# Commodification of the Subject in Presentations of Virtual Sexual Identity

**Nurgül ERGÜL GÜVENDİ [1]**

## Abstract

When the profiles created in social networks and the content produced are examined, the problem of commodification of the subject, especially in sexual identity presentations, draws attention. For this reason, in this study, emotions, thoughts, values and situations that cause objectification of people were investigated. This research has four aims: to create a conceptual framework regarding the sexuality perception of obscene content producers in social media, to investigate the motivations that cause people to create obscene content, to identify common points that affect the network preferences of content producers and to contribute to the literature on social media studies. For this purpose, case analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. The data were collected from social media applications named Instagram, Tender, Twitter by using purposeful criterion sampling method. Users who stand out with their sexual identity presentation on these platforms were asked questions in four different categories. These categories are users' opinions about the phenomenon of sexuality, the reasons for their social network preferences, why they prefer the presentation of sexual identity (common goals) and the problems they experience on these platforms. The findings of the research are as follows: The phenomenon of sexuality is seen as an escape from real life, freedom, pleasure, communication tools and discovery. The reasons why the participants prefer social networks are the ease of access, ease of sharing, the fact that these applications carry less risk than in real life, and the advantage of control. The common goals of users are economic freedom, recognition and self-realization. Problems arising from the presentation of sexual identity are disconnection from real life, exclusion, harassment and depression. Our results clearly show that sexual identity presentations created through social media applications commodify the individual and individual values. We think that our results will contribute to the current literature and will be good ground for new research to be conducted.

**Keywords:** Identity, Presentation of Sexual Identity, Production of Sexual Content, Commodification of the Subject, Social Media.

[1]Dr, Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Marketing and Advertising, Sivas, Türkiye, nurgulergul@gmail.com, ORCID:0000-0002-9473-1474

# Sanal Cinsel Kimlik Sunumlarında Öznenin Metalaştırılması

**Nurgül ERGÜL GÜVENDİ** [1]

## Öz

Sosyal ağlarda oluşturulan profiller ve üretilen içerikler incelendiğinde özellikle cinsel kimlik sunumlarında öznenin metalaşması sorunu dikkat çekmektedir. Bu nedenle bu araştırmada duygu, düşünce, değer ve kişilerin nesneleşmesine neden olan durumlar araştırılmıştır. Araştırmanın dört amacı bulunmaktadır. Sosyal medyada müstehcen içerik üreticilerinin cinsellik algısına ilişkin kavramsal bir çerçeve oluşturmak, kişilerin müstehcen içerik oluşturmalarına neden olan motivasyonları araştırmak, içerik üreticilerinin ağ tercihlerini etkileyen ortak noktaları belirlemek ve sosyal medya çalışmaları ile ilgili literatüre katkı sunmak. Bu amaçla nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden vaka analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veriler Instagram, Tender, Twitter isimli sosyal medya uygulamalarından amaçlı ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Bu sosyal medya uygulamalarında cinsel kimlik sunumu ile öne öne çıkan kullanıcılara, dört faklı kategoride sorular sorulmuştur. Bu kategoriler, kullanıcıların cinsellik olgusu hakkındaki görüşleri, sosyal ağ tercihlerinin sebepleri, neden cinsel kimlik sunumunu tercih ettikleri (ortak hedefleri) ve bu platformlarda yaşadıkları sorunlardır. Araştırma sonucunda ulaşılan bulgular şu şekildedir: Cinsellik olgusu gerçek hayattan kaçış, özgürlük, zevk, iletişim aracı ve keşif olarak görülmektedir. Katılımcıların sosyal ağları tercih etme nedenleri, erişim kolaylığı, paylaşım kolaylığı, bu uygulamaların gerçek yaşamdakine oranla daha az risk taşıması ve kontrol avantajıdır. Kullanıcıların ortak hedefleri ise ekonomik özgürlük, tanınma ve kendini gerçekleştirmedir. Cinsel kimlik sunumundan kaynaklanan sorunlar ise gerçek hayattan kopma, dışlanma, taciz ve depresyondur. Ulaşılan sonuçlar sosyal medya uygulamaları vasıtası ile oluşturulan cinsel kimlik sunumlarının birey ve bireye ait değerleri metalaştırdığını açıkça göstermektedir. Ulaşılan bulguların bundan sonraki çalışmalarda ilgili literatüre katkı sunacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kimlik, Cinsel Kimlik Sunumu, Cinsel İçerik Üretimi, Öznenin Metalaştırılması, Sosyal Medya

[1] Öğr, Gör, Dr., Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Yıldızeli MYO, Pazarlama ve Reklamcılık, Sivas, Türkiye, nurgulergul@gmail.com, ORCID:0000-0002-9473-1474

## Introduction

Identity is a concept that is defined in different ways in different areas and covers the physical, cognitive and social development processes of the individual. Basically, it is defined as an individual's answer to the question "who am I". Identity has two basic components: discovery and development process (Ericson, 1968). According to Erikson, the discovery process is the adolescence process. According to Arnett, identity discovery continues through adulthood (Arnett, 2000, p. 469-480). Individual identity is developed in three different areas in adulthood: work, love and worldview (Arnett, 2000, p. 469-480). Berzonsky proposed three types of identity styles: knowledge-oriented, norm-oriented, and avoidance-oriented (Berzonsky, 1992, p. 112-215). It is emphasized that information-oriented individuals consider many alternatives, norm-oriented individuals tend to conform to the expectations of society and family, and avoidance-oriented individuals prefer to avoid decisions about identity (Berzonsky, 1992, p. 112-215). The common point of these approaches is the question of how identity is formed. Identity formation is based on two basic approaches, the subjectivist and the objectivist approach. According to the subjectivist approach, identity is a true self (essence) that is consistent and more or less the same throughout life. This approach has been criticized for giving importance to the internal structure of the organism and ignoring its external environment and changes (Doğan, 2000, p. 21). According to the objectivist approach, identity is the integrity, consistency and continuity resulting from the interaction and communication of the organism with its entire external environment as well as its internal dynamics (Marshall, 2000, p. 9-12). According to Smith (2002, p. 139), the elements that make up identity are family, gender, class, religion, ethnicity and nation. These identities may change according to time and circumstances. The interaction of the person with the external environment is important in collective identities (Aşkın, 2007). For this reason, the age, society, values and personal needs of a person are the main variables that determine the formation of identity. Individual identity formation depends on interpersonal relations, and collective identity formation depends on intergroup relations (Bilgin 2007, p. 14). According to identity theories, the person treats himself/herself as an object and is in relation to other social categories (Aşkın, 2007). According to structuralism and poststructuralism, the formation of identity depends on language and representation. Michel Foucault (2003, p. 46-59) draws attention to the importance of discourse as well as language and representation in identity formation. According to Foucault, what constitutes the subject and its experience is discourse and objectification takes place in three ways. These are general grammar-philology, practical objectification and self-objectification. According to the self-objectification approach, the subject is constructed with body and identity features. What builds is the institutions of the age, the discourses of these institutions and the power relations (Foucault, 2003, p. 49-56). In general, identity formation and sexual identity formation, which is one of the important elements of identity, is complex and multi-component. Identity formation occurs as a result of the interaction of factors such as the individual's age, cultural environment, idioms and social interactions. Gender identity formation is related to how an individual defines his/her own gender. This includes elements such as biological gender, sexual orientation and gender. Personal experiences, cultural experiences, psychological differences and cultural differences are very important for the formation of general and sexual identity (Golombok et all. 2008; Cohen Kettenis and Gooren 1999; Zucker 2002). According to the discursive approach,

one of the important tools of identity formation is symbols and narrative (Özdemir, 2010, p. 18-19). In this construction process, the role of media and media tools is very important in terms of cultural and sociological impact. According to Baudrillard, media transforms individuals into objects of production. These individuals, designed by the media, are expressed as the commodification of the subject (Baudrillard, 2018). Media tools cause sociological changes on a national and global scale. These changes are image and representation, identification, social pressure, gender roles and reinforcement of common stereotypes. Recent research on public online communication shows that at least one in ten teens is involved in sexual self-presentation on social networking sites (Hall, West ve McIntyre, 2012, p. 76). Sexual behaviors can be shaped by many factors such as biological, social, psychological, cultural, political, economic and legality (Öz and Kısa, 2023). In addition, reasons such as attracting attention, communication, archiving, entertainment (Sung et al., 2016), self-affirmation, belonging and documentation are also effective in determining sexual behaviors (Etgar-Ami and chai-Hamburger, 2017; Seidman, 2013). The way people express their sexual preferences is one of the ways of presenting themselves. Self-presentation is actually an effort to control the impression one gives to others (Goffman, 2014, p. 33-59). Studies on self-presentation show that individuals perform these behaviors by taking on some roles and using social masks (Goffman, 2014, p. 56). Self-presentation strategies, on the other hand, refer to the reasons and ways of expressing information about oneself to others (Schwenker, 2003, p. 98). Self-presentation includes all behaviors that produce and maintain the desired self-image and motivation to manipulate the self-perception of others (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). According to the theory of self-perception (Bem, 1972, p. 67), the willingness of young people to share explicit photos on social networks and to participate in sexual messaging is closely related. According to this theory, people form an opinion about themselves and their behavior by observing themselves from the viewer's point of view (Bem, 1972, p. 8). As a result, when people present certain traits to others, these traits become more apparent to them and the likelihood that future behavior will be formed accordingly increases (Schlenker et al., 1994). Such motivations are associated with personality traits such as conscience, emotional stability, openness to experience, self-esteem (Etgar-Ami and chai-Hamburger, 2017; Seidman, 2013), and narcissism (Reed et al., 2018; Sung et al., 2016). One of the prominent elements in the identification and presentation process of individuals is the phenomenon of sexual identity. Social media applications where sexual content is widely shared are very important in terms of identity presentations. These applications are preferred because of their possibilities such as allowing people to be visible, creating the desired profile, and having unlimited interaction with others. The main point that makes social networks and the sexual identity presentations created in these networks important is that individuals present themselves as commodities in these networks (Debord, 1990, p. 13-17; Veblen, 2015). The most important point that draws attention to the problem of commodification is that the subject presents himself/herself as a parameter of change. "A commodity is an external object, something that satisfies human needs with its properties" (Marx, 2011, p. 49). Commodification, on the other hand, is the acquisition of a market (exchange) value for services, products, people or relationships that had no market value before. Commodification, the main criticism of Karl Marx's commodity theory, is the objectification of things for the purposes of the capitalist system (Marx, 2003). According to this approach, at the end of the

objectification process, commodities change their initial value and status. This change is called exchange value. According to Marx, the reason why commodities become fetish is that the basic quality of things is changed and gains an objective character. For Vincent, commodification is a secret social contract that transforms everything into a commodity to be bought and sold (Vincent, 2003). The most important result of this situation is the transformation of life, including human beings, into a commodity that can be bought and sold. Lukacs expands the framework of commodity fetishism and states that commodification is transformed into exchange value in all fields such as human, culture, art (Lukacs, 2006). The commodity has two separate qualities as use value and exchange value. For this reason, commodity is distinguished from utility, usefulness, use and exchange values. The distinction between exchange value and use value has led to the loss of originality and qualities (Marx, 2011). What qualities are destroyed? Is it only the qualities that are destroyed or is it the person himself/herself? These questions formed the main motivation of the research. This study has four aims: (a) investigating sexuality perceptions of people who produce obscene content on social media (b) investigating the motivations that cause people to create obscene content (c) investigation of the reasons affecting the network preferences of content producers (d) contributing to the current literature on identity presentation and social media studies. For these purposes, the relevant literature is included in the first part of the study. In the second part of the research (case study), open-ended questions asked to content producers were classified using semi-structured interview forms. In the third part, the findings were analyzed, and in the fourth and last part, the results were evaluated.

**Sexual Identity**

The gender characteristics of the individual and the whole personality are a whole, so the phenomenon of gender cannot be considered independently of the individual's personal characteristics. Gender identity is the identification of oneself with a specific biological gender. The term "sexual identity" was first used by Hooker and Stoller in the 1960s (Zucker, 2005, p. 65). Stoller (1964, p. 13) defined a child's basic belief that they belong to a gender as gender identity. Gender identity is the way an individual perceives and identifies with those with whom they feel romantic and sexually attracted (Reiter, 1989). Social gender is the determination of the gender roles of boys and girls by society. The basic features that determine gender roles such as privileges and limitations are determined according to the common acceptances of societies such as belief and tradition. The main difference of gender from sexual identity is that gender roles are classified according to social and psychological characteristics, unlike biological sex. In social gender, gender roles are determined as socio-culturally. Gender identity, once considered a dual demographic, is now recognized as a complex combination of male and female identities (Holt and Ellis, 1998, p. 66). In gender identity, the person does not have to be biologically male or female (Fraser, 2008, p. 22). In contrast, traditional gender norms are social constructs, so they change over time (Edwards and Jones, 2009, p. 51). Body and gender perceptions have changed with the effect of the period and cultural conditions. Transformations such as rationalism, modernity, and the medical revolution are some periods in which these changes are clearly seen (Öztürk, 2012, p. 1). These changes have been shaped by philosophical, social, political and ideological factors. Discussions about body and gender characteristics are based on gender roles, gender, gender inequalities and ideological differences. The presentation of sexual identity expresses the gender of the individual, how he/she expresses this gender and

how he/she behaves in society. This presentation includes the process of finding the balance between an individual's sexual identity and social expectations (Vatandaş, 2007). One of the important distinctions in this regard is the difference between the concepts of self and identity. The self is the potential wholeness that the human mind has shaped by social experiences. Identity, on the other hand, is the reflection of this socially shaped potential to the outside world with a conscious awareness (Kurtkan, 1982, p. 151). Therefore, individual identity depends on the presence of the other person. According to Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory, individuals try to influence the people they interact with and to control their impressions of themselves (Goffman, 2009). According to Mead's Theory of the Self, this results in the individual becoming an object in social life (Mead, 1972). In Rogers' Phenomenological Theory of Self, the individual is at the center of his/her own world (Rogers, 1902/1987). According to the Mirror Self Theory, it is the individual's view of himself/herself and his/her perception of how others see themselves, which determines the self-views of individuals (Cooley, 1902). According to Self-Perception Theory, when a game (action) is rewarded, it turns into behavior. According to the theory, this is an overjustification. According to the theory, people perform their actions because they like it (intrinsic motivation) or because they get rewards in return (extrinsic motivation). If an individual does something because he or she likes it and is rewarded in return, that action becomes an overly justified action (Bem, 1965/1972). Theories that deal with human actions in the context of 'self-presentation' are as follows: Self-Explanation, Dramaturgy, Self-Ascension Theory, Self-Expression and Image Theory. According to the Self-Explanation Theory, people act to confirm their positive or negative opinions (Deci and Ryan, 1985). According to Dramaturgy Theory, people think in terms of staging their interactions and relationships in social life. According to this theory, there are two different role classifications: what others see and what they see (Goffman, 1959). According to Self-Ascension Theory, people try to bring their positive features to the forefront in their relationships and try to minimize their negative features. According to this approach, the purpose of individuals is to gain the appreciation of others (Taylor, 1989). According to Self-Expression Theory, people believe that by sharing their emotional, private secrets with other people, they will create a positive impression (Altman and Taylor, 1973). According to Image Management Theory, people aim to create a positive impression on other people in their relationships. According to the theory, behavior is determined by how people want to be seen to others (Goffman, 1959). All these approaches are very important in terms of how people's self-perceptions are formed, revealing the factors that determine their attitudes and behaviors, and determining the effects of individual and social factors. These theories are very important for understanding the situations that cause people to commodify themselves, which is the main motivation of the research. For this reason, the reasons for presenting sexuality as a pure identity, the meanings attributed to the phenomenon of sexuality, the preferred social networks and the situations caused by these behaviors have been investigated within the scope of self-presentation theories that include psychological and sociological foundations.

**Production of Sexually Implicit Content in Social Media**

Gender identity is not visible or obvious in nature and can be shared or hidden in a variety of social settings. Sharing or not sharing a sexual identity depends on a

particular social situation or a particular person drawing attention to their identity (Doan and Mize, 2020, p. 11). Social networks allow the realization of purposes such as attracting attention, displaying oneself, and gaining appreciation. When people use social media platforms, they create "digital beacons" of their activity and identity (Hepekiz, 2019). These digital beacons offer a unique opportunity to analyze how, in the social context, they manage and disclose information about their lives, including their sexuality (Haimson and Hoffman, 2016, p. 55). In a place like the United States, sexuality is a central part of people's identities, influencing their worldview, life experience, and environment (Schnabel, 2018). People express their sexual identity online as digital social media often become key areas for self-expression and impression management. While online spaces were once more personal social spaces, they are increasingly integrated with offline social spaces (Boyd 2014; Jurgenson, 2011; Orne, 2017). Research into the impulsive use of internet pornography as a subfield of hypersexuality has become the focus of empirical research in recent years (Carol et al., 2008; Doring, 2009; Griffiths, 2012). The use of Internet pornography has become increasingly popular in Western culture (Caroll et al., 2008; Doring, 2009; Griffiths, 2012). Parallel to this increase, there has been a dramatic increase in the problematic use of internet pornography (Carol et al., 2008; Manning, 2006; Owens et al., 2012). CPUI has examined internet pornography use in three areas: (a) patterns of addiction associated with internet pornography use (b) feelings of guilt associated with internet pornography use (c) online social sexual behavior. Although the initial analyzes of the inventory were promising, the inventory was long (consisting of 32 items) and had not been tested with other measures of psychological performance. The Pornography Consumption Inventory (Reid et al., 2010) analyzes pornography use motivations and this inventory provides a model. There are many valuable tools that measure hypersexuality, online behavior, and attitudes towards pornography. However, content producers have different sources of motivation for the goals and results they want to achieve. Another important question is why sexual content producers prefer different social platforms. For this reason, it is necessary to investigate the meaning that sexual content producers attribute to the phenomenon of sexuality, the sources of motivation and the reasons for choosing the platform, to explain the causal relationships associated with the formation of sexual identity.

## Methodology

The study examines the question of what active social media users think about the phenomenon of sexuality and production of sexual content by using the case study pattern, which is one of qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is analysis of findings regarding social events and phenomena. Case study is a type of qualitative research where the researcher extensively analyzes a case or a few cases and presents themes associated with these cases (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, Morales, 2007). The study group of our research consists of 30 social media content producers who actively produce sexual content in social media. 11 of these content producers use Instagram, 10 use Tinder and 9 use Twitter. Out of 11 Instagram content producers, 8 are women and 3 are men; out of 10 Tinder content producers, 9 are women and 1 is man; and out of 9 Twitter content producers, 2 are women and 7 are men. The participants were determined from social media platform (nonrandom sampling) using the purposive sampling method by considering the criterion sampling criteria. Criterion sampling is

selection of the sample from individuals, incidents or objects that have specific features regarding the issue.

**Data Collection and Sample**

Data was collected using semi-structured interview forms. The questions in the interview form were determined using related literature research and scales. The form does not contain questions that include personal data, except age, because the research topic is within the scope of personal privacy. The questions in the interview form are as follows:

In your opinion, what is Sexuality?

"Why do you prefer virtual applications instead of real sexuality?"

"Why do you prefer this platform to produce content?"

"What are the goals you want to attain in your contents?"

"Does production of sexual content have any negative effects on you? If yes, please describe."

**Analysis of Data**

Questions related to the phenomenon of virtual sexuality in the semi-structured interview forms consist of various themes. These themes are coded as sexuality perception, selection of the platform, goals that are targeted, and positive and negative outputs. The coded responses were interpreted using the content analysis method. Content analysis ensures that a. the judgements presented by the researcher are considered as a scientific report b. in the light of explicitly formulated rules c. to classify signs and b. assert which judgements these signs contain (Janis, 1949, s. 425). Content analysis is the impartial, systematic, and qualitative definition of the presented content of communication (Berelson, 1952, s. 17). We envisage to make an impartial, systematic, and qualitative definition of any symbolic behavior by using "content analysis" and "coding" interchangeably (Cartwright, 1953, s. 421). In the first part of the analysis, raw data was classified based on common themes that were determined. In the second part, irrelevant responses that did not fit the themes were taken out of the coding pool. In the third part, the intersection sets of obtained findings were determined and interpreted using the inductive method. In the last part, data was presented by taking into consideration the frequency, citation selection, variety, and extreme sample criteria (Carley, 1993).

**Table 1.** Opinions on the Definition of Sexuality

| Categories | f |
| --- | --- |
| Escape | 10 |
| Freedom | 7 |
| Pleasure – Satisfaction | 6 |
| Building relations with the opposite sex | 5 |
| Self-exploration – Curiosity | 2 |

It is seen in Table 1 that content producers define sexuality as an escape from the problems of real life (f=12). Sexuality is perceived as a form of freedom (f=7). Virtual sex is characterized as a tool of pleasure and satisfaction (f=6). In addition, it is thought that sexuality is influential in establishing communication with the opposite sex (f=5) and that subjects associated with sexual experience are influential in self-discovery (f=2). Some of the responses by content producers regarding the findings are as follows:

Content Creator 9. Sexuality: For me, sexuality is a free and personal experience that does not include third parties and pressure. It is an experience where I feel good, create unrestricted communication with my partner and get away from daily issues and problems.

Content Creator 13. Sexuality: Sexual experience involves experiences where limits are removed, where I meet people from various cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles, where I express myself better, where I am not judged, and where I constantly learn new things and take pleasure.

**Table 2.** Reasons for Production of Virtual Sexual Content

| Categories | f |
|---|---|
| Convenience of access and control | 13 |
| Having less Risks | 7 |
| Being more profitable | 6 |
| Lack of restrictions | 4 |

According to Table 2, sharing of sexually explicit content in virtual platforms is preferred for: Convenience of access to the target audience and convenience of control (f=13), having less risks compared to real experience (f=7), having higher level of financial and emotional satisfaction (f=6), having a larger area of freedom compared to real sexual experience (f=4).

Content Creator 11. Its facilities finding a partner suitable for my sexual preferences. I have the option to choose someone who is suitable to me, someone that like out of thousands of people. In social platforms, I do not worry about the risk of physical violence and being harassed afterwards unlike in real sex. I shoot and share my videos whenever I want. Everything is in my control, and it offers more financial gain based on being watched and liked.

Content Creator 2. I am the one who decides what to do and who to do it with. I can block disturbing followers. I keep earning money as my posts are viewed over time. I can decide with whom I will conduct sexual acts. Afterwards, I can easily reach people that I want. If I want to see my close followers, I earn more income by opening webcam privately or meeting their private demands.

**Table 3**. Reasons for Selection of social media Tools

| Platform | Categories | f |
|---|---|---|
| All (30) | Convenience of Access to Target Audience | 13 |
| Instagram (11) | Convenience of accessing and sharing content | 7 |

| Tender (10) | Applications based on the type of posts | 7 |
| Twitter (9) | Opportunity to analyze the target audience | 3 |

According to Table 3, the platforms preferred by the content producers vary based on their convenience to access the audience in accordance with the targeted features (f=13), offering the chance to share visual and instant content (f=7), providing features in line with the content of the shared posts (f=7), and giving the opportunity to analyze the target audience (f=3).

Some statements from content producers regarding the findings:

Content Creator 1. I can share my videos on Tinder whenever I want. If I want to share content, I can submit it only for those who want it. I can easily learn about what my followers want and what they like and produce content accordingly.

Content Creator 19. The reels video in Instagram is an amazing feature for my long posts. During the day, I arouse interest with short stories and have live chat with my followers when I want. It allows me to permanently share my favorite photos as posts and my liked recordings as reels video. I can analyze my most viewed posts and gain more views by adding them to my featured stories.

Content Creator 30. I think Twitter consists of more educated and tolerant people compared to other social media tools. Sexuality does not consist of visual contents such as photos and videos. It is possible to share small sex stories, fantasies, dreams and find people who are into them. I can create hashtags in my interest areas and meet my followers.

**Table 4.** Opinions on the Goal of Virtual Sexuality

| Categories | f |
| --- | --- |
| Financial Freedom – Income | 15 |
| Recognition – Increasing the Target Audience | 10 |
| Indirect Gains (Being Validated Personal Satisfaction) | 5 |

According to Table 4, virtual sexuality is preferred as it provides more financial income (f=23), increases the chances of being a celebrity in this field and increasing the target audience (f=28), offers indirect gains, helps build different relationships and connections, and provides personal satisfaction (f=12)

Some statements from content producers regarding the findings:

Content Creator 4. I make good money and my network is getting larger.

Content Creator 14. My self-confidence has increased, and I have met people with mutual interests. Then, I started to have fun and earn money from this, which is great.

**Table 5.** Opinions of the Participants on the Negative Results of the Production of Sexually Explicit Content

| Categories | ƒ |
|---|---|
| Detachment from real life unsociability | 15 |
| Exclusion from family and social circle | 6 |
| Being subject to public defamation, harassment | 5 |
| Mental fatigue – depression | 4 |

According to Table 5, production of virtual sexually explicit content causes detachment from real life (f=15), exclusion from the family and social circle (f=6), being subject to severe verbal harassment (f=5), mental fatigue and depression (f=4).

Some statements from content producers regarding the findings:

Content Creator 5: After a while, I constantly wanted to try new things in front of the camera. I always kept track of how many likes my posts received and how much I was viewed. People both followed me and insulted me. Some of the people who like my videos also keep sending me harassment messages.

Content Creator 22: A while after I opened this account, my family decided to stop seeing me. I started to have communication problems with my close friends. While some of the people I know orally insulted me, some people physically harassed me. I feel overwhelmed as I need to update my account constantly.

Content Creator 17: Being involved in sexuality all the time is exhausting as much as it is fun. After a while, it has become very difficult to check posts and reply to the audience. I am used to being harassed by people I do not know; but it demoralizes me to get negative reactions from my close friends.

## Result

We had four objectives in this research:

(a) To create a conceptual framework for sexual content producers' perception of sexuality.

(b) To help explain the motivation for creating sexual content and to combine psychological literature and social theories within this framework.

(c) Identify common dynamics that influence content creators' social networking choices.

(d) To identify the negative experiences of content producers and to investigate the dynamics that lead to the instrumentalization of facts.

(a) In order to create a conceptual framework for sexual content producers' perception of sexuality, participants were asked for their views on the phenomenon of sexuality.

"What is sexuality to you?" The answers given to the question are escape from real life (f10), freedom (f7), pleasure (f6), active communication (f5) and discovery-curiosity (f2). According to the findings, the phenomenon of sexuality is characterized as escape from real life, freedom and a form of communication. With the interaction of new media tools, the phenomenon of sexuality has started to be seen as a lifestyle (object) that offers indirect gains rather than an individual pleasure area (pleasure itself). The findings show that new media extensions change the perception of sexuality and confirm that a new conceptual framework should be created.

(b) The following questions were asked to help explain the motivations for creating sexual content and to combine psychological literature with social theories in this context.

1. "Why do you prefer virtual apps over real sexuality?"

Reasons for preferring virtual environments for sexual content: Ease of access (f13), low risk level (f7), economic advantages (f6), less restrictions (f4).

2. "What are the goals you want to achieve in your content?"

The reasons for the participants to form sexual identity are economic freedom (f15), recognition (f10) and indirect advantages-personal satisfaction (f5).

1. These channels are preferred because of their ease of access and control to the target audience, less risk compared to real experience, higher level of economic and emotional satisfaction, and a wider area of freedom compared to real sexual experience.

2. The objectives aimed with the presentation of sexual identity are as follows: More economic income, recognition and advantages related to the target audience, indirect gains such as admiration, approval and personal satisfaction, giving the opportunity to establish different relationships and connections. According to the findings, economic, psychological and cultural motivation sources come to the fore in the formation of sexual identity. The common denominator of these motivations is the economic and sociocultural contributions of the created sexual identities.

(a) The following questions were asked to the participants in order to identify the common motivational sources that affect the social networking preferences of content producers.

"Why do you prefer this platform to produce content?"

Platform selection criteria: Ease of access to the target audience (f13), sharing options (f7), availability of appropriate applications (f7), control advantage (f3).

When the participants were asked why and which social networks they prefer, they were asked to use Instagram, Tender, Twitter, etc. They responded by presenting features according to the content of the posts and providing the opportunity to analyze the target audience. The common point of the participants in the selection of social networks was stated as the ease of access to the target audience.

(a) Identifying the common negative experiences faced by virtual gender identity producers and investigating the dynamics that lead to the instrumentalization of phenomena.

It is stated that the production of content based on sexual identity causes problems such as disconnection from real life (f15), exclusion (f6), harassment (f5) and depression (f4).

## Recommendations and Discussion

According to the results of the research, sexuality and the body are perceived as a tool for those who produce sexual content in social networks. According to psychological theories of self-presentation, people feel the need to create a positive self-image in the eyes of other people. For some people, this desire causes the person to present himself/herself as an object of display. According to psychological theories, the main reason for presenting oneself as a commodity is the need for validation. Personal sources of motivation are associated with the satisfaction experienced when such needs are met. According to the social theories developed on this subject, situations such as exhibition and self-presentation are social phenomena. In other words, while a person needs a community to present himself/herself, at the same time, he/she surrenders his/her individuality to the eyes of others with his/her private features in the social structure. The results we have reached have shown that the main reasons for using identities and bodies, which people commodify with their own will, are economic expectations. This situation shows that, contrary to psychological approaches, behaviors are not performed with the aim of psychological satisfaction, but with the expectation of economic welfare. Although economic welfare may be seen as psychological satisfaction, this does not change the fact that identities and bodies are used as tools for some purposes. In this case, economic gains (expectations) appear as a new and important parameter in identity formation. According to the results, individuals see sexual life and personal characteristics (body), which are among the most private areas, as a means of change. The main reason for this situation is economic expectations rather than psychological satisfaction. On the basis of making oneself a tool and legitimizing this situation, there is recognition, economic gain expected as a result of recognition, and the belief that life satisfaction will increase as a result of this gain. One of the most important results of the research is that sexuality is no longer an individual experience and the body is used as a change parameter against economic gains. Violation of respect, which is defined as knowing one's place in social life and acting accordingly, is a violation of fundamental rights. For Kant, who associates respect with the dignity of the person, this situation is violation of rights, disrespect and ultimately lack of dignity. In that case, the disrespect that a person has made to his or her autonomous existence, to the qualities that make this existence special, is not only a violation of rights, but also a matter of dignity. In this research, some situations that cause people to commodify themselves are examined in the context of platforms (social networks) that enable this. At the same time, the expansion of these contexts, which constitute the research constraints, the reasons for material gains to override moral values, identity, dignity problems, psychological, sociological and philosophical foundations should be investigated comprehensively. What are the situations that cause the individual to present himself/herself as a sexual object and the human body to be used as a marketing tool outside of social networks? Is there a relationship between the environments in which these behaviors are exhibited and the way they are exhibited and the people exhibiting them? What are the relations of these situations with facts such as personality and dignity? We think that the investigation of these questions, which constitute the limitations of this study, can contribute to the relevant literature in future.

| Peer-Review | Double anonymized - Two External |
|---|---|
| Ethical Statement | * It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited. |
| Plagiarism Checks | Yes - Ithenticate |
| Conflicts of Interest | The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare. |
| Complaints | itobiad@itobiad.com |
| Grant Support | The author(s) acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research. |

| Değerlendirme | İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme |
|---|---|
| Etik Beyan | * Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur. |
| Benzerlik Taraması | Yapıldı – Ithenticate |
| Etik Bildirim | itobiad@itobiad.com |
| Çıkar Çatışması | Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir. |
| Finansman | Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır. |

# References / Kaynakça

Altman, I. Ve Taylor, D. A. (1973). Social Penetration: The *Development of İnterpersonal Relationships.* Holt: Rinehart & Winston.

Arnett, J.J. (2000). Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From The Late Teens Through The Twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469–480.

Aşkın, M. (2007). Kimlik ve Giydirilmis Kimlikler. Atatürk *University Journal of Graduate School Of Social Sciences*, Volume 10, No. 2.

Baudrillard, J. (2018). *Kötülüğün Şeffaflığı,* (Çev. Işık Ergüden). Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul.

Baudrillard, J. (2018). *Tüketim Toplumu,* (Çev. Nilgün Tutal & Ferda Keskin). Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul.

Bem, Dj. (1965). An Experimental Analysis Of Self-Persuasion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. (1) 199–218.

Bem, Dj. (1972). Self-Perception Theory. In: Berkowitz L, Editor. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology.* Vol. 6, Academic Press, 1–62, Ca: San Diego.

Berzonsky, M. (1992). A Process Perspective on Identity and Stress Management. In G.R. Adams & R.M. Montemarory (Eds). *Adolescent Identity Formation* (2nd. Ed., Pp.193- 215). Newbury Park: Sage Publication.

Bilgin, N. (1999). *Kolektif Kimlik.* Sistem Yayıncılık, İstanbul.

Bilgin, N. (2007). *Kimlik İnşası.* Ege Yayıncılık, İzmir.

Boyd, D. (2014). *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press.

Castells, M. (2006). *Kimliğin Gücü Enformasyon Çağı: Ekonomi, Toplum ve Kültür.* İkinci Cilt. İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul.

Cohen-Kettenis PT, Gooren LJ (1999) Transsexualism: a review of etiology, diagnosis and treatment. J Psychosom Res 46:315-333.

Cooley, C.H. (1902). *Human Nature and the Social Order.* New York: Scribner's, 1902, 179-185.

Debord, E. G. (2006). *Gösteri Toplumu* (2. Baskı) (Çev. A. Emekçi, O. Taşkent). Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). The General Causality Orientations Scale: Self-Determination in Personality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 19(2), 109–134.

Dereboy F, Dereboy Ç, Coşkun B, Coşkun A. (1994). Özdeğer Duygusu, Öz İmgesi ve Kimlik Duygusu. *Çocuk ve Ergen Ruh Sağlığı Dergisi*, 1:61-69.

Doğan, E. (2000). *Kimlikler Kıskacında Ulusal Kişilik*. İmge Kitabevi, Ankara.

Döring N. (2009). The Internet's İmpact on Sexuality. A Critical Review of 15 Years of Research. *Computers İn Human Behavior*, 25(5), 1089–1101.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, Youth And Crisis*. New York: Norton.

Etgar, S., & Amichai-Hamburger, Y. (2017). Not All Selfies Took Alike: Distinct Selfie Motivations Are Related To Different Personality Characteristics. *Frontiers İn Psychology*, 8, 842.

Foucault, M. (2003). *İktidarın Gözü*. (F. Keskin, Çev.). İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (2009). *Günlük Yaşamda Benliğin Sunumu*. (B. Cezar, Çev.) İstanbul: Metis.

Golombok S, Rust J, Zervoulis K, Croudace T, Golding J, Hines M (2008) *Developmental trajectories of sex-typed behavior in boys and girls: a longitudinal general population study of children aged 2.5-8 years.* Child Dev 79:1583-1593.

Gözübüyük Tamer, M. (2014). Kimliklerin Seyrine Bir Keşif, *Folklor/Edebiyat*, 20 (77), 83 99.

Hall P. C., West J. H., Mcıntyre E. (2012). Female Self-Sexualization İn Myspace.Com Personal Profile Photographs. *Sexuality & Culture*, 16, 1–16.

Hall, S. (1998). *Eski ve Yeni Kimlikler, Eski ve Yeni Etniklikler, Kültür, Küreselleşme ve Dünya Sistemi* (İçinde). Der: Anthony D. King, Çev: Gülcan Seçkin Ümit Hüsrev Yolsal. Bilim ve Sanat Yay, Ankara.

Hepekiz, İ. & Gökaliler, E. (2019). Sosyal Medya Aracılığıyla Yaratılan Kişisel Markalar ve Benlik Sunumu. *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, 6 (1), 761-782.

Holt, Cl ve Ellis, Jb. (1998). Mevcut Geçerliliğin Değerlendirilmesi, Bem Cinsiyet Rolü Envanteri. *Seks Rolleri*, 39, 929–941

Kim, S., Thibodeau, R., & Jorgensen, R. S. (2011). Shame, Guilt, And Depressive Symptoms: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(1), 68–96.

Kurtkan, A. (1982). *Genel Sosyoloji*, Divan Yayınları, İstanbul.

Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2012). Internet Gaming Addiction: A Systematic Review of Empirical Research. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 10(2), 278–296

Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression Management: A Literature Review and Two-Component Model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107(1), 34–47.

Luhmann, N. (1992). *What İs Communication? Communication Theory*, 2(3), 251-259.

Lukacs, G. (2006). *Tarih ve Sınıf Bilinci*. Çev. Yılmaz Öner, Belge Yayınları, İstanbul.

Luyckx, K., Schwartz, S.J., Berzonsky, M.D., Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., Smits, I., & Goossens, L. (2008). Capturing Ruminative Exploration: Extending the Fourdimensional Model of Identity Formation in Late Adolescence. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 42, 58-82.

Manning, J. (2006) The Impact of Internet Pornography on Marriage and The Family: A Review of The Research. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 13, 131-165.

Marcia J. (1993). *The Relational Roots of Identity. In Discussions on Ego Identity* (Ed J Kroger):34-65. Nj, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. England.

Marshall, G. (2000). *Sosyoloji Sözlüğü*, Bilim Sanat Yayınları, Ankara.

Marx, K. (2003). *Kapital,* Cilt 2(5). (A. Bilgi Çev.), Kuban Matbaacılık, Sol Yayınları, Ankara.

Marx, K. Ve Engels, F. (2011). *Alman İdeolojisi.* Belli, S. (Çev.). Sol Yayınları, Ankara.

Mead, P. G., & Sampson, P. B. (1972). Hand Steadiness During Unrestricted Linear Arm Movements. *Human Factors*, 14(1), 45–50.

O'brien, K. M., & Vincent, N. K. (2003). Psychiatric Comorbidity in Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa: Nature, Prevalence and Causal Relationships. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23(1), 57–74.

Ong, E. Y. L., Et Al. (2011*).* Narcissism, Extraversion and Adolescents' Self-Presentation on Facebook, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 50 (2): 180-185.

Owens, E. W., Behun, R. J., Manning, J. C., & Reid, R. C. (2012). The İmpact Of İnternet Pornography On Adolescents: A Review of the Research. Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity: *The Journal of Treatment & Prevention*, 19(1-2), 99–122.

Öz, M. & Kısa, C. (2023). Cinsellik ve Duygular: Bir Gözden Geçirme. Habitus *Toplumbilim Dergisi,* 4 (4), 211-228.

Özdemir, E. Ö. (2010), "Kimlik Kavramı ve Teorik Yaklaşımlar", *Eğitim, Bilim, Toplum*, 8 (32).

Öztürk, N. (2012). *Bir Beden Sosyolojisi Problemi Olarak Namus Kavramı ve Kadın Bedeni.* Karaman: Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Kamu Yönetimi Anabilim Dalı.

Reiter, L. (1989). Sexual Orientation, Sexual İdentity, and The Question of Choice. *Clin Soc Work* J, (17) 138–150.

Ritzer, G. (2001). *Explorations in the Sociology of Consumption: Fast Food, Credit Cards and Casinos*, London, Gbr: Sage Publications Inc.

Rogers, E. (1986). *Communication Technology.* New York: The Free Press

Schnabel, L. (2018). *Sexual Orientation and Social Attitudes*. Socius, 4.

Seidman, G. (2013). Self-Presentation and Belonging on Facebook: How Personality Influences Social Media Use and Motivations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54(3), 402–407

Simpson, B., & Carroll, B. (2008). *Re-Viewing `Role' in Processes of Identity Construction. Organization,* 15(1), 29–50.

Smith, A. (2002). *Küresel Çağda Milletler ve Milliyetçilik*. Çev.: D. Kömürcü. Everest Yay, İstanbul.

Stoller, R. J. (1964). A Contribution to the Study of Gender İdentity. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 45(2-3), 220–226.

Sung, Y., Lee, J.-A., Kim, E., And Choi, S. M. (2016). Why We Post Selfies: Understanding Motivations for Posting Pictures of Oneself, *Personality and Individual*

*Differences*, 97: 260-265.

Swansea, K. R. (2010). Finding Strategic Solutions to Reduce Truancy. *Research in Education*, 84(1), 1–18.

Taylor, S. E., & Schneider, S. K. (1989). Coping And The Simulation of Events. *Social Cognition*, 7(2), 174–194.

Türkbağ, A. U. (2003). *Kimlik, Hukuk ve Adalet Sorunu: Kimlikler*. Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi, Yıl: 6, Sayı: 23, Doğu Batı Yayınları, Ankara.

Uzun, T. (2003). Ulus, Milliyetçilik ve Kimlik Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme. Kimlikler. *Düşünce Dergisi*, Yıl: 6, Sayı: 23. Doğu Batı Yayınları, Ankara.

Vatandaş, D. D. C. (2007). Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Cinsiyet Rollerinin Algılanışı. *Istanbul Journal of Sociological Studies*, 0 (35), 29-56.

Waterman, A. (1992). Identity as an Aspect of Optimal Psychological Functioning. G.R. Adams & R.M. Montemayor (Ed.), *Adolescent Identity Formation.* Newbury Park Sage Pub, S.51-72.

Zucker KJ (2002) *Gender Identity Disorders.* Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, A Comprehensive Textbook 3rd edition içinde. M Lewis (ed), Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, Philadelphia, s: 724-734.

Zucker, K. J. (2005). Gender Identity Disorder in Girls. In D. J. Bell, S. L. Foster, & E. J. Mash (Eds.), *Handbook of Behavioral nd Emotional Problems İin Girls* (285–319). Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.