

Authenticity and Disparity between Social Media Representations and Real-Life Experiences

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Abstract

Social media, as represented by websites such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, social media has become deeply interwoven in areas of daily life and displays a flawless reality through carefully chosen material. This study looks at the widening gap between social media and users' real-life judgments of authenticity. As a result, individuals may sense a discrepancy between their online personas and their real lives, which influences their self-concept and authenticity.

It emphasizes the push to offer ideal pictures, the repercussions of social comparison, and the impact of algorithmically selected information. The disparity between polished images provided on social media and the real experience of the social media user feeds into unachievable ideals of beauty, success, and pleasure, compounding inadequacy and affecting mental well-being. This study looks at the widening gap between social media and users' real-life judgments of authenticity, emphasizing the psychological and social ramifications that arise from this discrepancy.

In addition, this study investigates how social media uses individualized algorithms to influence society expectations, manage user actions, and perpetuate bias. As a result, through these studies, this study seeks to uncover the psychological and social implications of curated material in a way that can be combined with previous works aimed at improving knowledge of how digital media influences perceptions of reality and individual authenticity.

Keywords: authenticity; disparity; perception; social media; real-life experiences

Introduction

For the past twenty years, social media has increasingly integrated into our daily lives, transforming how we connect, communicate, and access information. Initially, platforms like Friendster and MySpace emerged in the early 2000s (Hafeez, 2024), enabling users to create personal profiles, share updates, and connect with others. Driven by the growth of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more recently TikTok, social media has developed over time from these simple networking sites into complex ecosystems where users exchange images and videos, voice their opinions, and participate in international conversations. This shows the contrast between how people present themselves or events on social media platforms versus what they truly experience in real life, in which social media representations are often curated, edited, and selectively shared to showcase the best, most appealing, or socially desirable aspects of life. Moreover, people tend to highlight successes, happiness, and idealized moments, which can create an impression of a polished and perfect existence. However, real-life experiences are typically more complex, including challenges, struggles, or less glamorous moments that are often left unshared. This disparity leads to questions about authenticity—whether what is seen on social media genuinely reflects a person's true life or is a projected image shaped by social expectations and personal motives. As a result, social media can create unrealistic standards and perceptions that differ significantly from actual lived realities.

The rise of social media accessibility, fueled by technological advancements in smartphones, has propelled it from its infancy to a platform that reaches almost every type of individual. Today, 51.17 percent among all individuals globally use TikTok social media on a monthly basis to keep up on news, connect with friends, follow influencers, and simply pass the time (Team, 2025a). Globally, the typical person spends approximately 3 hours each day on social media, which equates to 21 hours per week. We all unintentionally slipped into the habit of checking our phones throughout the day. We frequently skim through our social media feeds without realizing it. It is a digital reflex in which free moments are overwhelmed with the swipe of a screen.

Likes, comments, and alerts generate a feedback loop of dopamine, urging us to return for more. So, the algorithms that power these platforms are right there to grab our attention and keep us interested by automating what was once a conscious choice. As a result, social media has molded our perceptions, influenced our relationships, and even had an impact on our mental health (Cohen, 2004). We are often charmed into spending a significant amount of time reading through handpicked information without realizing the time in a digitally produced environment that merges seamlessly with our surroundings. This finding raises some very critical concerns about how social media influences our subconscious actions and sense of self, as well as our overall well-being, making it an increasing source of curiosity and scrutiny in the current digital world.

Literature Review

Authenticity in digital and social media marketing has emerged as a key subject for companies and marketers, as consumers increasingly seek credibility and trust in the material they consume. Business periodicals and pamphlets promote their goods, but the question is how real it is. Authenticity includes uniqueness, sincerity, and authenticity, all of which are essential for generating customer confidence (Massi et al., 2024). This blurs the distinction between what is real and what is made up, particularly with the growth of social media platforms. Another study highlights many forms of authenticity across digital touchpoints, including human, brand-generated, and user-generated material (Vo et al., 2024). Successful influencer marketing is dependent on authentic,

long-term connections between businesses and influencers, which improve brand image and customer trust (Afef, 2024). Glossier is an example of a good cooperation that leverages authenticity, whereas Snap Spectacles highlights the consequences of inauthentic partnerships (Zhou, 2023).

To sustain credibility, influencers use techniques formed by internal and external motivations, concentrating on attractiveness, dependability, and knowledge (Massi et al., 2024). Engaging in authentic social media marketing has a substantial influence on brand loyalty, with authenticity serving as a moderating factor (Ahmad et al., 2024). While authenticity is essential, it is also jeopardized by the nature of influencer marketing, which blurs the line between real connection and commercial aim. Social media frequently delivers a skewed image of reality, resulting in considerable gaps between online representations and real-life experiences. This difference may be seen in a variety of areas, including body image, parenting, and genuineness.

Sites such as Instagram promote idealized pictures, which might have a detrimental influence on women's body image and self-esteem. The "Instagram vs. reality" phenomena underlines the striking contrast between controlled online identities and actual looks, leading to undesirable social comparisons (Tiggemann and Anderberg, 2019). Moreover, in terms of parenting, media depictions frequently reduce the intricacies of stay-at-home moms' experiences, depicting their decisions as personal rather than affected by societal forces and economic concerns. This misinterpretation can make these women feel invisible, lack of confidence, silenced and inadequate (Orgad, 2016).

Emerging services such as BeReal try to offset the controlled character of traditional social media by fostering spontaneous, unedited material. However, the trend toward "authenticity-as-realness" remains inside a monitoring framework, confounding the concept of true representation (Maddox, 2023). Social media often fails to portray the intricate realities of people's lives, leading to a distorted sense of personal stories and societal standards, even as it can improve some storylines. This disparity raises important questions about how social media affects our perception of truth and value.

Individuals now incorporate social media into their daily lives. Friendster and MySpace, for example, emerged in the early 2000s as websites dedicated only to social interactions. Since then, the business has grown to include major players like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. The growth of social media has changed the way people interact and consume information, making it an important component of over 5 billion users' everyday lives worldwide. However, the digital world frequently provides an idealized picture of reality through selected information, establishing unrealistic expectations that can have a severe impact on self-esteem and mental health.

The notion of "Instagram vs. reality" emphasizes this divide, as polished online photographs contrast with real-life interactions. Authenticity has become a major problem as influencer marketing blurs the distinction between real material and commercial motivations. Furthermore, social media algorithms customize user experiences, resulting in echo chambers that perpetuate prejudices and lead to phenomena like FOMO (fear of missing out). These interactions highlight the significance of researching how social media influences perceptions of reality, self-worth, and well-being.

This study examines how social media portrayals—crafted via selective and idealized content from individuals, brands, and influencers—often diverge sharply from actual experiences (Raza et al., 2024). Drawing on a synthesis of prior scholars, it aims to reveal the mechanisms through which these polished depictions foster misleading notions of happiness, achievement, and attractiveness, leading audiences to perceive others' lives as flawless. The analysis further probes the effects of these distortions on users' sense of genuineness and self-perception, which can erode self-assurance and breed distrust in digital content. Moreover, it investigates how alterations in self-view and trust might shift social media engagement behaviors. Social media representation defines how individuals, businesses, and influencers select and idealize material; it frequently deviates from reality. The carefully chosen portrayal produces a false impression among viewers about pleasure, success, and beauty by convincing them that others enjoy 'perfect' lives. This may ultimately have an impact on the users' authenticity and self-concept; they may lose confidence in themselves and begin to question any information they get over the internet. Changes in confidence and self-identity may eventually lead to changes in social media usage.

Discussions

How People Perceive the Distinctions Between Their Social Media Personas and Their Real-Life Identities

Individuals have a tendency to compare and assess themselves to others, as stated by the "social comparison theory," which was developed in 1954 (MSEd, 2024). In this situation, the individual's skill is being compared to that of individuals who are superior to them. Selective exposure theory investigates the idea that people tend to depend on external representations to assess their own beliefs and talents and find their self-value and identities through personas which compliments the concept of comparative theory. These photos draw references to the real world or to other individuals. People compare themselves to other people and idealized images, believing that the ideals depicted by others are realistic and achievable. Social comparisons are common on the internet. If applied properly, this might be a great motivation for personal and professional development. The question is what occurs when social comparisons turn uncomfortable and unfavorable.

People begin to believe in ideal photographs that are either manipulated or created with a filter effect. The stalking begins when they see other films and pictures and believe that other people are living their lives, but the stalker feels out of place, backward in life, and this causes a lot of self-doubt and anxiety. One of the most prominent incidents included Kylie Jenner's lip size. Initially, she claimed to overline the lip to make it look bigger and persuaded insecure individuals to follow her lead, only to end up with unsatisfactory results. However, she subsequently admitted on a television broadcast that it is not only make-up, but she has used lip filler to make it seem that way (Miller, 2024). Even though her online identity does not fully reflect who she is in real life, Kylie felt obliged to keep it when she initially revealed her fuller lips and saw other people sharing equally well-chosen, idealized photographs. This contributed to feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction, as she believes her real-life events are not as glamorous or amazing as the ones she depicts on Instagram, particularly if they are not deemed good enough by the other person.

Emotional and Psychological Effects towards Individuals through their Daily Lives and the Selected Information on Social Media

Social media is believed to be used for interacting with others, updating oneself, and remembering the past. However, as time passes, the past appears to become longer, and it is used obsessively and excessively, that is when people refer to social media addiction (Cherney, 2020). Nothing extravagant occurs with this addiction; the brain identifies social media usage as a pleasurable activity that a person should repeat when they feel more dopamine after using it. Every time an individual writes their own post and receives positive feedback, they might feel this pleasure more intensely. A study found that persons who are hooked to social media, particularly teenage men, are more likely to engage in cyberbullying (Kao, 2021).

Individuals cannot see the immediate harm their acts do, therefore the anonymity provided by internet platforms decreases empathy by allowing people to act without fear of punishment or immediate repercussions. The design of social media, which stimulates dopamine, encourages obsessive behavior when likes, shares, and comments are sought as a means of obtaining acceptance from others. Some people use cyberbullying to get attention and contact, functioning as a quick reward mechanism (Kao, 2021). The male teenager who has been taught to be more aggressive may use this with greater vigor in an attempt to establish dominance or elevate his position in the virtual world.

Those who have been cyberbullied four times are more likely to have suicidal thoughts (National Institute of Health, 2022). Another side effect of long-term exposure to such idealized pictures and updates is FOMO (fear of missing out), or the dread of missing out on activities that others consider enjoyable or prestigious (Littman-Ovadia & Russo-Netzer, 2024). The desire to seem as that ideal on social networking sites may lead to individuals creating a highly idealized image of themselves, widening the gap between their identities in real and virtual worlds. With time, this chronic cycle of comparison, as well as the pleasure of social media interactions linked to dopamine levels, can lead to addictive behaviors.

In recent years, several celebrities have opened up about how they feel about public criticism of their bodies. Selena Gomez, a singer, was introduced to social media at a very young age. She was constantly reminded and conscious of the unachievable beauty ideal (Stone, 2022). It felt as if she was always being seen and scrutinized. But it is not just her; other celebrities, such as Billie Eilish, have encountered the same issue. That is when they made the daring choice to go away from social media. The emotional impact of constant validation, combined with the negative effects of unfavorable comparisons, can result in mental disorders such as chronic stress, body image concerns, and suicidal ideation in the worst cases, particularly among vulnerable groups such as teenagers, who are more influenced by social approval and peer influence.

Factors that Shaped Users' Perception of Success, Beauty and Happiness in Social Media Platforms

People argue that beauty is subjective, but Aristotle disagrees, he claims that beauty is symmetry, beauty is measurable and may be shown by specific degrees in mathematical sciences (BBC, 2017). Beauty is an impression formed when an element is formed or looked at and is thought to be pleasing by those with the capacity or desire to appreciate it, rather than an inherent trait of the object. This leads to the idea that, because beauty is determined by the observer's cultural or personal standards of beauty, it must be contextual and subjective.

In recent years, when the Barbie movie visited theaters, they defined the beauty criteria for the characters. Some even went to tremendous lengths to imitate the traits through plastic surgery, for example, Justin Jedlica took delight in having no facial hair and being a real-life doll (Ghlionn, 2022). He has at least 999 operations and has spent a fortune of \$1 million on his beautifying. He asserted that beauty standards were elements he wanted to establish for himself, which he demonstrated by having his first operation at the age of 18. But he is not the only one who thinks like this anymore. Beauty clinics may be found anywhere, with the United States accounting for 16 percent of plastic procedures (Statista, 2024). They also had the most non-surgical procedures performed, including as botox and liposuction, for 5.4 million persons.

Furthermore, algorithms and social media design influence user behavior and decision-making by curating material, generating filter bubbles, and shaping perceptions through individualized experiences (Berman & Katona, 2020). These processes influence not only what people see, but also how they interact with information, with significant implications for their decisions and views. Algorithms serve as gatekeepers, prioritizing material based on user interactions, resulting in tailored feeds that increase user engagement (Poleac & Ghergut-Babii, 2024). This customization can instill a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out), encouraging users to interact with the site more regularly (Poleac & Ghergut-Babii, 2024). For example, TikTok trends are actions that all TikTokers aim to keep up with. It has more than 1 billion active users globally, surpassing Facebook Messenger and WeChat (Team, 2025b).

Social media algorithms frequently reinforce current opinions by presenting users to similar perspectives, resulting in filter bubbles that limit varied viewpoints (Harner et al., 2022).

As users grow established in echo chambers, this phenomenon has the potential to lead to harmful results, such as the spread of mislead information. As activities become more complicated, users increasingly rely on algorithmic recommendations rather than social influence, indicating a change in decision-making dynamics (Bogert et al., 2021). This implies that the algorithm magnifies particular items on the site in order to induce a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) among users, forcing them to join the bandwagon because they do not want to lose out on the fun or approval of their peer group.

Furthermore, due to the algorithm that promotes popular and trending materials, it creates filter bubbles in which viewers are repeatedly presented with similar types of videos, reinforcing their preferences and restricting exposure to different information. In order to increase their chances of being featured, individuals may alter their material to reflect what is popular, creating a vicious cycle that affects platform and creative decisions.

Credibility and Quality Issues in Social Media Content: Examining How Authoritative the Authors are and the Reliability and Continuity of Shared Information

The nature of user-generated content on social media frequently makes it difficult to trust. Issues with social media content's credibility and quality are mostly caused by elements such as the writers' authority, the accuracy of the data, and the consistency of the shared content. Authenticity and trustworthiness are maintained by regular updates, high-quality content, and author credibility. Reliability assessment is made more difficult by the fact that most social media information is created by users, and popularity indicators like likes and shares further skew perceptions of credibility. Furthermore, content that are inconsistently updated or discontinuous can raise questions about authenticity more than just the author's reputation or level of expertise. As the nature of user-generated content on social media frequently makes it less trustable. Social media is more casual than traditional media, more likely to contain false information, and is impacted by social dynamics such as promoting group norms or identity reinforcement. This can distort the perception of dependability, which can disseminate false information and erode public confidence. Likes, comments, shares, and other popularity metrics might encourage conformity above truth, increasing the likelihood of false information. Social media information trust is strongly impacted by platform interactivity and message quality. Credibility is perceived by the user based on a number of criteria, such as the quality of the information, the transparency of the medium, and the reliability of the source (Al-Awadhi, 2023). Authors on social media who exhibit expertise and reliability are seen as more authoritative, especially when writing on health, where credentials from professional associations increase perceived legitimacy (Li et al., 2023). Due to the presence of instant messaging application services such as Facebook and WhatsApp that are major sources of fake news during emergencies like the COVID-19 outbreak, research shows the dangers of misinformation on these platforms, highlighting the severity of social media trust issues (Al-Awadhi, 2023). Research on social media influencers highlights three key aspects of credibility that have a beneficial impact on audience perceptions: competence, attractiveness, and trustworthiness (Coutinho et al., 2023).

For information to be considered content accurate, it must be factually correct and devoid of errors or false claims. Relevance refers to the information's applicability to the needs or interests of the audience. Providing enough information to allow the audience to completely comprehend the subject without significant gaps is referred to as completeness. The likelihood that users will view the content as reliable and trustworthy increases when certain quality criteria are satisfied (Li & Suh, 2015). If statements made in the content are backed up by solid proof, citations, or sound reasoning, their credibility rises. Claims that are unsupported or only poorly supported tend to be less credible since they come seem as biased or subjective. Research indicates that readers are more likely to accept posts that cite studies, explicitly identify sources, or offer logical justification (Li et al., 2023).

Perceived content quality is improved by using clear, businesslike language that is devoid of spelling and grammar mistakes. Moreover, the tone should match the content: formal for serious subjects, lighthearted or friendly for lighthearted ones. Storytelling and other narrative strategies can successfully communicate difficult information while capturing readers' attention. An audience-appropriate language style promotes readability and trust while providing a polished appearance that bolsters reputation. Social evidence, such as likes, shares, and comments, can affect how reliable users view content. Furthermore, critical comments on a post can also raise skepticism and decrease

perceived trustworthiness. On social media platforms, user credibility assessments are greatly influenced by high-quality information, compelling arguments, suitable and clear language, and social endorsement—particularly for today's widely consumed short-form content.

Drivers and Consequences of Social Media Authenticity

Social media authenticity's drivers and effects, including how it affects conversations, customer behavior, and engagement. Credibility impressions on social media are mostly shaped by the source's perceived honesty and dependability. Factors including occupation, reputation, age, gender, and ethnicity might affect an author's perceived credibility. Credibility and authority are increased when one has qualifications or demonstrated knowledge in the field (Halder, 2024). Perceptions of authenticity are enhanced by transparent, relatable, and high-quality material that is consistent with brand values. Moreover, sincere corporate social responsibility initiatives that align with the ideals of the target audience create an authentic social media presence. In addition, messages that are in line with consumers' expectations and efficient, accountable complaint resolution are what define authenticity (Alhouti & Johnson, 2021).

Authenticity is largely influenced by honesty in messaging, brand communication, and brand values (Kothari et al., 2025). Perceptions of authenticity are often improved by a less obviously sales-oriented strategy (Alhouti & Johnson, 2021). Higher user engagement and conversation involvement result from authentic content's promotion of meaningful self-expression and interactions. Authenticity has a favorable impact on consumer attitudes, contentment, perceived value, and intentions to purchase. Strong emotional bonds are developed via genuine social media, which encourages word-of-mouth referrals and loyalty. Customers like brands that are authentic, relatable, and reliable on social media (Kothari et al., 2025). The impact of authenticity on consumer behavior is mediated by trust; customers are more inclined to interact with and purchase from companies they believe to be genuine. Therefore, better marketing results and increased consumer confidence are seen by brands that effectively communicate authenticity through narrative and reliable messaging. Transparency, corporate social responsibility, and excellent content quality—while avoiding hard selling—are what propel the authenticity of social media content. Among its effects are increased customer involvement and trust, which result in favorable behavioral outcomes including advocacy, loyalty, and purchase intentions. Therefore, authenticity is a strategic advantage for organizations looking to create lasting relationships with their customers and achieve social media marketing success.

The Impact of Social Media Authenticity on Mental Health, Social Comparisons, and Overall Psychological Well-Being

Social comparisons brought on by social media profiles' manicured, idealized appearance frequently undermine mental health and self-worth (Sustainability Directory, 2025). People who are less authentic engage in more social comparison, which is associated with poorer mental health. Viewers of other people's highlight reels may experience feelings of inadequacy or diminished life satisfaction, which can exacerbate anxiety and despair (Sustainability Directory, 2025). Stress, internal conflict, and a disconnection between one's real self and online persona can result from the pressure to maintain an edited, idealized online persona, which can exacerbate mental health conditions. Constant exposure to fake or inauthentic social media content, exacerbated by sensationalist algorithms, can weaken empathy and lead to psychological problems. Negative online interactions and cyberbullying

worsen mental health by increasing the likelihood of anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. On the other hand, sincere online interactions that encourage true self-expression can result in deeper relationships, more social support, and better mental health. Particularly for younger users, social media authenticity improves mental health by lowering psychological discomfort and encouraging a more positive self-concept. However, anxiety, depression symptoms, and negative social comparisons are fueled by a lack of authenticity. Psychological well-being in today's digital environment depends on finding a careful balance between maintaining one's online image and expressing oneself authentically.

Stronger online–offline self-splitting, or a greater difference between how people present themselves online and offline, is predicted by a number of criteria. When opposed to offline social contexts, those with high levels of social anxiety or general anxiety tend to feel more at ease and unrestrained online, which permits them to disclose more about themselves; as people make up for their offline discomfort online, this causes a wider divide (Baumann & Utz, 2021). People who have poor self-esteem are more likely to keep up several identities, utilizing online platforms as a place to explore or escape, which causes a disconnect between their real offline and online personalities. On the other hand, people who are more extraverted typically show less separation between their offline and online identities (Lin et al., 2018). More self-identity integration between the online and offline spheres is associated with less self-splitting; these individuals maintain similar behavioral patterns and self-evaluations in both domains. More self-splitting is reported by those who have a higher online–offline self-discrepancy, a misaligned self-image or behavior across the online and offline worlds, which is linked to worse psychological health and an increased risk of internet addiction (Lin et al., 2018). Online–offline self-splitting is becoming more common as an adaptive coping mechanism as people who are lonely or socially isolated use online settings to make up for offline deficiencies. The distinction between online and offline identities is reinforced by the correlation between increased stress and anxiety and higher levels of online social sensitivity and attentiveness. Connections within social networks might have an impact on integration. Identity splitting is facilitated by reliance on online-only interactions, whereas stronger offline social networks are associated with more matched online–offline identities. Generation Z and other younger age groups might place more emphasis on online identity exploration, which would increase the distinction between online and offline life. Social isolation, a bigger self-identity discrepancy, anxiety, low self-esteem, and specific coping requirements are all associated with stronger online–offline self-splitting. Extraversion, psychological health, and integration initiatives; on the other hand, lessen self-splitting by encouraging uniformity across one's online and offline identities.

Social media authenticity perception is associated with a lower prevalence of mental health issues like stress and depression. Perceived authenticity on social media, independent of offline authenticity beliefs, was found to predict improved mental health outcomes over time in longitudinal research including American college students. There was less psychological suffering among those who believed that their online persona was genuine (Bunker et al., 2024). In particular, Generation Z has a tendency to distinguish between their online and offline selves, and this distinction is linked to improved psychological well-being, including reduced despair and increased life satisfaction. This implies that young adults' mental health may benefit from a certain amount of separation between their online and offline identities (Dolan, 2024). Complex identity management techniques are made easier by the differentiation between one's online and offline selves. In order to manage their impressions and prevent unfavorable social outcomes, Generation Z may create secondary or alternative social media

profiles as safer venues for genuine self-expression and identity development. By adjusting their self-presentation to suit various audiences, this dual-account method aids them in navigating a variety of social demands, but it also runs the danger of causing internal conflicts and identity fragmentation. The tendency of Generation Z to maintain a different online and offline identity is associated with their increased effort to balance authentic self-expression, social acceptance, and privacy concerns in digital settings. Their mental health and social relationships depend on this dynamic.

Conclusion

The study shed light on the complicated relationship between social media representations and real-life viewpoints, emphasizing the enormous consequences of digital platforms for an individual's authenticity, self-concept, and societal expectations. Individuals idealized online personas and their actual lives have become increasingly disjointed as a result of social media's algorithm-driven engagement and carefully picked content. This difference in reality affects mental health, encourages unfavorable social comparisons, and reinforces false ideals of pleasure, success, and beauty. The findings highlighted the negative psychological and societal repercussions of excessive exposure to ideal material, including user anxiety, mental health problems such as chronic stress and body image difficulties, and a mistaken view of reality. More severe self-splitting is predicted by poorer self-esteem and higher levels of social anxiety. Less extraverted people are more likely to distinguish between their online and offline selves. Extraverted people, on the other hand, exhibit greater identity integration in a variety of settings. People that have a more cohesive and consistent self-concept tend to combine their online and offline identities better. Those with greater self-discrepancy between these realms demonstrate more self-splitting, which can significantly affect mental health. Online-offline identities tend to be more in line with those who have close, strong offline social links. Identity splitting is encouraged by reliance on social connections that take place solely online. Identity coherence, social isolation, network dependence, generational roles in digital identity creation, and personal anxiety and self-esteem all interact to predict increased online–offline self-splitting.

Furthermore, this encourages reliance and the practice of always seeking affirmation by pushing people into mainstream material and societal standards that limit authentic self-expression and innovation through algorithms. Understanding these relationships allows for more beneficial social media interactions. This involves encouraging platforms to accept diverse and realistic material, raising awareness of the significance of well selected portrayals, and teaching consumers on how to consume media critically. Addressing these challenges would enable us to close the gap between social media depictions and reality, establishing a culture of self-acceptance, authenticity, and mental wellbeing in the digital age. In the broader context of digital media impact, the study's findings can assist and guide future research and initiatives for minimizing the negative effects of social media on both individuals and at a societal level.

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