

Constructing Digital Selves: A Narrative Review on Identity in Online Communities

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ABSTRACT: In the digital era, identity construction has become increasingly intertwined with online interactions and platform-based communication. This narrative review aims to synthesize contemporary findings on how individuals construct and express identities within diverse online communities. Utilizing qualitative and quantitative studies retrieved from Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar, the review focuses on four primary contexts: social media platforms, online activism, role-playing games, and professional networking sites. Keywords such as "identity construction," "online communities," and "digital communication" guided the search and selection criteria. Findings reveal that identity is constructed through a range of communicative and narrative practices, including visual content creation, emotive expression, and community engagement. In social media, users employ multimodal strategies to project curated personas; in activist forums, shared narratives and symbols reinforce collective identities. Role-playing environments allow for creative exploration of identity via avatars and storylines, while professional platforms emphasize self-curation aligned with career aspirations. These processes are deeply influenced by systemic factors such as platform algorithms, socio-economic access disparities, and cultural norms. This review highlights the need for inclusive digital policies and educational initiatives to counteract algorithmic bias and bridge digital divides. Moreover, it calls for future research focusing on marginalized groups and non-Western perspectives to deepen global understanding. Overall, this study contributes to the growing scholarship on digital identity and offers practical insights for fostering equitable online engagement.

Keywords: Identity Construction, Online Communities, Digital Communication, Self-Presentation, Social Media Identity, Professional Networking, Digital Activism.



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INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, online communities have become central to the formation and negotiation of both social and professional identities. These virtual environments serve not merely as platforms for communication, but as complex ecosystems where individuals engage in dynamic and

multilayered processes of identity construction. Through digital interaction, users create, express, and adjust their identities in response to personal goals, social expectations, and technological affordances. According to Li et al. (2018), social media features such as user profiles and shared content operate as identity artifacts that reflect various facets of individual selves—from personal to professional—functioning as vehicles for relational development and status signaling. Similarly, Maliki et al. (2019) underscore the role of media literacy in enabling Facebook users to construct digital personas that align with their aspirational social roles.

Digital communication plays a pivotal role in shaping how individuals present and perceive themselves online. Platforms such as social media networks and online forums afford users the ability to articulate identity narratives that are both contextual and strategic. Jang and Lee (2021), for instance, documented how university students in South Korea adapted their core competencies during the COVID-19 pandemic, with remote learning reshaping their self-concepts and online representations. Concurrently, Feng et al. (2022) observed that social media functioned as a psychological refuge amid global crises, offering users a space for identity work and public response. These findings suggest that digital platforms are not only venues for interaction but also critical in mediating the personal and collective processes of identity construction.

The relevance of studying identity construction in online communities is underscored by ongoing transformations in global communication patterns and digital behaviors. Data from various studies affirm that individuals increasingly rely on digital platforms for self-expression, professional networking, and social belonging. The growing ubiquity of smartphones, combined with the expansion of high-speed internet and the integration of digital tools into everyday life, has facilitated new modes of identity performance. Notably, these platforms allow individuals to curate content, engage with diverse audiences, and modify their narratives in real-time, all of which contribute to the continuous shaping and reshaping of identity (Wang, 2024).

Moreover, the global COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the significance of digital identity. As in-person interaction became limited, individuals turned to virtual environments to maintain social connections, express solidarity, and adapt to evolving societal norms. In the case of South Korean students, as reported by Jang and Lee (2021), the shift to distance learning not only transformed academic routines but also reconfigured the contours of social and professional identity. Similarly, digital migration—the phenomenon of individuals moving their social, professional, and civic activities online—has redefined the spatial and cultural boundaries within which identities are constructed and perceived (Darics & Gatti, 2019).

However, constructing identity in online, multicultural, and multilingual spaces poses several challenges. Linguistic diversity, for example, often leads to miscommunication or exclusion. Kperogi (2018) highlighted how linguistic practices in Nigeria influence digital identity, with language functioning as a marker of inclusion or marginalization. In such settings, the interplay between language use and identity perception can either facilitate or hinder participation. Ditchfield (2019) further noted that online interactions are often performative, compelling users to conform to shifting community norms that may not align with their offline identities. This creates a tension between authenticity and adaptation in digital self-presentation.

In addition to cultural and linguistic barriers, online identities are inherently unstable and context-dependent. Wang (2024) investigated how live-stream moderators construct their personas

through discursive practices that must constantly adapt to audience expectations, which may result in psychological strain and identity dissonance. Eddington et al. (2022) similarly emphasized the emotional labor involved in maintaining coherent digital personas, particularly when individuals juggle multiple social roles across platforms. The need to balance visibility, consistency, and relatability intensifies the cognitive and emotional demands associated with digital identity work.

These challenges are compounded by the multiplicity of identities that individuals perform simultaneously in various digital spaces. While online communities offer unprecedented opportunities for expression and exploration, they also generate identity fragmentation and ambivalence. Users are often required to switch between professional, cultural, and personal selves, leading to a fluid but at times disorienting experience of identity. Such complexity necessitates a multidimensional understanding of how people navigate and perform their identities online, especially across culturally diverse and linguistically heterogeneous contexts.

Despite the growing body of research on digital identity, notable gaps remain. Much of the existing literature is fragmented, focusing on specific platforms, user groups, or regional contexts without fully accounting for the interplay of culture, language, and global trends in identity construction. For example, there is limited understanding of how different social norms across multimodal platforms influence digital self-presentation (Azizan et al., 2023; Mahmod, 2019). Furthermore, marginalized groups, such as LGBTQ+ communities, have received insufficient attention in discussions on online identity, particularly regarding how stigma, surveillance, and algorithmic biases affect their self-expression (Green et al., 2015).

The primary aim of this narrative review is to investigate the processes through which individuals construct and perform identity in online communities, with particular attention to cross-cultural and multilingual contexts. The review will explore how social, technological, and contextual factors influence digital identity, drawing on empirical findings from various disciplines, including media studies, communication, psychology, and digital ethnography. Special focus will be placed on how users from diverse backgrounds engage with online platforms to express, negotiate, and legitimize their identities, particularly during periods of global disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Feng et al., 2022; Watkins et al., 2023).

This review will concentrate on identity formation within online communities that are characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity, including transnational social media networks, virtual learning environments, and digital workplaces. It will examine how phenomena such as digital migration, remote collaboration, and global crises shape the affordances and constraints of online identity construction. By focusing on diverse demographic groups, including youth, professionals, and marginalized communities, the review seeks to illuminate the varied experiences and strategies individuals employ in navigating digital identity landscapes.

In sum, this review aims to synthesize and critically examine the scholarly literature on identity construction in online communities, identifying both the transformative potential and the limitations of digital platforms as identity spaces. Through a rigorous analysis of cross-cultural and multilingual experiences, this work aspires to contribute to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of identity in the digital age. Such an understanding is crucial not only for academic inquiry but also for informing policy, platform design, and digital literacy initiatives aimed at fostering equitable and empowering online environments.

METHOD

This narrative review adopts a structured and rigorous approach to identifying and analyzing scholarly literature concerning identity construction and communication within online communities. The methodology is designed to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the topic by using targeted keywords, appropriate inclusion and exclusion criteria, and a careful selection process across a range of credible academic databases.

The initial phase of the literature review began with systematic searches conducted across three major academic databases: Scopus, Google Scholar, and PubMed. These databases were selected due to their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journal articles in the fields of communication studies, digital media, sociology, and interdisciplinary research on identity. Scopus was prioritized for its comprehensive indexing of high-impact journals and international publications. Google Scholar was used to supplement searches with additional relevant studies not indexed in Scopus, especially in open-access formats. PubMed, while primarily associated with health sciences, was included to capture studies from psychological and behavioral sciences relevant to identity and digital behavior.

To guide the search process, a series of strategically selected keywords was employed. These included "identity construction," "online communities," "digital communication," "virtual identity," "self-presentation," "social media identity," and "online interaction." The selection of these terms was based on their relevance to the dimensions of identity explored in the review. For example, "identity construction" and "virtual identity" reflect the overarching theme of self-representation in online spaces, while "self-presentation" and "social media identity" are more specific to how individuals curate their personas on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn. Likewise, "online communities" and "online interaction" were used to capture studies focusing on the relational and participatory dynamics within virtual environments. Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT were applied to combine these keywords effectively, enhancing the precision and breadth of the search results (Nor & Fuat, 2021; Mascheroni et al., 2015).

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were carefully developed to refine the selection of studies relevant to the research objective. Studies were included if they: (1) explicitly investigated identity formation or communication practices within online communities, (2) employed either qualitative or quantitative methodologies with clear and valid procedures, and (3) were published in reputable, peer-reviewed journals within the domains of communication studies, sociology, psychology, or digital media. The rationale for including both qualitative and quantitative studies was to ensure a holistic understanding of identity construction processes, acknowledging the value of both experiential insights and measurable patterns.

Conversely, studies were excluded based on several considerations: (1) if they did not focus specifically on identity or community interaction in online settings, (2) if they were not peer-reviewed or published in grey literature such as opinion pieces or blog posts, and (3) if they lacked methodological transparency, such as failing to report sample sizes, research instruments, or data analysis procedures (Rosino & Hughey, 2016; Nor & Fuat, 2021).

The types of studies ultimately selected for the review were diverse in design but shared a common commitment to exploring identity construction in digital environments. Qualitative studies constituted the majority of included articles, given their capacity to delve into subjective experiences, nuanced interactions, and symbolic meanings attributed by participants. Notably, digital ethnographies, case studies, and discourse analyses were prominent among these. For example, digital ethnographic studies enabled an in-depth exploration of how online communities serve as sites of identity negotiation among users from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Unay-Gailhard & Simões, 2021; MacIntosh et al., 2017). These studies often relied on prolonged engagement with virtual communities, participant observation, and textual analysis of online interactions.

Case studies were also significant, particularly those focusing on specific groups such as LGBTQ+ individuals, young professionals, or diaspora communities who engage in self-presentation practices across digital platforms. These studies highlighted how identity is performed, validated, or contested within specific socio-technical contexts. Meanwhile, discourse analytic approaches were valuable in examining the linguistic and semiotic strategies individuals use to construct meaning and identity in written or visual content across blogs, social media posts, and user profiles.

Quantitative studies complemented these qualitative findings by offering statistical assessments of identity-related behaviors and their correlates. These included survey-based studies measuring the influence of variables such as platform use frequency, anonymity, audience perception, and cultural orientation on identity performance. For instance, Coimbra-Gomes and Motschenbacher (2019) employed survey instruments to explore how language choices in online interactions reflected users' sexual identity negotiation. Quantitative data added robustness to the review by enabling comparisons across demographics and geographies.

The process of literature selection was conducted in stages to ensure rigor and relevance. In the initial screening stage, article titles and abstracts were evaluated based on the predefined inclusion criteria. Studies that met the basic criteria were retained for full-text review. During the second stage, full articles were examined in depth to assess methodological clarity, thematic relevance, and analytical rigor. Articles that lacked sufficient empirical grounding or failed to engage meaningfully with the concepts of identity or digital communication were excluded at this point.

To maintain consistency and reduce selection bias, each stage of the screening process involved at least two reviewers who independently assessed the studies and resolved disagreements through discussion. Citations within selected studies were also examined to identify additional relevant literature through backward snowballing. This iterative process expanded the scope of the review and ensured that key works in the field were not omitted due to database indexing limitations.

Ultimately, the inclusion of a wide array of study designs enriched the review's analytical depth. The final corpus of literature encompasses empirical investigations from multiple countries, spanning different cultural contexts, age groups, and online platforms. This diversity allows for cross-cultural comparisons and the identification of both universal and context-specific patterns in identity construction.

In conclusion, this review utilized a systematic and transparent methodology to gather and analyze scholarly literature on identity construction and communication in online communities. Through

careful selection of databases, targeted keyword strategies, clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and rigorous screening procedures, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and reliable synthesis of current knowledge. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, it acknowledges the complexity of digital identity and offers a balanced view of how individuals navigate identity in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The synthesis of recent scholarly literature on identity construction in online communities reveals four thematic domains: the role of social media in identity formation, identity within online activism communities, identity in role-playing virtual environments, and professional identity construction via social media. Each domain underscores unique dynamics, mechanisms, and sociocultural implications of digital communication in shaping both personal and collective identities. The following subsections explore these themes with empirical backing and cross-cultural comparisons.

The Role of Social Media in Identity Construction Social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have emerged as critical spaces for constructing and negotiating identity. These platforms provide users with extensive affordances for self-expression and narrative curation. Kperogi (2018) highlights that individuals often construct multiple, sometimes contradictory, identities across various social media platforms, tailored to specific audiences and communicative contexts. Such performative strategies enable users to explore, experiment with, and adapt their digital self-representations.

On visually oriented platforms like Instagram and TikTok, identity construction is particularly shaped by aesthetic and performative elements. Users deploy visual markers such as selfies, memes, and short-form videos to signal cultural affiliation, lifestyle choices, and ideological stances. Ju and Zhao (2020) found that the use of emoticons and visual effects strengthens users' social bonds and group identification, facilitating the development of a shared digital identity. This process is further reinforced through the engagement of followers—likes, shares, and comments—which serve as feedback mechanisms for validating identity performances.

Moreover, Miladi et al. (2022) demonstrated that among young people, especially digital natives, identity formation is heavily influenced by social norms and peer expectations prevalent in digital subcultures. These users co-create meaning and values through interaction, forging collective identities that are simultaneously expressive and regulatory. Narratives of personal triumphs, daily experiences, and political opinions are widely shared, enabling users to connect and negotiate communal meanings across regional and linguistic boundaries. The comparative context also shows that while users in Western contexts may emphasize individualism and authenticity, users in collectivist cultures tend to emphasize group harmony and social roles in their digital self-presentation.

Identity in Online Activism Communities Online activism spaces have emerged as potent venues for identity negotiation and solidarity-building. These digital communities foster collective identities rooted in shared values and social justice aspirations. According to Eddington et al. (2022), affective discourses—particularly those relating to gender, race, and emotional wellbeing—

serve as key mechanisms for identity construction in activist forums. In such spaces, emotional expression is not merely a byproduct but a constitutive feature of political engagement and identity formation.

Hashtags, digital storytelling, and multimedia campaigns are among the most salient communication strategies employed to strengthen group cohesion and mobilize support. These strategies serve both functional and symbolic purposes, enabling activists to voice grievances, affirm membership, and establish legitimacy. The performative nature of digital activism, through memes, protest videos, and viral challenges, enables activists to extend their reach and visibility, thereby reinforcing their identity as change agents.

Cross-national comparisons reveal important distinctions in the organization and expression of activist identities. In the Global South, where access to digital tools may be constrained, identity formation in activist networks often incorporates hybrid strategies combining offline rituals with online expressions. In contrast, in contexts like North America or Europe, online activism tends to dominate identity-making processes, with users relying extensively on networked platforms for political expression and community-building.

In all settings, however, the emotional labor involved in sustaining activist identities can be intense. Participants must continuously perform and reaffirm their commitment to the cause, which may lead to identity fatigue or conflict when their digital selves diverge from personal experiences. Despite these tensions, digital activism offers marginalized communities a platform for articulating alternative narratives and fostering a sense of belonging that transcends geographical boundaries.

Identity and Role-Playing in Virtual Environments Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) and online role-playing forums represent immersive environments where users engage in imaginative identity exploration. The construction of avatars—customized digital representations—enables players to project idealized or fantastical versions of themselves. Pan and Hassan (2025) argue that avatars function not only as individual identity markers but also as conduits for community participation and symbolic alignment with collective values.

Narrative engagement in role-playing games facilitates deep emotional attachment to characters and virtual scenarios. Through episodic storytelling and mission-based gameplay, users co-construct fictional universes that mirror real-world social dynamics. This co-construction strengthens the internalization of identity traits embedded in character roles. Over time, players develop a narrative arc that influences their perception of self within the game and, by extension, in real life.

While MMORPGs offer rich grounds for creativity, they also surface critical identity dilemmas. Players often navigate tensions between in-game roles and real-world expectations, particularly when their online identities challenge social norms or personal constraints. This dissonance can be especially pronounced among adolescents or marginalized individuals who may find greater agency in their virtual personas than in their offline lives.

Comparative studies show that in Western contexts, MMORPGs are often used for leisure and community bonding, whereas in East Asian contexts, such environments may also serve as informal social spaces where hierarchical norms are reimaged or subverted. The social

affordances of these platforms thus vary culturally, affecting how identity is constructed, performed, and perceived.

Professional Identity in Social Media Contexts In the digital economy, social media platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and even Instagram play a vital role in the cultivation of professional identity, especially among young professionals and recent graduates. These platforms allow users to showcase expertise, network with peers, and curate a coherent personal brand. According to Li et al. (2018), filling out one's LinkedIn profile is more than a resume activity—it represents a performative act of self-definition within a professional context. It enables users to align themselves with institutional norms, cultural expectations, and community values.

The act of self-curation is central to professional identity formation. Individuals selectively present experiences, skills, and achievements that reinforce a particular narrative or image. Miladi et al. (2022) observed that such curation strategies are often driven by algorithmic visibility, where users tailor content to increase professional appeal and engagement. For instance, posting thought leadership content or industry insights may reinforce an image of authority and credibility.

Furthermore, interactions within professional networks contribute to identity reinforcement. Endorsements, recommendations, and content sharing function as mechanisms of validation and recognition. These interactions, though often perceived as formal, also carry affective weight, strengthening users' sense of inclusion in professional communities.

Cultural differences also shape how professional identity is expressed online. In Western contexts, the emphasis is often on individual achievements and self-promotion. In contrast, professionals in Asian societies may prioritize collective accomplishments and organizational loyalty. This divergence affects both the content and tone of digital self-presentation, suggesting the need for culturally sensitive frameworks in understanding professional identity formation.

The comparative evidence from these studies underscores the multidimensional nature of identity construction in digital spaces. While platforms offer diverse tools for self-expression, the underlying mechanisms are shaped by cultural, emotional, and contextual variables. Across all domains—from social media and activism to gaming and professional networking—identity is constructed not in isolation but through a constant negotiation with social norms, technological affordances, and audience expectations.

In summary, the reviewed literature reveals that identity construction in online communities is a complex, ongoing, and relational process. It involves a combination of narrative crafting, visual signaling, interactive participation, and emotional engagement. The digital landscape offers vast opportunities for identity experimentation and affirmation, yet it also imposes new challenges that require individuals to navigate evolving norms and expectations across various cultural and platform-specific contexts. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of how identity is dynamically shaped in the interconnected world of digital communication.

The findings presented in this review confirm and extend existing theoretical frameworks on digital identity construction, while simultaneously illuminating new dynamics and complexities introduced by contemporary digital platforms and socio-political contexts. The classic notion that identity is co-constructed through interaction and language, as outlined by Kperogi (2018), remains robust. However, the nuances added by our analysis indicate that digital identity is increasingly

shaped not only through interpersonal communication but also through self-curation strategies, mediated experiences in crisis contexts, and platform-driven content mechanisms.

Digital communication platforms have fundamentally redefined how identity is negotiated. For instance, social media environments such as Instagram and TikTok empower users to develop multifaceted identities through visual storytelling, often utilizing tools such as selfies, memes, and short-form videos. These platforms support what Goffman once described as the dramaturgical performance of self, now reimaged in algorithmic and interactive contexts. This aligns with the findings of Ju and Zhao, who emphasize the role of emoticons and visual elements in strengthening social bonds and expressing nuanced emotional identities. Additionally, the work by Miladi et al. reinforces the concept of generational identity shaped by collective responses to digital content, where young people form shared norms and values through participation in online discourses.

A distinct contribution of this study is its examination of identity construction in activist online communities. Eddington et al. have shown that emotional and gendered discourses are central to such identity formations. This review reveals that strategic digital communication—through hashtags, video campaigns, and narrative building—plays an instrumental role in uniting dispersed individuals around shared objectives. These practices create solidarity and enhance perceived group membership, consistent with Mascheroni et al.'s (2015) assertion that media platforms enable both individual and collective identity formation.

Online gaming environments and roleplaying forums present a particularly compelling dimension of identity construction. The use of avatars and narrative arcs in MMORPGs as explored by Pan and Hassan (2025) suggests a participatory model of identity where players project and experiment with aspects of themselves in mediated, immersive settings. The emotional investment in game narratives supports the theory that identity can be performative and experimental, providing a space for users to explore alternative versions of self that may not be viable in offline settings. This finding deepens our understanding of the psychological and communal aspects of digital identity and supports earlier frameworks emphasizing the symbolic and experiential dimensions of virtual presence.

The professional domain further exemplifies how identity is increasingly curated across platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter. Li et al. (2018) discuss the function of self-curation in crafting a professional persona. This review found that such curation is not only strategic but also dynamic, evolving as young professionals adapt to changing social and economic contexts. This extension of Li et al.'s argument underscores the importance of cross-platform identity management and suggests a shift from static conceptions of professional identity to more fluid, networked representations.

Systemic factors significantly influence these identity construction processes. Algorithms, for example, shape visibility and engagement, determining which identities receive validation and amplification. Rosino and Hughey (2016) argue that such algorithmic governance reinforces certain identity postures while marginalizing others, a point reaffirmed in this study. Algorithms thus serve as gatekeepers of digital recognition, steering identity formation toward what is most likely to generate engagement, not necessarily what is most authentic.

Digital access remains another crucial determinant. The digital divide—whether due to socioeconomic status, geographic location, or infrastructure—limits participation and representation in online communities. As highlighted by Knight et al. (2017), unequal access creates identity asymmetries, wherein those with greater connectivity enjoy richer opportunities for self-expression and social integration. This exclusion hinders the formation of diverse digital publics and perpetuates social stratification.

Cultural norms act as an interpretive filter through which digital identities are performed and perceived. Lacalle and Pujol (2017) demonstrate how these norms can reinforce stereotypes, affecting gender, ethnicity, and generational portrayals. This study corroborates that users often navigate complex cultural expectations when expressing themselves online, particularly in multilingual or multicultural spaces. This challenge is further intensified for marginalized groups, whose identities may not align with dominant platform cultures, leading to identity suppression or performative conformity.

Policy implications emerge from these findings. The need for equitable access to digital infrastructure is paramount. Policies should advocate for universal digital literacy and infrastructural development that enables all citizens to participate meaningfully in online identity construction. Moreover, platform developers must prioritize algorithmic fairness and transparency to mitigate systemic bias in digital visibility. As Kurian and John (2017) and Jang and Lee (2021) argue, platform governance must consider the ethical ramifications of digital inclusion and representation.

Educational interventions may also serve as viable solutions to address identity exclusion. Community-based training programs can equip individuals with the tools to navigate digital spaces effectively, fostering greater inclusion in identity discourse. Collaborative efforts between governments, NGOs, and private enterprises can bridge access gaps and cultivate digital environments that support inclusive, nuanced identity construction (Feng et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, several limitations in the existing literature must be acknowledged. Many studies remain regionally confined, with limited exploration of transnational or global identity dynamics. Research focusing on marginalized populations, such as LGBTQ+ individuals or those with disabilities, is particularly sparse, despite their vulnerability to identity-based exclusion in digital spaces. Furthermore, much of the literature is platform-specific, lacking comparative analyses across different digital ecosystems.

Future research should address these gaps by conducting cross-cultural and comparative studies that examine how identity is shaped in diverse digital contexts. Ethnographic and longitudinal methodologies could offer deeper insights into the evolution of digital identities over time. Research that incorporates intersectional perspectives would also enhance our understanding of how overlapping social categories influence online identity formation and recognition.

In summary, the discussion has unpacked how identity construction in online communities is a multifaceted, dynamic, and context-sensitive process. It is shaped by the interplay of individual agency, digital infrastructure, platform algorithms, and socio-cultural norms. As digital life becomes increasingly inseparable from offline reality, a more holistic and equitable understanding of identity in virtual spaces is not just academically relevant but also socially imperative.

CONCLUSION

This narrative review has explored how identity construction unfolds across various online communities, highlighting the interplay of self-presentation, social interaction, and digital affordances. Drawing on recent studies, the review emphasized how media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and MMORPG environments provide diverse mechanisms for users to express and curate identity, both personally and professionally. The thematic analysis identified four key domains: social media identity expression, activist identity in digital movements, identity play in online gaming environments, and professional self-presentation through platforms like LinkedIn. Each theme illustrated how identity construction is a dynamic and context-sensitive process shaped by digital communication practices, community norms, and technological structures.

The findings underscore that identity construction is increasingly mediated by algorithms, platform affordances, and socio-cultural pressures, reinforcing the necessity for more equitable access to digital infrastructure and critical digital literacy. Systemic challenges, such as algorithmic bias and digital divides, must be addressed through inclusive policy measures and user education initiatives. For example, digital literacy training can help marginalized users better navigate identity presentation, while ethical platform governance could foster more inclusive representations.

Future research should investigate underrepresented populations in digital identity studies, particularly from non-Western contexts and marginalized communities, to bridge existing knowledge gaps. Methodologically, integrating mixed methods and cross-platform ethnographies could yield deeper insights. This review reaffirms that digital identity construction is a complex, fluid, and socially embedded phenomenon, requiring ongoing scholarly attention and proactive intervention strategies.

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