

FLUID IDENTITIES IN DIGITAL SPACES: PAKISTANI INFLUENCERS' ONLINE NARRATIVES THROUGH THE THEORY OF ZYGMUNT BAUMAN

Altaf Hussain<sup>1</sup>, Fazal Rabi<sup>2</sup>, Ehsan Aziz<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University

<sup>2</sup>Ph.D. Scholar in English Literature at MY University, Islamabad and Senior Lecturer at Department of English Literature & Linguistics, Riphah International University

<sup>3</sup>MPhil Scholar in English literature, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad

<sup>1</sup>altafhussain33162@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>fazalrabbi999@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>ehsanaziz3081@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author: \*

Fazal Rabi

**Abstract**

This study aims to explore the ways in which Pakistani social media influencers create and enact their identities in the virtual world. The significance of the topic is that the phenomenon of influencer culture has emerged as a major arena of identity construction in the contemporary world of digital media and information technologies, while sociological inquiries into the phenomenon of digital identity in non-Western societies have not received much attention. In this regard, the present research project undertakes an analysis of the online discourses of Pakistani social media influencers on Instagram and TikTok platforms over a period of five months (May-September 2025). The aim of the project is to explore the ways in which Pakistani social media influencers enact their identities in the virtual world through the medium of online discourses. The project is informed by the theoretical perspective of Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, in which identity is constructed as a fluid and unstable concept that is continually reconstructed in the rapidly changing world of modernity. The findings of the project reveal that the identity of Pakistani social media influencers is constructed as a fluid and multiform concept.

**1. Introduction**

**Background of the Study**

The rapid growth of social media sites has greatly influenced how individuals create their identities and present them to others in modern society. Social media sites such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have created spaces where individuals present their personal stories, pictures, and lifestyles to various audiences, thus creating identity as a process. Social media influencers have

become key actors in this virtual world, where they have greatly influenced various aspects of culture through their presence on social media sites. These influencers have created unique identities, which have incorporated various aspects of personal storytelling, cultural representation, and brand creation. Therefore, this shows how identity is constantly created in virtual spaces through various factors such as audience, technology, and global media flows (Abidin, 2016; Marwick, 2015).

While the phenomenon of influencer culture is gaining increased academic recognition, most existing research is primarily concerned with marketing aspects, brand communication, and consumer behavior rather than the sociological aspects of identity performance. Moreover, most existing research is based on Western culture and society, while the digital culture of non-Western societies is still an understudied phenomenon. The rise of influencer culture in Pakistan through social media platforms is gradually transforming cultural narratives in the country. However, academic research in this regard is still in its infancy. Most notably, there is a lack of research that explores the ways in which influencer culture in Pakistan is performing and negotiating its identity through narratives. Additionally, the sociological aspects of influencer culture in relation to the dynamic and unstable nature of identity in contemporary societies are still an understudied phenomenon in the context of Pakistan (Abidin, 2018; Senft, 2013).

The main goal of this study is to examine how Pakistani influencers construct and perform identity in their online narratives in digital spaces. Influencers' online narratives may be seen as a form of complex interplay between self-expression and digital visibility; therefore, identity construction and performance are important elements in this interplay. This study will seek to examine and explore this aspect in order to understand how Pakistani influencers construct and perform identity in their online narratives in digital spaces and how this construction and performance reflect the fluid and dynamic nature of identity in digital culture. In order to achieve this main goal, this study will seek to answer the following questions: (1) How do Pakistani influencers construct and perform identity in their online narratives in digital spaces? (2) How does this construction and performance of identity reflect the fluid and dynamic nature of identity in digital culture? (3) How do Pakistani influencers negotiate cultural values and global digital trends in their construction and performance of identity? This study is based upon a sociological theory that is referred to as liquid modernity, which has been proposed by a sociologist named Bauman.

According to this theory, modern society is characterized by uncertainty and instability and is moving away from traditional social structures that provided individuals with a sense of identity. Individuals in a liquid modern society are constantly required to construct and reconstruct their identity in accordance with changing social conditions. Thus, identity becomes a process in a liquid modern society instead of being a static attribute that is inherent in individuals. Social media sites are a clear example of this process in action, especially in relation to individuals such as influencers whose identity is based upon maintaining a persona that is engaging and flexible and changing in accordance with Bauman's theory of identity in a liquid modern society (Bauman, 2000; Bauman, 2007).

This study is significant to the emerging literature on digital identity and influencer culture, as it specifically looks at identity performance within the Pakistani social media landscape. This study bridges classical sociological theory, as presented by Bauman, with contemporary social media practice, creating a unique contribution to the literature. Furthermore, this study is significant because it looks specifically at a non-Western cultural setting where identity is constructed by the interplay between indigenous cultural influences and globalized digital influences. Therefore, this study is significant because it provides insight into identity construction within a digital setting, creating a unique contribution to the literature. As such, this study contributes to the emerging literature within media studies, sociology, and digital culture, specifically addressing how social media platforms enable fluid identities within contemporary society (Abidin, 2018; Papacharissi, 2012).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Digital Identity in Contemporary Media Environments

The evolution of digital communication technologies has profoundly influenced the way people create and express their identities (Çöteli, 2019). For instance, the use of social media has enabled people to create personal stories and express themselves in various ways. In this case, the

concept of identity has been viewed as a dynamic and performative process. Researchers have noted that the concept of identity in the context of the internet is naturally dynamic because people are constantly changing the way they present themselves based on the responses they receive from the audience (boyd, 2014; Papacharissi, 2012). Contrary to the traditional concept of identity as a reflection of one's essence, the concept of digital identity has been viewed as an interactive and storytelling concept in which people choose to reveal aspects of their lives in order to influence the way they are perceived by other people (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

### **2.2 Liquid Modernity and the Fluid Nature of Identity**

The sociological theory of liquid modernity, as propounded by Zygmunt Bauman, is essential in understanding the fluidity and dynamics of modern identity (Best, 2019). According to Bauman (2000), modern societies have witnessed a decline in traditional institutions, which have played a critical role in providing individuals with identity. Therefore, identity is fluid, reconstructed, and continuously changing, especially as individuals interact with fluid social situations. Unlike other periods, such as solid modernity, where identity is determined by solid social structures, modern identity is one that is constantly reconstructed, especially as individuals interact with fluid cultural values and economic situations (Bauman, 2007).

### **2.3 Fluidity of Identity in Digital Spaces**

The fluidity of identity is also evident in the context of the digital world and the constant self-invention promoted by social media sites. The virtual world allows for the reinvention of the self by changing the information provided and the way it is presented (Gottschalk, 2010). There are studies suggesting that the reinvention of the self in the virtual world reflects the concept of fluid identity as proposed by Bauman (Leurs, 2015). The feedback system provided by social media sites also plays an important role in the reinvention of the self by affecting the way the individual interprets the feedback they receive (boyd, 2014).

Therefore, the concept of identity in the virtual world is constantly changing and flexible.

### **2.4 Multiplicity of Selves in Social Media**

One of the notable characteristics of digital identity is the existence of multiple selves that people portray in different settings. Rosen (2012) suggests that the environment of social media sites creates a situation where people tend to form multiple identities based on different aspects of their social lives. The identities may also change depending on the context of the interaction. For instance, people may portray different identities for different people (Bodenhausen, 2010). Studies have shown that this is also influenced by the global nature of the network environment. For instance, Leurs (2015) suggests that people are exposed to various cultures in the network environment. This means that the concept of online identity is also complex and multiple because people are constantly interacting with different personal and professional roles (Merchant, 2006).

### **2.5 Networked Individualism and Identity Multiplicity**

The term "network individualism" further clarifies the role of digital connectivity in the formation of multiple identities. Rainie and Wellman (2012) have explained the term "network individualism" as a "social structure in which people are connected through flexible networks rather than communities." Social media sites help in this regard as they allow people to connect with multiple communities at the same time. This further encourages people to present their identities in multiple ways. Although this connectivity helps people express themselves in multiple ways, researchers have also indicated that this may lead people to feel a sense of instability due to the formation of fragmented identities as they try to adapt to the ever-changing social environment (Buckingham, 2008).

### **2.6 Fragmentation of Identity in Digital Culture**

Alongside fluidity and multiplicity, fragmentation has also been identified as a significant attribute of identity in digital environments. The high velocity

of information flow and perpetual encounters with various viewpoints have a fragmenting effect on personal stories and social identities (Kimmons, 2014). It has been suggested that digital communication leads to a fragmented self-presentation because individuals tend to share discrete slices of their lives instead of a comprehensive narrative (Papacharissi, 2012). In this sense, identity is fragmented across various online platforms and encounters. This is a result of the general instability of identity in a liquid modern world, in which individuals must constantly integrate various experiences and social influences into their identity (Bauman, 2007).

### **2.7 Consumer Culture and Identity Construction**

Another aspect of Bauman's theory is the importance of consumer culture in the formation of modern identity. In liquid modern societies, people are more likely to form their identities based on consumption practices (Caldwell, 2020; Nawaz, 2024). This means that the concept of consumption is used as a way of expressing individuality and belonging. For instance, people use the products they consume as a way of expressing themselves and communicating with other people (Cova, 1997; Rabi, 2025). This is also evident in the case of influencers and the way they integrate products into their stories. Social media has also played an important role in the relationship between consumption and identity (Wu, Y. 2022; Latif, 2026). For instance, social media has been used as a platform for people to present themselves and create a lifestyle that represents individuality and belonging (Ahmad, 2025; Hussain, Danish, Rabi, & Rabi, n.d.).

### **2.8 Digital Narratives and Identity Performance**

Digital storytelling is one of the main ways through which individuals explore their identities. Various studies have highlighted how, through storytelling, individuals use blogs, social media, and videos to narrate their experiences, thus enabling them to create meaningful stories while exploring different aspects of their identities (Morgan, 2013; Rabi, 2026). Banaji (2012) states

that online stories have been used by individuals to explore their identities, thus helping them navigate their sense of belonging within global digital communities. Through storytelling, individuals have been able to create their identities, thus making identity a performative process (Valentine, 2016).

### **2.9 Digital Selfhood and the Extended Self**

The process of identity change in digital spaces may also be understood in reference to the extended self theory, which proposes that identity does not end with one's physical self but also comprises digital possessions and online associations and representations. According to Belk (2013), technological advancements such as online content sharing, digital archives, and online communities have extended the self beyond one's physical form. Individuals have started to form identities based on cooperative associations with other individuals, as feedback from the audience validates online representations of identity (Merchant, 2006; Khan et al., 2026). Similarly, Carroll and Romano (2010) propose that online content such as pictures, messages, and posts contributes to a digital archive that represents individuals' identity. Such technological advancements illustrate identity formation in the digital age in reference to technological platforms and cooperative interactions with others (Bozkurt, 2016).

### **2.10 Identity Experimentation and Online Self-Presentation**

Online platforms give people the opportunity to experiment with their identities by selectively revealing and editing aspects of themselves. Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) claim that the digital environment allows people to modify aspects of their identities without compromising their essential self. This capacity for self-modification is an aspect of the dynamic concept of self and personality (Hernández-Ramírez, 2017). Individuals are constantly engaging in the processes of self-reflection and self-modification. Studies on youth and the use of social media as an environment for online communication have also shown that people are encouraged by the

environment to experiment with different social roles and identities as part of the self-development process (Nelsen, 2015).

### **2.11 Synthesis: Fluid, Multiple, and Fragmented Identities**

Thus, the existing studies demonstrate that the identity in digital space is marked by three key aspects: fluidity, multiplicity, and fragmentation. Bauman's theory of liquid modernity is also important in this regard as it helps to conceptualize the dynamics in identity formation by emphasizing the dynamic nature of contemporary society. Social media sites have further increased the intensity of these aspects as they have enabled continuous self-presentation and engagement with diverse audiences in global digital networks (Hogan, 2010). Thus, people are increasingly able to create flexible, multiple, and fragmented identities in digital space. This theoretical background is important in analyzing the identity formation and negotiation by Pakistani influencers in their digital narratives and understanding how digital self-presentation is an extension of broader societal transformations (Hussain, 2025).

## **4. Theoretical Framework:**

### **Liquid Modernity and the Fluid Construction of Digital Identity**

The current study is informed by the sociological theory of liquid modernity, as conceptualized by Zygmunt Bauman, with a specific focus on understanding the ways in which Pakistani influencers perform their identity. Bauman's theory of liquid modernity is a critical approach that helps us understand the ways in which identity is being transformed in contemporary societies that are characterized by rapid technological advancements, global interconnectedness, and fluidity in cultural values. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding identity performance, as it is a departure from earlier sociological theories of identity, which emphasized the stable and institutional character of identity. Bauman's theory of liquid modernity argues that modern society has entered a "liquid" phase, where

traditional structures of class, community, and stable cultural values are no longer available as a framework for identity formation (Bauman, 2000). This is a critical departure from earlier theories of identity, as it argues that people are being compelled by the fluidity of contemporary society to construct their identities.

Bauman's theory of liquid modernity indicates that identity in contemporary societies is not simply given or predetermined but becomes an ongoing project that people have to negotiate. Traditionally, in any form of modernity, social institutions have been dominant in the formation of identity through providing clear expectations and life paths. Liquid modern societies are characterized by uncertainty and dynamism as people have to constantly adapt to new cultural and social surroundings (Bauman, 2007). This leads to flexible, provisional, and mutable identity. This state is referred to as "liquid identities," which are characterized by their adaptability and dynamic nature. The theoretical importance of this theory is based on its ability to account for the ways in which people cope with multiple and dynamic presentations of self in response to shifting social expectations.

The fluidity of liquid identity is also seen in the context of digital media. For example, social media platforms provide a new kind of space for the performance of identity. This is different from other forms of personal representation in that digital media allow people to strategically create stories about their personal lives. Digital media scholars note that social media transform identity into a performance where people can strategically manage their impressions and create a public persona (Papacharissi, 2012). In this sense, identity is also about being visible, engaging with the audience, and being "online." This is also similar with Bauman's idea that identity in contemporary society is created by the need for people to be relevant in a changing environment. Social media influencers are a particularly important case study of the practices of identity formation described in liquid modernity. Influencers tend to heavily invest in their engaging and malleable digital personality to maintain audience interest and digital presence. Influencer

narratives often tend to blend personal narratives, lifestyle portrayals, and aspirational self-presentation styles. This means that social media influencers have to continually update their identities to meet audience demands, digital platform requirements, and cultural trend shifts. Influencer culture has been an important area of study in terms of how it reflects personal presentation styles, including strategic identity formation, where personal authenticity meets branding (Abidin, 2018; Marwick, 2015). From a liquid modernity point of view, this can be seen as an expression of fluid identity formation.

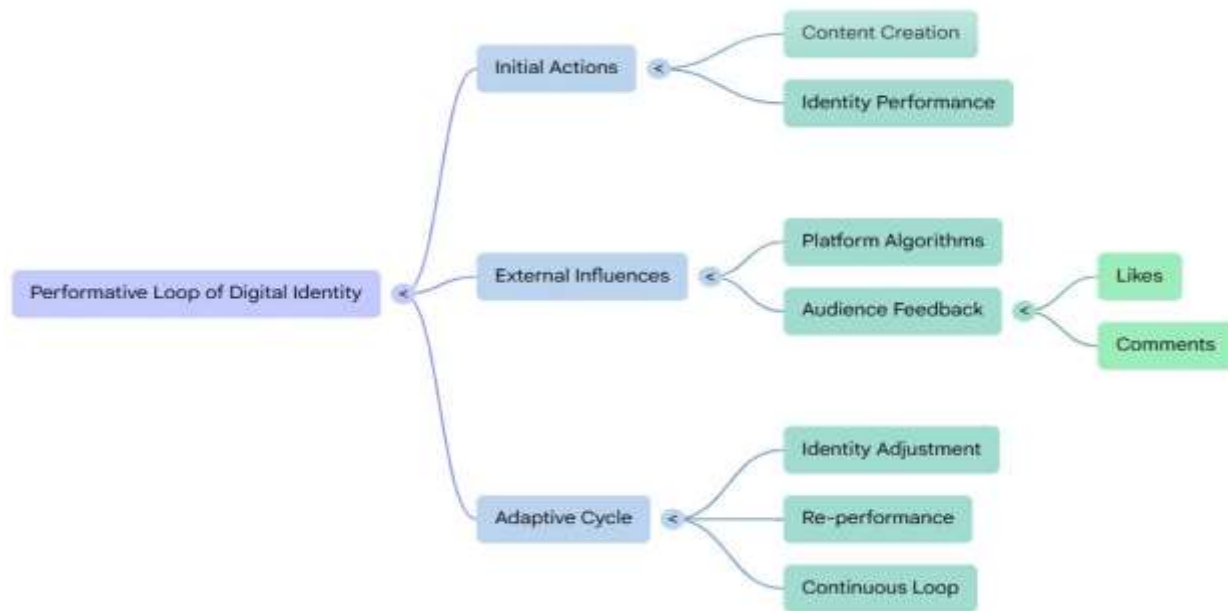
Although the phenomenon of influencer culture has received considerable attention in the context of marketing studies, there is a lack of studies that have discussed the phenomenon of influencer identity from the perspective of sociological theories of modernity. The use of the theoretical framework of modernity, as proposed by Bauman, helps in understanding the structural conditions that influence the phenomenon of digital identity. The influencers are not simply performing in terms of self-presentation on the internet; they are, in fact, part of a larger cultural process in which the identity of the self needs to be constantly performed in the context of changing social circumstances. The focus, therefore, shifts from the self-presentation of the influencers as a form of identity to the social circumstances that require such self-presentation in the first place, i.e., the fluid social realities of the digital culture of modernity.

The relevance of the theory of Bauman is significant in the context of the digital culture of the people of Pakistan because the people of this country are living in a society where the values and traditions of the people are influencing the way people express themselves. On the other hand, the use of social media has provided the people of this country with the opportunity to get exposure to

the global trends and culture of the people of the world. The global culture has provided the people of this country with the opportunity to experiment with the way they express themselves. The theory of liquid identity proposed by Bauman is relevant in the context of the way the influencers of the people of this country are expressing themselves.

Based on these theoretical foundations, the current research proposes the concept of the influencer's identity performance along the dimensions of fluidity, multiplicity, and fragmentation. The first dimension of fluidity points to the potential of the influencers' identities to transform and evolve along with the changing cultural landscape and the engagement with the audience. The second dimension of multiplicity points to the presence of multiple positions of the influencers' identities that they perform simultaneously, such as the cultural representative, lifestyle expert, entrepreneur, and personal storyteller. Finally, the third dimension of fragmentation points to the fragmented nature of the influencers' identities along the various posts and formats of the narrative. These dimensions operationalize the theoretical concept of liquid identity as proposed by Bauman.

In this regard, the theoretical framework locates the narratives of influencers as a significant point of observation in the process of identity construction in liquid modern societies. The influencers' online performances, in this regard, demonstrate the process whereby identity is constructed as a fluid, ongoing project in response to the interplay between technology, culture, and engagement. The use of the theoretical framework of Bauman, in the study of the influencers in Pakistan, links classical sociological theories with modern-day internet practices, thereby not only extending the understanding of the phenomenon of influencers but also contributing to the debate on identity construction in the era of social media.



## 5. Analysis:

### Fluid Identities in Digital Influencer Culture

The analysis is aimed at understanding the ways in which Pakistani influencers negotiate their digital identity across various platforms. Based on the analysis of influencer culture in Pakistan between May and September 2025, the research findings have revealed that identity performance is characterized by continuous adaptability to cultural norms and global digital culture. Based on the theoretical framework of Zygmunt Bauman and his theory of *liquid modernity*, the research analysis has revealed that identity is not a fixed or essential concept but is constantly subject to reconstruction in response to the dynamic demands of digital culture. Bauman argues that identity is a project that is constantly subject to reconstruction in response to the dynamic demands of culture. He further argues that in the context of contemporary culture characterized by liquid modernity, an individual must be flexible and adaptive in order to be relevant in society (Bauman, 2000; Bauman, 2001). The research analysis based on influencer culture in Pakistan is consistent with this theoretical perspective in revealing three manifestations of identity fluidity in the context of Pakistani influencer culture.

### 5.1 Shifting Between Tradition and Modernity

One of the most prominent manifestations of fluidity of identity is found in how Pakistani influencers seamlessly shift between their traditional cultural identities and their modern, globalized identities. Considering the sociocultural context of Pakistan, where cultural values have remained a significant part of their lives, these influencers have shown their ability to navigate between their cultural identities and globalized digital identities, which is a form of identity performance that is similar to what Bauman described about individuals needing to constantly shift their identities according to their social surroundings.

The subject matter of an influencer such as Jannat Mirza is an apt example to describe this dynamic interplay between cultural tradition and global contemporary identity. On platforms such as TikTok, Jannat Mirza is often seen participating in global contemporary culture through lip-sync performances, playful skits, and fashion-oriented content featuring Western clothing styles. This is an apt example to describe an influencer's globalized digital identity. However, the same influencer is also seen representing her cultural identity during important religious or cultural festivals. For instance, during important festivals such as Eid, Jannat Mirza is seen representing her

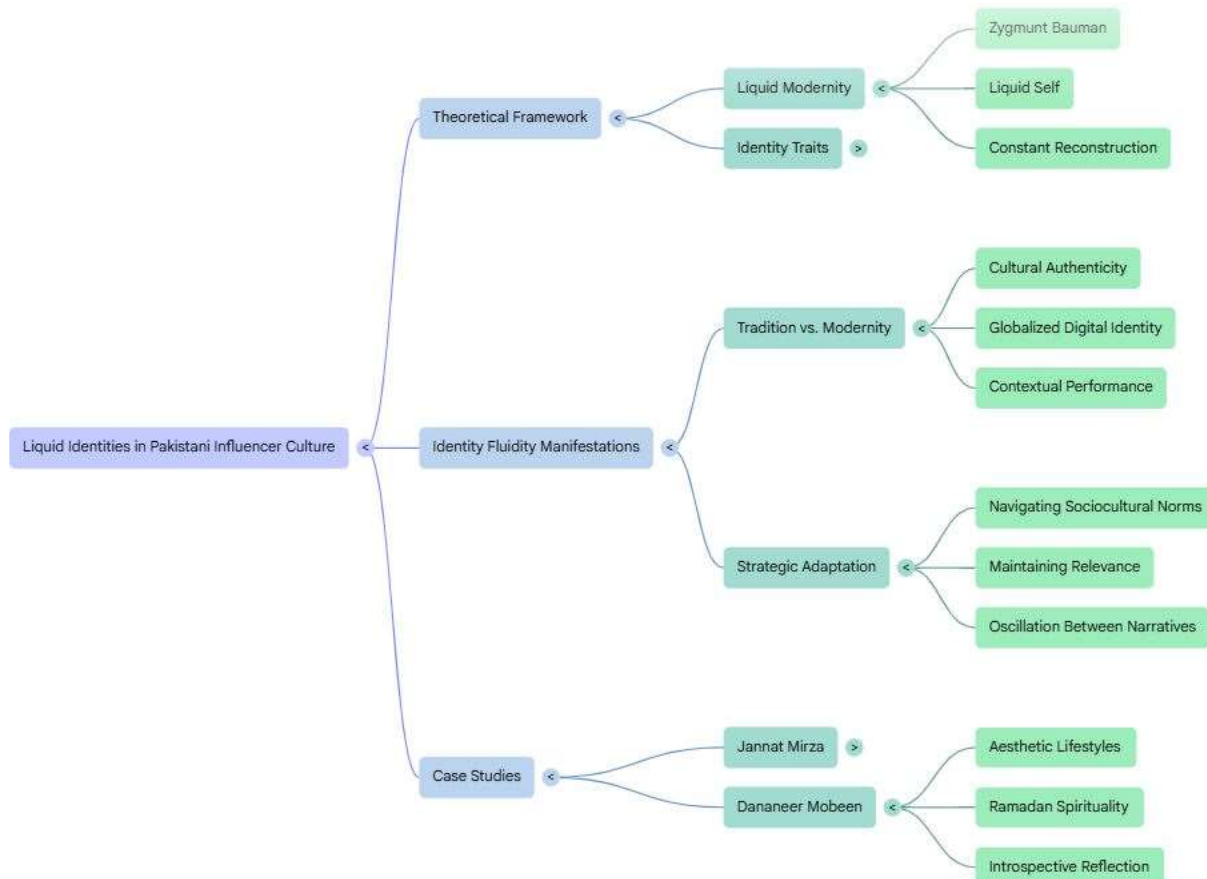
cultural identity through traditional clothing styles such as Pakistani attire and captions. Similarly, religious festivals such as pilgrimage or Ramadan are represented through modest clothing styles and captions.

Such an oscillation between opposing identity performances indicates that influencer identity is not based on any singular cultural narrative but is constructed in context. Thus, the influencer may choose to express different identity performances based on the cultural meaning assigned to certain events, groups, or moments in time. This is what leads to the formation of what Bauman calls the “liquid self,” an identity that is flexible and able to change in response to diverse and even contradictory demands (Bauman, 2000).

A similar phenomenon is also seen in the digital performances of Dananeer Mobeen. Her digital profiles on Instagram and TikTok show an

oscillation in her performances as she transitions from a focus on aesthetic lifestyles to more introspective or spiritually focused performances, especially during religious periods such as Ramadan. Here, her digital performances transition from playful entertainment to introspective reflection, with an increased focus on gratitude and spirituality.

These examples demonstrate the strategic role in the construction of digital identity. The influencer is in a sociocultural environment that is a mix of cultural authenticity and modern relatability. The influencer is able to navigate this environment through flexible identity performances in order to maintain their relevance among diverse groups. The dynamic nature of the influencer's identity does not demonstrate instability but rather the adaptability required in a dynamic digital environment.



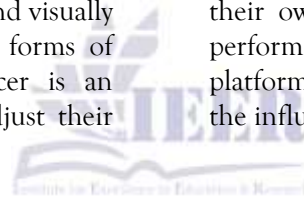
## 5.2 Platform-Specific Identity Performances

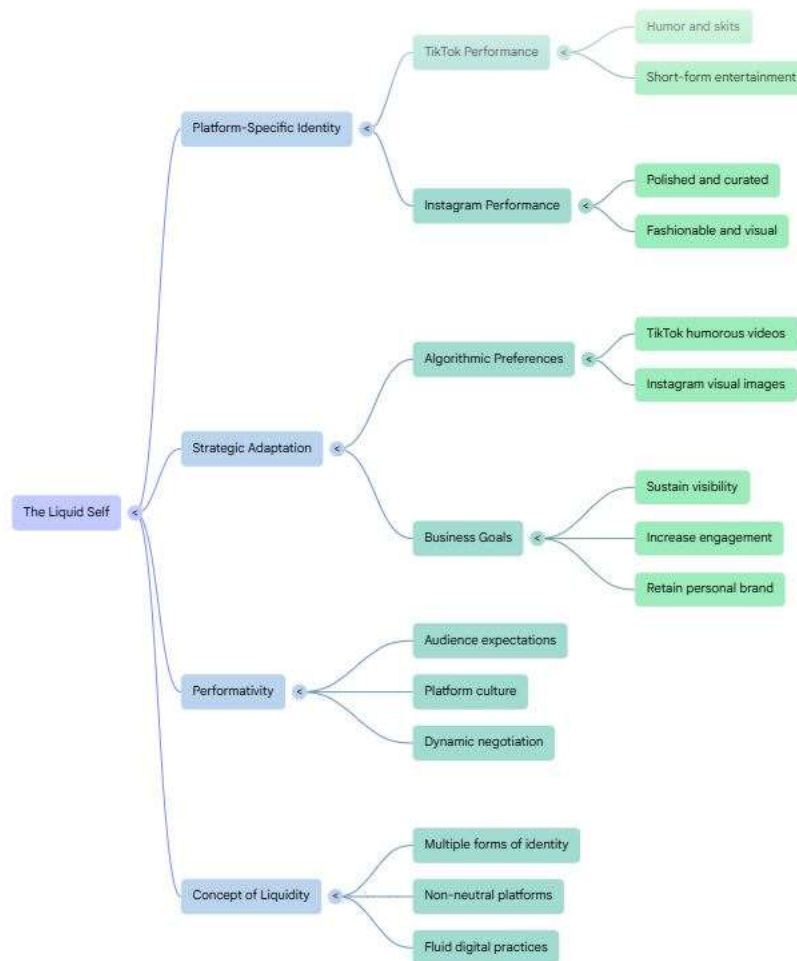
Another important aspect of fluidity in terms of identity is the concept of platform-specific self-presentation. It has been argued that social media platforms are not neutral and are unique in terms of the way they allow users to perform and represent themselves. For instance, influencers tend to perform and represent themselves differently depending on the platform they are interacting with. This aspect of fluidity has been observed in the digital practices of Romaisa Khan. For instance, Romaisa Khan's TikTok account is mostly centered around humor and other short skits and scenarios. The platform is more focused on short-form entertainment; therefore, her performance and identity are centered around humor and other entertaining acts.

However, in the case of Instagram, this influencer takes on a different form of identity that is polished and visually curated. This is because the culture surrounding this platform is based on the presentation of oneself as fashionable and visually appealing. This difference in the two forms of identity performance by the influencer is an indication of how they strategically adjust their

identity to fit in with the culture of the respective platforms. This is an indication of the liquidity concept as explained by Bauman in the context of digital platforms. This is because the influencer does not take on a single form of identity but rather multiple forms that are based on the structural characteristics of the respective platforms. The "liquid self" is thus able to navigate through digital platforms while retaining a personal brand.

This is not only an aesthetic but also a strategic form of adaptation. This is because algorithms have preferences for certain forms of content, such as humorous videos for TikTok or visually appealing images for Instagram. Thus, the influencer must adapt their identity performances in ways that meet these requirements in order to sustain their visibility and engagement. This platform-based adaptation also points to another aspect of digital identity: its performativity. This is because an influencer does not simply express their own identity but also engages in identity performances that meet the requirements of the platform culture and audience expectations. Thus, the influencer identity is a dynamic negotiation.





### 5.3 Global Belonging and Hybrid Digital Identity

The third dimension of identity fluidity is realized through the formation of globalized digital identities. Social media platforms allow influencers to reach out to people beyond their geographical location. This results in the formation of an identity that is a blend of local and global influences. This is often communicated through visual symbolism and stories of travels. For example, Jannat Mirza's social media profiles often feature references to her Pakistani and international cultural backgrounds. In her Instagram bio, the reference to her country's national symbols and Japan indicates an identity that is a blend of local and global influences. The stories of her interactions with international

audiences while traveling also indicate her globalized identity.

Similarly, Dananeer Mobeen's content shows how cultural identity is performed across global spaces. For example, Dananeer posted a video where she celebrated Eid in New York while wearing Pakistani attire. This is a performance of cultural identity, where Dananeer is showing how her identity is rooted in national culture while engaging with global spaces. These performances show how identity is deterritorialized, according to Bauman, where individuals, especially with increased social mobility, form identities that do not have to be rooted in any particular space. Rather, identity is formed through experiences, travel, and global connectivity, which is not limited to any particular cultural space (Bauman, 2001).

For the influencers, it also represents a strategy for extending audience outreach. This is because, by being both culturally authentic and connected to the global audience, the influencers are simultaneously appealing to both the local audience and the global audience. This gives the influencers a hybrid identity, as it represents both local and global. However, it is also important to note that the global orientation of the influencers brings a new level of complexity into the construction of identity. This is because the influencers are expected to balance the complexities of being both culturally authentic and connected to the global audience. This fluidity of identity, therefore, represents a necessity for digital visibility in a globalized media landscape.

#### **5.4 Fluid Identity as Strategic Adaptation**

Cumulatively, these patterns that have emerged under each of these themes illustrate that being an influencer is a process of constant adaptation. That is, it is not based upon a static personal attribute but is instead a process that is shaped by cultural influences and technological and/or audience interactions. In relation to the concept of liquid modernity, these findings illustrate how being in a digital world serves to heighten this process of fluidity in identity. The influencer must constantly adapt and change in order to be seen within this world. Trends and technologies change

rapidly, and so do audience demands and desires. In this sense, having a static identity is a guarantee that one will not be seen in this world.

The adaptability of the Pakistani influencers, therefore, is a reflection of a cultural movement as well as a survival strategy in a digital capitalist society. The influencers create an identity for themselves, which is malleable enough to embrace multiple audiences, platforms, and cultures at once. This, in a sense, is a reflection of Bauman's idea of an individual in a modern society, where one must reinvent themselves in order to successfully navigate an unstable social environment. Furthermore, the research also indicates that fluidity of identity is not a reflection of a lack of authenticity. Rather, it is a performance of authenticity that helps the influencers connect with their audience. The moments of vulnerability, reflection, or storytelling, as a reflection of authenticity, are also a performance of identity.

In this regard, the concept of the digital influencer represents the very essence of the liquid self—a self that flows between different cultural roles, technologies, and global networks. The Pakistani influencer setting illustrates the dynamics of the process in a country where tradition and modernity in the digital age coexist. The influencer achieves this through the construction of a self that is malleable, hybrid, and dynamic.

## Liquid Identity: How Modernity Shapes the Digital Influencer

Zygmunt Bauman's theory suggests identity is no longer a stable fixture. In the digital age, Pakistani influencers exemplify this by treating their persona as a flexible, ongoing project, constantly adapting to global trends.

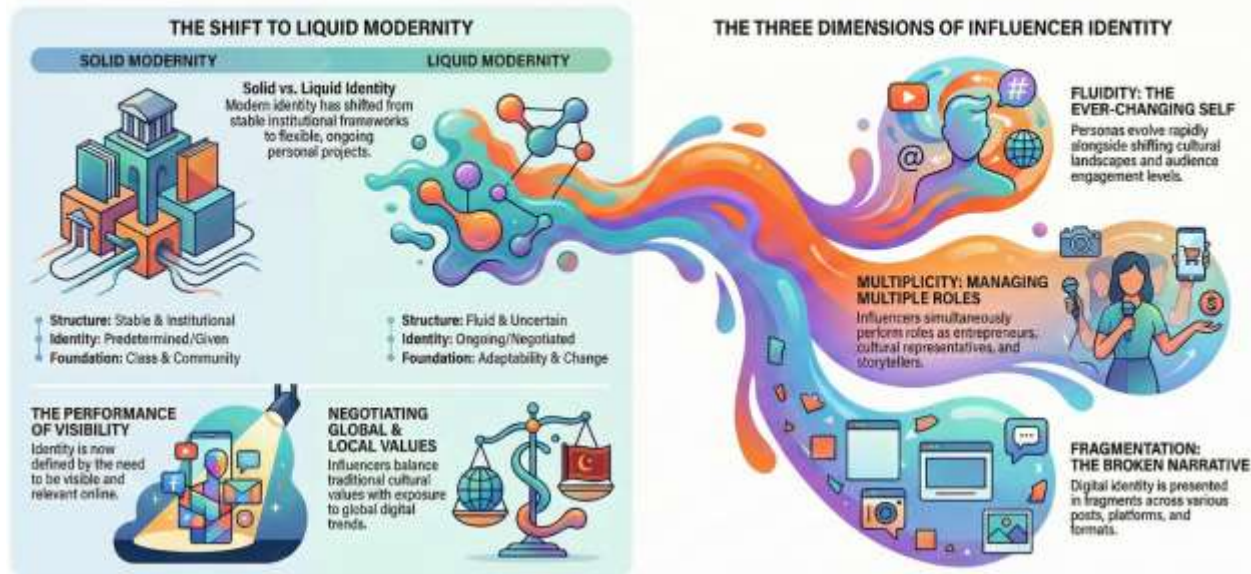


Table: Identity Fluidity and Digital Performance of Pakistani Influencers

Influencer Name	Primary Platforms	Key Identity Themes	Cultural / Traditional Performances	Modern / Global Performances	Platform-Specific Content Strategy	Global Locations Mentioned	Strategic Adaptation Approach (Inferred)
Jannat Mirza	TikTok, Instagram	Oscillation between tradition and modernity; Liquid self; Hybrid identity	Traditional Pakistani attire during Eid; modest dressing during Ramadan and religious events	Lip-sync videos, fashion content, Western clothing styles	Uses Instagram bio and content to merge national identity with global exposure	Japan	Balances cultural authenticity with modern relatability to appeal to diverse audiences and expand global reach
Dananeer Mobeen	Instagram, TikTok	Transition between lifestyle and spirituality; Deterritorialized identity	Spiritual reflections, gratitude posts during Ramadan; Pakistani attire in cultural events (e.g., Eid)	Aesthetic lifestyle content; global engagement; entertainment videos	Shifts tone depending on context (religious vs entertainment periods)	New York	Projects hybrid identity to connect with both local and global audiences while showing mobility and cultural flexibility
Romaisa Khan	TikTok, Instagram	Platform-specific identity; Liquid self	Not explicitly highlighted	Humorous skits (TikTok); polished fashion and lifestyle imagery (Instagram)	TikTok – humor & relatability; Instagram – curated and aesthetic identity	Not specified	Adapts identity based on platform algorithms and audience expectations to maximize visibility and engagement

### 6. Discussion

The results obtained in this study clearly show that Pakistani influencers' digital self-presentations are fully embedded in the dynamics of fluid identity characteristic of modern digital culture. By employing the concept of liquid modernity

developed by Zygmunt Bauman, this study has shown that Pakistani influencers' identities function as flexible, adaptive, and ever-reconstructed forms, rather than being considered as a stable expression of a given self-identity. The results obtained in this study have clearly shown

that Pakistani influencers' identity performances are shaped through constant negotiations between cultural traditions, platform arrangements, and global digital networks, which can be seen as an expression of broader dynamics of identity formation characteristic of digitally mediated societies.

### **6.1 Fluid Identity and Digital Adaptation**

One of the most important findings that emerge from the analysis is that the identity of the influencer is defined by the need to be malleable and able to adapt to the rapidly changing digital world. This is similar to the concept of the "liquid self," as discussed by Bauman (2000), in which the identity of the individual is a project of reconstruction and is defined by the unstable social world. The unstable world of the influencer is exacerbated by the algorithmic world of social media. Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok prioritize the visible and the new through their constantly shifting algorithms. This means that the influencer is required to continually adapt and change their identity performances in order to remain relevant in the digital world. The malleability of the Pakistani influencer, in their ability to shift between play, entertainment, and culture, is an exemplification of the adaptable nature of their identity.

Instead, these inconsistencies demonstrate the structural necessities that guide digital self-presentations. The influencer is working in an "attention economy," in which visibility is tied to the ability to adapt quickly to shifting audience interests and platform cultures. Within this environment, the ability to maintain a singular identity may be seen as a hindrance. Instead, change is required as a means to maintain digital presence.

### **6.2 Negotiating Tradition and Modernity**

Another significant factor that has been brought out by the findings is the interplay of cultural tradition and modern digital expression. The influencers in Pakistan are part of a sociocultural setting where religious values and cultural traditions are still important. On the other hand, the use of social media also provides the

influencers with exposure to globalized cultural trends and aesthetics. This has led to the development of hybrid performances of identity that are a combination of the influencers' exposure to cultural tradition and globalized digital culture. The performances of digital culture observed among influencers such as Jannat Mirza and Dananeer Mobeen are examples of this interplay. The performances oscillate between culturally grounded expressions such as posts based on religious events and cultural clothing and globalized digital culture.

From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon may be seen as an expression of Bauman's theory that in a liquid modern world, human identity is not based on any specific social structure but is constructed through an ongoing process of negotiation with cultural context (Bauman, 2001). Within the context of Pakistan, this phenomenon is particularly relevant as the influencer must negotiate cultural authenticity with global digital visibility. Thus, the identity performances that emerge are not merely individualistic but also reflect broader sociocultural dynamics in relation to tradition and modernity. Here, the influencer is positioned as a mediator between tradition and modernity, using cultural traditions to communicate with contemporary digital culture.

### **6.3 Platform Structures and Algorithmic Identity**

The study's findings also underscore the significance of the platform's architecture in the performance of the influencer's identity. Each platform has its own unique aesthetic norms, its own unique technological affordances, and its own unique logics. These platform conditions are not just important for the type of content that is produced but also for the type of identity that is performed. The differences in the performances of Romaisa Khan's TikTok and Instagram are an important case study for the type of adjustments that are made for the performance of the influencer's identity. TikTok's focus on entertainment requires a type of performance that is humorous and extremely relatable. On the other hand, Instagram's focus is more on aesthetics and lifestyle.

From the perspective of liquid modernity, it can be argued that these platform-based adaptations of the idea of adapting to change further solidify the notion that identity is being influenced by technological infrastructure. Rather than being created by personal or cultural attributes, digital identities are being co-created by the relationships that occur between the user and the system. The algorithms, for example, can affect what is being performed, which indirectly shapes the identity of the influencers. This is a reflection of a fundamental change in the way identity is being created in digital societies. No longer is the individual simply performing their identity within a social environment; instead, they are also being influenced by the invisible hand of the algorithm.

#### **6.4 Global Digital Belonging**

Another important implication of the present findings is the formation of globalized forms of digital belonging. Social media platforms help the influencer connect with their audience beyond geographical borders, thus leading to the formation of identity that is deeply rooted in local culture as well as global digital culture. The formation of global culture in the profiles of the influencer, as seen through narratives such as traveling stories or symbolic representations of global identity, also indicates the formation of digital identity beyond national borders.

This phenomenon is closely related to the concept of mobility in liquid modernity, as discussed by Bauman (2000), in which the individual is not locked into a physically defined identity. Instead, their identity is defined by their mobility, exposure, and connectivity in a range of social contexts. In the case of the influencers, this global perspective is also functional in the sense that it increases the potential scope of their audience and the cultural capital of their global recognition. However, there is also a new set of challenges associated with global digital belonging. The influencer is caught between the need to fulfill the

demands of their global audience while remaining true to their local culture. Excessive identification with global culture may lead to accusations of inauthenticity, while strict adherence to local culture may result in a lack of global appeal. The dynamic identity performances in this study indicate the balancing act between these competing demands.

#### **6.5 Influencer Culture and the Liquid Self**

Collectively, the results indicate that the culture of influencers is a particularly salient example of Bauman's notion of liquid identity. This is because the culture of influencers is one of constant change, of being under a microscope, and of being surrounded by fluid and ever-changing cultural trends. It is under such circumstances that identity cannot remain static; it must remain fluid if it is to survive. The idea of the liquid self is an interesting one, particularly when it comes to understanding the identity performances of influencers. The identities of influencers are personal and strategic, authentic and performative, culturally specific and global. They are not static representations of a stable self but, rather, fluid stories.

Significantly, this study also shows that fluid identity does not necessarily mean fragmentation and instability. Rather, it may be conceived as a type of adaptive resilience in digital societies in general. In this sense, influencers seek to create flexible identities that help them cope with the intricate requirements and challenges of engaging with their audience and culture in general. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that in the Pakistani context, this adaptability may be particularly important in that it requires influencers to engage with a social context that balances cultural values and digital expansion. In this sense, hybrid and fluid identity may be conceived as a type of negotiation of cultural identity in the digital age.



## 7. Conclusion

The current study aimed to explore the identity performance of Pakistani social media influencers by employing the theoretical framework of Zygmunt Bauman and his theory of liquid modernity, which demonstrated that digital identity is, by essence, fluid, adaptive, and context-dependent. Thematic content analysis of the posts of social media influencers on Instagram and Tiktok revealed that the identity of social media

influencers is strategically re-performed across cultural, technological, and global contexts. Social media influencers are always in a state of negotiation between tradition and modernity, adapting their identity performance according to the specific culture of each social media platform, and performing a hybrid identity that represents both their sense of belonging to a specific culture and their global digital engagement. This, in a sense, represents the essence of identity

performance in the digital age, where identity is not an entity but a constant negotiation of visibility, audience engagement, and the structural dynamics of social media platforms. This, in a sense, represents the essence of Bauman's theory of the "Liquid Self" where people are obliged to constantly reconstruct their identities in order to remain relevant in a fluid and ever-changing social environment (Bauman, 2000; Bauman, 2001).

Furthermore, the study adds to the ongoing debate on the nature of digital culture by showing the ways in which the practices of influencers mirror the sociocultural changes occurring in the evolving media sphere of Pakistan. The influencers, as cultural intermediaries, embody the interface between the local traditions of the region and the globalized digital cultures, thereby creating hybrid forms of self-presentation that appeal to a wide range of audiences. The identity formations of the influencers reveal the ways in which the digital subject of the present era struggles with the dual demands of authenticity and commercial/cultural acceptability. By using the theoretical concepts of liquid modernity in the sphere of the influencer culture of Pakistan, the current study expands the theoretical framework of the concept of liquid modernity, which was originally used in the context of Western societies, and reveals its applicability in the non-Western sphere of the digital world. Ultimately, the current study reveals that the identity of the influencers is not simply a form of self-presentation in the digital sphere but, in fact, a response to the technological, cultural, and economic conditions of the digital world in the twenty-first century.

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