# Construction and deconstruction of selfidentity of Palembang adolescent on instagram

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# CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF SELF-IDENTITY OF PALEMBANG ADOLESCENTS ON INSTAGRAM

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#### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study analyses the process of establishing the self-identity of Palembang adolescents through the social media Instagram and how they construct, manage, and deconstruct this identity.

**Methods:** This study used a qualitative method with narrative and phenomenological approaches. Researchers collected data by observing informant accounts' text posts, photos, and short videos. They followed the comments given by the account's followers and the responses given by the account owner. Researchers also identified other social media accounts with which the adolescent was affiliated. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with informants.

Results and Conclusion: The results showed that establishing Palembang adolescents' identities on Instagram media was initially carried out by identity experiments using appropriate styles and interests. This identity establishment is dynamic because adolescent will construct and deconstruct their identity. This process is determined by the responses given by his followers to his posts and the affiliate accounts he follows. The adolescent's self-identity then develops into the self-identity expected by his followers and what is 'offered' by the statements he follows. The adolescent's self-identity that his followers expect and is 'offered' by the accounts he follows. The adolescent's self-identity is no longer what he wants. Adolescent's identities on social media platforms show a contemporary identity that is becoming rather than being.

**Research Implication:** The development of information technology has resulted in adolescents being able to express their identity through social media. However, these adolescents' self-identity is no longer based on the noble values of their culture but is more influenced by contemporary values formed by their generation, so it is constantly changing.

**Originality/value:** The meaning of self-identity can no longer be understood statically but more dynamically following changes that occur in society. The adolescent's self-identity is no longer what he wants but is formed by his social environment.

Keywords: Construction, Deconstruction, Self-Identity, Adolescent, Instagram.

## CONSTRUÇÃO E DESCONSTRUÇÃO DA AUTOIDENTIDADE DE ADOLESCENTES PALEMBANG NO INSTAGRAM

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Este estudo analisa o processo de estabelecimento da autoidentidade de adolescentes de Palembang por meio da mídia social Instagram e como eles constroem, gerenciam e desconstruem essa identidade.

**Métodos:** Este estudo utilizou método qualitativo com abordagens narrativa e fenomenológica. Os pesquisadores coletaram dados observando postagens de texto, fotos e vídeos curtos de contas de informantes. Eles seguiram os

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comentários dos seguidores da conta e as respostas do proprietário da conta. Os pesquisadores também identificaram outras contas de mídia social às quais o adolescente era afiliado. Os pesquisadores conduziram entrevistas em profundidade com informantes.

Resultados e Conclusão: Os resultados mostraram que o estabelecimento de identidades de adolescentes de Palembang na mídia Instagram foi inicialmente realizado por meio de experimentos de identidade usando estilos e interesses apropriados. Este estabelecimento de identidade é dinâmico porque o adolescente irá construir e desconstruir a sua identidade. Este processo é determinado pelas respostas dadas pelos seus seguidores às suas postagens e pelas contas afiliadas que ele segue. A auto-identidade do adolescente desenvolve-se então na auto-identidade esperada pelos seus seguidores e naquilo que é "oferecido" pelas declarações que ele segue. A auto-identidade do adolescente desenvolve-se então na auto-identidade que os seus seguidores esperam e é "oferecida" pelos relatos que ele segue. A autoidentidade do adolescente não é mais o que ele deseja. As identidades dos adolescentes nas plataformas de redes sociais mostram uma identidade contemporânea que mais se torna do que

**Implicação da pesquisa:** O desenvolvimento da tecnologia da informação resultou na capacidade dos adolescentes de expressar sua identidade por meio das mídias sociais. Porém, a autoidentidade desses adolescentes não se baseia mais nos valores nobres de sua cultura, mas é mais influenciada pelos valores contemporâneos formados por sua geração, por isso está em constante mudança.

**Originalidade/valor:** O significado da autoidentidade não pode mais ser entendido estaticamente, mas de forma mais dinâmica, seguindo as mudanças que ocorrem na sociedade. A autoidentidade do adolescente não é mais o que ele deseja, mas é formada pelo seu ambiente social.

Palavras-chave: Construção, Desconstrução, Identidade Própria, Adolescente, Instagram.

## CONSTRUCCIÓN Y DECONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA AUTOIDENTIDAD DE ADOLESCENTES DE PALEMBANG EN INSTAGRAM

#### RESUMEN

**Propósito:** Este estudio analiza el proceso de establecimiento de la identidad propia de los adolescentes de Palembang a través de la red social Instagram y cómo construyen, gestionan y deconstruyen esta identidad.

**Métodos:** Este estudio utilizó un método cualitativo con enfoques narrativo y fenomenológico. Los investigadores recopilaron datos observando publicaciones de texto, fotografías y videos cortos de las cuentas de los informantes. Siguieron los comentarios de los seguidores de la cuenta y las respuestas del propietario de la cuenta. Los investigadores también identificaron otras cuentas de redes sociales a las que estaba afiliado el adolescente. Los investigadores realizaron entrevistas en profundidad con los informantes.

Resultados y conclusión: Los resultados mostraron que el establecimiento de las identidades de los adolescentes de Palembang en los medios de Instagram se llevó a cabo inicialmente mediante experimentos de identidad utilizando estilos e intereses apropiados. Este establecimiento de identidad es dinámico porque el adolescente construirá y deconstruirá su identidad. Este proceso está determinado por las respuestas adas por sus seguidores a sus publicaciones y las cuentas de afiliados que sigue. La identidad propia del adolescente se convierte entonces en la identidad esperada por sus seguidores y en lo que "ofrecen" las declaraciones que sigue. La identidad propia del adolescente se convierte entonces en la identidad que sus seguidores esperan y quanto esta que sigue. La identidad propia del adolescente ya no es la que desea. Las identidades de los adolescentes en las plataformas de redes sociales muestran una identidad contemporánea que se está convirtiendo en lugar de ser.

Implicaciones de la investigación: El desarro 12 de la tecnología de la información ha dado como resultado que los adolescentes puedan expresar su identidad a través de las redes sociales. Sin embargo, la identidad propia de estos adolescentes ya no se basa en los valores nobles de su cultura, sino que está más influenciada por los valores contemporáneos formados por su generación, por lo que está en constante cambio.

**Originalidad/valor:** El significado de la propia identidad ya no puede entenderse de forma estática sino más dinámica tras los cambios que se producen en la sociedad. La identidad propia del adolescente ya no es la que él desea, sino que está formada por su entorno social.

Palabras clave: Construcción, Deconstrucción, Autoidentidad, Adolescente, Instagram.



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#### 1 INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) is rapid and can provide comprehensive sources of information and communication. This cannot be separated from ICT's characteristics, namely, its ability to ensure the acquisition, storage, processing, delivery, distribution, handling, control of information, transformation, retrieval, and use. ICT also relates to all previous systems and creates a new, more complex technological system (Sasvari, 2013, 2014) that aims to speed up and make it easier for humans to communicate and obtain information.

Social media is one of the most significant forms of change from ICT developments. It allows users to share various activities in text, photos, or videos. Social media can facilitate the creation, curating, and sharing of user-generated content individually and collaboratively (Davis, 2016). Social media users can interact freely and create the desired message content.

Social media also forms a user's self-identity, which is not obtained in everyday life. Users can use the status or story featured on social media platforms to realize their identity (Candrasari, 2018; Ganda, 2014; Kurtto, 2020; Norbert, 2018; Rahman, 2023). Social media users construct their identity by engaging in social climbing (Dewi et al., 2020; Mustofa, 2020) or showing a particular social class status (Yates, 2018). The construction of user identity on social media can be obtained by analyzing repeated and patterned user posting patterns, such as selfies or photos with people in their family environment, natural landscapes, or fashion, thus forming a specific identity pattern (Yılmaz, 2021). Users also create and manage their identity by utilizing emoticons to strengthen their self-representation and manage their identity.(Maria Mahmud & Foong Wong, 2021).

This easily accessible and interactive social media gives users greater freedom of expression, access to information, and a way to share their thoughts and feelings (Chen, 2023; Ganda, 2014). An individual's sense of who they are in the world and their conception of society as a whole combine and form a person's sense of self-identity (Giddens, 2020). Social media can push individuals towards a more participatory, global space and change how users collect and disseminate information (Mahoney & Tang, 2016).



One social media platform that is widely used is Instagram, which is used for sharing photos and videos, using digital filters, and sharing them on various social networking services, including one's account. The app allows users to upload media, edit it with filters, or set hashtags by including location tags. Users can browse other users' content by tags and location, view trending content, like photos, and follow other users to add their content to a personal feed (Hutchinson, 2018). Instagram also provides a reel feature, namely short videos with a vertical orientation with a maximum duration of up to 90 seconds, which can be edited by adding filters, effects, text, or sound before uploading on Instagram (https://revou.co/kosakata/reels).

The number of Instagram users in Indonesia as of September 2023 is 111,187,100 (https://napoleoncat.com/stats/instagram-users-in-indonesia/2023/09/), which covers 39.6% of the Indonesian population. Instagram users are primarily adolescents aged 18 - 24, namely 39.9%; the 25-34 year age group is 29.0%, and the 35-44 year age group is 12.4%. Instagram is still one of the choices for Indonesian adolescents when using social media.

Instagram is widely used to emphasize recognition of a particular social status by managing the user's impression through the goods or attributes worn or the attitudes or lifestyles displayed through Instagram. Instagram has become an arena for showing one's identity (Chen, 2023; Wiederhold, 2018; Hakkerberg, 2021). Users on Instagram want an ideal self-image, even though there is no coherent perception among them, especially regarding the separation between the perfect image desired through Instagram and their perceived identity in the natural world (Kurtto, 2020).

The problem of adolescents' self-identity has become an exciting issue with the increasing use of social media platforms. Adolescence is a time of forming self-identity and having greater self-awareness of other people's perceptions of themselves (Becht et al., 2016); Harter, 2012). Social media has become a place for adolescents to express their identity through posting photos or videos. It is just that studies so far (Candrasari, 2018; Dewi et al., 2020; Ganda, 2014; Girnanfa & Susilo, 2022; Kurtto, 2020; Mustofa, 2020; Rahman, 2023; Wiederhold, 2018; Yılmaz, 2021) tend to position social media users, including Instagram, as subjects who construct themselves according to what they think, even though users not only build but also deconstruct their own identities. Adolescents deconstruct their identity as a response to their followers or other social media accounts they follow, so their self-identity becomes dynamic.

This study aims to analyze the process of deconstructing self-identity. Deconstruction is an attempt to read the meaning of a text by referring to a series of traces, namely the contexts in the text, which give sense through differentiation rather than difference (Derrida, 1991).



Thus, this study analyses the process of forming the self-identity of Palembang adolescents through Instagram social media and how they manage and deconstruct this identity.

#### 2 METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research method. Late adolescence is critical for crystallizing one's identity (Steinberg, 2002). Researchers collected data for 26 days by observing text posts, photos, and short videos on informant accounts. They followed the comments given by the account's followers and the responses given by the account owner. Researchers also identified other social media accounts with which the adolescent was affiliated. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with informants using Instagram's direct message (DM) feature.

The approaches used are narrative and phenomenology. A narrative approach reveals stories of research subjects' experiences constructing and deconstructing their identities through Instagram. Phenomenology indicates the meaning of the subject's daily experiences using Instagram media and how the issue forms his identity through his knowledge and awareness. He manages it through posts as responses given by his followers or following developing trends through social media accounts. The informant owned him. Researchers then analyzed it using content analysis in the form of text, photos, or short videos.

#### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 INSTAGRAM AS AN ADOLESCENT THEATRICAL STAGE

Instagram is a theatrical stage for adolescents to show their identity. Instagram is a place where adolescents construct themselves by presenting themselves through the use of various types of items, such as clothes, make-up, or accessories that identify themselves with a certain social status, as stated by A (female, 19 years old)...how do they want to look like...like people like that...cool... that is why I wear a lot of branded goods...not original...but if you take a photo you cannot see it...or post a picture showing B (female, 20 years old) dressed fashionably with glasses with a destination in the background the natural attractions he visited...or also G (female, 19 years old) who showed that he was eating at a restaurant that was known to be expensive.

Adolescents also introduce themselves through attitudes and styles that show how followers make an impression on the adolescent. Adolescents usually post photos or videos



wisdom about life.

showing body language, facial expressions, or selfie photography styles using specific photo techniques.... for selfies, I have to look slim, even though my body is fat, but I can trick it with photo techniques so that I look slim... that is how it is—said C (female, 20 years old). It also displays selfie photos that look more elegant and luxurious using low-angle photo-taking techniques. Followers often ask him to take selfies in a particular style...I follow...but sometimes I do not, said B. This differs from H (male, 19 years old), who is more concerned with posting his activities. Most of the time, I post my activities at Ormawa or when hanging out with my friends.....This differs from L (male, 21 years old), who assigns many actions that indirectly show his achievements in various fields. For J (male, 24 years old), when posting photos or videos, he must reflect an authoritative and wise figure...usually, I post my appearance, which looks authoritative and authoritarian; usually, the posts are in the form of photos, but if you want to be seen as a wise figure, what is posted is a photo or video with text that can contain

When adolescents post photos or videos, they often change according to their activities, attitudes, styles, and the accessories they wear. They do this to attract the attention of their followers so that they like and comment on them with comments that make them proud. This process is done repeatedly. Adolescents can post various poses or activities 3-4 times daily via Instagram stories or reels. D (female, 24 years old) stated... I want to post anything at any opportunity. It can be four times a day. If I am hanging out with friends and eating or if experiences make me feel better, I will post about them. I can take photos, selfies, or videos. Usually, on social media, I post in words with related photos as a background. .....When I (E, female, 20 years old) depend...sometimes 3...sometimes four times...sometimes not really.

What this adolescent in Palembang did was conduct an identity experiment. Experimentation is seen as a deliberate effort, as part of the adolescent's stage of self-discovery. In the end, adolescents will do it, ignoring roles and personalities that do not match their identity (Santrock, 2013). The adolescent said that after posting the photo or short video, he felt a little nervous (informants D, E, G, K (male, 20 years old, and H) because he was waiting for his followers' response to comment, like, see it, ignore it, or sometimes someone bullies it. Almost whenever he posts, he will always count how many people have liked or seen it, even commented on it. As soon as someone comments, he will immediately reply to him, either with words or emoticons. The more people respond, the more the post shows recognition of the identity he displays. However, when there are only a few responses, he feels his followers do not recognize his self-identity. Therefore, he will then post photos and videos that are expected to be liked and commented on positively by his followers.



3.2 SELF-IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

### Adolescents will continue to try to post with various variations in appearance, whether through text, photos, or short videos. This process is repeated until he can finally find out what kind of views his followers respond to a lot or which his followers respond to little. When I posted many selfies in the places they visited...many people responded, but when I posted about my activities on campus, on the other hand, not many positive responses were given...at most, only friends from campus liked it, said H. This situation In contrast to G (female, 22 years old), the posts that get lots of likes, views and comments are when she posts selfies in the places she visits. Maybe they like it and comment because my appearance is considered beautiful; that is it... selfies in locations outside the city and the incredible views... Another female adolescent (F) stated that many of my selfie photos get comments and likes rather than photos of food or traveling. Views that get lots of likes, views, or comments are maintained and always posted. However, the response from his followers often changes. Sometimes, they like my selfie photos more, but sometimes, they do not get comments, and few people like them...I do not know why it is like that, either. So, I follow what the followers want....the important thing is that many people like and review my posts...This condition is also acknowledged by informants F, K, and L (18 years), who often need clarification about following what the followers want.

Adolescents build a particular impression, demonstrated through knowledge and awareness about the importance of appearance and how to manage the image they want. Adolescents want to show a self-presentation that their followers want to see. However, this self-representation is also in line with the expectations of its followers. In this context, adolescents attempt to self-explore by identifying how followers respond to their posts, suppressing embarrassment about them, and adjusting their positions accordingly. When adolescents find out about posting patterns that get lots of responses from their followers, they will post photos or videos that will get lots of responses from their followers. In this way, adolescents form their own identity, not only according to their wishes but also adapting to the expectations of their followers.

Adolescents also become followers of other social media platforms, personal accounts, social affiliates, and store offices. Adolescents' accounts are also a source of inspiration in representing their identity. Developments in the accounts they follow consciously or unconsciously influence adolescents' self-appearance in showing their identity. K (male, 23 years old) said he often posts photos with a Barcelona jersey because he is a fan of the Spanish



football club. Likewise, C, D, and F imitate a lot of certain styles that are often done by their idols.

The appearance of adolescents on Instagram shows that adolescents have many choices to represent their identity through Instagram. This choice will depend on the adolescent, even though the identity displayed no longer matches the identity the adolescent wants to portray. This self-image is no longer only determined by the adolescent but also depends significantly on the social situation surrounding him, in this case, the response from followers and the development of the accounts he follows. These two elements will also determine whether one's identity is acceptable.

The management of impressions displayed by adolescents from Palembang on Instagram shows the relationship between motives, self-representation, and the social situation surrounding them. This third component plays a person's role in interacting with their environment (Valkenburg et al., 2005). This picture shows that people interact with the desire to present an image of themselves that others will accept, called message management (impression management). This concept has the character of theatrical performance, which focuses on social life as a series of theatrical performances, such as drama performances on stage (Goffman, 1990). This is the image displayed by Palembang adolescents on Instagram.

#### 3.3 CONSTRUCTING AND DECONSTRUCTING ADOLESCENT SELF-IDENTITY

Adolescents' self-identity representation results from interactions between adolescents and their virtual communities, which are displayed on a theatrical stage. Humans are actors who attempt to combine personal characteristics and goals with others through their theatrical performances (Goffman, 1990). On this front stage, adolescents manage their impressions intensely, forming a self-identity that they want to display and gain recognition from their followers. The self-identity of Palembang City adolescents on Instagram reflects their self-image. Adolescents build and manage this self-image so that the impression they get from their followers matches the appearance, manner, and expressive equipment they display via Instagram. This self-image describes the character of oneself, which is formed by awareness, views about oneself, and the hope of adolescents to be able to actualize themselves, both verbally and non-verbally, by utilizing features on Instagram, such as profile bio, story, uploading photos or videos via feed, or reel. Adolescents hope to be accepted as someone with specific characteristics and a self-image that their followers like. Instagram is an arena where adolescents actualize and realize their identities.



The self-image of Palembang adolescents on Instagram is dynamic because it is influenced not only by the adolescents' identity results about themselves but also by two other elements. Namely, the expectations of their followers and the development of the social media affiliate accounts they follow. On Instagram, adolescents play the role of actors whom their audience wants to see as individuals who can satisfy their audience. This process is carried out by combining the three elements that influence it. However, the level of combination of these three elements can change. The tendency is that the elements of expectations of followers and affiliated social media accounts that they follow play an essential role in forming adolescents' identities on Instagram media. This condition causes the representation of adolescents' self-identity on Instagram to change according to responses from followers and trends in the social media affiliate accounts they follow. Self-identity then becomes social because it is revealed and formed by other people. Self-identity is an object seen by different people and discovered by the adolescent.

Self-identity becomes an action that is continuously carried out. Adolescents' appearance on Instagram is free, and no one can control it. In a performance, the stage is not directed by the director, but the actors are free to act without anyone holding them (Derrida, in Ritzer, 2012: 609). Therefore, the identity of adolescents on Instagram is fluid. In cyberspace, identity boundaries melt and melt, so each person can interact or act as someone else or act as several different people simultaneously (Rheingold, 1993). This self-identity can be created, replaced, and changed without limits. Identity is not about "being" because identity is never fixed – identity is "action." The interaction between self-expression, self-presentation, and social interaction in the Instagram ecosystem has significant implications for understanding the dynamics of identity construction in the digital era (Butler, 1990).

In this sense, self-identity is related to difference. There is no absolute identity, that nothing "is itself" by its existence. Differences are differences that negate the cult of identity. Derrida calls the meaning of difference differentiation the importance of not being identical, of being other (Derrida, 1991). This concept also contradicts the idea of identity, which emphasizes the individual's awareness of placing oneself and giving meaning to oneself appropriately in the context of future life to become a unified, complete, and continuous self-image to find one's identity (Ericson, 1994).

This fact shows that self-identity is no longer understood as an identity that includes role, position, family relationships and roles, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, level of education, socio-economic status, religion, nationality, and language (Halualani, 2018). Self-



identity is relative and open, in which various possible forms of identity are available. Identity is seen as a dynamic that never stops moving in search of its endless form.

The development of technology and information has created a kind of 'new space' for adolescents in Palembang, where identity has become something artificially created, replaced, and changed without limits, thus creating a sort of identity paradox space. Identity is no longer a self-identity according to the adolescent's construction but becomes an identity continuously deconstructed and reconstructed, involving its virtual community in a digital area.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Adolescent self-identity on the social media platform Instagram is a complex process. Adolescents carry out identity experiments to create their image. This self-image management reflects the desired self-identity through Instagram. Adolescents construct and deconstruct identities through their followers' responses to photo or video posts on Instagram and affiliated social media accounts they follow. Identity becomes an action that is carried out continuously. Identities can be created, replaced, and changed without limit so that there is no longer any consistency, continuity, or historical similarity in identifying a self-identity. An adolescent's self-identity is no longer what they want it to be. The identity of adolescents on social media platforms shows a contemporary identity that is as becoming, not as being.

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# Construction and deconstruction of self-identity of Palembang adolescent on instagram

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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