The role of social media in shaping youth identity challenges and opportunities

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of social media in shaping youth identity by analyzing the relationship between social media usage and both social and political identity, with a particular focus on the challenges and opportunities these platforms present. The research employed a quantitative methodology supported by statistically reliable tools. The overall reliability coefficient reached 80.9%, while the validity coefficient was 90%, both of which are considered scientifically acceptable and allow for the generalization of findings to the broader study population. The results indicated that the highest reliability was observed in the variable "interaction with followers," at 91.3%, whereas "advertising campaigns" recorded the lowest reliability at 74.6%. Additionally, the data did not follow a normal distribution, necessitating the use of non-parametric tests to ensure the accuracy and validity of the analysis. The study sample consisted of 380 young leaders, the majority of whom were male, aged between 25 and 45 years. The findings revealed a significant impact of social media on shaping both the social and political identities of youth. The results further emphasized the direct relationship between social media engagement and the development of a sense of belonging and identity. Key recommendations include guiding social media use in ways that support national identity and foster a sense of belonging among young people. It highlights the importance of designing awareness programs that build critical thinking skills in users regarding the content they encounter on these platforms. Furthermore, the study encourages more in-depth future research to explore digital media usage's psychological and social effects. It also calls for greater involvement from relevant authorities to support meaningful content that contributes to the development of a positive and stable youth identity.

Keywords: Social Media, Youth Identity, Challenges and Opportunities.

1. Introduction

Modern social media services have changed the process through which individuals build their personal identities while altering their understanding of self. People use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to establish virtual environments through which they construct virtual life presentations and maintain social connections while self-expressing. Modern technology permits users to shape their personal identities through social media platforms, which modifies self-perception, communication styles, and contemporary life management abilities. Social media impacts individual identity because users develop their self-image through these platforms [1].

During traditional periods, people used personal meetings and physical characteristics to establish their identity. Users today tend to create controlled profiles along with carefully released posts that make it difficult to distinguish reality from fantasy because they exhibit only their perfect side while concealing their true weaknesses at home. Presenting ourselves through carefully curated content creates a false perception of identity because we are trying to meet the unattainable standards shown by celebrities and social media influencers [2].

Identity formation is one of the most important processes that a person undergoes during their life, as their identity is shaped through their interactions with the world around them. This process includes many different factors, such as culture, religion, and social order, all of which influence personality, behavior, customs, and traditions [3].

It can be said that the initial formation of identity occurs at home, where the child receives instructions and guidance from their parents and is influenced by their behaviors, ideas, and beliefs. This helps shape his personality and determine his initial identity. Subsequently, this identity is affected by school, friends, society, and the surrounding culture [4].

Identity formation represents a complex process in which multiple elements shape it; therefore, people need to recognize their cultural identities alongside their beliefs and practices and develop these aspects to create identities that match their own values [5].

This research aims to identify the role of social media in shaping the identity of young people and to identify the most important challenges and opportunities associated with it.

2. Concepts and Terminology

2.1. Social Media

Abu Rahma and Abu Liya [6], the authors defined social media as an electronic network platform where users build their websites to link with members who share identical interests or belong to their university or high school class.-2/2Identity formation:

Xiao et al. [2] according to Olweus, electronic identity describes the online identity formed by users through their activity on social media websites and digital domains. Electronic identity explains how people define themselves through social interactions, as well as the ways in which others perceive and understand their identities. The process by which electronic identity affects social identity structure contains multiple layers of complexity.

2.2. Exploratory Study

- A field survey conducted by the researcher aimed to understand the practical implementation of the study topic. The researcher interviewed a selection of young individuals with personal queries to determine how social media influences their identity development, as well as to identify crucial opportunities and challenges within this process. This step helped in accurately defining the initial research gap of the problem area. The interviews employed specific questions that addressed multiple important points during the investigation: Do social media platforms work to provide suggestions that help increase cultural and Islamic experiences among young people?
- Do social media sites guide to the importance of scientific and social construction for young people?
- How do social media provide suggestions for caring for the flags of national thought?
- How do social media encourage young people to compete to introduce their homeland and religion?
- Do social media contribute to participation in national events?

In light of the results of the scientific and applied review, the initial exploratory study, and the set of phenomena and evidence that were reached, the researcher identified the initial research gap. which is as follows: "Understanding the role of social media in shaping the identity of youth."

2.3. Previous Studies

This section presents the most important previous studies that addressed both social media and identity formation, after reviewing research, scientific dissertations, and specialized periodicals as follows:-A study Abu Rahma and Abu Liya [6] entitled "The role of social media in strengthening the cultural and religious identity of Palestinian university students (Islamic University - Case Study)"

The study aimed to identify the role of social media in strengthening the cultural and religious identity of

Palestinian university students - Islamic University - Case Study. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers used a descriptive analytical approach. The study sample consisted of 173 male and female undergraduate students at the Islamic University of Gaza, which is an appropriate percentage for conducting statistical analyses. The researchers used the questionnaire as the main tool for the study, and to analyze the questionnaires, they used the SPSS program. The study concluded with a number of results, the most important of which are: The total degree of the reality of the role of social media in strengthening the cultural and religious identity of university students appeared with a relative weight of 33.77, with a very low degree of appreciation. There are no statistically significant differences between the average scores of the study sample members' assessment of the role of social media in promoting cultural and religious identity among Palestinian university students according to the study variables (gender, college, academic level, presence of political affiliation). The researchers recommend the following: the necessity for experts from Palestinian university professors and new media specialists to allocate special pages to publish general principles and broad outlines for promoting cultural and religious identity among university youth, so that accurate, historical, and documented information on various issues can be obtained through them. The researchers also recommend the necessity of holding many training courses and workshops for all segments of society, especially for the youth category, targeting the development of their skills in employing social media sites to promote cultural and religious identity.

A study Sawalhiya [7] entitled "The impact of using social networking sites on the cultural identity of university youth - a field study on a sample of youth at Tebessa University"

The research defined the cultural identity effects of social networking sites on university youth through user behavior observation and cultural identity element investigation. The research employed a survey method with questionnaire tools to test 60 young university people from Tebessa. University youth experience negative consequences to their cultural identity due to social networking site usage, according to the research findings. Most respondents follow Western cultural values through social media, yet they actively build connections with non-Muslim friends and speak informally in their interactions while using written shortcuts and emojis during messaging. However, they do not display backgrounds containing Algerian historical accomplishments through their accounts. Social sites have transformed their views about societal practices, along with local customs, hair, and dressing choices.

Social customs, along with dress codes and haircut styles, define Muslim individuals. Impact and usage patterns among university youth create influence on their cultural identity through social networking sites.

Study Al-Danawi [8] entitled "An investigation into the use of social media and identity formation among high school students in South Lebanon"

The researchers conducted this study to determine which social media platforms adolescents use and what factors influence their sense of identity in South Lebanon. Two questionnaires were administered to 44 students during an assessment of their social media usage along with their identity adaptation process. The participants ranged from 15 to 16 years old. Different types of social media serve unspecified purposes, mainly entertainment, according to the study results, where 79.50% of respondents declared they cannot survive without social media. The research results showed that the sense of community affiliation is the final aspect of identity when students complete their identity verification process. Multiple factors influence the process of identity development; therefore, additional research is needed to identify all possible variables.

Study - Fan [1] entitled "The Shaping and Influence of Virtual Communities on Adolescent Identity in the Social Media Era." Virtual communities in the age of social media have had a profound impact on adolescent identity.

The study aimed to understand social media, the characteristics of virtual communities, the concept of adolescent identity, and the factors that influence it. It also sought to clarify how different types of virtual communities and social media platforms shape adolescent identity. The study resulted in a set of recommendations, the most important of which are establishing family support systems that encourage parents to actively participate in and understand adolescent activities within virtual communities, and providing education and support by schools and social organizations to help adolescents successfully navigate the challenges of social media.

Xiao et al. [2] entitled "How Does New Media Shape the Sense of Belonging and Social Identity?

The research aims to understand how new media influences social identity and reintegration efforts for rehabilitated individuals (ex-offenders). This study employed qualitative methods and narrative research during 2022-2023 to examine how rehabilitated individuals access new media to shape social identity and facilitate reintegration. Media dependency is identified as a key factor that enhances the process of building social identity for rehabilitated people, thereby supporting their reintegration into society. Media provides emotional support throughout this process, enabling rehabilitated individuals to resolve identity contradictions during their reintegration phase. The research concludes that reliance on media reinforces positive outcomes for identity creation and promotes sustainable reintegration into the community.

3. Problem and Questions of the Study

Through the results of the exploratory study conducted by the researcher, as well as through what was extracted from previous studies and a review of the research literature, it was possible to identify the problem of

the study, which is "identifying the role of social media in shaping the identity of youth, challenges, and opportunities."

Thus, the problem of the study can be formulated in the following questions:

- What is the impact of social media on shaping the identity of the youth under study?
- What is the nature of the relationship between social media and identity formation for youth?

4. Study Objectives

In light of the study questions, there is a set of objectives that the study seeks to achieve, and these objectives are as follows:

- Identifying the extent of the impact of social media on shaping the identity of the youth under study.
- Revealing the nature of the relationship between social media and identity formation for the youth under study.

5. The Importance of the Study

The value of this research emerges both from its relevant subject matter and its mission, which explains why this research matters. The analysis of this study derives significance from both theoretical and practical perspectives as described below:

5.1. Theoretical Importance
5.1.1. The Study Derives Its Theoretical Importance from the Following Elements

- The research, as a complete work, monitors youth importance because this demographic forms an enormous segment of any population, yet according to their significance, the study determines social media network influence on youth identity formation.

5.2. Applied Importance

This study is considered an enrichment of the literature of the humanities in the field of social networks and identity.

This study is a link between many sciences, as the writer, the psychological, social and anthropological researcher can all address this topic.

6. Study Hypotheses

- Hypothesis one (H01): There is no statistically significant relationship between the use of social media and identity formation taken as a whole.
- Hypothesis two (H02): There is no statistically significant effect between the use of social media and identity formation.

7. Study Variables

- Independent variable: social media, which includes the following dimensions: content, advertising campaigns, and interaction with followers.
- Dependent variable: identity formation, which includes the following dimensions: (cultural identity, social identity, political identity).

The proposed model for the study
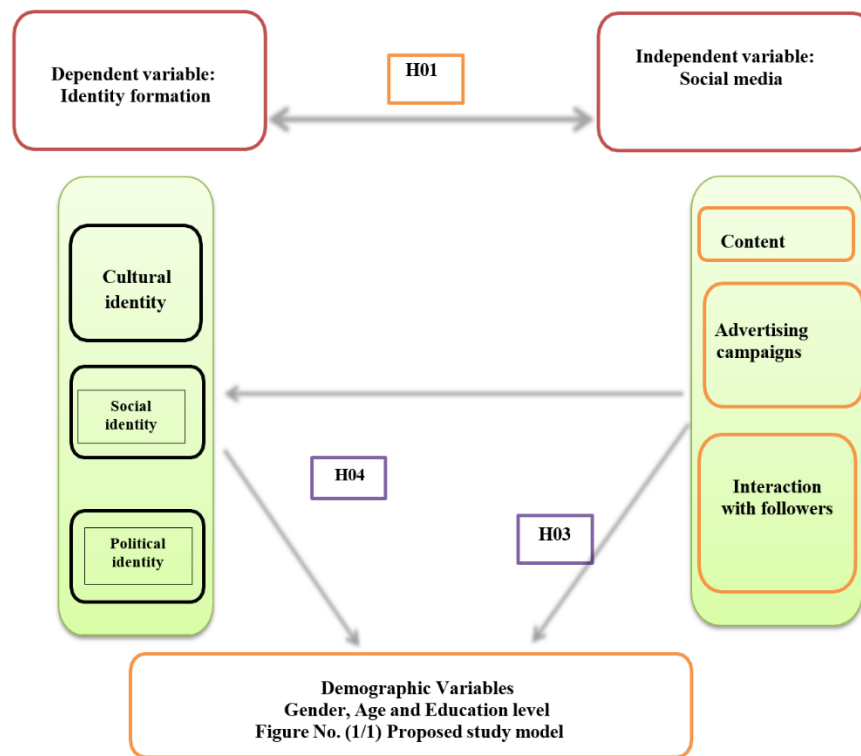
Figure 1.
Proposed study model.

8. Study Methodology

8.1. In Terms of the Study Objective

The study researcher discerned the main issue for investigation before proposing remedial measures. Therefore, the method followed in this study is the exploratory method, as it aims to identify the study problem, identify its variables, formulate hypotheses, then use the deductive method, which aims to address the problem and provide appropriate suggestions for its treatment, as it aims to describe the phenomena and variables of the study and analyze the relationships and differences between the variables of the study subject and its problem, in order to achieve the integrated treatment of that problem [9].

8.2. Study community and sample

8.2.1. Study Community

The study community is represented by all young people who use social media.

8.2.2. Study Sample

The researcher needs to use sampling as the data collection method because the study includes many young social media users, the absence of proper youth data frameworks, and the need for an efficient response collection process to address a dispersed research population.

8.3. Sample Size

Statistical tables indicated that ($\pm5\%$ error limits at 95% confidence) with (50,000 individuals) in the community, leads to the calculation of a sample size at (380 individuals). 11-Testing the reliability and validity coefficients

Table 1.
Value of stability and validity.

Validity coefficient	Reliability coefficient	Study variables	Variable	
0.938	0.880	Social Media		Independent
0.864	0.746	Content		
0.88	0.763	Advertising campaigns		
0.90	0.913	Interaction with followers		
0.936	0.837	Identity Formation		Dependent
0.81	0.88	Cultural Identity		
0.81	0.90	Social Identity		
0.889	0.790	Political Identity		
0.900			0.809	

From the previous table, it is clear that the total percentage of the reliability coefficient was 80.9%, while the reliability coefficient was 90.0%, which is a statistically acceptable percentage, confirming the possibility of relying on the results of statistical analyses and the potential for generalizing them to the study community. The reliability coefficient at the level of the independent variables as a whole was 88.0%, which is a statistically acceptable value. The highest value of the reliability coefficient for the independent variable (interaction with followers) was 91.3%, and the lowest value for the independent variable (advertising campaigns) was 74.6%. It is also evident that the reliability coefficient at the level of the independent variables as a whole was 93.8%, which is a statistically acceptable value. The survey questions achieved an acceptable statistical reliability coefficient of 80.9% for the dependent variable, with 90.0% being the highest possible value measured by the reliability coefficient for the dependent variable (social identity).

The most stable variable of dependent data (political identity) shows a stability coefficient value of 79.0%.[15] Testing the normal distribution of data.

Table 2.
Results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the normal distribution of the study data.

Shapiro-Wilk			Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			
Sig.	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**	**df**	**Statistic**	
0.000	380	0.815	0.000	380	0.296	Content
0.000	380	0.696	0.000	380	0.313	Advertising campaigns
0.000	380	0.536	0.000	380	0.236	Interaction with followers
0.000	380	0.775	0.000	380	0.215	Social Media
0.000	380	0.651	0.000	380	0.366	Cultural Identity
0.000	380	0.324	0.000	380	0.341	Social Identity
0.000	380	0.811	0.000	380	0.279	Political Identity
0.000	380	0.792	0.000	380	0.341	Identity Formation

The results in the previous table show that the z value significance is below 0.05, thus indicating that the current research variables, both independent and dependent, do not follow normal distribution patterns. The researcher relies on nonparametric tests when validating hypotheses because these tests yield more accurate results.

9. Analysis of the Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 3.
Study sample according to the type of respondents.

Percentage %	Frequency	Type of respondents
61.8	235	Male
38.2	145	Female
100.0	380	Total

The survey statistics show that male leaders made up (61.8%) or (235) people out of the total (380) while female leaders numbered (38.2%) or (145) survey participants. (145) individuals, at a rate of (38.2%).

Table 4.
Distribution of survey participants according to the age of the surveyed person.

Percentage %	Frequency	Statement
13.4	51	Less than 25 years
30.5	116	From 25 to less than 35 years
28.4	108	From 36 to less than 45 years
20.5	78	From 46 to less than 55 years
7.1	27	years and above 55
100.0	380	Total

The majority of survey respondents are within the age range of 25 to less than 35 years old, totaling 116 individuals, which accounts for 30.5%. The survey also indicates that 28.4% of participants are aged between 36 to less than 45 years old, alongside 7.1% of individuals older than 55 years. The smallest group comprises 13.4% of respondents who are under 25 years old, representing 51 individuals, at a rate of 13.4%.

Table 5.
Distribution of survey participants according to the academic qualification surveyed.

Percentage %	Frequency	Statement
26.6	101	Intermediate qualification
55.5	211	University qualification
17.9	68	Postgraduate qualification
100.0	380	Total

The previous table indicates that the qualification of surveyed individuals shows that university degree recipients numbered 211 among 381 participants, with a frequency rate of 55.5%. Of these, 211 participants obtained university degrees, accounting for 55.5% of the total group, while 101 participants obtained intermediate qualifications, representing 26.6%, and postgraduate university students numbered 68, making up 17.9%.

Table 6.
Distribution of survey participants according to the social status of the person being surveyed.

Percentage %	Frequency	Statement
46%	178	Single
40%	154	Married
0.039%	15	Divorced
0.086%	33	Widowed
100.0%	380	Total

The research data shows that single status is the majority condition among study participants (46%), with 178 out of 390 people belonging to this category. Married individuals are the second most common, accounting for 40% with 154 members.

10. Testing the Study Hypotheses and Analyzing the Results

The first hypothesis: The first hypothesis (H01): There is no statistically significant relationship between marketing deception and the dimensions of the customer experience taken as a whole.

Table 7.
Results of the correlation analysis between social media and identity formation.

Identity Formation	Key Variables	
0.631**	Correlation Coefficient	Social Media
0.000	Significance Level	

The statistical analysis results in the previous table establish that most social media variables deemed important by respondents create a statistically significant direct correlation with identity formation at .631**.

From the above, we reject the hypothesis that "there is no significant, statistically significant correlation between the use of social media and identity formation for young people who use social media."

The second hypothesis (H02): There is no statistically significant effect between the use of social media and identity formation.

Table 8. Below shows the results of the multiple regression analysis between the dimensions of social media and identity formation

Table 8.
Results of multiple regression analysis between the dimensions of social media and identity formation.

TOL	VIF	Significance	Value Level T of	Standard Error	Coefficient Beta	Variables	
0.674	1.485	0.000	5.597	0.057	0.299	Content	X1
0.426	2.345	0.210	1.255	0.070	0.084	Advertising campaigns	X2
0.634	1.578	0.005	2.843	0.052	0.157	Interaction with followers	X3
0.491= (R), 0.241 = R2							
0.234 = (R2 adj)							
31.414 = (F), 0.000 = Significance Level							

The following is evident from the previous table:
- The (F) test value of (31.414), combined with a (0.000) significance level, confirms the model's validity for forecasting values with statistically significant findings because (0.000) remains below (5%). Each explanatory variable displays a VIF value below 10, indicating no multicollinearity among these variables. Therefore, the research team can rely on this model's findings.
- The accuracy of the regression analysis can be evaluated through the high correlation (0.491) between the

independent variables in the previous table and the dependent variable.
- The coefficient of determination (R^2) reveals that the explanatory variables contribute to explaining 34% of the variation in the dependent variable.

11. Results

The study reached a set of results, the most important of which are the following:

The results of the study indicated that the total percentage of the reliability coefficient was 80.9%, while the percentage of the validity coefficient was 90.0%, which are statistically acceptable values. These findings confirm the possibility of relying on the results of statistical analyses and generalizing them to the study community, as the reliability coefficient at the level of the independent variables as a whole was (88.0%), which is a statistically acceptable value, while the highest value of the reliability coefficient for the independent variable, which is (interaction with followers), was (91.3%), and the lowest value of the reliability coefficient for the independent variable, which is (advertising campaigns), was (74.6%), and it is clear that the reliability coefficient at the level of the independent variables as a whole was (93.8%), which is a statistically acceptable value.

The study also found that the value of the reliability coefficient at the level of the survey questions was 80.9%, which is a statistically acceptable value. The highest value of the reliability coefficient for the dependent variables, which is social identity, was 90.0%, while the lowest value of the stability coefficient for the dependent variables, political identity, was 79.0%.

The study also concluded that the current variables in the research (independent and dependent variables) do not follow a normal distribution. On the other hand, the researcher relied on non-parametric tests to validate the hypotheses and obtain more accurate results.

The distribution of respondents according to their type indicates that the number of male leaders among the respondents in the sample was 235 individuals, accounting for a certain percentage (61.8%), and the number of female leaders among the respondents in the sample was 145 individuals, accounting for 38.2%.

Most of the study sample members are between 25 and less than 35 years old, totaling 116 individuals, at a rate of 30.5%. This is followed by those aged between 36 and less than 45 years old, with a total of 108 individuals, at a rate of 28.4%. The group over 55 years old with a total of (27) individuals, at a rate of (7.1%), while those aged less than 25 years old are the smallest number, with a total of (51) individuals, at a rate of (13.4%).

12. Recommendations

- Direct the use of social media platforms in ways that promote national identity and reinforce a sense of belonging among youth.
- Develop awareness programs aimed at cultivating critical thinking in users regarding the content shared across these platforms.
- Encourage further research to deepen the understanding of the psychological and social impacts of digital media use on young people.
- Advocate for the active involvement of relevant stakeholders in supporting purposeful content that contributes to the development of a positive and stable youth identity.

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