FINAL DESTINATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA JOURNEYS: THE FRAGMENTED SELF

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ABSTRACT

The self is established through knowledge of self, the projection of others' view of the self, and self-evaluation. According to Goffman, social relations which are established in communications constitute a process of presenting the "self" to others to be accepted or rejected. Burgoon states the five basic components of the self as material, psychological, emotional, social, and ideal. The practices of an individual who is a user of multiple social media platforms can vary on each of the media. It wouldn't be false to suggest that individuals who can act according to the behavioral patterns required by each social media platform, turn exclusively towards behavior patterns of the social aspect of self and a fragmented formation of self by alienating other components. Thus, it can also be suggested that the fragmented self, self that is categorized based on uses and practices of different social media platforms with which the individual interacts, causes disassociation from a sense of belonging to individuals' ideal selves. The study aims to relay the formation of the fragmented self in the context of relationality of social media and self, and to propound said transformation's projections within individuals' perceptions. Therefore, the subject of "fragmented self on social media", which constitutes the content of this study, is exemplified by the social media trend started by singer Dolly Parton in the first month of 2020, "Dolly Parton Challenge". Dolly Parton shared her projections on her Facebook, Linkedin, Tinder and Instagram accounts in one visual, causing thousands of users to share their different visuals according to different social media accounts. Therefore, said trend is approached as an effective example of relaying the transformation of fragmented identity. The study aims to relay the formation of fragmented self in the context of the relationality of self and social media, and to present the reflections of said formation on

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individuals' presentation of self. Starting from this point of view, this descriptive study proposes an assessment on social media users' presentation of fragmented self by online questionnaire forms and the likert scale.

Keywords: Fragmented self, social self, social media trends, Dolly Parton Challenge

INTRODUCTION

Identity, as a concept which expresses and positions the individual's essential truth, has been evaluated differently within social and cultural contexts throughout the history of thought. The dynamics of the concept of identity have transformed particularly during the transition from modernism to postmodernism, and it has been debated through various expositions. Changing dynamics and commentary influenced the parameters of interpreting the concepts of identity and self as delineative expressions of self.

The point of view of postmodernism contradicts modern thought's dualist, universalist and reductionist perspective and allows for definitions of the subject which is able to exist in plurality, outside of centralized dichotomies. Therefore, the ideas of solid and stable identity and self are rejected.

The concept of self, which changed in the transition from modernism to postmodernism, enables the evaluation of self in conjunction with identity within this framework. This study disposes of two concepts of identity and self, which have been formed around the individual's definition, positioning and expression of themselves in the historical process. Hence it is beneficial to explain the relationship between these two concepts. Self is the individual's way to essentially define and position themselves. Identity, on the other hand, refers to how the individual is perceived by others in relation to the concept of self (Tural, 1990, p. 30). The link between the two concepts is "others". So the formation and presentation of self and identity can be changed and affected by socialization.

The concept of fragmented self, the subject of this study, surfaces as a phenomenon which can be directly linked to the unity of postmodernism and consumption in the literature of social sciences. The subject is centralized in postmodern conjuncture. Furthermore, it is constructed by switching between the images created

in consumption culture. The fragmented self, which is directly related to the subject of polymorphic subject in postmodernism, is the ground that allows us to evaluate the subject of fragmented self in today's world where the use/consumption of social media is very common. The ground which allows us to evaluate the issue of fragmented self is the self which becomes sectional in consumption culture and capitalism. Concordantly, the phenomenon of fragmented self on social media is transferred within the relationality of consumption culture and postmodernism.

The social media trend "the Dolly Parton Challenge" enabled the subject of this research, which is based on the fragmented self on social media, to become a study. American singer Dolly Parton started "the Dolly Parton Challenge" in January 2020 by posting a single image depicting her on Facebook, Linkedin, Tinder and Instagram. Following the original post, thousands of users shared different images of themselves based on their different social media accounts. "The Dolly Parton Challenge" is an effective example to convey the formation of the fragmented self. The study aims to relay the formation of fragmented self in the context of the relationality of self and social media, and to present the reflections of said formation on individuals' presentation of self. Starting from this point of view, this descriptive study proposes an assessment on social media users' presentation of fragmented self by online questionnaire forms and the likert scale.

Postmodernist Consumption Culture's Influence on Self

Contrary to dualist, universalism and reductionist modern thought, the perspective of postmodernism includes definitions of the subject who can exist in plurality outside of dichotomies. Theorists of postmodernism speak of its influence of transforming and changing societies through cultural, economic, psychological and social practices. Namely, the positioning of the subject in postmodernist tradition puts forth an observable influence on social and individual forms of identity, and their representations, and said representations' analyses (Erdem, 2019, p. 58). The ongoing abundance of polysemy and stimulation in every field of postmodern society diversified identities and social roles, emptied them out and retraced their boundaries (Sertalp, 2016, p. 391). Thus, plural and polymorphic

identities are positioned against the identities stemming from modernism's totalitarian and oppressive views.

Along with the transition from modernity to postmodernity, totalitarian concepts such as nation and class were abandoned in the context of identity, and they were replaced by particular identities (such as gender, race, ethnicity). Since the glorified values are fragmentation, dividedness, difference, pluralism, diversity and uniqueness, the concept of identity takes part of a structure which is construed in the pivot of differences and similarities, and it is often abandoned arbitrarily (Karaduman, 2010, p. 2897).

When the historic process is considered, technological advancements cannot be interpreted outside of globalization, increase of neoliberal policies, and proliferation of consumption culture. Under these postmodernist conditions, it is impossible to speak of a solid concept of identity, while the formation of different forms of identity should be highlighted.

Identity is centralized in postmodernist culture, and the individual builds their identity by choosing to dip in and out of the images created in consumption culture. The postmodern individual who wants to show that their consumption is special, makes use of these images in creative ways in order to create strong identities. At the same time, this saves said images from becoming cliché and monotone (Best and Kellner cited in Binay, 2010, p. 18- 19).

At this juncture, postmodernist theorist Jameson's thoughts should be reviewed in order to constitute the relationality of postmodern identity and consumption, According to Connor (2005, p. 67), who expresses Jameson's point of view on postmodernism as "relating a new economic system to a new type of social life with new formal characteristics in culture", capitalism evolves into this new form:

> "This theory sees the production, exchange, marketing and consumption of cultural forms considered in their widest sense and therefore including advertising, TV and the mass media generally as a central focus and expression of economic activity. Here, images, styles and representations are not the promotional accessories to economic products, they are the products themselves. In a similar way, the explosion of information technology makes information not merely a lubricant

of the cycles of exchange and profit, but itself the most important of commodities" (Connor, 2005: 69)

Jameson (2011) interprets postmodernism itself as a cultural logic within a new stage of capitalism; as the cultural logic of late capitalism.

> "Today, in postmodernist societies based on capitalist and consumer processes, public welfare depends on overproduction and consumption of goods, tools, fashion, and their continuous destruction; therefore, individuals need to conform to (or rather, they are made to conform to) these needs. Even if this conformance isn't fulfilled, they need to abandon their agency and/or "reconstruct" their identity, in order to live in a society in a civilized manner and fulfill the duties of being a member of said society. This causes a disjunction and fracture in individuals' selfhood, and the subject loses their coherence" (Sertalp, 2016, p. 394).

Jameson's (2011) views basically reflect the Marxist perception that capitalism is in its "late" stage today, that it maintains its dominant characteristic in today's world, however it creates the new logic of postmodernism.

> "The concept of fragmentation put forth by Jameson shouldn't be evaluated independently of capitalist society and socio-economic system. Jameson stated that one of the most predominant features of postmodernism is the individual's fragmented self. Starting from Jacques Lacan's theories, he asserted that the sense of emptiness felt by the individual in trying to keep up with the society they live in, and the chaos they experience causes them to perceive the world in a way that is similar to the experience of schizophrenic patients. This is an alienated, lonely, fragmented and incoherent experience, and shows that the individual can't experience their self in a normal way" (Jameson cited in Sertalp, 2016, p. 397).

Theorizations of postmodern identity mentioned above, enable the idea that individuals freely choose and present various forms of self. As Karaduman (2010, p. 2895) mentions, postmodern identity which interiorizes plural identities, has the tendency to form through free time activities and consumption images, and can be chosen freely, and change freely.

Accordingly, identities which come up in the field of consumption through characteristics brought by postmodern structure, carry separated, sectional features which are centerless, which can be reproduced consistently, and are far away from a totalitarian form.

The Fragmented Self as a Form of Presentation of the Self on Social Media

The concept of the fragmented self is directly related to the issue of plural and polymorphic identity in postmodernism. In today's world, where social media use/consumption is quite high, the ground that allows us to evaluate the subject of the fragmented self is also the fragmented selves that become disjointed in capitalism and consumption culture, as postmodernists suggest.

In postmodernity where fragmentation, dividedness, difference and uniqueness are praised, the concept of identity is handled within the axis of differences and similarities. Contrary to the modern paradigm, construction of identity in postmodernity is dominated by uncertainty, diversity, heterogeneity, complexity, relativism and fragmentation in a social environment that develops on slippery grounds. Prevailing discourse of identity in this period is formed within the essence of heterogeneity and difference (Karaduman, 2010, p. 2894).

With its sectional structure (much like a patchwork bundle) and online invisibility, identity is now in a state that can change and be reconstructed at any moment (Karaduman, 2010, p. 2897).

Goffman (2014) draws attention to the issue of "impression" in the presentation of self. Said impression is the impression which is given or given off by the individual based on expectations. According to Goffman, actions, which include presentation of self and which are taken with the purpose of transfusing an impression on purpose, present performances. Performance involves activities that a person performs during a time period where they are in front of a set of observes, and that have an impact on the observers (2014, p. 33). Performances which reveal the presentation of self are shared through fronts. Goffman defines front as standardized expression devices which are utilized willingly or unknowingly during performance (2014, p. 33). Goffman's explanations of the presentation of self in everyday life cracks the door open to analyze the presentation of self encountered

on social media. Because, users' profiles on social media platforms can be evaluated as their personal fronts, and the activities on these profiles (shares, likes, comments, follows etc.) as their performances.

Individuals who use social media platforms with different features and areas of use, create a space of expression for themselves through their profiles, and make themselves visible in different forms through their actions on these profiles. Diversity of social media platforms causes the internet users to create multiple social media accounts, hence multiple fronts, and a diversity in their performance. This situation brings forth expressions that are diverse, different, pluralist and ultimately fragmented, which then reflect on the presentation of self in today's postmodernist environment of consumption.

Burgoon remarked five basic components of the phenomenon of self: material, psychological, social and ideal. The behavioral practices of an individual who is a user of multiple social media platforms can differentiate on each of said media. It can be suggested that individuals who can act according to each social media platform's set of features/behavioral patterns, tend to isolate from the elements who compose their self. Therefore, they gravitate to exclusively "space" (the social media platform) focused behavioral practices and formation of a fragmented self. It can also be suggested that the fragmented self, self that is categorized based on the practices of social media interaction, causes individuals to lose their sense of belonging around their ideal self, and causes incoherent experiences as stated by Jameson.

According to Debord, who characterized today's society as "the society of the spectacle", spectacle's fundamentally tautological character comes from a simple phenomenon that the ends are also the means (p.16). This point of view leads us to the deduction that individuals use their social media accounts as means of presenting their self, and also as ends when the phenomenon of consumption is considered. Likewise, the relationship between appearance and behavior that Goffman (2014, p. 35) draws attention to is also a manifestation of postmodern fragmented selves which are pluralist, fluid, active, open to quick change, and built through images. When real world turns into simple images, simple images become real assets and influential motivations to hypnotic behavior (Debord, 1996, p. 17). For this reason, it can be understood that appearance is one of the

basic elements in the construction of postmodern selves. Consumption culture allows images to revive and gain different meanings for each consumer, and prevents images from becoming monotone and cliché (Binay, 2010, p. 18- 19). Therefore, individuals who socialize on social media platforms where images lead, present their selves through the performances they execute in the fronts they create on said platforms. The amplitude and diversity of fronts come forward as manifestations of fragmented selves in the presentation of self.

Social media trend "the Dolly Parton Challenge" which enabled the subject of the study to turn into a field of research, exemplifies the phenomenon of the fragmented self through users' presentation of the self on different social media platforms. "The Dolly Parton Challenge" started on January 21st, 2020 when American singer Dolly Parton shared a photograph with four separate squares representing her four social media personalities. The image shared by Parton included her looks which are exclusive to Instagram, Tinder, Linkedin and Facebook. The post gathered millions of likes in a matter of hours, and became a trend on social platforms. A large number of both celebrities and other users participated to the trend. The aforementioned trend drew attention to individuals' presentation of self on social media as a field of consumption, and made it possible to evaluate the concept of the fragmented self.

PURPOSES AND METHODOLOGY

The study aims to analyze the formation of self in the context of the relationality of social media and self in light of user choices. Additionally, it aims to propound these choices' reflections on users' social media practices, and to assess the relationality of fragmented self and social media. Concordantly, the study includes a qualitative research method based on descriptive analysis by online questionnaire. The sample of research consists of 250 social media users who were chosen via random sampling. Due to the content of the research, the questionnaire was only sent to users who are on more than one social media platform. The questionnaire first demands demographic information, the names of the used social media platforms, their frequency of usage, and the time period spent on social media. A likert scale was added to the form in order for the users to respond based on their

social media behaviors. The suggestions were prepared so that they provide findings which would facilitate the analysis of fragmented self on social media. The suggestions are:

1. I think it's insufficient to use only one social media platform.
2. I think that my use of different social media platforms makes me more active on social media.
3. I attribute spending time on different social media platforms to the fact that the platforms each offer different features.
4. Social media platforms' popularity influences my choices.
5. I feel free on social media platforms.
6. My manner of self-expression (my profile photo, my bio etc.) changes based on the platform.
7. My behavior on social media (my likes, comments, follows etc.) can vary based on the platform.
8. I equate different social and psychological needs in my life to the different social media platforms that I use.
9. I post on all of the social media platforms I use.
10. My posts differ based on the social media platform's features.
11. My posts differ based on my field of use of the social media platform.
12. I participate in the trends on social media platforms.

Findings and Commentary

Below are the findings that are obtained through the results of the online questionnaire.

Table 1: Gender Distribution

Male	Female	Total
90	160	250

36% of the participants are male, while 64% are female.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Age Range	Number of Persons
18-24	141 (56,4%)
25-34	89 (35,6%)

35-44	12 (4,8%)
45-54	6 (2,4%)
55+	2 (0,8%)
Total	**250**

Most of the participants are young social media users of 18 to 24 years of age. They are followed by the age groups of 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55+.

According to the "World Internet, Social Media and Mobile Statistics" report published by *We are Social*, one of the international social media analysis platforms, in 2020 the age range who spends the most time on social media is 18-24 and 25-34. For this reason, the high ratio of those in that age range increases the sample's power of representation.

Table 3: Education level

Education Level	Number of Persons
Elementary	2 (0,8%)
High school	13 (5,2%)
Undergraduate	35 (14%)
Bachelor	160 (64%)
Graduate	13 (5,2%)
Doctorate	27 (10,8%)
Total	**250**

The level of education of 94% of the participants is higher education.

Table 4: The usage ratios of social media platforms

The study asked the users which social media platforms they used. Accordingly:

Social Media Platform	Number of Users and Percentage
Facebook	114 (45,6%)
Instagram	228 (91,2%)
LinkedIn	95 (38%)
Snapchat	61 (24,4%)
Tiktok	14 (5,6%)
Tinder	19 (7,6%)

Twitter	213 (85,2%)
Youtube	215 (86%)

The social media with the most users is Instagram. Instagram is followed by Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Tinder and Tiktok. Following this table, the users were asked to state which platform they used most frequently. Accordingly, the most frequently used social media platforms are Instagram, Twitter and Youtube. Therefore, the social media platforms with the most users and the social media platforms that are most frequently used demonstrate a similarity.

Table 5: Frequency of time spent on social media

The users' frequency of spending time on social media platforms are as follows:

Time Spent	Number of Persons and Percentage
Less than 1 hour	8 (3,2%)
1-2 hours	64 (25,6%)
3-4 hours	81 (32,4%)
4-5 hours	39 (15,6%)
5-6 hours	22 (8,8%)
More than 6 hours	36 (14,4%)

The suggestions, which were offered to the participants in order to analyze their social media use in terms of "fragmented self", are listed below:

Table 6: Suggestions about the use of more than one social media

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally agree
I think it's insufficient to use only one social media platform.	29	56	46	81	38
I think that my use of different social media platforms makes me more active on social media.	19	44	43	104	40

I think that my use of different social media platforms makes me more active on social media.	18	15	16	115	86
I attribute spending time on different social media platforms to the fact that the platforms each offer different features.	61	49	42	66	32

When the suggestions about the use of multiple social media are evaluated, it is observed that the reasons behind their use of more than one social media are that the use of only one platform is insufficient, that the use of more than one platforms facilitates more activity, and that each social media platform offers different features. On the other hand, popularity as a reason for social media use has a lower approval rating than the other statements. This demonstrates that social media platforms' popularity is less influential than those in other suggestions.

Table 7: Freedom on social media platforms

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Unde-	Agree	Totally agree
I feel free on social media platforms.	29	56	46	81	38

119 of the participants (81+38) approved the statement "I feel free on social media platforms". This number is more than the number of participants who state they don't feel free. What relates these ratios to the subject of fragmented self is that individual users multiply their identities through the use of multiple social media platforms and create a field of expression.

Table 8: Expressions about the fragmentation of self on social media

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally agree
My manner of self-expression (my profile photo, my bio etc.) changes based on the platform.	42	25	29	93	61
My behavior on social media (my likes, comments, follows etc.) can vary based on the platform.	44	36	31	88	51
My posts differ based on the social media platform's features.	22	32	30	111	55
My posts differ based on my field of use of the social media platform.	24	20	29	117	60

These ratios set forth the practices which can be described as the social media manifestations of the concept of fragmented self. As it can be seen, almost all suggestions that can be proposed as the reasons or results of the fragmented self are approved of. Users assign different social media platforms to different fields of use in their lives.

Table 9: Social media platforms' ratios of assignment to social and psychological needs

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally agree
I equate different social and psychological needs in my life to the different social media platforms that I use.	26	33	48	103	40

Users confirm that they equate social media platforms to different social and psychological needs in their lives.

Table 10: Posting ratios on all the utilized social media platforms

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Unde-	Agree	Totally agree
I post on all of the social media platforms I use.	65	85	34	43	23

The majority of users state that they don't post on all of the social media platforms they use. These findings point us away from the thought that the reflection of self on social media is only established through posts. Users' self-expression (profile photos, bios etc.) and behaviors rooting from social media accounts' features (liking, commenting, retweeting, following etc.) can also be signs of the presentation of fragmented self.

Table 11: Ratios participation to the trends on social media platforms

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally agree
I participate in the trends on social media platforms.	78	72	60	29	11

A majority of the participants state that they don't participate in social media trends.

CONCLUSION

As it can be observed in the research data, social media use, or in terms of the study, social media consumption has been affected by the increase in the number of social media platforms. In other words, platforms which offer users different services in different areas of use, employ users to not settle for only one social media platform but to take part in multiple platforms. This, in turn, causes the individual to define and position their self in a variety of ways. Users fulfill their

social and psychological needs by assigning social media platforms to different areas of their lives.

Jameson suggests that with postmodernism, we have transitioned into societies which are defined by space instead of time. It is necessary to draw attention to the problem of self being positioned and constructed within space. Accordingly, if we acknowledge social media platforms as spaces, each space creates different areas of expression, offers different patterns of behavior, and responds to different social or psychological needs. Therefore, different fragments of the individual's self exist in these spaces, and neutralizes the individual's self. Just like the social media trend entitled the Dolly Parton Challenge, social media users' selves are presented as fragments.

When we accept social media platforms as spaces of consumption, we reach the idea that the individual needs to perform the necessities of said spaces in order to conform to them. This means that the individual withdraws from their essence and reconstructs their self in every platform. Thus, the totality of self gets lost and becomes sectional.

The individual process of constructing the self and building an identity also expects the consumption of meanings and symbols. Namely, in order to position and identify themselves in the spaces they are situated in, the individuals consume the meanings which are carried out symbolically according to certain needs. Social media users create their personal stories through symbols and images in the consumption environment where the self loses its wholeness. Therefore, they give themselves meaning in the stories they create on social media platforms, in the forms of self they present. As stated by Tural, (1990, p. 30) the self gains various appearances within socialization. Based on the assumption that social media platforms are spaces of socialization and consumption, the assessment of the study is that the fragmented self is the ultimate destination in the route of social media journeys today.

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