IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION ON FACEBOOK AMONG YOUNG MALAYSIANS

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of technology allows people to communicate globally without barriers and thus, increases the usage of Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC). One example of CMC is the social networking site. Social networking sites are popular and they continue to grow due to the large number of users. Many studies have been conducted to explore identity construction on the Internet and it was found that many users are publishing favourable images and information of themselves in order to maintain an ideal self among their audience. The purpose of this research is to examine how young Malaysians construct multiple identities and portray themselves in a self-preferred image projection via status updates on their Facebook profiles through the use of different linguistic, semiotic and visual features. This research wants to explore the range of identity claims people use in a non-anonymous online setting. The participants of this research comprised of ten males and ten females from the age group of 24 to 28. All participants are Malaysian citizens and are currently residing in Kuala Lumpur, a metropolitan city in Malaysia. This research is a qualitative research which uses the case study strategy in order to study a group of individuals based on data collected over a period of one month. The sampling methods used in this research are convenience sampling and homogenous sampling. Findings show that participants frequently use Facebook to keep in touch and to share thoughts with their audiences. Though gender identity is not intended for this research, it is found that male participants and female participants post significantly different topics of interest. Female participants show greater interest in friendship/relationship matters while male participants show greater interest in work-related or political issues. Most participants emphasise that they post whatever issues they wish to on Facebook and they are not concerned with how others view them but stress that they are cautious in their posts in order to avoid being offensive and to prevent misunderstanding. In short, identity construction does occur

among these young Malaysians. The research shows that the participants want to portray a positive image. Though no exact identity is identified, self-presentation is clearly reflected in the topics discussed and the writing strategies used by these participants.

ABSTRAK

Kemajuan teknologi membolehkan orang ramai untuk berkomunikasi secara global tanpa halangan dan ini turut meningkatkan penggunaan Komunikasi melalui Pengantaraan Komputer (KPK). Satu contoh penggunaan KPK adalah penggunaan laman rangkaian sosial. Penggunaan laman rangkaian sosial sangat popular dan terus berkembang disebabkan pengguna yang ramai. Banyak kajian telah dijalankan untuk memahami pembentukan identiti di Internet dan banyak pengguna didapati mempaparkan gambar dan maklumat diri yang positif untuk mengekalkan imej diri yang ideal di kalangan rakan Facebook mereka. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji bagaimana golongan muda Malaysia membina pelbagai identiti untuk mengekalkan imej diri yang positif melalui pengunaan pelbagai strategi dari segi linguistik, semiotik dan visual. Kajian ini dijalankan untuk memahami pelbagai identiti yang digunakan oleh pengguna melalui Facebook. Peserta kajian ini terdiri daripada sepuluh lelaki dan sepuluh perempuan dalam kumpulan umur 24 hingga 28. Mereka merupakan rakyat Malaysia yang kini tinggal di Kuala Lumpur, sebuah bandar metropolitan di Malaysia. Kajian ini merupakan satu kajian kualitatif yang menggunakan strategi kajian kes untuk mengkaji sekumpulan individu berdasarkan data yang dikumpul dalam tempoh satu bulan. Kaedah persampelan yang digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah persampelan mudah dan pensampelan *homogenous*. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa semua peserta kerap menggunakan Facebook untuk berhubung dan berkongsi pemikiran dengan rakan mereka. Walaupun identiti gender bukan tujuan kajian ini, kedua-dua peserta-peserta lelaki dan perempuan didapati berkomunikasi tentang topik yang sangat berlainan. Peserta perempuan menunjukkan minat besar dalam hal-hal persahabatan / perhubungan manakala peserta lelaki menunjukkan minat besar dalam isu-isu yang berkaitan dengan kerjaya atau politik. Kebanyakan peserta mengatakan bahawa mereka tidak bimbang tentang pemikiran rakan terhadap mereka

tetapi menegaskan bahawa mereka berhati-hati dalam penulisan mereka untuk mengelakkan salah faham. Kesimpulannya, pembentukan identiti berlaku di kalangan generasi muda di Malaysia. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa para peserta ingin menggambarkan imej yang positif. Walaupun tiada identiti tertentu yang dikenal pasti, presentasi diri para peserta adalah jelas dari segi pilihan topik perbincangan dan strategi penulisan mereka.

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