshape these symbolic systems.

Drawing on the theoretical framework of Baudrillard (1970; 1981/1994), the findings suggest that digital identity functions within a hyperreal system of signs. In this system, meaning is separated from lived experience and is constructed through representation, circulation, and symbolic exchange. However, this structural perspective is complicated by alternative theoretical approaches, particularly Stuart Hall's (1973; 1997) work, which emphasises the interpretive and negotiated nature of meaning-making. This introduces a critical tension between simulation and agency, challenging deterministic accounts of digital culture and allowing for a more integrative analysis.

In this context, the discussion argues that digital identity should not be viewed as a simple binary between structural control and individual freedom. Instead, identity is seen as a dynamic and ongoing process influenced by interaction between symbolic systems and user practices. The relationship between simulation, reception, and participatory engagement indicates that individuals work within structured environments while also exercising their agency in interpreting and recreating meaning.

This argument is developed through three interconnected dimensions. First, it explores the tension between simulation and agency, examining how both structural constraints and individual interpretive practices influence digital identity. Second, it addresses the concept of authenticity, redefining it as a relational and performative construct that emerges from processes of reception and audience engagement. Third, it analyses the idea of negotiated digital identity, emphasising how individuals actively navigate and reshape symbolic systems within hyperreal environments.

This integrated analysis aims to transcend simplistic views of simulation by showing that systems of representation do not just impose digital identity. Instead, it is continuously shaped through negotiation, interpretation, and cultural context. This perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of digital identity, viewing it as both a result of structural forces and a space for ongoing meaning-making in contemporary media culture.

5.1 Simulation versus Agency in Digital Identity Construction

The findings of this review highlight a key theoretical tension in our understanding of digital identity: the relationship between simulation and agency. On the one hand, the literature strongly supports Baudrillard's (1981;1994) argument that contemporary digital environments operate within a regime of simulation, in which identity is constructed through systems of signs detached from any stable reference point. On the other side, alternative perspectives emphasised the role of users as active agents who interpret, negotiate, and reshape these symbolic systems. This section critically examines this tension, arguing that digital identity should not be understood as purely simulated or entirely agentic, but rather as a dynamic interplay between structural constraints and interpretive practices.

From a Baudrillardian perspective, social media creates a hyperreal environment in which identity is no longer grounded in lived experience but is shaped by the circulation of images, representations, and aesthetic codes. As discussed earlier, identities on platforms like Instagram and TikTok are constructed through curated content, self-branding practices, and algorithmically driven visibility. These processes align with Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, which suggests that representations do not mirror reality but rather form a self-referential system of meaning. Within this framework, identity becomes a simulation, an assemblage of signs optimised for circulation, engagement, and symbolic value.

The integration of consumerist logic with algorithmic systems reinforces the current state of society. As Baudrillard (1970) explains, consumer culture is driven more by sign-value than by use-value. This principle is clearly seen in digital environments, where personal identity is shaped by factors such as visibility, desirability, and aesthetic conformity. Algorithmic structures enhance this effect by favouring certain forms of representation, which encourage users to replicate dominant visual and narrative codes (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2014). Consequently, identity increasingly seems to be determined by external systems, suggesting that digital culture prioritises simulation over authentic self-expression.

The deterministic interpretation has been widely criticised for underestimating the role of human agency. Drawing on Stuart Hall's work (1973; 1997), we can view identity as a space for meaning making in which individuals actively engage with and interpret symbolic systems. Hall's encoding/decoding model suggests that media messages are not passively absorbed; rather, they are interpreted through dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings. When applied to digital environments, this means that users are not just passive recipients of simulation but active participants who can reinterpret, resist and reconfigure the meanings embedded in social media content.

Empirical studies support the idea that users engage in strategic self-presentation and perform authenticity, reflecting both personal intention and cultural context. For instance, Abidin (2023) illustrates how influencers navigate the tensions between commercial demands and genuine self-expression, suggesting that external structures do not solely shape digital identity but are actively negotiated by individuals. Similarly, Jenkins' (2006) concept of participatory culture emphasises the role of users as prosumers who both consume and produce content. This dynamic contributes to the circulation and transformation of meaning. These practices demonstrate that, even within simulated environments, individuals still have the capacity to shape their identities in meaningful ways.

The coexistence of simulation and agency indicates that digital identity should not be understood through a binary framework. Instead of seeing users as either completely controlled by simulation or entirely free agents, we should view identity as emerging from a recursive process. In this process, individuals engage with existing symbolic systems while also reproducing and modifying them. Interpretation often serves as a precursor to production: users internalise aesthetic codes, narrative structures, and symbolic meanings from the content they consume, and later re-encode these elements into their own self-presentations. This recursive dynamic mirrors the broader transformation in media culture, where the lines between audience and producer have become increasingly blurred.

This perspective underscores the importance of cultural specificity in shaping digital identity. Baudrillard's theory presents a compelling critique of simulation. However, it is grounded in a Western late-capitalist context and may not adequately address the diversity of digital practices in different regions. Research conducted in Southeast Asia, specifically Malaysia, shows that concepts of authenticity, credibility, and identity are significantly influenced by local

cultural values, social norms, and relational dynamics (Abdul Hamid et al., 2022; Norazman et al., 2023). This indicates that simulation is not a universal phenomenon; rather, it is shaped by cultural contexts that influence how identities are constructed and understood.

The relationship between simulation and agency in constructing digital identity is best understood as a dynamic tension rather than a static state. Social media platforms provide the structural and symbolic frameworks that facilitate simulation, while users actively navigate, negotiate, and reinterpret these frameworks as they form their identities. This duality reflects a broader shift in contemporary media culture, where identity is shaped by systems of commodification and sustained through practices of meaning-making. By integrating Baudrillard's critique of simulation with Hall's emphasis on agency, this study presents a more nuanced understanding of digital identity as both a product of hyperreal systems and a site of ongoing cultural negotiation.

5.2 Authenticity and Reception in Digital Identity Construction

The question of authenticity is a central and contested issue in the study of digital identity, especially in environments characterised by simulation and symbolic exchange. From a Baudrillardian perspective, authenticity becomes fundamentally destabilised in hyperreal conditions where signs no longer refer to any original reality but instead circulate within self-referential systems of meaning. As Baudrillard (1981/1994) argues, the distinction between the real and the simulated collapses in contemporary media environments, making the pursuit of authenticity increasingly problematic. Within his framework, identity on social media is not an expression of inner truth but a constructed performance shaped by aesthetic codes, platform logics, and consumerist values. This discussion echoes foundational philosophical debates on the ethics of authenticity (Taylor, 1991), which now extend into digital domains.

The literature indicates that authenticity does not vanish in digital environments; rather, it is reconfigured as a performative and relational concept. Unlike the deterministic views of simulation, Stuart Hall (1973; 1997) provides a framework that emphasises the active role of audiences in meaning-making. Hall's encoding/decoding model suggests that media messages are polysemic, meaning they can be interpreted in various ways. Audiences can adopt dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings based on their socio-cultural contexts. When applied to social media, this perspective demonstrates that authenticity is not inherent to the content itself but is created through processes of reception, interpretation, and social interaction.

Empirical studies support the idea that authenticity is primarily shaped by how it is received, highlighting distinct generation differences, particularly between Gen Z and Millennials, in their perceptions and negotiations of curated authenticity (Singer & Friedline, 2023). Research on influencer culture shows that authenticity is often performed strategically rather than expressed naturally. Abidin (2023) refers to this as a "metric of authenticity," in which influencers manage the tension between commercial interests and audience expectations by skillfully curating aspects such as relatability, transparency, and emotional engagement. This indicates that authenticity functions as a communicative strategy influenced by both platform dynamics and audience reception. Similarly, studies conducted in Malaysia reveal that perceptions of authenticity are closely linked to credibility, trustworthiness, and relatability, rather than to any fixed concept of the "real self" (Abdul Hamid et al., 2022; Norazman et al., 2023).

The relational nature of authenticity is evident in how audiences validate and negotiate identity performances through their interactions. Metrics like likes, comments, and shares serve as forms of social feedback that reinforce certain interpretations of authenticity. In this way, authenticity is not solely created by the content creator; rather, it is co-constructed through audience engagement. This idea aligns with Hall's (1997) broader argument that meaning is generated through cultural practices and representational systems, rather than being inherent in the text itself.

The performative nature of authenticity does not diminish its social significance. Drawing on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, we can see that self-presentation, however constructed, holds meaning within specific social

contexts. Digital expressions of authenticity can be understood as practices shaped by broader cultural values, relational dynamics, and communicative intentions. Papacharissi (2010) builds on this idea by arguing that online self-presentation functions within networks of emotional connection and intimacy, where authenticity is experienced as a feeling of connection rather than as an objective truth.

The concept of authenticity must be understood within specific cultural contexts. While Baudrillard's critique suggests a universal decline in authenticity, empirical evidence shows that cultural values continue to influence how authenticity is defined and perceived. In Southeast Asia, for example, authenticity is often linked to moral conduct, humility, and sincere relationships. This complicates the idea that digital identity is entirely influenced by simulation (Abidin, 2023). Therefore, it is important to move beyond universal theories of hyperreality and acknowledge the role of local cultural frameworks in shaping digital practices.

The literature indicates that authenticity in digital environments should not be seen as a fixed quality or as an illusion completely removed by simulation. Instead, authenticity is a negotiated, relational construct that arises from interactions among content creators, audiences, and platform systems. While simulation establishes the structural conditions in which identity is expressed, the ways audiences receive and interpret content shape how authenticity is understood, validated, and maintained. This relationship between simulation and reception highlights the complexity of digital identity, presenting authenticity not as a lost reality but as a dynamic and culturally mediated practice.

5.3 Negotiated Digital Identity in Hyperreal Environments

The construction of digital identity in today's social media environments is best understood as an ongoing negotiation rather than a fixed or singular process. The interaction between structural forces and individual agency shapes this negotiation. It goes beyond personal aesthetics and influences broader social interactions, including the hyperreality of identity politics in network societies (Castells, 2009; Hariyanto et al., 2024; Rosana & Fauzi, 2024). While the analysis highlights the prevalence of simulation, commodification, and algorithmic mediation, the literature consistently shows that users do not passively accept these structures. Instead, identity evolves through a dynamic process of negotiation, in which individuals actively interpret, adapt, and reconfigure the symbolic systems in which they are embedded.

From a structural perspective, Baudrillard (1981/1994) argues that contemporary identity operates within a hyperreal system of signs, in which meaning is created through simulation rather than by referencing any authentic reality. In this context, identity is shaped by existing codes, aesthetic conventions, and consumer-driven logics that determine what is visible, desirable, and socially valued. Social media platforms reinforce this situation by promoting specific forms of self-presentation through algorithmic filtering, engagement metrics, and platform-specific visual cultures (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2014). Consequently, users find themselves in a structured environment that seems to restrict the possibilities for authentic self-expression.

This concept of structural determinism becomes more complex when considering the active role of users in interpreting meaning. Drawing on Stuart Hall's work (1973; 1997), we can understand identity as a process of encoding and decoding. Individuals interpret media content based on their own cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. Hall's model indicates that meaning is not simply imposed; rather, it is negotiated, allowing for three types of readings: dominant, negotiated and oppositional. In the context of social media, this means that users do not merely replicate dominant identity forms. Instead, they selectively adopt, modify, or resist these forms based on their personal values, social contexts, and communication goals.

This negotiation is especially clear in the everyday practices of digital self-presentation. Users often rely on widely recognised aesthetic codes, such as lifestyle imagery, fashion trends, and influencer styles, while simultaneously incorporating personal narratives and contextual meanings into their content. For example, individuals might use popular visual formats to gain visibility but reinterpret them to reflect local cultural values, humour, or social commentary. This

illustrates that identity is not solely shaped by simulation; rather, it is actively formed through processes of reinterpretation and adaptation.

The concept of the prosumer emphasises a negotiated understanding of identity. As Jenkins (2006) points out, digital culture is characterised by participatory practices where individuals both consume and produce content simultaneously. This blurring of lines between audience and producer allows users to engage in ongoing processes of meaning-making, where interpretation serves as a precursor to production. Users absorb symbolic elements from the content they consume, such as aesthetic styles, narrative structures, and emotional tones, and then re-encode them into their own identity expressions. This dynamic illustrates how identity is constantly negotiated through cycles of consumption and production.

Empirical research on influencer culture supports this perspective. Abidin (2023) shows that influencers actively navigate the tensions between commercial expectations and personal authenticity, creating identities that strike a balance between relatability and aspiration. Similarly, studies in the Malaysian context emphasise that users appreciate authenticity, credibility, and cultural relevance. This indicates that identity is shaped not only by global platform trends but also by local socio-cultural norms (Abdul Hamid et al., 2022; Norazman et al., 2023). These findings suggest that digital identity is constructed through multiple layers of negotiation, including platform structures, audience expectations, and cultural values.

The negotiation of identity takes place within the framework of simulation rather than outside of it. Users operate in a hyperreal environment where larger systems of representation shape the available signs, symbols, and narratives. However, even within these constraints, individuals have the ability to exercise agency by selecting, recombining, and reinterpreting these elements to create meaningful and relevant identities. This suggests that simulation and agency are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are intertwined in constructing identity.

Negotiated digital identity can be understood as a dynamic and ongoing process where individuals balance conformity and creativity, structure and agency, as well as simulation and meaning. Instead of representing a complete loss of authenticity or total freedom of expression, digital identity reflects a continuous negotiation influenced by the interaction between symbolic systems and human interpretation. This viewpoint goes beyond simplistic explanations of hyperreality, providing a more nuanced understanding of how identity is constructed, experienced, and maintained within contemporary digital culture.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has critically examined how digital identity is constructed within contemporary social media environments, using the theoretical frameworks of consumer society, simulation, and user agency. Drawing on the work of Baudrillard (1970; 1981/1994), the findings revealed that digital identity is increasingly shaped by systems of signification, in which meaning is generated through the circulation of images, symbols, and representations rather than through lived experiences. Social media platforms operate as hyperreal environments in which identity is constructed, performed, and validated through aesthetic codes, algorithmic visibility, and symbolic consumption.

The thematic analysis highlights four key dimensions of this process. First, consumer society serves as the structural foundation in which identity is embedded within systems of symbolic exchange and commodification. Second, identity functions as a simulacrum, meaning that self-representation is constructed through curated and idealised signs that are detached from any stable reference point. Third, the commodification of selfhood shows how individuals transform their identities into marketable entities, aligning with the logic of visibility engagement, and cultural capital. Finally, algorithmic mediation reinforces these dynamics by shaping visibility and influencing the forms of identity amplified in digital environments.

This study shows that digital identity cannot be fully understood through a purely deterministic framework of simulation. By incorporating Stuart Hall's (1973; 1997) perspective, the findings indicate that identity is actively negotiated through processes of interpretation, reception, and cultural contextualization. Users are not merely passive subjects of hyperreality; rather, they are active participants who interpret, adapt and reconfigure symbolic systems in ways that reflect their social positions, cultural values, and communicative intentions.

The relationship between structure and agency indicates that digital identity functions within a system that is both recursive and negotiated. Simulation creates the structural conditions in which identity is formed, while user practices, such as selective self-presentation, content creation, and strategic authenticity, allow for the reinterpretation and transformation of these structures. Thus, identity is neither completely simulated nor entirely authentic; it emerges as a dynamic process influenced by the ongoing interaction between representation, perception, and cultural meaning-making.

This study theoretically contributes to the field of media and visual communication by linking Baudrillard's concept of simulation with reception-oriented perspectives. It provides a more nuanced understanding of digital identity, viewing it as both a product of hyperreal systems and a space for agency. By introducing the idea of identity as a negotiated simulation within recursive media environments, this research addresses a critical gap in the existing literature, which often presents simulation and agency as opposing concepts rather than interconnected processes.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the findings emphasise the importance of understanding digital identity as a practice influenced by cultural contexts. While the global platform dynamics shape patterns of representation, local values, norms, and relationships continue to affect how concepts of authenticity, credibility, and selfhood are constructed and understood. This underscores the need for future research to delve deeper into cultural specificity, especially in non-Western contexts like Southeast Asia, where digital practices reflect unique social and cultural configurations.

This study, while valuable, has limitations due to its reliance on a narrative literature review approach. This method synthesises existing scholarship rather than generating new empirical data. Future research could enhance this framework by integrating qualitative or mixed method approaches such as interviews, visual analysis, or digital ethnography. These methods could provide deeper insights into how individuals experience and navigate their identities within hyperreal environments.

In conclusion, this study argues that digital identity in today's social media culture should be understood as a negotiated and evolving construct. The interaction between simulation, commodification, algorithmic mediation, and user agency shapes it. Instead of signalling the decline of authenticity, hyperreality changes how authenticity is produced, interpreted, and experienced. Understanding this complexity is crucial for critically engaging with the evolving nature of identity in the digital age, where the boundaries between the real and the simulated are not simply erased, but are continuously constructed through cultural practices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/FUNDING

The author would like to extend sincere gratitude to Dr. Mohamed Razeef bin Abdul Razak from the College of Creative Arts at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for his steadfast support, insightful mentorship, and significant contributions, particularly concerning the theoretical frameworks applied in this article. Dr. Mohamed Razeef bin Abdul Razak's expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping the trajectory and the depth of this research endeavour. Additionally, the author acknowledges the invaluable support of the academic staff and peers at the College of Creative Arts, who have fostered an intellectually stimulating environment conducive to scholarly inquiry. Appreciation is also extended to digital content creators and fellow researchers, whose diverse practices and perspectives have substantially enriched the context of this study. Finally, the author extends profound gratitude to their family and close colleagues for their unwavering support and motivation throughout the research process.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Mohd Nizar Bin Mohd Mokhtar: Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation and writing-original draft; **Saiful Akram Bin Che Cob @ Ab Ghafar:** Conceptualisation, supervision, and writing- review. **Mohd Hafnidzam Bin Adzmi:** Conceptualisation, supervision, and writing- review.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the author used AI-assisted tools to support language refinement and clarity. The author reviewed and edited all content and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study employed a literature review and a conceptual analytical approach. As the study did not involve human participants, animal subjects, or experimental procedures, formal ethical approval was not required.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Rahman, N. I., Mursidi, A., Suanda, J., & Mohd Rizal, N. I. Y. (2025). Enhancing brand trust through influencer marketing credibility, honesty and trustworthiness -A SOR theory application. *International Business Education Journal*, 18(2), 43-60. <https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol18.2.4.2025>
- Abdul Hamid, M. N., Khey Pooi, C., & Shuet Reng, O. (2022). MALAYSIAN YOUTH EXPECTATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS (SMI). *Journal of Creative Industry and Sustainable Culture*, 1, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jcisc2022.1.1>
- Abidin, C. (2023). The Matrix of Authenticity in Influencer Cultures. *Cultural Science Journal*, 15(1), 14-29. <https://doi.org/10.2478/csaj-2023-0002>
- Ahmad, S. N. B., Malik, I., Sondoh Jr, S. L., & Mahmud, N. A. (2024). Social media influencer's content credibility on information adoption and purchase intention of beauty product among Generation Z in Malaysia. In M. Madah Marzuki et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Governance, Management & Social Innovation (ICGMSI 2023)* (pp. 115-133). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-425-9_10
- Barroso, P. (2022). From reality to the hyperreality of simulation. *Texts Livre*, 15, e37426. <https://doi.org/10.35699/1983-3652.2022.37426>
- Baudrillard, J. (1970). *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. Sage.
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation* (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). University of Michigan Press. (Original work published 1981)
- Baudrillard, J. (2017). *Symbolic exchange and death* (2nd ed., I. H. Grant, Trans.). SAGE Publications. (Original work published 1976)
- Baudrillard, J. (2020). *The system of objects* (J. Benedict, Trans.). Verso. (Original work published 1968)
- Baym, N. K. (2015). *Personal connections in the digital age* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Boyd, d. (2014). *It's Complicated: The Social Lives Of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press.
- Bucher, T. (2018). *If...Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Bull, J. (2022). *Authenticity, commodification of the self, and micro-influencers* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Cape

Town.

- Bullingham, L., & Vasconcelos, A. C. (2013). 'The presentation of self in the online world': Goffman and the study of online identities. *Journal of Information Science*, 39(1), 101–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551512470051>
- Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. Oxford University Press.
- Che Wan Mohd Khair, W. N. The Effect of Social Media Influencer Marketing Disclosure on Consumer's Perceived Brand Image and Purchase Intention among Youth in Malaysia. *Management Research Journal*, 12(2), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.37134/mrj.vol12.2.1.2023>
- Christanti, M. F., Mardani, P. B., Cahyani, I. P., & Sembada, W. Y. (2021). "Instagramable": Simulation, simulacra and hyperreality on Instagram post. *International Journal of Social Service and Research*, 1(4), 394–401. <https://doi.org/10.46799/ijssr.v1i4.59>
- Damayanti, N. L., & Hidayat, M. A. (2019). Hiperreality of social media: A phenomenology study of self-confession of housewives of Facebook users. *The Journal of Society and Media*, 3(2), 261–277. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jsm.v3n2.p261-277>
- Durani, K., & Eckhardt, A. (2024). From simulation to hyperreality: A critical investigation into the role of simulacra in visual formats on social media. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS 2024)*. Association for Information Systems. https://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2024/socmedia_digcollab/socmedia_digcollab/2/
- Firmansyah, T. R., Muttaqin, K., Hidayah, L., & Murniatie, I. U. (2024). The hyperreality and simulacra theory of Jean Baudrillard: On fashion trends in TikTok. *Elite Journal: International Journal of Education, Language, and Literature*, 4(2), 27–34. <https://doi.org/10.26740/elitejournal.v4n2.p27-34>
- Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. J. Boczkowski, & K. A. Foot (Eds.), *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society* (pp. 167–194). MIT Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday.
- Gündüz, U. (2017). The effect of social media on identity construction. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(5), 85–92. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mjss-2017-0026>
- Hall, S. (1973). *Encoding and decoding in the television discourse*. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.
- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.
- Hariyanto, D., Dharma, F. A., Yussof, I., & Muharram, F. (2024). The Hyperreality of Identity Politics on Social Media. *Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 8(1), 19–38. <https://doi.org/10.15575/cjik.v8i1.28356>
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Ju, N., Kim, T. & Im, H. Fake human but real influencer: the interplay of authenticity and humanlikeness in Virtual Influencer communication?. *Fash Text* 11, 16 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40691-024-00380-0>
- Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies*, 8(2), 191–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>
- Kim, E., & McDonald-Liu, C. (2023). Influencers with #NoFilter: How micro-celebrities use self-branding practices on Instagram. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 148, 107892. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107892>
- Lang, T. L. (2019). *Identity in the digital age: About identity formation and self-presentation in online social networks and the possible effects on our offline selves' wellbeing, with the example of Instagram* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Osnabrück University.
- Leong, S. Y., Yip, M. Y., Tan, C. H., & Chan, M. S. (2024). Effect of Social Media Influencers on Generation Y Purchase Intention: Evidence From Men's Skincare Products In Malaysia: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33093/ijomfa.2024.5.1.5>. *International Journal of Management, Finance and Accounting*, 5(1), 111–135. <https://doi.org/10.33093/ijomfa.2024.5.1.5>
- Mohamed, K., & Bukhari, S. (2023). The media in metaverse: Baudrillard's simulacra, is the metaverse that begins the apocalypse. *International Journal of Communication and Media Science*, 10(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.14445/2349641X/IJCMS-V10I1P101>
- Morris, J. (2021). Simulacra in the Age of Social Media: Baudrillard as the Prophet of Fake News. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 45(4), 319–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859920977154>
- Norazman, N. A. A., Mohd Puad, F., & Zaidi, Z. A. (2023). Review of Malaysian social media influencers' credibility. *Ideology Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2023, pp. 123–130. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ideology.v8i2.511>
- Papacharissi, Z. (2010). *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*. (pp. 304–318). Routledge.

- Renganathan, T. S., & Teh, G. M. (2023). The Effect of Social Media Influencers on Fashion Counterfeit Purchase Intention among Young Generation. *Information Management and Business Review*, 15(2(1)SI), 128-143. [https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v15i2\(1\)SI.3427](https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v15i2(1)SI.3427)
- Rosana, A., & Fauzi, I. (2024). The role of digital identity in the age of social media: Literature analysis on self-identity construction and online social interaction. *Journal of Social Science*, 1(4), 477–489. <https://doi.org/10.59613/a8vyff42>
- Scott, R. (2023). “I ran to the comments”: Social media culture, hate-speech, and hyperreality. *Plurality Journal*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.2218/plurality.10622>
- Singer, M. F., & Friedline, T. (2023). Differences in perceived influencer authenticity among Gen Z and Millennials. *Online Media and Global Communication*, Volume 2, Issue 3 <https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2023-0038>
- Taylor, S. S., Chan, T. J., Zolkepli, I. A., & Sharipudin, M. N. S. (2022). Mediating Role of Parasocial Relationships on Social Media Influencers’ Reputation Signals and Purchase Intention of Beauty Products. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 24(3), 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.21018/rjcpr.2022.3.348>
- Taylor, C. (1991). *The ethics of authenticity*. Harvard University Press.
- Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic Books.
- Wilska, T.-A., Holkkola, M., & Tuominen, J. (2023). The Role of Social Media in the Creation of Young People’s Consumer Identities. *SAGE Open*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231177030>
- Yau, J. Y.-K., et al. (2019). The role of social media in negotiating identity during the process of acculturation. *Information, Technology & People*, 32(2), 482–501. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-09-2017-0305>



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC-ND) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).