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Digitised Body and Self Among Generation Z on Instagram in West Sumatra

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Abstract: *This study aims to determine how the Digitized body/self is perceived by Gen Z on Instagram and explore the challenges faced by Generation Z in constructing and producing digital identities in their daily activities. This study uses a digital sociology perspective and Deborah Lupton's concept of the digitized body in the context of the West Sumatra community. This study uses a qualitative approach using netnographic research types such as observation of visual content, captions, profile descriptions, and interaction patterns that complement the explanation of their digital practices. This research is complemented by in-depth interviews with Instagram users from Generation Z based on predetermined criteria. The results show that Generation Z forms the digitalization of the body and self through the practice of audience segmentation based on goals, namely using multiple accounts, using anonymous accounts, selecting posts based on audience groups per account, and differentiating the digital self they want to show based on the account's purpose. This form of digitalization reflects the difference between online representation and their real-world self.*

Keywords**:** Generation Z; Instagram; Digitised Body and Self

A. INTRODUCTION

The digitalization of the body and self was introduced by Lupton (2012), namely how the human body and identity are represented through digital technology, one of the most popular being social media. The body and self are no longer understood as merely physical entities, but are also represented in social interactions in the digital world (Lupton, 2013). The development of digitalization has blurred the physical body and the body in the digital world, sometimes making them unrelated.

The digital self continuously reproduces values, lifestyles, and perspectives in audiovisual media. Ultimately, an individual's identity becomes highly dynamic, highly personal, and highly context-dependent. The digital self is also fragmented into multiple forms, seemingly possessing multiple personalities separated into distinct

accounts that do not define each other (Frade, 2024). The digital body becomes an object that is expected to conform to the expectations of prevailing digital norms and standards, so that the body has been divided into many forms according to the audience that has access to see it.

Instagram represents the largest social media platform favored by users, particularly in shaping digital images in contemporary pop culture (Baird, 2022; McNicol & Aillerie, 2017; Sitompul et al., 2023). Instagram provides algorithmic support to make someone appear authentic, aesthetic, and distinctive according to the existing audience and reproduce the desired persona to attract a large following. This creates the influencer phenomenon that can influence people's values, lifestyles, and behavior according to the desires of the industry (Mantilla-León et al., 2024).

Lupton explains Instagram's role as a social media platform that facilitates the formation of digital personas. It creates performative constructs within the digital space, often in the form of likes, comments, and follower growth, which often create an intoxicating dopamine rush. As a result, social media is no longer a means of communication, but rather a platform for the creation of a digital persona intentionally crafted for a predetermined target audience.

The concept of the digitized body and self has received limited discussion within the context of local communities, especially in Indonesia. Although this concept has been widely discussed in introductory courses on Pop Studies or Digital Sociology, its analytical application through phenomena and cases remains very limited, particularly in West Sumatra, a non-industrial, homogeneous, and non-metropolitan city (Brison, 2023; Rauf, 2021).

The phenomenon of individuals and social media is still widely discussed in communication and cultural studies, but very few continue to the implications of digital sociology with various perspectives. In the context of Minangkabau society, collective values and norms are so deeply embedded that the digital body created gives rise to forms of tension between traditional identity and highly performative self-representation that will give rise to pressure. Therefore, this study will examine how Gen Z in West Sumatra forms a digitized body and self on Instagram by highlighting the forms of digitized body and self constructed and represented on Instagram and what are the challenges faced in digitized body and self in Generation Z on Instagram?

B. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a netnographic (digital ethnography) research method (Creswell, 2015). Netnography is a type of qualitative research that seeks to understand cultural experiences that encompass and are reflected in traces, practices, networks, and systems within social media. This research method was chosen because it allows researchers to observe how individuals reproduce values, practices, social interactions, and representations of digital personas through digital devices. Netnography was chosen to analyze the digitized body and self visually on Instagram.

In netnographic research, researchers actively observe the digital activities undertaken by individuals in presenting their digital personas through the content they create, including song selection, layout, content format, and so on, all aimed at representing their bodies online. Researchers actively observe through uploaded photos, videos, captions, biographies, reposts, number of views, and interactions with followers, such as comments, likes, and so on.

All individual activity on their Instagram accounts will be recorded in a structured and systematic manner to identify key findings. The documentation process is conducted with consent and with due regard for individual privacy. All individual identities will be anonymized to avoid compromising the informant's sensitive information.

This study employed observation and in-depth interviews as sampling techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted voluntarily by informants who had agreed to participate. This study employed a purposive sampling technique, where the selected informants met predetermined criteria. These criteria included Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2014, with more than one Instagram account, and accounts older than a year. Interviews were conducted online via text message or video. All data collection procedures were conducted with the informants' privacy and security in mind.

The existing data will be analyzed using Miles and Huberman's data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction stage involves determining the main themes and creating categories or codes to facilitate analysis. The data presentation stage involves organizing the data in a systematic narrative and using visualizations to simplify the data, such as graphs or concept maps. The conclusion-drawing or verification stage involves linking the findings to relevant perspectives and re-examining the data to confirm the conclusions drawn.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of the Digitised Body and Self

The concept of the digitized body and self in the social media arena is shaped through individual interactions and identities within digital practices. This interaction is evident in the account segmentation carried out by informants to reproduce their identities on Instagram. This practice is socially mediated and has become a phenomenon in digital communities. Rambe and Mulyadi emphasize that identity in virtual communities is highly dynamic, semantic, and pragmatic (Villani et al., 2016). Digital identity is also a form of self-identity constructed through digital personas within virtual communities (Noumeur, 2019). Individuals construct their identities in the interest of creating digital personas that are very different from their real identities (Oktarina et al., 2022; von Benda-Beckmann, 2012).

Marwick and Boyd's study highlights how the mechanisms of self-presentation on platforms like Twitter, which create context, have collapsed as audiences exist within their own bubbles while managing their identities. This creates tension between digital personas and conformity to social norms (Feng et al., 2021). Individuals continually project themselves through digital practices that align with self- and social expectations.

The use of digital devices also tends to blur spatial boundaries for their users. By combining material objects (devices such as smartphones or tablet computers) with the information that flows between these objects and repositories such as archives and digital repositories, and also by connecting private space with public space (one may use a device at home but thereby connect with others outside this domestic space), mobile media occupy a liminal space (Beer 2012b; Schneider 2012). Smartphones such as the iPhone are highly tactile and visual in their materiality, yet also immaterial, thus blurring the boundaries as objects between the two. It is no longer possible to make a definitive distinction between hardware and software. On such devices, touch, sight,

and immaterial objects of knowledge (digital data objects) are aligned (Schneider 2012). Similarly, the need to connect one's device to a broadband network when in public spaces and find a strong enough signal unites the visible and invisible aspects of digital technology, and avoiding interference with other users' wireless connections highlights the "physicality of the virtual" (Dourish and Bell 2007: 424).

2. Generational Theory by Karl Mannheim

Karl Mannheim's concept of generations has significantly influenced the topic of intergenerational social change. Mannheim, in his work, The Problem of Generation, offers a perspective that each generation has different sociohistorical experiences according to the social changes that accompany it (Mannheim, 1952; Swanzen, 2018). This approach proposes that individuals share the same social experiences based on their year of birth and have collective meanings about things in social life. Generation theory emerged from Mannheim's ideas because he criticized the positivist school of thought about how generations ignore social factors and prioritize biological ones. Mannheim argued that efforts to discover the rhythm of history can only be achieved through research by examining the social order that occurred based on the generations living at that time. The concept of generation, according to Mannheim, is equated with social class position because it indicates the location of an individual or group within the social structure. The generation theory initiated by Mannheim encouraged researchers to see the events of World Wars I and II as a benchmark for the next generation according to the sociohistorical events experienced. Mannheim's contribution, for example, can explain how the millennial generation responded to major events like the global financial crisis of the 1990s. Each generation has a different response to the social dynamics that occur, both at the local and global levels (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

The development of Mannheim's ideas in contemporary studies has received complex recognition in generational studies. Scholars have integrated the concept of generation into topics of political consciousness, social construction, or the influence of culture and society in various contexts. The diversity of narratives and forms of identification that emerge within generational groups have been embedded in frameworks that focus on the political dimension (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2013; Bencsik et al., 2016; Bessant et al., 2017). Generational theory also analyzes different political frameworks based on their lived experiences, which ultimately give rise to different responses to the regime, whether compliance or resistance (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2013; Bessant et al., 2017). Understanding generational shifts provides important insights into the broader social dynamics that shape perspectives and actions. Generational analysis offers a different perspective on the transformation of social life.

Generational theory analysis remains highly relevant to current social conditions, which are evolving in line with emerging dynamics. A sociopolitical framework also urgently requires an analysis of identity differences between generations to understand collective consciousness influenced by shared historical conditions. Therefore, Mannheim's generational theory remains analytically relevant and productive (Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Karácsony et al., 2020; Rafiki & Hartijasti, 2022).

The study of Generation Z's digitalization of their bodies and selves on Instagram merits analysis using generational theory. Generation Y was the first generation to encounter digital technology during their development into adulthood,

in the 1990s, when the internet was first introduced to the world. However, Generation Z is the primary generation born, raised, and developed entirely within the development of the internet and digital technologies. Generation Z has been deeply immersed in digital technology, even as an inseparable entity. Therefore, analyzing Generation Z specifically will provide us with a deeper understanding of how digital natives are able to form a significant segmentation between the online and offline worlds.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Curating the Audience

Our first finding was that informants actively manage their audiences based on the accounts they create on Instagram. On average, Generation Z has more than one account to curate their audience according to the purpose of the account. Informants also actively manage their audiences to determine who can access and observe their digital identities across various platforms and accounts, such as utilizing features like close friends, primary accounts, second accounts, fake accounts, turning off comments, hidden accounts, muted accounts, and so on, which can restrict certain accounts.

They also selectively modify their self-representations to determine what content to display and who is allowed to see it. This practice is illustrated by VE, a junior high school teacher from Padang City who lives in Agam Regency and works as a teacher there. VE has had a secondary Instagram account for five years. VE has an introverted and private personality, but she enjoys posting about her daily activities to close friends on her secondary account. VE's close friends are acquired through real-world interactions rather than digital ones. VE has several reasons for not posting much about her daily life on her primary account. First, she doesn't want her followers to feel uncomfortable with her spammy posts. Second, she fears social judgment, which will make her anxious and uneasy. As a result, VE restricts access to her secondary account to close friends from her offline life.

VE's primary Instagram account has 1,147 followers. From those 1,147 followers, she curates a following of 62 close friends in real life. VE perceives her secondary account as more reflective of her offline personality compared to her primary account.

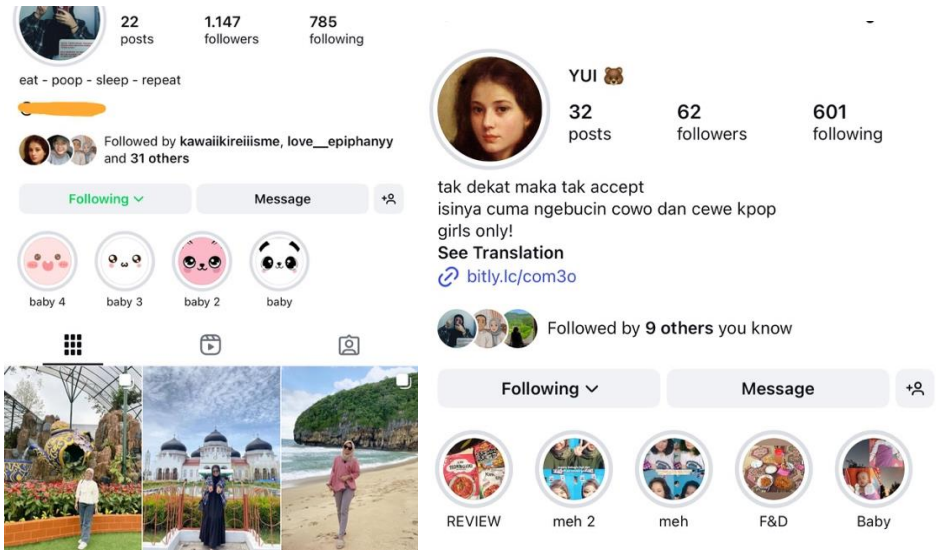


Figure 1. First account and second account (from left to right)

VE also admitted to being a K-pop fan. She only displays her fangirling activities on her secondary account due to fear of receiving unwelcome comments from followers, making her feel insecure about publishing fangirling content publicly. She relies on her secondary account to express this aspect of her identity more authentically. As a teacher, VE feels constantly scrutinized for her online behavior, especially regarding her fangirling activities, which she worries could be interpreted as impulsive and potentially inappropriate by her students. She describes her primary account as a space for casual interactions, such as sharing posts with friends and tagging stories for a limited time. In practice, VE interacts more frequently with her secondary account than with her primary account. She defines her primary account as representing a calm, peaceful, and socially acceptable persona, in line with broader expectations. In contrast, her secondary account is described as expressive, humorous, narrative-oriented, and full of intellectual play.

Another form of curation VE employs is limiting her colleagues at school from seeing her romantic content with her partner. She also feels uncomfortable about the potential judgment of her professional colleagues about her posts. She feels unsafe if her colleagues have excessive access to her personal life. VE fears being attacked if she ever finds herself in a situation where she has conflicting interests with her colleagues, so she keeps personal matters hidden from her professional environment as much as possible.

VE explained that she applies several layers of audience curation to all her accounts. Her primary account also utilizes the "close friends" feature, which includes close friends of both men and women. The content shared in this feature tends to be semi-private. VE consistently posts content about her daily activities and personal life, while still wearing the hijab as a way of identifying herself. All followers on her secondary account are on the "close friends" feature, but not all followers on the "close friends" feature are on the secondary account's "followers" list. The secondary account itself is restricted exclusively to female followers. This layered structure reflects the tiered levels of information privacy, with the secondary account being the most private, followed by the "close friends" feature on her primary account, and finally, the primary account itself. VE has also set her primary account to private, restricting access to approved followers and refusing full public exposure in the digital realm.

VE's secondary account has very open access to view VE's activities in a very personal way. For example, VE sometimes posts without a hijab, something she would never do on her primary account or the primary account with the close friends feature.

Conversely, FA, a 27-year-old lecturer with a master's degree and middle-income background, uses her secondary account to freely share content, including appearing without a hijab and engaging in daily activities. Her secondary account is exclusively for female followers. FA uses her secondary account as a digital diary, documenting her professional experiences, daily routines, and romantic stories. Although FA is known for her extroversion in real life, she doesn't display that personality on her primary account.

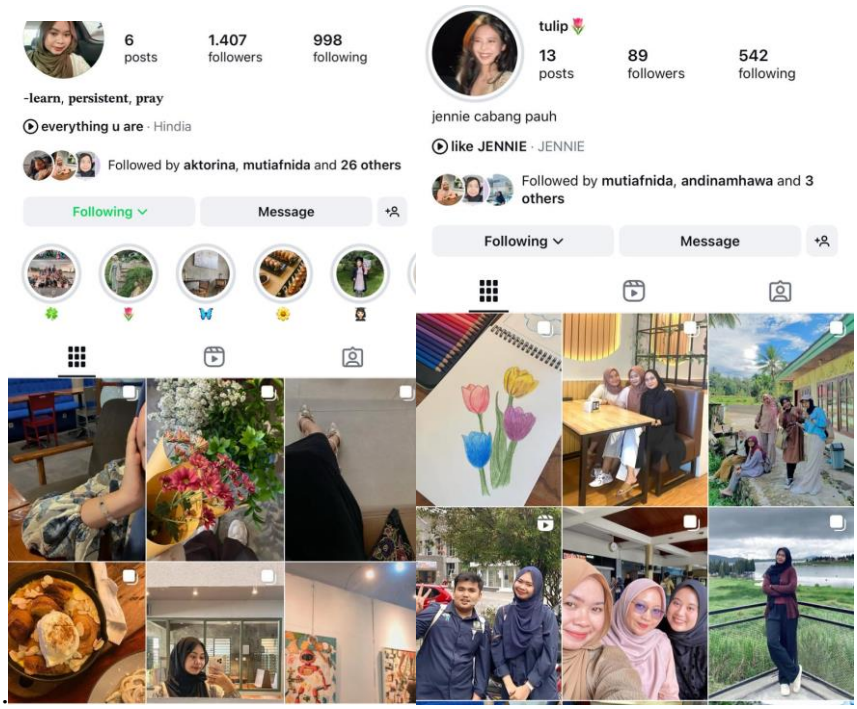


Figure 2. First account and second account (from left to right)

The differences between FA's primary and secondary accounts are striking. On her primary account, FA strives to project a serene, feminine, aesthetic, and photogenic persona. Unlike VE, FA uses her first account aesthetically, considering color composition and using face filters to create a sparkling and attractive look. She wants to define herself as a calm and elegant woman. Meanwhile, on her second account, FA seems comfortable sharing spontaneous memories with friends, where body proportions, facial appearance, and visual consistency are less of a concern. FA identifies with her real-life self and her second Instagram account. FA's cheerful and spontaneous personality isn't intended to be displayed to all audiences on Instagram.

Unlike FA, who strives to project a feminine and aesthetic persona, VE prefers to post professional moments, family activities, and playtime with peers. Meanwhile, on her second account, VE focuses more on daily life, anxieties, disappointments, and self-expression, a feature she never explored on her first account.

FA is very careful to avoid revealing the emotional state and vulnerability experienced on her first account. She often uploads photos or videos with the same background but from different perspectives. For example, on her first account, she uploaded a photo of herself successfully completing a basic civil servant training seminar with a stunning photo and a beautiful filter, while on her second account, she showed herself crying due to nervousness during a hearing. Her second account, however, serves as a space for sharing more authentic experiences, sharing honest stories with close friends.

FA uses her secondary account as the safest space to share aspects of her romantic life because she feels secure within her secondary circle of friends, who she feels will not judge or control her activities on her second account. She also posts more frequently on her second account than on her first account. On her first account, FA also curates her audience using the close friends feature, which includes close friends of the same gender or the opposite gender. On her second account, however, her audience is more intimate and exclusive, consisting of only women.

According to Lupton (2014), the practices demonstrated by VE and FA illustrate how Generation Z actively curates audiences at a highly complex, multi-layered, and robust level to protect information security, community perspectives, and the digital persona they seek to construct. Bodies are represented in various forms according to the supporting digital networks and platforms. Bodies receive a great deal of digital attention, especially those with the largest audiences, and are often the object of spontaneous and judgmental commentary on social media. Uploading content about personal activities on social media platforms like Instagram is a form of personal brand development. Shaping one's persona in the digital world can also be challenging if the individual has friends or followers from the same offline environment and posts something that contradicts the personal brand they desire to project.

Self-monitoring of uploaded content is part of the digitalization of the ideal body and self on social media. Individuals may have different online bodies, with different audiences and timelines that differ from their current lives. Instagram also provides a feature to hide content to safeguard the personal brand they are building. This feature locks Instagram users into a particular narrative about the body they wish to transform. Additionally, Instagram users can still preserve their memories, appearances, and interactions with selected audiences through account restriction, close friends, and the creation of secondary accounts, which are hallmarks of Instagram. Secondary accounts have become a highly engaging visual diary for Generation Z.

In VE's case, the digitised self is characterised by a strong awareness of surveillance and professional accountability. Her identity management reflects a heightened sensitivity to institutional gaze, particularly related to her role as a teacher. The separation between her primary and secondary accounts demonstrates how the digitised body is fragmented across platforms to manage differing moral expectations, professional norms, and affective expressions. VE's fangirling practices, which involve emotional investment and bodily expression, are deliberately relocated to a more private digital space, illustrating how certain embodied identities are considered incompatible with dominant norms attached to professional respectability. Her digital self is therefore not suppressed, but strategically displaced, allowing her to maintain both conformity and authenticity within different digital contexts.

FA's digitised self, on the other hand, reveals a distinct negotiation between aesthetic discipline and emotional release. Her primary account operates as a carefully curated visual surface, where the body is stylised, partially concealed, and aligned with ideals of femininity, elegance, and independence. This reflects Lupton's argument that the digitised body is often subjected to regimes of optimisation and visual governance. Conversely, FA's secondary account functions as a space for affective expression and narrative spontaneity, where bodily appearance becomes secondary to emotional truth and relational intimacy. Here, the digitised self is not optimised but lived, allowing vulnerability, humour, and insecurity to coexist without fear of public judgement.

Importantly, the experiences of VE and FA should not be generalised as uniform representations of Gen Z behaviour. Rather, they demonstrate distinct strategies of digital self-management shaped by professional roles, gendered expectations, religious norms, and personal comfort with visibility. While both informants employ audience curation and account segmentation, the meanings attached to these practices differ. VE's practices are oriented toward safeguarding

professional legitimacy, whereas FA's practices prioritise emotional safety and self-expression. Through Lupton's framework, these cases highlight how the digitised body and self are not fixed identities but relational processes that emerge through continuous negotiation between the individual, the audience, and the technological architecture of social media platforms.

2. Selection and Exclusion: What Is Hidden as What Is Shown

WI, a 29-year-old entrepreneur, began creating a secondary Instagram account after increasingly socialising with younger peers. She described her experience as follows:

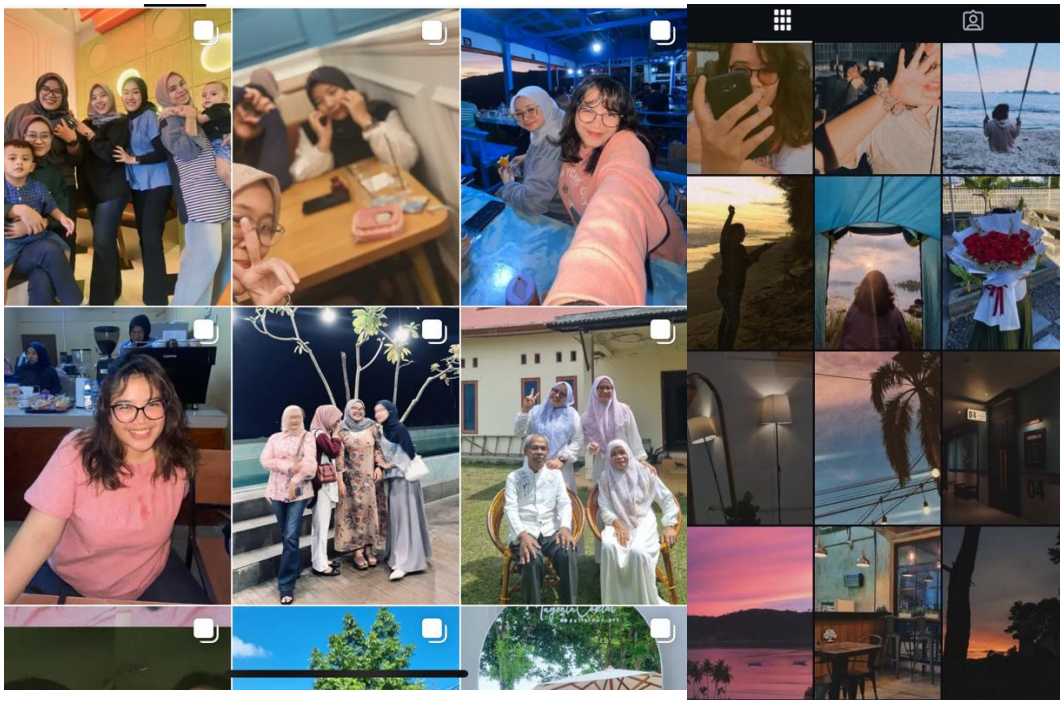


Figure 3. First account and second account (from left to right)

WI explained that she had previously created a fake, or secondary, Instagram account, but initially only used it briefly due to the exhaustion of managing two separate accounts for different audiences. This practice emerged after she started hanging out with a younger neighbor born in 2002. After about two months, she found constantly switching accounts exhausting. She then returned to using the secondary account because she was increasingly overwhelmed by the content shared by her peers, particularly posts related to childbirth and pregnancy. To address this, WI often temporarily deactivated her primary account and focused entirely on her secondary account, allowing her to experience the platform as if she were using a single account, rather than managing two simultaneously.

As an individual in the transitional generation between Millennials and Gen Z, WI represents herself as being strongly influenced by a circle of friends who are closer to Generation Z. WI has never experienced account restrictions on the amount of personal activity she does, until she was advised by her Gen Z friends to create a secondary account specifically to show her true identity. However, WI still uses the first account as her real self because she is used to it. Meanwhile, for the second account, she often stores many cinematic photos that she takes herself on her phone. WI is also overwhelmed by managing so many accounts that the second account is often used passively. WI's decision to use a second account for her photography hobby

is interpreted as the digitized body in the second account being replaced by an abstracted self, which goes against the collective norms held by Gen Z.

Rather than conforming to collective norms, WI demonstrates that digital identity is inherently free, highly personal, and situational. This contrasts with the practice of Generation Z, which often normalizes the coexistence of multiple personal brands across multiple Instagram accounts.

In addition to having a second account to curate an audience, XY maintains an anonymous account for his digital visibility. None of his friends know about XY's anonymous account. He withdraws from these social circles and collective norms. XY activates the private account feature so no one can see his posts. Uniquely, XY does not accept any follower requests, nor does he post anything. He follows 118 accounts, consisting of people he secretly interests him to follow, as well as idols and influencers he aspires to be like. XY has maintained an anonymous account for over four years. XY uses a photo of a school building as his display profile on his anonymous Instagram.

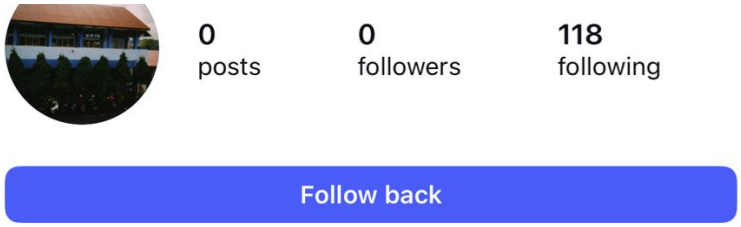


Figure 4. Anonymous Account XY

XY explained that his anonymous account gave him a sense of security because he could follow anyone without revealing his identity. He used his anonymous account to follow people he wanted to follow because he was attracted to their digital personas without fear of judgment or rejection due to their identity being hidden. Meanwhile, his primary account was restricted exclusively to people he knew in real life. According to XY, he did this because many users have primary accounts, secondary accounts, and even anonymous accounts to prevent others from discovering his interests, daily activities, and personal preferences.

XY deliberately hid this account from everyone and freely followed individuals regardless of personal or social proximity. Anonymity served as a protective mechanism for XY from unfettered digital surveillance, and XY was also free from social bonds, visibility, or reciprocal engagement.

Unlike informants like VE, VD, and WI, who managed their social connections through selective inclusion and exclusion, XY did not allow his acquaintances to know about the existence of his anonymous account. He deliberately hid this account from everyone and freely followed individuals regardless of personal or social proximity. For XY, anonymity serves as a protective mechanism that allows for unrestricted digital observation without social obligations, visibility, or reciprocal engagement.

3. Challenges Faced by Generation Z in the Process of Digitised Body and Self on Social Media

The digitized body and self are characterized by a high degree of complexity regarding the digital body and the creation of multiple identities. Social media platforms present numerous negotiations with communities, social structures, and personal experiences related to identity formation. These challenges ultimately make

it difficult for individuals to maintain their authenticity. Individuals create a deep gap between their offline and online selves. A primary account, typically followed by all members of the offline community, can overwhelm individuals, living within the confines of social norms, customs, and collective norms. Meanwhile, a secondary account serves as a means of expression, a safe space for the body and self to represent themselves through technological means.

The most fundamental challenge faced by Generation Z in the process of digitalizing their bodies and selves on Instagram is a crisis of authenticity. This crisis arises from the high societal demands on individuals in their actions, behaviors, and behaviors, causing individuals to often divide themselves into multiple identities according to their respective domains, which serve as a shield for themselves. In a digital society, the self is constantly subject to monitoring, assessment, and adjustment. Generation Z often finds themselves negotiating with the expectations of the community that is always present on social media platforms. The openness of information and the freedom to upload photo and video content also frustrate individuals because it is too easy to compare themselves to others, as is the high social demands of adulthood such as career success, marriage, children, economic stability, and so on.

This identity crisis becomes increasingly apparent as Generation Z realizes that their behavior, expressions, and personalities differ significantly across platforms. Someone might appear relaxed and humorous on TikTok, while projecting a highly authentic and mysterious image on Instagram. This variation creates a fragmented identity with specific collective norms within the digital world. The differences in self-presentation across platforms also reflect the structural demands of the real world, which are more complex in the digital world.

Freund (2004) uses technological habitus as a concept to explain the type of consciousness offered by contemporary Western society in describing the digital world. Human and machine entities have very striking differences and cannot be combined. The real body and the digital body operated by machines often experience cyber borg which ultimately causes discomfort, stress, or loss of self-control. The merging of the digital body and the physical body creates disruptions in activities such as damaged sleep patterns, increased work hours that are no longer limited by space and time, decreased quality of leisure time, and social overwhelm due to information that has flooded the social world. A person's body that is open and transparent in the social world also makes him easy to track, making the body more easily visible and causing great anxiety.

The main challenge of identity standardization is described as a filter bubble. Social identities often appear homogeneous because they are governed by the same algorithms through the amount of time we spend watching a show, liking, commenting, and sharing certain content. This standardization creates new pressures for Generation Z as they face collective norms that determine their acceptance online based on the existing filter bubble. These norms encompass lifestyle, clothing choices, discussion topics, personal opinions, and even tastes in content or music. Deviating from these shared patterns can lead to social isolation within digital communities. Therefore, individuals are constantly in the process of creating a digital body that aligns with the communities they are close to. The digital body continuously adapts to current and rapidly changing phenomena, whether it be the era's sense of humor, self-image, or responses to rapidly changing content.

For example, the practice of taking selfies has become a popular style, with collective norms that vary widely depending on the generation. Generation Z presents themselves through selfies, using different apps that are less flashy, aesthetically pleasing, and less conspicuous in their self-expression. This contrasts with Generation Y, whose selfies are more modest. Individuals force themselves to look the same through their filter bubbles because digitalization creates a form of collective surveillance. Social media allows users to upload images, such as selfies, and textual information so that others can comment on the content. The "like" feature also serves as a motivation to create better content, encouraging others to like the content they post. Whether other users like a Facebook status update or photo, like or retweet a tweet, or read someone's blog post, all of these are measures of success as part of a social media network. Indeed, a lack or loss of visibility can be considered problematic for social media users because it suggests a lack of popularity, importance, or interest in their updates and other posts. In this context, "visibility is a reward, not a punishment".

Digital body representation creates a gap between personal emotional experiences and digital representations. Individuals realize that social media content is not real and does not reflect their personalities. Instead, uploaded content often embodies expectations, stability, and all manner of socially acceptable activities. Meanwhile, uncertainty and vulnerability become completely neglected personal domains. In Lupton's framework, this suggests that digital identity formation involves not only acts of display but also acts of concealment. What is omitted from representation plays a crucial role in shaping the digital self.

The tension between the real and virtual selves also influences how Generation Z individuals perceive their own bodies and identities. Repeated exposure to idealized images and narratives on social media can create discomfort when experienced reality does not align with dominant digital representations. Visual standards and lifestyle depictions circulating online contribute to ongoing self-evaluation and comparison. In this sense, the digitalized body becomes a site where everyday experiences intersect with representational demands, often resulting in feelings of inadequacy or distress.

This study reveals that the use of secondary accounts serves as a defense mechanism for Generation Z to avoid the loss of their authentic selves and digital demands. Therefore, the issue of identity standardization should not be understood as a single issue; rather, individuals also negotiate with social structures and digital technologies in the digital world.

These findings underscore that the digitalization of the body and self is produced through numerous ongoing negotiations and tensions. Social media is not only a space for constructing a digital persona but also actively enables individuals to reproduce meanings, social relations, and understandings of the body and identity itself. The challenges faced by Generation Z reflect the broader conditions of contemporary digital society, where authenticity is no longer stable or singular, but constantly shifts in response to platform expectations and social feedback. Thus, the concept of the digitalized body and self offers a valuable analytical lens for understanding how identities are constructed, constrained, and contested in the digital age.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Generation Z does not present themselves in a single, stable form in digital spaces. Instead, participants actively manage their digital identities through audience selection, content curation, account separation, and, in some cases, the use of anonymity. These practices reflect conscious efforts to regulate visibility, maintain privacy, and control how their bodies and selves are perceived by different audiences. The use of multiple accounts, follower restrictions, and content curation indicate that digital identities are situational and highly context-dependent.

One of the study's key findings is the emergence of issues of authenticity. Participants frequently experienced tension between their real-world identities and their digital self-presentations. Differences in behavior and self-presentation across platforms are not necessarily intended as dishonesty, but rather as adjustments to platform norms, potential social judgment, and digital audience expectations. This contributes to uncertainty in self-definition, as individuals must continually adapt their self-presentations to different digital contexts. Overall, this study suggests that the digitalization of the body and self among Generation Z is shaped through a continuous interaction between individual agency and the structural conditions of social media.

Challenges related to authenticity, identity fragmentation, and conformity to digital norms cannot be understood solely as individual issues, but rather as a result of how social media regulates visibility, interaction, and social judgment. By situating these findings within a digital sociology framework, this research provides a clearer understanding of how social media shapes experiences of identity and the body in the context of contemporary digital society, particularly in the local context studied.

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