

The Role of Internet in the Youth's National Identity

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ABSTRACT

This article tried to identify the role of internet in shaping the youth's national identity and determine factors affecting the identity of the youth who use the Internet. The population included all the youth users of Internet. In this research, quantitative survey method was applied and the research tool is questionnaire which is prepared by the researcher. It can be concluded that using Internet affects the youth's identity in terms of their cognitive, feeling and value identity, and in general, the research showed that using internet has a great and undeniable role on shaping or even changing the youth's national identity.

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Introduction

The identity is "a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality (Erikson, 1970).

Identity is an ambiguous and slippery term and it has been used—and perhaps overused—in many different contexts and for many different purposes, particularly in recent years (Ito, Mizuko et al, 2008). Identities structure the way a person understands themselves and their world in both a descriptive and a prescriptive sense. From infancy onwards, a person is addressed by others through identities that invite the addressee to regard them in a certain way (Heaven & Tubridy, 2002). Nowadays, there are some diverse assumptions about what identity is, and about its relevance to our understanding of young people's engagements with digital media (Ito, Mizuko et al, 2008). Identity plays a key role in virtual communities and in communication, which is the primary activity, knowing the identity of those with whom you communicate is essential for understanding and evaluating an interaction (Donath, 1998). The relationship between identity and community is encapsulated in the definition of communities as "networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, and information, a sense of belonging and social identity" (Wellman, 2001: 18).

Erikson described adolescent identity exploration as a crisis of *identity versus identity diffusion*: "From among all possible imaginable relations, [the adolescent] must make a series of ever-narrowing selections of personal, occupational, sexual, and ideological commitments" (Erikson, 1968). Identity diffusion also results when such choices remain unresolved. The person does not seem to know who she or he is in this respect. Erikson argued that achieving a solid identity requires a period of *psychosocial moratorium* -- a time when the adolescent is relieved from the obligations and responsibilities of adulthood that might restrict his or her pursuit of self-discovery (ACT for Youth Upstate Center of Excellence, 2002). Adolescents who

prematurely assume adult responsibilities, most often as parents or full-time workers, have a harder time achieving their own identity. They may prove fragile and immature later in life when faced with difficult challenges (ACT for Youth Upstate Center of Excellence, 2002).

Types of Identity

In order to outline a model of the youth identity and the effect of internet on it, it is necessary to distinguish two general types of identity. In an identity deficit ("motivation crisis"), the individual experiences a lack of guiding commitments but struggles to establish personal goals and values. In an identity conflict ("legitimation crisis"), the person has several commitments which prescribe conflicting behavioral imperatives in some situations, such that at least one commitment may have to be betrayed. The literature on identity crisis is reviewed in connection with this distinction, and an attempt is made to delineate the causes, the subjective experiences, behavioral consequences and modes of resolution of each type of crisis (Baumeister, R F; Shapiro, J P; Tice, D M).

Individual Identity

Jenkins believes that individual identity -as self- is undefined without being in a social context. Every single person is unique and different from others, but self is built in an individual by being in the society (Jenkins, 2004, p. 35).

Collective Identity

The concept of a collective identity refers to a set of individuals' sense of belonging to the group or collective. For the individual, the identity derived from the collective shapes a part of his or her personal identity. It is possible, at times, that this sense of belonging to a particular group will be so strong that it will trump other aspects of the person's personal identity. To put it another way, Collective Identity is the idea that through participating in social activities, individuals can gain a sense of belonging and in essence an "identity" that transcends the individual. Therein are the rewards and risks of Social Networking. One can derive great satisfaction and sometimes great risks from participating. Within a typical collective, agreement is often valued over debate, though even more often fierce battles may erupt (Jenkins, 2004).

Research objectives

Main goals

1. Determining the relationship between the Internet and its users
2. Determining the factors affecting the youth's identity using the Internet

Objectives

1. Determining the relationship between the motivation and purpose of the youth using Internet and their identity
2. Determining the relationship between individual and social characteristics of the youth using Internet and their identity
3. Determining the relationship between the rates of the youth's participation using Internet and their identity
4. Determining the relationship between the socio-economic base of the youth using Internet and their identity

Research questions

Main question

Which factors affect the identity of the youth using the Internet?

Secondary questions

1. Is there a relationship between the extent to which the youth use Internet and their identity?
2. Is there a difference in the identity of the youth according to the type of their use of Internet?
3. Is there a relationship between the youth's motivation and purpose in using Internet and their identities?
4. Is there a relationship between the youth's socio-economic status in using Internet and their identity?

Research hypotheses

1. There is a significance relationship between the rate of the use of Internet by the youth and their identity formation.
2. There is a significance relationship between the type of the use of Internet by the youth and their identity formation.
3. There is a significance relationship between the motivation and purpose of the use of Internet by the youth and their identity formation.
4. There is a significance relationship between the socio-economic status of the youth using Internet and their identity formation.

Research population and sample

The statistical population in this research included all young internet users of ages between 15 to 30 years old in Rasht City in 2012 which is number of 200445 including 103159 women and 97286 men. Simple sampling was used in this study and based on Morgan table, the sample size is 384 people.

Research analytical model

Figure 1 shows which factors affect the youth identity.

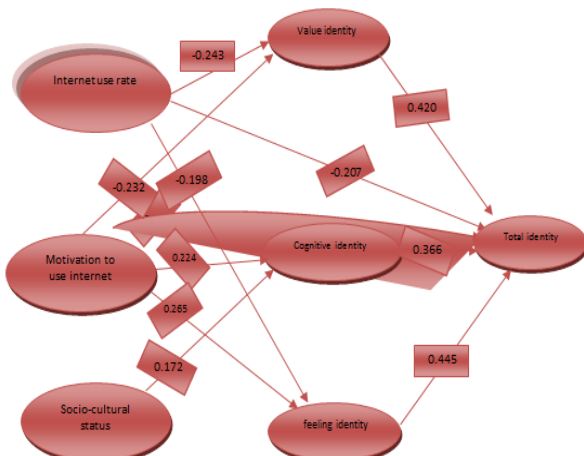


Figure 1. Factors affecting the youth's identity

Research method and tools

In this research, quantitative survey method is applied and the research tool is questionnaire which is prepared by the researcher.

Data collecting and analysis method

Library and field method were applied for collecting data and SPSS software, path analysis, correlation and one-way ANOVA test were used for analyzing data.

Demographic description

Figure 1a shows the distribution of participants according to gender

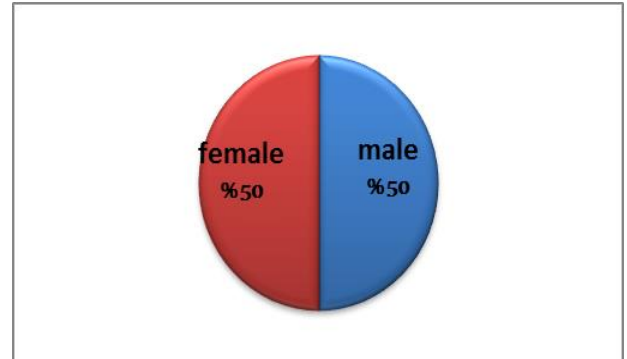


Figure 1a. Distribution of participants according to gender

Figure 2 shows the distribution of participants according to age

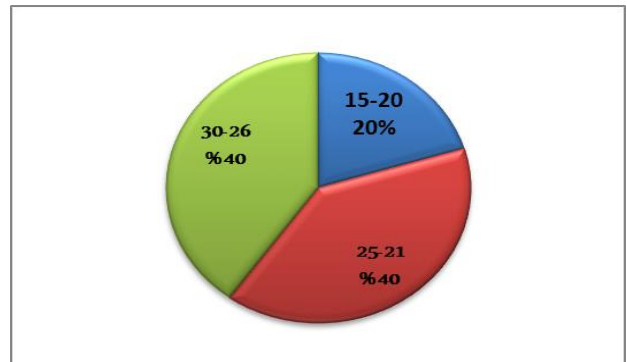


Figure 2. Distribution of participants according to age

Figure 3 shows the distribution of participants according to internet use purpose

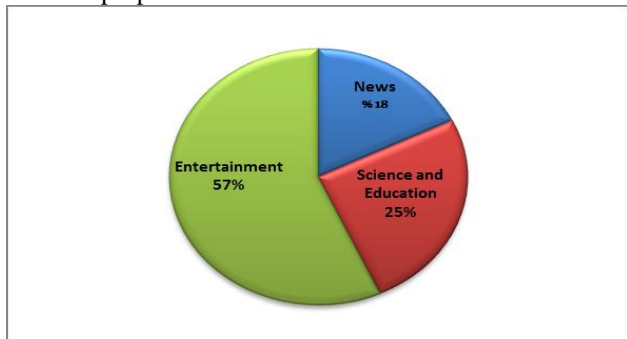


Figure 3. Distribution of participants according to internet use purpose

Description of variables

Table 1 shows the description of research variables.

Research questions and their replies:

Question 1. Is there a relationship between the extent to which the youth use Internet and their identity?

Table 2 shows the correlation between the use of the internet and youth identity.

Question 2. Is there a difference in the identity of the youth according to the type of their use of Internet?

Table 1. Description of research variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Cognitive aspect	3.0543	.72388	1.00	5.00
Value aspect	3.7992	.83066	1.00	5.00
Feeling aspect	3.3741	.88139	1.00	5.00
Overall identity	3.4092	.65970	1.10	5.00
Users' motivation	3.3786	.85864	1.00	5.00
Usage amount	3.0502	.78843	1.00	5.00
Socio-economic status	2.8053	.62751	1.00	4.89

Table 2. The correlation between the use of the internet and youth identity

Variable	Amount of internet use by the youth	
Cognitive identity	Correlation coefficients	0.133
	Significance	.009
	Number	384
Value identity	Correlation coefficients	-.075
	Significance	.141
	Number	384
Feeling identity	Correlation coefficients	-.031
	Significance	.541
	Number	384
Overall identity	Correlation coefficients	.003
	Significance	.951
	Number	384

Table 3. The youth identity scores with respect to the type of their use of the Internet

Variable	Usage type	SD	M	N
Cognitive identity	News	.66268	3.0784	68
	Science & Education	.77062	3.2077	98
	Entertainment	.71211	2.9778	218
	Total	.72388	3.0543	384
Feeling identity	News	.75264	3.9471	68
	Science & Education	.78092	3.7971	98
	Entertainment	.87259	3.7540	218
	Total	.83066	3.7992	384
Overall identity	News	.91638	3.5182	68
	Science & Education	.86846	3.3435	98
	Entertainment	.87567	3.3429	218
	Total	.88139	3.3741	384
Variable	News	.62818	3.5146	68
	Science & Education	.64074	3.4494	98
	Entertainment	.67523	3.3582	218
	Total	.65970	3.4092	384

Table 4. Correlation between the youth's motivation to use the Internet and their identities

Variable	the youth's motivation to use the Internet	
Cognitive identity	Correlation coefficients	.229
	Significance	.000
	Number	384
Value identity	Correlation coefficients	.091
	Significance	.074
	Number	384
Feeling identity	Correlation coefficients	.130
	Significance	.011
	Number	384
Overall identity	Correlation coefficients	.180
	Significance	.000
	Number	384

Table 5. Correlation between the youth's socio-economic status and their identities

Variable	Socio-economic status	
Cognitive identity	Correlation coefficients	.210
	Significance	.000
	Number	384
Value identity	Correlation coefficients	.079
	Significance	.121
	Number	384
Feeling identity	Correlation coefficients	-.014
	Significance	.779
	Number	384
Overall identity	Correlation coefficients	.104
	Significance	.042
	Number	384

Table 3 shows the youth identity scores with respect to the type of their use of the Internet.

Question 3. Is there a relationship between the youth's motivation and purpose in using Internet and their identities?

Table 4 shows the correlation between the youth's motivation to use the Internet and their identities.

Question 4. Is there a relationship between the youth's socio-economic status in using Internet and their identity?

Table 5 shows the correlation between the youth's socio-economic status and their identities

Discussion and conclusion

Internet has certainly been a part of people's everyday life. The need for the Internet today is inevitable. Presence in cyberspace and using Internet, especially by young people is important. Youth as the future of society are more vulnerable to cyberspace negative effects. An overview of the survey questions indicated that the amount of Internet use had negative impact on the youth's identity. And motivation to use the Internet has a positive impact on the youth's identity. The socio-economic status of the youth affected indirectly by mediating the cognitive identity on the youth's overall identity. Also, there is a significant relationship between the use of the Internet and the variable of the youth's cognitive identity. And also, there is a significant difference between the type of the youth's use of Internet and their cognitive identity, so that the youth who use Internet for science and education purpose, achieve significantly higher cognitive identity. And then the use of the news and entertainment sites affect the youth's cognitive identity in respect. The results also showed that there is a significant relationship between the motivation of the youth to use the Internet and their cognitive and emotional identity. But, there is no significant relationship between the motivation of the youth to use the Internet and their value identity. Finally, there is a significant relationship between the socio-economic status of the youth using the Internet and their cognitive identity.

We can acknowledge that today, the status and impact of cyberspace, especially the Internet is undeniable. Putting together the results of similar studies in relation to the Internet and national identity, it can be concluded that using Internet

affects the youth's identity. In fact, the increasing spread of information and communication technologies in recent years has affected human life in different aspects of political, social and cultural development. And of course, as well as usefulness of internet in people's lives, it can have negative effects in shaping the youth's national identity.

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