

DIGITAL MEDIA AND SELF PRESENTATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

NAZMINE¹, Dr.MANAN KHAN TAREEN², ABDULLAH³, HANNAN KHAN TAREEN⁴,
SAIMASIDDIQUE⁵

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University,
Multan – Pakistan

²Research Scholar, Department of Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan -
Pakistan.

³M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University,
Multan – Pakistan

⁴Ph.D. Scholar, Associate Lecturer, Department of Media Studies, Islamia University
Bahawalpur, - Pakistan

⁵Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Media Studies, Islamia University Bahawalpur, - Pakistan

Abstract

Self-presentation is a crucial phenomenon for identity development. It leads people to think in a particular way and it is intended to maintain, manipulate and adjust an image of oneself. This particular review paper was aimed to provide a systematic review of the prior research studies performed on the subject of self-presentation. For this review paper only those studies were selected and reviewed that were centered on the notion of digital media and self-presentation. The present study reviewed the prior literature on self presentation with different variables that led users towards the urge of self presentation. For developing the clear and better understanding of the phenomenon of self presentations this particular study aims to elaborate the self-presentation with reference to Social support, Mental health, Narcissism , selfie as a tool for self-presentation and gender. Goffman theory of self-presentation was also discussed in this review study. The review of the past studies on self presentation revealed that there are different factors that lead the phenomenon of self presentation on digital media including social support, mental well-being and narcissism. Furthermore, this review study also discussed the scope for further research studies, recommendations and limitations and for future studies.

Keywords: Self Presentation, Digital Media, Mental well-being, Social Support, Selfie, Narcissism.

Digital Media and Self presentation: A systematic Review

1. Introduction

Internet users are engaged in virtual communications on this digital world media. Earlier Internet studies dealt with the question of how this virtual world of digital media provided freedom and space to construct of “self-identity”. Recent era of research more

deals with investigating the “digital” pieces of identity construction. Internet has completely changed the way of communications. Specific Web communities have changed the scenario of online interactions. Participants post self-related information and pave a way to interact with other individuals. These websites provide a path for online “identity constructions”. Therefore, the Internet plays a vital role in identity production.

There have been many researches in this area and the majority of these studies have concentrated on unidentified online situations. Which includes chat rooms etc. Lately, focuses of researches have been shifted to social media addiction. In the early phases of researches attention have been diverted to identity formation in the online world, designated as online “self-presentation”. The phenomenon of Self-presentation defined as “the performance of actions that symbolically communicate information about the self to others” (Schlenker,2003). Self-presentation is the meaning making process about the self, by collecting specific gestures which may carry symbolic meanings. Such symbolic meanings and gestures influence the responses of audience and help self-presentation goals (Belk 1988).

Digital media is the mixture of information and ideas related to social, political and cultural sphere by the advancement of technology. Leary (1996) ,defines self presentation as “the process by which people convey to others that they are a certain kind of person or possess certain characteristics”. Self-presentation in this era of social media triggers various features of how to present oneself and how to be perceived online. Social media participants have the freedom to display according to their choice. This selective form of presentation includes “impression management” and “selective disclosure of personal details designed to present an idealized self” (Hogan, 2010).

Self-presentation is an important phenomenon because it presents particularly that image which individuals wants to convey (Goffman, 1959). Self-presentation is a dominant process it leads individuals to understand the various characteristics. This characteristic has an insightful influence on outcomes of an individual life (Hogan & Briggs, 1986). Self-presentation become a very important element for the acceptance of selfies, but researches also discovered a general approach for selfies that is associated with harmful effects and giving a preference for observing other images on social media (Diefenbach & Christoforakos 2017). Similarly, what an individual present on social media networks becomes a significant statement in real who a person is. For achieving desired possible identities the users of social media post variety of content on social media related to their self (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008; Coyne, Padilla-Walker & Howard, 2013).

Walther 2001, stated that “One of the reasons why self-presentation on social networking sites may be different from face-to-face is that online one may inspect, edit and revise”. It is a well-known fact that Self-presentation is a substantial factor of Facebook. Comprehending phenomena of online self-presentation may help individuals

to understand other Social and psychological phenomena for example “well-being, self-esteem, identity formation and social anxiety”.

2. Objectives of Study

The objective of the current review paper is to review and critically analyze the previous research studies conducted on the phenomenon of self presentation. However, the basic objectives of this study are:

- To review and summarize the findings of different researches on self presentation in context of digital media.
- To critically analyze and find out the gap between the previous researches in terms of methods and theoretical implications.

3. Importance of the current Study

This study was proposed to critically review and analyze the previous work has been done in context of self-presentation because there has been a slight shift in self-presentation phenomenon which led to presentation of self specifically through photographs. It is essential to emphasize the role of digital media in self presentation because of its emerging trends and features. This study would allow to future researchers of this particular area of self presentation to understand the link between digital media and self-presentation. By reviewing the previous studies conducted in this regard the researcher wants to provide a systemic review of literature particularly in the perspective of self presentation and also wants to find out the gap in the context of self presentation. Furthermore, this review paper will provide new horizon to analyze the self-presentation phenomenon and paves out the way for future researchers to conduct more studies related to this topic.

4. Self Presentation and Social Support

Wong (2012) conducted a study on Facebook and uses and gratification theory was used. Results of the study exhibit that Self presentation on Facebook relates with getting social support and achieving the desired image. Users post videos and pictures on Facebook for maintaining social links with their friends. Similarly, the users of social media like Facebook involved in uploading and updating those photos that made them attractive and showed them keen to present themselves as helpful to others as a social support on Facebook. Beside, this the emotional support considered as the most important type of social support for self presentation. Likewise, Chua & Chang (2015) examined the association between online self presentation and peer comparison with the help of in-depth interviews. Findings of the researchers revealed that posting selfies on social media sites provide opportunities to the teen age girls to present their self according to their own preference and desires by the use of different tools available on the sites for enhancing their beauty. Although Teenage girls online self presentation

showed their deeper desire to attain the recognition and appreciation among their peer groups but the comparison between peer groups on social media reinforce the users to achieved the criteria of beauty set by their friends. Users acts of self-presentation and friend circle are determined by the craving to get attention, appreciation and acceptance among their social circle, which eventually led towards the issues of low confidence and low self-esteem because there has a gap between teenage girls' self-beliefs and apparent peer standards of beauty observed by the society. Additionally, Fear of missing out is consider as the important factor that influence the self-presentation on Instagram. Desire to be with people that considered important highly influence the thought of missing out and increased their concerned to be connected with their friends (Salim,Rahardio,Tanaya&Qurani ,2017).Self presentation become an essential component of young generation's identity development . From face to face communication to online self presentation the users redefine themselves in the context of new environment. In perspective of self presentation and self-development theories association among online self presentation and users self-esteem was observed. Similarly there was a positive relation between the support received from the audience through self presentation and higher self-esteem. However, deliberate self presentation on Facebook shows the users self-reflection which was associated with lesser self-concept clarity.(Yang & Brown ,2016). The individuals are engaged in several types of self -presentation for their peer groups and outsiders. Hence, the opinion and comments of friends are believed to be more essential as compared to the desired to impress the unknown person. (Salim,Rahardio,Tanaya&Qurani ,2017).

5. Selfie as Self Presentation

Selfie is the form of visual self presentation. Sung, Lee, Kim, and Choi (2016), identified different gratifications in the perspective of selfie posting on social media sites that include looking for attention, interaction, and entertainment by using uses and gratification theory framework. Furthermore, the researchers argued that mostly the user post pictures on social media for presenting themselves in way that the other users admire them. Likewise, in accordance with the Goffman's concept of self presentation users of digital media control what they present online and portray a certain image in front of others according to the trends. (Papacharissi,2002) .Additionally, the users of social media use different filters for enhancing their self presentation.(Hong, Jahng, Lee & Wise 2019).With the help of content analysis of pictures posted on Instagram by the users were randomly selected. Only those pictures were selected that use the hashtag of selfie. Findings of the study revealed that by adding the other social cues like additional information about the individual has recognized positively by the others users. While on the other hand the selfies posted on Instagram that involved excessive use of filters gets less numbers of like as comped to the selfies without filters because excessive intent to present the ideal online image has negatively perceived by the other users. However, Narcissistic motivations considered as substantial factor for selfie posting. Users use different filters for getting appreciations from the others on their

selfies and also tried to influence the perception of others about themselves.(Hong, Jahng, Lee & Wise 2019).

6. Narcissism and Self Presentation

Social networking sites have provided entirely different and new ways of self presentation. Contemporary studies have anticipated the gestures and visibility of narcissism on Social networking websites. In justifications for Facebook usage and narcissism Bibby (2008), examined both narcissism and extraversion on Facebook and found that narcissists use Facebook to enjoy the attractive exhibitionistic platform of social media to avail leisure interests. Buffardi and Campbell (2008) stated in their work that social media websites provides full control over self-presentation and gives space to maintain meaningless relationships just to satisfy narcissistic desires. They identified “narcissists” had more wall-posts and Facebook friends. Relating to these researchers’ states that to affirm the exaggerated beliefs narcissists may have carefully chosen more attractive photos of themselves.

Narcissism and self-esteem was also related with self presentation users of social media with low self-esteem would be associated with a greater amount of self-promotional content on their Facebook pages. The association between narcissism and self-esteem was predicted by the research studies (Mehdizadeh, 2010).Digital media based communication provides many new opportunities to the users for self-presentation specifically through the use of social media websites that provides a platform for users to present themselves in a different way according to their own choice through the use of personal information ,status updates, texts and posting of pictures. However, audience diversity has positively related with active management of online activities and the female users made more attempts to manage their online visual representation as compared to the male users. Similarly cultural identity also plays an important role in strategic self presentation.(Rui&Stefanone, 2012).Social networking sites gave almost full freedom to the users to present and manage their selves online like Ong et al., 2010 observed the connection of narcissism and extraversion on youths’ self presentation in four aspects of Facebook (profile pictures, status , social network size, and photo count).findings of the researchers revealed that the extrovert users involved more in online self-presentation as compared to the less extrovert users. Furthermore, the narcissistic individuals select and post those photos on Facebook which were more glamorous, attractive and physically appealing.

7. Self presentation and Mental Health

Online real self presentation has related with mental health like depression. Social support and dispositional optimism plays a vital role among Chinese teens in online self presentation. However, online real self presentation was connected with depression in a negative way but online real self presentation also decreased the amount of depressing thoughts with the help of social support (Xie X et al.2017). Similarly self presentation can improve mental well-being and reduce the signs of

depression among the users because higher the accurate information revealed by the user online, higher the level of well-being observed (Huang, 2016). Although Leary and Allen (2011), argued that during self presentation the users actually wanted to convey their image in a desire and ideal way in front of others. Similarly personality and persona made a great impression in the management of self presentational behaviors. Additionally, interpersonal goals, motivation, self-image and self-evaluation considered as important factors for self-presentations process.

8. Self presentation and Gender

Manago, Graham, Greenfield and Salimkhan (2008), conducted research study on Myspace and explores the role of gender in self presentation. By using focus group methodology the researchers recommends that social media sites provide a useful platform for grownups for self presentation and to recognize their personalities. However, the female users faced a huge pressure of sexual objectification and exaggerated social assessment that may also affect their self-development in the negative way. Similarly, Malik et al. (2015) discloses photo sharing on Facebook on the basis of gender differences through the use of survey technique. Findings of the study suggests that male post more photos on Facebook in contrast with female users. Male users of Facebook post pictures for disclosure gratifications and for time pass while female users seems more vigilant about their online privacy and self-disclosure while the purpose behind the posting pictures on Facebook related with time pass and escape.

9. Goffman's theory of self-presentation

Goffman 1959, suggested a model to explore every day life's social interactions through his framework. He discussed the self, identity and impression management by going into details of face to face interaction. He described the process of impression management by arranging certain information in order to influence the audience during "social interaction". Goffman used "dramaturgical" notion to make audience understand different "personality representations" performed by participants during social encounters.

Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation speculates that, people take on conflicting identities in society in accordance with changing factors such as the setting or audience. Goffman elaborates that "During any interaction an actor performs for an audience either as an individual or as part of a team". While performing, he uses factors such as verbal communication, body language, gestures, props and movements. Expressions are used to convey impressions through signals, language and gestures for others to interpret. A person can use this methodology to present a self which adheres well to the nature of the presentation to accommodate the presentation goal. It explains how perceptions can be well made and altered using photographs and deciding which personal images should or shouldn't be publicly shared.

10. Conclusion

Purpose behind writing this review paper was to give a synthesized and systematic literature on self presentation in context of digital media .Self presentation is an important and critical phenomenon that need much more exploration because of its diverse dimensions and its impact on the users. Digital media provide the opportunity to the users to present their self according to their own choice without any restriction. In this current review paper the researchers analyze some variables that explain the self presentation like social support, Narcissism, Mental health, Selfie concept, gender and Goffman theory of self presentation .

Findings from the above cited studies highlights that the one cannot neglect the impact and consequences of self presentation on the lives of users. Self presentation through the use of digital media provide a platform to the users to present their pictures according to their own desires and this thing lead towards the concept of desired self or desired image that one actually want to portray in front of others for getting positive admiration and social support. Likewise, Fear of missing out and self presentation association needs more exploration because it is important to highlight the aspect because of its evolving trend. Similarly the concept of self presentation also relates with mental health as well. Findings from the studies suggest both positive and negative effects of self presentation on mental health of the users. Like the users who got positive comments on their pictures they feel mentally relax while on the other hand the users who got negative or bad feedback felt anxious and depressed.

Furthermore, the result from previous studies on self presentation and mental health also revealed the relationship between the accurate information and positive mental well being.Eventually, individuals go through “judgment anxiety” when they take part in this phenomenon of self-presentation. However, proper investigation on self-presentation reveals that females are more involved in self-presentation. Moreover, digital media users are presenting their “idealized self” through self-presentation. Idealized self is directly related to narcissism. Hence, on the basis results of past studies it can be concluded that narcissists do self-presentation more often and narcissism is the major factor in increased level of self-presentation trends on digital media.

11. Limitations and indications for Future Studies

There are some limitations as well in this current study that are highlighted for the future researches to rule out and to develop the further researches keeping in view the present aspects for self presentation. First, the research that was added in this specific review only highlights some issues that are linked with self presentation like Social Support, Mental health, Narcissism and gender. Other variables like, cultural values, demographics, individual traits and education must also be included in the future studies of self presentation for better understanding of the phenomenon of self presentation. Second, the majority of the research studies on the phenomenon of self presentation was based on Uses and gratification approach, Goffman, 1959 theory of

self presentation and Schlenker's (1985) theory of self identification. Third, it is important for the future researchers to explore the users' intentions behind the self presentation as well. Use of different filters by the users for self presentation is also increasing that indicates the need to conduct more studies on self presentation with reference to excessive use of filters. Fourth, the area that too needs more attention in context of self presentation is the negative feedback that users get back after posting pictures. Fifth, and the most important phenomenon that relates with self presentation is online body shaming because of the lack of privacy and security of digital media the issue of online body shaming is increasing. There have been several studies of different contexts related to self presentation but some variables are still overlooked by the researchers.

It is essential to note that different aspects and many narratives related to digital media and self presentation have been analyzed descriptively and empirically by many researchers. Hence, this review paper highlights some significant variables that helped the future researchers to carry out new researches on this phenomenon with some innovative dimensions.

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