

Online-Offline Identity as a Representation of Cyber Culture in the Academic Community

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Abstract— Social media with many varieties no longer has user segmentation. Mc Luhan's famous phrase about the medium is the message and the global village is finally answered. That there is no message in the media that does not contain a meaning and that no message is distributed without the intent / purpose. In the case of social media, these messages are distorted to be more than just meanings. It has been transformed into a waste of information due to the overlapping of the same information. Message producers and message consumers become biased. While the identity of users of social media continues to change due to the mingling of behavior, community and reality between the virtual and the real. This research tries to see the unique phenomena that occur due to communication patterns that are intertwined in cyberspace and the real world so as to form an online-offline identity. Cyber culture that occurs in the academic environment becomes more varied due to the need for identity in cyberspace and in the real world. Social media is a place to look for identity or just throw away information for nothing. By combining the concept of cyber culture and the communication map of the cyber community on social media, online-offline identity representations can be identified.

Keywords— Social Media, Cyber Culture, Online-Offline Identity

Manuscript received : 29-12-2024; revised : 31-12-2025; accepted : 31-12-2025. Date of publication : 01-01-2025.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The development of communication and information technology in the 4.0 era has brought about the fulfillment of both virtual and real-world needs. Changes in interactions—socially, politically, and culturally—have driven communication to evolve beyond mere information exchange. Communication has transformed into a negotiation of information and message construction. An invisible agreement emerges, requiring acceptance so that feedback no longer flows in two directions but rotates unpredictably until reaching an agreement. This process often serves unexpected directions to achieve certain purposes and agreements. Consequently, information becomes abundant and chaotic, resembling waste, as neither the producer nor the consumer of messages can trace the origin or endpoint of information.

Cyber culture, on the one hand, offers emotional satisfaction to social media users, and on the other hand, creates a new culture distinctly different from the realities of formal (offline) environments. This cultural framework enables local communities to connect as part of a global community—a highly transparent world enriched by rapid advancements in information, transportation, and technology. This global society fosters shared culture, collaborative industrial products, unified markets, collective defense strategies, shared currencies, and even joint conflicts. Cyber culture introduces a post-spatial awareness where all cultural activities occur in a boundless virtual world (Jenkins, 2006).

Like traditional culture, cyber culture (or cyberculture) aims to establish identity and credibility within society. In formal, real-world environments like academic settings, identity and credibility differ significantly from the roles performed in social interactions. Professionalism often becomes overlooked, blending virtual (online) and real (offline) communication, blurring self-identity. This ambiguity creates a crisis awaiting resolution: students act like lecturers, lecturers behave like students, students present themselves as the general public, and laypeople act like students. Verbal and non-verbal communication conveys messages and information so alike that social status and roles intertwine, rendering boundaries unclear. This leads to a dilemma in identity construction and communication across various audiences. Cyber culture revolves around images and meanings exchanged in continuous symbolic interaction. Conversely, real-world culture demands logical consistency and synchrony between verbal and non-verbal communication, emphasizing verbal dimensions.

Social media introduces new values amidst its utilization. It not only serves as a medium for self-expression but also evolves into a platform for voicing online aspirations. As a widely discussed topic among social media users, it sparks online petitions and even mobilizes mass offline actions. In his renowned essay on encoding and decoding, Stuart Hall analyzed media studies in relation to cultural circuits. Hall's findings revealed that cultural circuits involve how cultural values and meanings are communicated, created, and sustained through various moments and forms. Later, with Barker, he developed four heuristic stages

encompassing production, circulation, usage, and reproduction (Taylor, 2002).

In cyberspace, culture uniquely centers on the "life" of texts—an accumulation of commodification and interpretation dialogues. Since no communication in the virtual world occurs comprehensively, directly, or clearly, power dynamics explain cultural artifacts with shared contradictions. As a result, text meanings are harder to negotiate and often conflict among users (interfaces).

The author is advised to present his article in a section structure: Introduction - Materials and Methods - Results and Discussion - Conclusion. The discussion should provide a bridge between the results and the literature review in the introduction. Please ensure that the quotation is up to date. All citations must be listed in the reference. It is expected that citations are at least 25 sources, and 70% are publications in the last 5 years. IJHEI requires authors to submit at least 7 pages of the article and a maximum of 15 pages.

II. METHOD

This study employs participatory observation and literature review methods for data collection. Data were gathered from conversations on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The researcher analyzed the participants' identities and their conversations. Utilizing critical discourse analysis as the analytical framework, the researcher seeks to illustrate how social media operates within its own circuit, leading to the formation of online-offline identity representations.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

One of America's leading psychologists, Nancy Etcoff, in *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty* (1999), introduced the concept of Lookism. Lookism is a theory that assumes the better one's appearance, the more successful they will be in life. In the era of images, visuals dominate our perceptions, thoughts, and judgments about a person's face, skin, or overall appearance (Chaney, 2004).

What we see in media coverage often encompasses two realities. In the case of social media, the first reality is the factual truth of events in the physical/real environment. The second reality is how new media interprets the first reality. This aligns with Niklas Luhmann's perspective in *The Reality of the Mass Media* (1996), where he distinguishes between primary reality (actual events) and secondary reality (media representations). Luhmann terms this dual reality. He acknowledges that the reality conveyed by media isn't always accurate—it can be true, false, or partially manipulated. Luhmann views society as a system that operates with its own internal logic, independent of the active capacities of the individuals within it.

Luhmann's perspective aligns with the concept of virality, which views society as a network. This condition creates a community that perpetually relies on media for self-reflection. Metrics of good and bad, rankings, and

moral judgments are increasingly based on what trends on social media. Luhmann observed that society learns about all forms of reality through mass media, even if the sources are unreliable or manipulated—what is often called media construction of reality.

Given the public's high level of trust in media, there is a moral imperative for information providers to ensure their messages are complete, fair, and truthful. This fosters an orderly society and an informed public. Social media's role as a mass communication platform is pivotal in shaping these dual realities.

[1] Information Circuits in Cyberculture

In the realm of academia within cyberspace, the cultural and informational circuits involve interconnected aspects such as production, consumption, identity, representation, and regulation. Intensive interactions within cyberspace merge cultural forms and practices, transforming communication technologies into a battleground between labor and power (Wetherford, 1999).

This democratization of information within cyberspace leads to greater dominance and openness in public spaces. Simultaneously, the formation of self-identity adapts to the demands of the online world. Role-switching among users becomes normalized. For example, in the physical world, someone may be an ordinary worker; in cyberspace, they can assume any identity assigned by the digital community. This role-shifting represents the fluidity of social roles within the communication landscapes of cyberspace, emphasizing speed over substance.

In this digital era, communication frameworks have shifted from valuing information as a core resource to prioritizing the speed of its dissemination. This change indirectly democratizes the communication stage, though at the expense of traditional social constraints.

However, this new equilibrium comes with its own set of imbalances. Ethical considerations often lag behind technological adoption, necessitating a longer adaptation period to establish consensus on digital communication ethics. The internet as a democratic space, termed the public sphere by Habermas, enables equitable and dialogic cultural communication. Yet, practical realities such as unequal access and privacy violations undermine the fairness of this space.

[2] Cyberculture in Academia

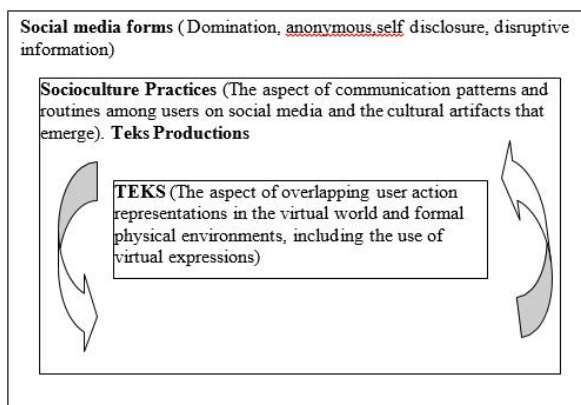
For academics, the engagement with cyberculture and its information circuits creates unique challenges. Self-dominated discourse, peer dominance, and the desire to momentarily escape real-world identities often lead to a diversified use of social media platforms. The features and characteristics of these platforms influence how academics interact within these information circuits.

Routines among users with diverse educational backgrounds and experiences create new agreements in the flow of cybercultural information.

At this stage, socio-cultural practices emerge in communication patterns and routines on social media. These include how users communicate, the identities they adopt, and the shared norms for cultural artifacts such as memes and emojis. These artifacts blend real-world and virtual information, embodying the intersection of both realities.

Furthermore, the production and consumption of text in social media blur boundaries. Authors and consumers of text often remain unidentified. Text circulates endlessly, with recipients interpreting it through their lenses, leading to unresolved narratives. This overlap between actions in virtual and real worlds creates challenges in maintaining distinct boundaries between the two realms. At this intersection, texts lose clarity and evolve into new forms, reflecting the complex interplay of virtual and real-world interactions.

Figure 1. Information Circuit in Cyberculture



[3] Unknown Identity versus Multi-Identity

In the review of digital communication aspects moderated through computers or smartphones, individuals are increasingly absorbed into the realm of the crowd. The many-to-many communication scheme causes individuals to appear submerged in the crowd. The loss of identity and selfhood in cyberspace occurs due to the nature of communication and the availability of privacy options. The option to be anonymous is enabled in the virtual space. Not only that, we can create pseudo-identities, using avatars chosen according to our will and the image we wish to present to the public. Although some still present identities similar to those in the real world, the construction of identity also emerges alongside updates and uploads in cyberspace. While it is very possible to diverge from the actual reality, cyberspace offers the potential to become anything we imagine. The virtual space becomes a place for experimentation, acting as if it were something, but not without substance. Identity then appears in the form of hyperreality.

There are many online identities. This effectively allows individuals to choose what is relevant to a

particular context and apply it. For example, using LinkedIn for professional updates rather than personal ones, enables users to compartmentalize and promote themselves online. Separating your professional and personal lives is often cited as the best way to represent yourself online (BBC News, 2013). In conclusion, having multiple virtual identities offers greater flexibility, but with the consequent potential for issues, risking becoming anonymous identities (Krotoski, 2012).

Most adults have multiple roles and group memberships, and negotiating a combination of identities is not always easy. Often, the result of holding multiple identities is identity disruption, which occurs when they press against each other, disrupting the functioning of other identities (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). What happens in cyberspace today is that people with high levels of anonymity compete with many identity holders. According to David Silver (2000), the first stage, popular cyberculture, is marked by its journalistic origins and characterized by its descriptive nature, limited dualism, and the metaphor of the Internet as a frontier. The second stage, cyberculture studies, largely focuses on virtual communities and online identities, and the benefits of academic scholarly involvement.

The absence of a leader's identity, for example, is replaced by opinion leaders who have the ability to interpret at will. Misinterpretation due to labyrinthine deception is likely. This pattern becomes ambiguous. Like the busy information circuit in cyberspace, loud and always noisy in cyberspace, yet seemingly calm and peaceful in the real world. Identity is mocked.

In a group, one must have an identity to maintain their existence. Personal identity is one component of the personal concept, which means organizing the principles responsible for unity, continuity, consistency, and uniqueness of an individual formed from infancy onwards, especially in adolescence. In reality, humans have a desire to continue developing themselves to achieve a personality shaped by past and present experiences they desire.

Each individual has limitless ability to create who they are in cyberspace, and their creations will represent them in playing roles and interacting on the internet. The choice to reveal their identity honestly or to create a false identity is available. What is needed on social media, for example, is simply connecting to the site, choosing a name, selecting gender, and writing a personal description. Once individuals have identified themselves on social media, such as choosing a username and password, that identity eventually gives birth to a virtual individual, along with the attributes attached to it, and becomes 'eternal.' This means that any new individual can access their virtual self if they use the same username and password.

At a certain point, individuals can determine and limit what others want to know about themselves. In the virtual world, characteristics visible in the real world, such as gender, race groups, and invisible modes, are controlled by internet technology, offering the possibility to manage aspects of self-identity as considerations for the public (Wood and Smith, 2005).

Connections in the expanding network, transcending territorial boundaries of national sovereignty, require digital citizens to develop the ability to communicate among themselves. Netizens build consensus, formulating it in language standards. Text interconnections, restructured, not only involve written language rules but also include expressive elements. Understanding emojis and textual communication patterns is a new form of relationship between digital natives. Meanwhile, the previous generation, the digital immigrants, tries to adjust to the changes. In the past, young people learned from senior groups, but in the digital era, the opposite happens, with older generations learning from the young. Even at a macro level, it's not impossible to experience the erosion of language diversity due to the monolithic use of a single language in the online society era. English, as the international language, becomes a unifier, while the expansion of each country's language is merely an accessory.

An issue that seems to repeat positions similar to those in the real world is about gender submission. Feminist subordination concerning male dominance in technology mastery further affirms the position of men. Even from an early age, domestication occurs, with computer games and gadgets becoming a daily reality for boys compared to girls. The struggle for emancipation among women's groups must be reconstructed, but the exchange of sexual identities in the digital world is not a black-and-white line but a gray area that can be used as needed by the individual subject. However, the representation that the digital space has a masculine aroma cannot be denied. Again, virtual identity and the original identity of the user are questioned. Do they truly have multiple identities as portrayed in cyberspace or have they not found their identity and even have a high level of distrust, often leading to the term 'anonymous' emerging?

IV. CONCLUSION

The information circuit in cyberculture within the academic environment at least creates new products in the form of intangible elements, namely: 1) virtual identity, 2) fake identity, 3) information waste, 4) unclear information sources, 5) pseudo-reality, and 6) new regulations. The richness of these products can either be an opportunity or a challenge for social media users. The representation of online-offline identities, which are considered as waste, also has the potential to become a blessing. On the other hand, deviations from the information circuit can become a place for mass suicide in terms of identity and reality.

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