

## SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIGITAL SELFNESS

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### ABSTRACT

New communication technologies have become increasingly common in all areas of our daily lives. The transformation of interactive networks offered by information technologies has also affected many components of social life. While these technologies digitally exist as individuals, they also give them the freedom to relate to the digital self. Social networking networks can be considered as an expression of self with both the profiles they create and the shares they make. It is assumed that as individuals shape their digital self, they are influenced by the views of other users attached to their social network and are going to design an ego as a result of interaction. In the method part of the study, four cases belonging to the digital identity of a user actively using social networks are distributed in four groups and these four cases have been analyzed by different groups of individuals from different statuses formed within the framework of semi-structured interviews.

**Key Words:** Social Networking Sites, Social Media, Digital Self, Digitalization

### 1. New Communication Environments and Socialization

Socialization is the process of forming human identity, teaching the current values and norms of society to individuals. In the process of socialization, the individual learns how to behave in society, expects society and expects to exhibit socially acceptable behaviors. In the process of socialization, the individual creates his identity by moving from family to the outermost social layer. The socialization process is divided into two. The first is the period of primary socialization that starts in the family and covers the period up to the school and the secondary socialization starts with school and continues until the end of human life. A person who was born as a biological entity becomes a socio-cultural personality in this process (İşman&Buluş, 2016:612).

Despite the influence of society on the individual, individuals are also influenced by society and social changes. Socialization is a constant interaction. In socialization based on mutual social relations, the behavior of each member in the group affects, controls and regulates the behavior of others; so socialization is also mutual. As a result, socialization is the process of becoming a part of this whole by accepting the concept of a high degree of freedom, eliminating the natural self of man, forming an identity and interacting with society.

There are three important stages in the process of social interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 108-130): 1. Externalization 2. Objectivity 3. Internalization

In the process of externalization, individuals create a decisive culture in the social structure. In this phase, which gives an objective qualification to the material and cultural conditions of social material, the individual carries subjective values and worlds of meaning. Role-based activities and typologies based on traction are the basic tools at this stage (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Then a ground should be prepared where the ideas that are externalized will become a constant reality. In this phase, called objecting, individuals shape the norms they claim to be necessary for coexistence. For example, when we go to a hospital, the behavioral patterns we have inherited have actually been created before us and institutionalized in the historical process (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Thus, behavioral patterns have become an external reality.

In the third stage, the process of internalization reveals the transfer of this external reality to the subjective areas of the individual through socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). People construct a certain norm and object it into the next generations as an external reality. What is expected is that in the processes of socialization of individuals, they carry this external fact to their subjective universes and internalize the social reality that is constructed according to their own reality. At the end of this process, internalized patterns are reproduced by externalizing through roles and actions and transferred to later generations (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Socialization is a dynamic and multifaceted process. The media has a very effective role in this process. The transformation of communication environments and the possibility of socialization have also been differentiated. According to Mc. Quail, the media has five main functions: informing; cultural continuity; socialization; creating publicity and amusement. With the web 2.0 technology, known as second-generation Internet services, was introduced into the market in 2004, resulting in a cyberspace public space left behind by geographical borders. With the possibility of global communication provided by social networking networks and the possibility of continuity, the person keeps a constant identity development process. The interaction with the community is

accelerating and increasing, and the individual has more to do with the cultural influences than ever before. Cultures are interacting with other cultures and become as open as ever before. Through social networks, social traditions, values and culture, global regulation from national boundaries are carried. As globalization, inter-individual interaction, products, capital and public space are overcoming the boundaries, while the boundaries are becoming more and more fierce with the new communication medium, the cultural product is becoming a product that is uncovered from the hand and the cultural encounters in the expanding circle have been realized. This process which is also expressed as cultural globalization has become a product of the global village. The identities that are influenced by the multifaceted process of socialization carried on the global stage are noses with different cultures, and what they receive from dominant cultures are like building blocks that integrate into the culture of the society they are in (<http://ab.org.tr/ab13/bildiri/228.pdf>).

Individuals can turn their personal information into digital codes and form a profile with the forms directed after joining the social network. The accessibility feature can be customized with the view profile of the created profile. Other users can then be invited to the same network via this platform. It is the most important feature of social sharing sites that the list attached to the created profile is also open to others. This feature, which allows the profiles to connect indirectly, extends the network's volume. The use of social media has come to be referred to as a new mode of socialization, as it comes to being an objectified element in the way of social reality: "Individuals' social forms of existence can be classified under the following headings: representation, performance, profile, surveillance, surveillance, create, organize, carry out actions / campaigns in virtual space, and even move to offline everyday life " (Dunbar and Goffman, 2009: 29).

## **2. Social Network Sites and The Digital Self-Presentation**

Dökmen (2010:169) describes selfness as "every feature and process that distinguishes me from the others." Goffmann (2009:16, 33) also tells us that when we present ourselves to other people, we display different performances according to different roles, and social life is actually a scene. When a person is in an act, he or she wants to make an impact on the person he or she follows. They want the viewers to believe that the character presented to them is actually a real character. Dökmen (2010:169) also says that according to the theory of self presentation, the behavior of a person depends on his / her gender concepts, his / her ability to act in accordance with the expectations of others. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration that the presentations of self are different according to the different social roles of women and man.

We can think of social media networks as environments in which individuals redefine society's integration process with digital codes. Web 2.0 technologies that enable simultaneous and bilateral sharing of user-based content have made the theory of Berger and Luckmann (1966: 108-130), the mechanism of producing social reality more dynamic. In providing these changes, it is necessary to talk about the social network areas created by the new media. Binark et al. (2012: 124-125) have thought of this space as a free and dynamic living space that can be easily found in new tribes, where new ones can easily be encountered by similar ones and "others". From these definitions, Web 2.0 can be seen as a means of freedom that an individual can use while creating digital identity. The development of the Internet has changed the conditions of traditional identity construction. Previous work on self-presentation in online environments has usually focused on constructing identities in anonymous (anonymous) user environments where the identity of the persons is not clear. Binark et al. (2012: 118) have considered the digital identity creation process as a process of constantly building/constructing. According to them, this process is not only a "future" but also a "being" with its past sentences. That is, the construction of the identity of the individual, which the individual creates, is proceeding at a time of its own shaping. According to Gonzales (2008) and Melcombe (2011), facebook users have the ability to present their own controllable images to friends and followers using personal profile pages. When users make a decision about Facebook identities, they are determined based on how other users want to perceive themselves. The fact that the information is under control in this way is vital for self presentation. When compared with what happens in the face-to-face communication of the self-presentation, it offers the user the ability to be selective about features that are presented for self-modifiable and manipulable online self-presentations. In other words, individuals decide for themselves which identity they are to offer on Facebook. Timisi (2005:97) defines this new situation as a centerless communication field as a perfect opportunity of self-creation. The user can place the desired visual or textual content on this page in the virtual entity. The person now has a copy of the digital components.

The results of the work Zhao and colleagues (2008) identities are different from identities in the anonymous online environment or those in the offline real world. Facebook users emphasize or exaggerate the ideal self characteristics that are socially desirable but not observed in real life. At the same time, users tend to hide their undesirable features. The emergence of Facebook has empowered its users on selective self presentation. Zhao et al. (2008) have identified desirable identities as inconsistent social network identities with real life

personalities. These online identities are often positively shaped to express one's socially desirable and sympathetic attitude and are carefully constructed to reflect social and cultural norms.

Hood (2012: 315) approaches the subject in another way in the sub-title of "we all want a second life" in social media's work on the creation process of the self. Hood (2012) thinks of the social media user as an individual who designs an online world where he can live an extraordinary life in beautiful homes where he can have a great body that does not get old and does not get sick. Then he gives a striking example of the difference between the real and the self created in the virtual space. In these examples, it indicates that the individual creates the self which others want to see while forming their own self.

Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, Instagram, Vine, Youtube, Pinterest, blogs, wikis, and many social networks that we can duplicate have undoubtedly different features, dynamics, usage limitations. However, when it is evaluated from the general perspective, it can be seen that a profile belonging to the user (selected profile photograph, identity descriptions, age, sex, relationship status, business information, education bill, cover photo, motto) opinion), likes, comments, friends (followers, followers). These properties are filled in to the individual's preference, either true or completely indistinguishable. Individuals who are looking for absolute power in social networks are also constructing their actions and social networking practices in this direction (Uğurlu, 2015:242). The individual expresses an identity that he or she does not feel by manipulating it through images through social networks. Social media, as an area where it can fill the gap between what it is and what it wants to be, just becomes functional in this process. When we are thinking about the subject, we have a virtual self that can make identity control itself by means of perfection on the body, in short, creating, organizing, attaching, extracting or delighting in digital visual materials by re-producing and re-producing digital visual materials. Agger (2011:168) defines the virtual self as: Existence is the act of being in the world rather than abstract philosophical ideas. In the formal, flashing, imaginary world of the Internet, where people create themselves electronically, more than ever is needed for self-editing. It is also possible to say that self-assembly is necessary. In other words, reality is debatable, creating a fictional self is like evidence of social nobility in the presence of individuals. It is able to offer the mechanism of repair and regulation to equip the body with images, to polish and shine the life stories, to complete the incomplete, to transform all these voluntarily into voluminous items, to say, I am special.

### 3. The Method of Research

In the method part of the research, three cases belonging to the digital identity of a user actively using social networks are distributed in three groups and three cases have been analyzed by different groups of individuals from different status formed within the framework of semi-structured interviews. The first group is consisted of academicians, the second group is from administrative staff of an university and the third group is consisted of students. It is chosen from different status because it should be shown that how the same person's different social network sites sharings are evaluated by people who have different status.

The purpose of these negotiations is to reveal implicit and explicit information that can be obtained from digital sources. Three digital data belonging to an individual were selected in the interviews. These are the person's one of the Instagram account's post, the other Facebook profile photo, the avatar that is used in the next Twitter account. Each of these data is distributed in three groups of five persons. Based on the data from each group, they were asked to make estimates about their personal information, lifestyle and personality. At the end of the interviews, the third person assessed the said individual together with the digital data and reached the conclusion that he had cut it from its real context and identified the same person as four different "persona".

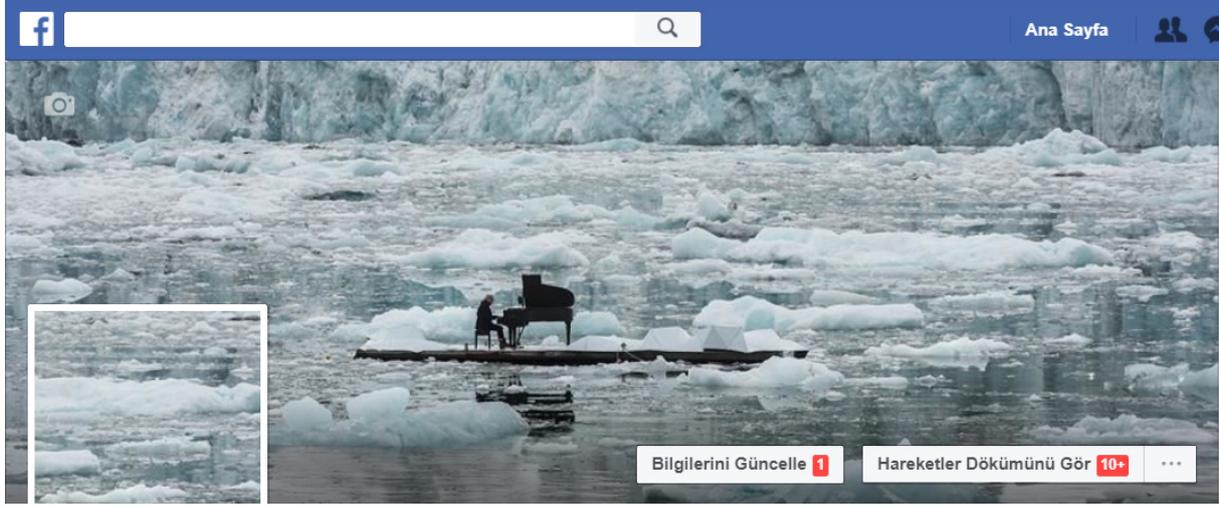
The elements that are basically measured are as follows. 1. Marital status 2. Age 3. Gender 4. Occupation 5. Economic income status 6. Hobbies 7. Cultural and Social Activities. These interviews are of great importance for our research. It uncovered how third-parties perceived the large, personalized information archive that was accumulating as a major source of reliance when pulled out of the relevant networks. Significant results were obtained in the talks.

The actual information of the individual who receives the digital identities is as follows (Personal permission has been obtained for the sharing of this information) :

1. Marital Status: Married
2. Age: 33
3. Gender: Female
4. Occupation: Instructor (Child Development Department)
5. Economic income status: 4.500
6. Hobbies: Reading book, imagining, shooting, discovering new places, writing, thinking and interpreting

7. Cultural and Social Activities: Helping living things in every situation, theatre, cinema and concerts in different cities, chat with people meaningfully and intellectually, organizing reading activities, making activities by recognizing the works of art

Group 1 (Academics), evaluating the person's Facebook photo, was found in descriptive explanations and commented on the character of the person. The information they provide by way of image analysis is as follows:



1. Marital Status: Married
2. Age: 40
3. Gender: Male
4. Occupation: Doctor
5. Economic income status: 5.000-10.000
6. Hobbies: Listening to music, Diving, Swimming, Skiing
7. Cultural and Social Activities: Participating in conversations and concerts, theatre

*“We think that a person is alone in the crowd. It's a person who likes less things in his home, eats less food and wants fewer people in his life. He's gentleman with culture and art. It looks like a human born to nature. we think that he loves loneliness and that he has an unrequited love.”*

Group 2 (Administrative staff), who is on the way out of the Twitter avatar of the quiche, has gone through a general analysis of the clues they have found:

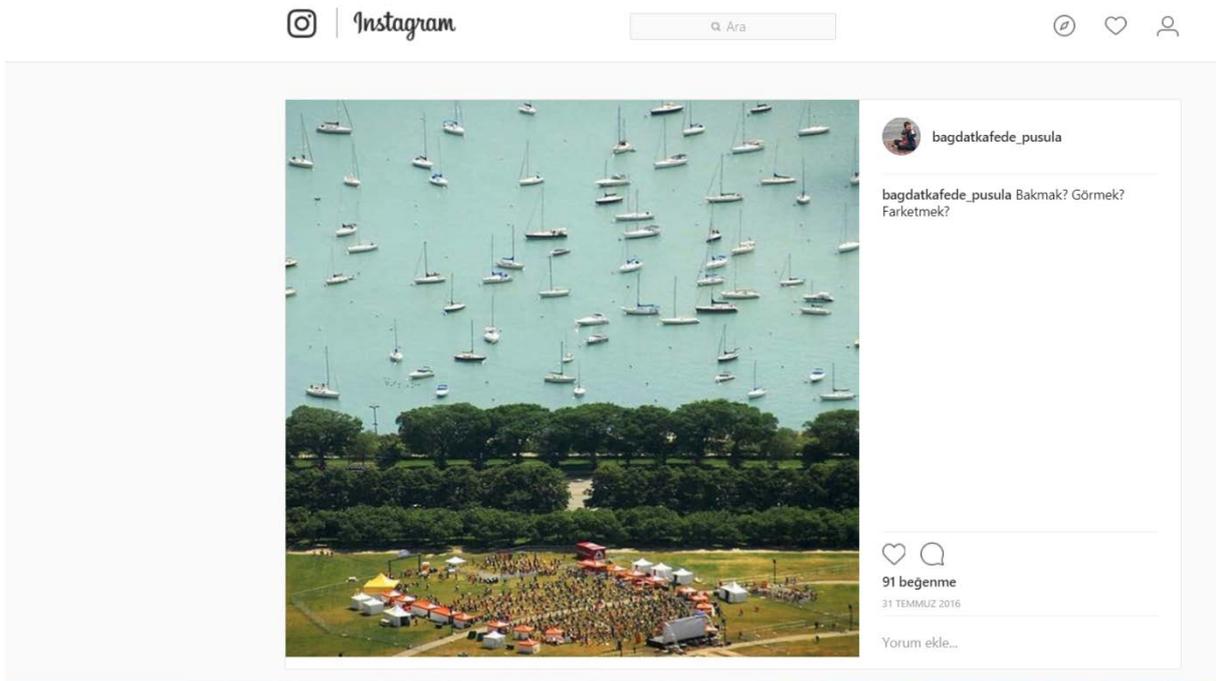


1. Marital Status: Married
2. Age: 35
3. Gender: Male

4. Occupation: Academician
5. Economic income status: 5.000-7.000
6. Hobies: Watching films, Reading books, Being in nature
7. Cultural and Social Activities: Shooting, Travelling

*“We think that having Little Prince photo as twitter avatar shows that he has child soul and colourful personality so his children are very lucky. He has a retweet about rectors so we assume that he is an academician and he likes his job because he writes that his job and his soul are the same and whole. He likes children very much also he has positive perspective on life.”*

Group 3 (students), who is on the way out of the Instagram post, has gone through a general analysis of the clues they have found:



1. Marital Status: Single
2. Age: 35
3. Gender: Male
4. Occupation: Blogger
5. Economic income status: 5.000-6.000
6. Hobies: Travelling, Shooting, Reading books, Discovering, Tracking, Dealing with antiquities
7. Cultural and Social Activities: Exhibitions and artistic activities, theatre

*“We think that he is single because he has free spirit but he has a child in his spirit that he can not grow in. He also tries to show his own truths through artistic activities. He likes nature very much.”*

At the end of the talks, these three interpretations were revealed to the groups of the same person who actually represented the same individual. The interviewer's group makes different comments for the user and responds differently to the questions, indicating that the user has created his digital identity differently for each social network. This shows us that users design their identities in the online environment according to the existence and expectations of others.

## CONCLUSION

The user who enters the virtual extension is in fact building an identity from the moment it first enters this area. This process goes in line with how one wants to be seen by others. It is possible to read each of the shares in social media profiles as performance. The person is aware that he is being watched by an audience during the performance, and he wants to make a certain impact on that audience. It is in the interests of the user to obtain the consent of other participants and to share them in order to make them accepted by them.

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This confirms the claim of the article. The difference in users' self-organization in digital media spaces has shown that this is a design process.

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