Visual Culture in Social Media: A Study on the Influence of Instagram on Aesthetics and Youth Culture Trends

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of visual aesthetics on Instagram in shaping social identity and user behavior, with a focus on how the visual standards on this platform affect how individuals express themselves. Using a literature review method, this research gathers and analyzes various relevant sources, including academic articles, journals, and previous research reports, to explore the impact of visual aesthetics on Instagram users. The main findings of this study show that the visual aesthetics on Instagram, which often create idealized representations of the self, play a significant role in the formation of individual social identity. Users, especially younger ones, are frequently influenced by the beauty standards and lifestyles promoted by influencers, reinforcing the tendency to compare themselves with more "perfect" images. This can negatively impact mental health, such as increasing anxiety and body dissatisfaction. However, this research also finds that the platform offers space for more inclusive self-expression, particularly for marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community and specific ethnic groups, who use Instagram to showcase their cultural identities. This study highlights the importance of awareness of the influence of visual aesthetics on social media in shaping self-perception and social relationships, as well as the need for a more sensitive approach to diversity in the use of digital platforms.

Keywords: Visual Culture, Social Media, Instagram, and Youth Culture

Introduction

The development of social media, particularly Instagram, has transformed the way society views and interacts with the visual world. This shift has influenced visual culture and aesthetics in social life, creating new consumption patterns that involve identity and status. While social media provides freedom for self-expression, it often also creates new norms that direct individuals toward standardized visual standards. Instagram, as an image-based platform,

emphasizes images and visual content as the main form of communication, shaping new perspectives on beauty, lifestyle, and culture. Research by Marwick (2015) indicates that social media, especially Instagram, shapes a "visual culture" that affects individuals' perceptions of themselves and others. This shift is clearly visible in the evolving youth culture trends driven by influencers, brands, and content selected based on particular aesthetics. The presence of social media, particularly Instagram, not only creates opportunities for self-expression but also reshapes aesthetic values that significantly influence youth culture.

Despite numerous studies on the role of social media in social life, there is still a gap in understanding how Instagram specifically influences aesthetics and youth culture trends. Most studies focus on the impact of social media on social or psychological behavior in general, but few explore how platforms like Instagram create visual aesthetics that alter cultural preferences. Studies like those by Zeng (2019) and Sorensen (2021) focus on social media user behavior, but only a few delve deeply into how visual aesthetics on Instagram shape specific cultural identities. This highlights the need for more in-depth research on the influence of visual culture on Instagram and its impact on current youth culture trends. The central question of this paper is: How does Instagram shape visual culture that influences aesthetics and youth culture trends? To answer this question, we need to understand the interaction between visual content on Instagram, user identity, and how this permeates global youth culture. Three main questions will be discussed: Frist, how is visual aesthetics on Instagram shaped and accepted by young people? Second, what role do influencers and digital celebrities play in shaping these aesthetic trends? Third, how does the influence of these visual aesthetics affect social norms and youth cultural behavior? Answers to these questions will provide a deeper understanding of Instagram's role in shaping visual culture and its impact on the dynamics of youth culture.

This article argues that Instagram, as a visual medium, not only reflects youth culture trends but also actively shapes and directs these trends through visualization and normative mechanisms. Social media serves as a space where visual images, especially on Instagram, create aesthetic forms that act as social standards among young people. Research by Abidin (2016) shows that influencers play a key role in shaping visual trends, while Instagram provides a platform for the accessibility and rapid spread of these trends. Therefore, Instagram acts as an agent of change in shaping visual aesthetics that influence

youth culture and becomes an important tool in the formation of new cultural trends among young generations.

This research uses a literature review method to explore and analyze the influence of visual aesthetics on Instagram on the formation of identity and social behavior of users. In this approach, the author collects and analyzes various relevant sources, including academic articles, journals, books, and previous research reports. Through systematic analysis of existing literature, this research aims to understand how visual aesthetics on Instagram influence how individuals shape and express their identities, as well as how this relates to social and cultural trends. The literature review method also allows for the exploration of various perspectives and the understanding of both global and local contexts in the use of social media platforms, particularly Instagram.

The Formation of Visual Aesthetics on Instagram

The formation of visual aesthetics on Instagram is a multifaceted phenomenon that combines personal branding, consumer engagement, and cultural representation. As a platform primarily focused on visual content, Instagram has become a crucial space for users to curate their identities and engage with various aesthetic trends. The relationship between visual aesthetics and user engagement is highly significant, as it influences how individuals and brands communicate and connect with their audiences. One of the fundamental aspects of visual aesthetics on Instagram is the concept of idealized self-presentation. Harris & Bardey (2019) highlight that users often depict an idealized version of themselves, closely linked to perceptions of attractiveness and popularity. This idealization reflects deeper psychological motivations, where individuals seek validation through likes and comments, which can be seen as a form of social currency. The emphasis on physical appearance and curated visuals is further supported by research showing that aesthetically pleasing profiles tend to attract more attention and engagement on social media platforms (Harris & Bardey, 2019).

In addition to personal branding, the role of visual aesthetics extends to broader cultural narratives. Caldeira (2021) discusses how Instagram has democratized the creation and dissemination of visual culture, allowing users to engage with and contribute to the collective imagination. This shift has led to the emergence of new photographic conventions and aesthetic values that resonate with diverse audiences. The platform's design facilitates the sharing of visually

appealing content, which in turn shapes users' perceptions of beauty and desire in contemporary society (Caldeira, 2021; Caldeira et al., 2021). The impact of visual aesthetics on consumer behavior is particularly evident in the context of luxury brands. Research by Khan & Raza (2024) reveals that when consumers perceive high levels of quality and value in luxury brands, their engagement on Instagram significantly increases brand loyalty. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining a consistent and visually appealing brand presence on the platform. Brands that effectively use visual strategies can attract consumer attention and build deeper relationships, ultimately driving purchase intentions (Khan & Raza, 2024; Valentini et al., 2018).

Beyond personal aesthetics and branding, the platform also serves as a space for cultural expression and political engagement. Caldeira (2021) notes that Instagram has become an important arena for exploring gender politics, where users navigate the complexities of identity and representation. The visual nature of the platform allows for the coexistence of personal, political, and aesthetic content, creating a rich texture of narratives generated by users that reflect contemporary social issues (Caldeira et al., 2021; Caldeira, 2024). This multifaceted engagement illustrates how Instagram transcends mere visual sharing, becoming a site for activism and cultural commentary. The significance of visual aesthetics is further emphasized in the context of user engagement metrics. Studies show that visually engaging content tends to receive higher engagement rates, with posts featuring attractive visuals getting more likes and shares (Sumarah et al., 2023). The correlation between aesthetics and engagement underscores the importance for both users and brands to prioritize visual quality in their content creation strategies. As noted by Sumarah et al. (2023), visually appealing displays can facilitate user interaction, reinforcing the idea that aesthetics play a crucial role in the effectiveness of social media communication.

Instagram's algorithm also plays a pivotal role in shaping visual aesthetics and user engagement. The platform's algorithm prioritizes content that generates high engagement, which often correlates with visually appealing posts. This creates a feedback loop where aesthetically pleasing content is more likely to be promoted, increasing visibility and engagement (Rosa & Soto-Vásquez, 2022). Therefore, users and brands are encouraged to adopt certain aesthetic strategies to align with the platform's algorithmic preferences, further reinforcing the importance of visual aesthetics in social media dynamics. Exploring visual aesthetics on Instagram is also related to the concept of cultural capital. When

users curate their feeds, they engage in a form of cultural production that reflects their tastes and social identities. This curating process is not just about personal expression but also about signaling social status and a sense of belonging within particular communities (Caldeira, 2021; Caldeira et al., 2021). The aesthetic choices made by users can be seen as a form of social signaling, where the visual presentation of content communicates values, affiliations, and aspirations to a wider audience.

Furthermore, the rise of influencer culture on Instagram has amplified the significance of visual aesthetics. Influencers often function as trendsetters, shaping the platform's visual landscape through the content they curate. Their ability to create visually compelling narratives has a profound impact on consumer behavior, as followers frequently imitate the aesthetic choices of influencers they admire (Cruz et al., 2024; Khan & Raza, 2024). This dynamic illustrates how visual aesthetics are not just a personal endeavor but also a collective cultural phenomenon that influences broader consumer trends.

In the world of marketing, the strategic use of visual aesthetics has proven to enhance brand communication effectiveness. Brands that leverage rich visual formats, such as images and videos, are more likely to engage consumers and encourage interaction (Kusumasondjaja, 2018). The emphasis on aesthetics in marketing strategies reflects a broader understanding of the role visual content plays in capturing consumer attention and building brand loyalty. As such, businesses are increasingly aware of the need to invest in high-quality visual content to remain competitive in the digital landscape. Moreover, the aesthetic dimension of Instagram extends beyond individual users and brands; it also reaches institutional practices. Museums and cultural institutions have begun to harness the power of Instagram to boost visitor engagement and promote exhibitions. Research by Rhee et al. (2021) shows that visitors engage more with objects and experiences than just focusing on selfies, indicating a shift in how cultural experiences are mediated through the visual platform. These findings highlight Instagram's potential to function as a tool for shaping place and social presence, enriching visitor experiences in cultural contexts.

The development of visual aesthetics on Instagram also raises questions about authenticity and representation. As users navigate the pressures of curating their online personas, the issue of authenticity becomes increasingly complex. The desire to present an idealized self can create a disconnect between online and offline identities, prompting discussions about the psychological

implications of social media engagement (Caldeira, 2021; Harris & Bardey, 2019). The tension between authenticity and idealization is an important area of investigation, as it reflects broader social trends regarding self-presentation and identity formation in the digital age. It is clear that the formation of visual aesthetics on Instagram is a dynamic interaction between personal expression, cultural representation, and consumer engagement. The platform's emphasis on visual content has profound implications for how individuals and brands communicate, connect, and navigate their identities within the digital landscape. As users continue to engage with Instagram's visual culture, the significance of aesthetics will remain a central theme in understanding the complexities of social media interactions and their impact on contemporary society.

The Role of Influencers and Digital Celebrities in Shaping Youth Culture Trends

The role of influencers and digital celebrities in shaping youth cultural trends has become increasingly significant in the contemporary digital landscape. Social media platforms serve as crucial arenas where influencers engage with their audiences, often resulting in the emergence of new cultural norms and consumer behaviors. This phenomenon is particularly evident among younger demographics, who are more susceptible to the persuasive power of these digital figures. The intersection between social media and cultural trends is marked by the dynamic interaction between marketing strategies, consumer behavior, and the formation of cultural identities. Influencer marketing has become the dominant strategy for brands aiming to connect with young consumers. According to a study by Statista, 72% of fashion brands in the U.S. plan to increase their spending on influencer marketing, indicating a growing reliance on social media influencers to shape consumer perceptions and preferences (Muturi, 2024). This trend is not limited to the fashion industry alone; it extends to various sectors, including beauty, lifestyle, and technology. Influencers, who often build personal brands that resonate with their followers, leverage their platforms to promote products and services, thus influencing purchasing decisions and cultural trends (Maitri et al., 2023). The effectiveness of influencer marketing lies in the perception of authenticity and relatability of these figures, which fosters trust among their followers (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2022).

Moreover, the impact of social media influencers extends beyond mere consumerism; they also play a significant role in shaping cultural identities and aspirations among youth. For instance, the hustle culture trend, which emphasizes hard work and entrepreneurial spirit, has been significantly promoted through social media platforms, especially among Indonesian youth (Athifah Chairunnisah & Lilawati Kurnia, 2023). This cultural narrative encourages young individuals to adopt lifestyles and values that align with the ideals conveyed by influencers. The aspirational content shared by digital celebrities often leads to the internalization of cultural norms that prioritize success, productivity, and personal branding (Khamis et al., 2017). Thus, social media influencers not only reflect existing cultural trends but also actively contribute to creating and spreading them. The relationship between social media usage and cultural consumption is further complicated by the diverse backgrounds of teenagers. Research suggests that students from minority ethnic groups may be more motivated to learn languages through engagement with mainstream culture on social media (Lai, 2019). This indicates that influencers can facilitate cultural integration and identity formation, allowing young individuals to navigate their bicultural identities more effectively. Content produced by influencers often resonates with the experiences of these youth, offering them narratives they can relate to and encouraging cultural exploration and engagement.

In addition to shaping cultural identities, influencers also contribute to the evolution of consumer behavior. The rise of social media usage has transformed traditional marketing paradigms, with influencers acting as intermediaries between brands and consumers. Their recommendations are often perceived as more credible than traditional advertisements, leading to higher engagement and conversion rates (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021). This shift is prompting brands to rethink their marketing strategies, with an increasing focus on collaborating with influencers to effectively reach their target audiences. The reciprocal reinforcement between influencers and brands creates a symbiotic relationship that benefits both parties, as influencers gain access to exclusive products, while brands benefit from the reach and credibility of the influencers (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021).

The cultural implications of influencer marketing are profound, as it often reflects and shapes social values and norms. For example, the promotion of sustainable and ethical consumption practices by influencers has gained

momentum in recent years, driven by growing awareness of environmental issues among youth (Pop et al., 2020). This shift towards green consumerism demonstrates how influencers can drive cultural change by advocating for responsible consumption and encouraging their followers to adopt sustainable practices. The ability of influencers to mobilize their audiences around social causes highlights their potential as agents of cultural transformation.

Furthermore, the role of music in social media content production should not be overlooked. Music has proven to be a powerful tool in enhancing engagement and shaping cultural trends on platforms like TikTok and Instagram (Tabak, 2023). The integration of music into influencer content not only amplifies the emotional resonance of their messages but also contributes to the viral nature of trends, as catchy songs and challenges often spread rapidly among young people. The interaction between music and social media underscores the multifaceted nature of cultural consumption in the digital era. As social media continues to evolve, the influence of digital celebrities on youth culture is likely to expand further. The increasing prevalence of platforms that facilitate user-generated content allows for a more democratized form of cultural production, where anyone can potentially become an influencer (Abidin, 2021). This shift has implications for traditional concepts of celebrity and authority, as the boundaries between influencers and their followers become increasingly blurred. The participatory nature of social media fosters a culture of engagement, where teens are not just passive consumers but also active participants in the creation and dissemination of cultural content.

The implications of this trend extend to various aspects of teenage life, including education, socialization, and mental health. For example, the use of social media as a coping mechanism during periods of social isolation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights the complex relationship between digital engagement and emotional well-being (Cauberghe et al., 2021). While social media can provide a sense of community and belonging, it can also contribute to feelings of anxiety and loneliness, particularly when young individuals compare themselves to the curated lives of influencers (Cauberghe et al., 2021). This duality emphasizes the need for critical engagement with social media content and the importance of building digital literacy among teenagers. It is clear that the role of influencers and digital celebrities in shaping youth cultural trends is multifaceted and complex. Their impact extends beyond consumer behavior to encompass cultural identity formation, social values, and emotional well-being.

As social media continues to evolve, understanding the dynamics of influencer culture will be crucial for educators, marketers, and policymakers. Ongoing dialogue about the influence of digital celebrities on youth culture should take into account the diverse experiences and perspectives of young individuals, ensuring that their voices are heard in the ever-changing landscape of digital engagement.

The Psychological and Social Impact of Instagram Aesthetic Standards

The psychological and social impact of aesthetic standards on Instagram is a complex issue that has received increasing attention in recent years. The platform's emphasis on visual content and the representation of an idealized lifestyle often leads to various psychological effects, particularly among young users. Research indicates that frequent exposure to idealized images on Instagram is correlated with negative psychological outcomes, including increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and body image disorders (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019; Stefana et al., 2022). The phenomenon of social comparison, where individuals assess their lives against the curated lives of others, plays a significant role in these negative impacts. Such comparisons often lead to feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem, especially among young women who are more vulnerable to these pressures (Fardouly et al., 2020; Pedalino & Camerini, 2022).

Instagram's aesthetic standards are often reinforced by influencers who curate their images to reflect an ideal lifestyle, which can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy among followers. Influencers frequently promote messages about dieting, exercise, and beauty standards that may be unattainable for most users, thereby fostering a culture of comparison that can lead to unhealthy behaviors and mental health issues (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). Mixed-methods research conducted by Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko highlights how influencers' portrayals of health and happiness can distort followers' perceptions of their own bodies and lifestyles, leading to a cycle of dissatisfaction and unhealthy behaviors (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). This is particularly concerning in the context of young users who are still developing their sense of identity and body image.

Moreover, the impact of Instagram on mental health is not uniform; its effects can vary significantly based on individual differences such as personality traits and pre-existing mental health conditions. For example, users with higher levels of social anxiety may experience greater negative effects from social

comparison on Instagram, as they are more likely to internalize the beauty and success standards presented on the platform (Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Mackson et al., 2019). In contrast, some studies suggest that certain types of content, such as body-positive posts, can have a positive effect on mood and body image, indicating that the type of content consumed plays a crucial role in determining Instagram's impact on mental health (Cohen et al., 2019).

The role of community and social support on Instagram also deserves attention. While the platform can foster feelings of isolation and inadequacy, it can also provide a sense of belonging and support, particularly for marginalized groups or individuals struggling with mental health issues (Unruh-Dawes et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2020). Users often find comfort in communities that share similar experiences, which can alleviate some of the negative psychological effects associated with aesthetic standards (Brown et al., 2020). However, the challenge lies in navigating the boundary between beneficial community engagement and harmful social comparison. Cultural context also influences how Instagram's aesthetic standards affect users. For example, in different cultural settings, the ideals promoted on Instagram may resonate differently, leading to varying psychological outcomes (Dhiman, 2024). In some cultures, the pressure to conform to Western beauty standards can be especially intense, resulting in body dissatisfaction and mental health issues among young women (Dhiman, 2024). This underscores the need for a culturally sensitive approach when researching the impact of social media on mental health. In addition to psychological impacts, the social dynamics created by Instagram can also contribute to the perpetuation of unrealistic aesthetic standards.

The platform's algorithm tends to prioritize content that receives high engagement, often promoting images that align with narrow definitions of beauty and success (DOROFEEVA, 2023). This creates a feedback loop where users are repeatedly exposed to idealized representations, further reinforcing these standards and harmful behaviors. The presence of "likes" and comments further complicates this dynamic, as users may tie their self-worth to the approval they receive on their posts, leading to increased anxiety and body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann et al., 2018). Furthermore, Instagram's impact on mental health is compounded by the prevalence of cyberbullying and negative interactions that can occur on the platform. Users may face criticism or harassment regarding their appearance or lifestyle choices, which can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and contribute to mental health struggles ("The Benefits

of Instagram on Teenagers' Mental Health", 2023; Moreton & Greenfield, 2022). This highlights the need for robust mental health support and educational initiatives that promote resilience and critical thinking among young users. In conclusion, the psychological and social impacts of Instagram's aesthetic standards are the result of a complex interaction between individual, cultural, and social factors. While the platform can foster community and support, it also presents significant risks to mental health through mechanisms of social comparison, exposure to idealized images, and pressure to conform to unrealistic standards. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes promoting media literacy, building positive online communities, and encouraging critical engagement with social media content.

Instagram as an Inclusive and Diverse Space for Self-Expression

Instagram functions as a multifaceted platform that fosters inclusivity and diversity, allowing users to express their identities in various ways. Due to its visual nature, Instagram encourages self-expression through images and videos, which can be particularly empowering for marginalized groups. Research indicates that social media platforms like Instagram provide users with the opportunity to build and showcase their identities, often leading to a sense of belonging and community among diverse user groups (Carlson & Kennedy, 2021; Goehring, 2019). This is especially relevant for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds, such as Indigenous communities and Muslim women, who use Instagram to articulate their cultural identities and engage in broader social conversations (Baulch & Pramiyanti, 2018; Carlson & Kennedy, 2021; Goehring, 2019).

The role of social media in identity formation is particularly evident among younger users, like Generation Z, who actively navigate how they present themselves in the digital space. Studies show that social media platforms provide these users with tools to experiment with and solidify their identities (Sitompul et al., 2023). Instagram's focus on visuals allows for creative expression, where users can curate their profiles to reflect their personal narratives, interests, and cultural backgrounds (Purnama et al., 2024; Putikadyanto et al., 2021). This process of identity formation is not only individualistic; it often involves community engagement and feedback, strengthening social bonds and collective identity (Alimuddin & Latepo, 2021; Wilska et al., 2023). Moreover, the intersection of technology and identity is crucial for understanding how users

interact with Instagram. The platform's algorithm and user-generated content shape the visibility of various identities, facilitating the promotion of inclusivity ("The Impact of Technology Identity on Student's Adoption of Social Media in Online Learning," 2023; Thomas et al., 2017). For instance, hashtags related to specific identities or movements can amplify voices that may be marginalized in mainstream media (Leaver & Highfield, 2018). This democratization of content creation allows users to challenge stereotypes and promote narratives that reflect their lived experiences, contributing to a more diverse and richer social media landscape (Ferrari, 2016; Jeyanthi, 2022).

The impact of social media on identity is also evident in how users navigate issues of representation and visibility. Many individuals use Instagram to respond to social norms and expectations, particularly around gender, race, and sexuality (Buss et al., 2021; Eleuteri et al., 2017). For example, transgender individuals often use social media to manage their identities and advocate for their rights, highlighting the platform's role as a space for activism and self-advocacy (Buss et al., 2021). This illustrates how Instagram not only functions as a space for personal expression but also as a catalyst for social change, allowing users to engage in dialogues that challenge oppressive structures (Carlson & Kennedy, 2021; Goehring, 2019). Additionally, Instagram's participatory nature allows for dynamic interactions between self-presentation and audience reception. Users often curate their content based on feedback from their followers, which can lead to a more nuanced understanding of their identities (Sparrman, 2021; Thomas et al., 2017). These interactions foster a sense of community and ownership, as users find solidarity in shared experiences and collective narratives (Alimuddin & Latepo, 2021; Wilska et al., 2023). As a result, the platform becomes a space where diverse identities can be celebrated and validated, contributing to broader discourse around inclusivity and representation in digital spaces (Carlson & Kennedy, 2021; P, 2024).

Beyond personal identity formation, Instagram also plays a vital role in shaping cultural identity. Users from diverse cultural backgrounds leverage the platform to express their heritage and traditions, often blending personal narratives with cultural stories (P, 2024; Baulch & Pramiyanti, 2018). This cultural expression is particularly important in a globalized world, where individuals strive to preserve their cultural identities while navigating multiple social contexts (Carlson & Kennedy, 2021; Goehring, 2019). Instagram's visual nature facilitates this process, allowing users to share images and videos that resonate

with their cultural experiences, thus enriching the diversity of the platform (Putikadyanto et al., 2021; Purnama, 2024). Additionally, the rise of cultural influencers on Instagram complicates the landscape of identity formation. Influencers often serve as role models for their followers, shaping perceptions of identity and self-presentation (Wilska et al., 2023; P, 2024). This dynamic can empower users to embrace their uniqueness, while also presenting challenges related to authenticity and representation (Jeyanthi, 2022; Wilska et al., 2023). The pressure to conform to certain aesthetic standards may lead to the homogenization of identities, but it also opens up opportunities for users to redefine these standards and advocate for more inclusive representation (Carlson & Kennedy, 2021; P, 2024).

The implications of Instagram as an inclusive and diverse space extend to broader social structures. The platform has the potential to influence public discourse on identity, promoting conversations about race, gender, and sexuality that might not occur in traditional media (Carlson & Kennedy, 2021; Goehring, 2019). By providing a space for marginalized voices to be heard, Instagram contributes to a more equitable representation of identities in society (Leaver & Highfield, 2016). Changes in representation can lead to greater awareness and understanding of the complexities surrounding identity, ultimately fostering a more inclusive social environment (Jeyanthi, 2022; P, 2024). In conclusion, Instagram serves as a vital platform for self-expression, particularly for individuals from diverse backgrounds. Its visual nature, combined with the participatory dynamics of social media, allows users to build and share their identities in ways that challenge social norms and promote inclusivity. As users navigate their identities within this digital space, they contribute to a broader cultural narrative that values diversity and encourages community engagement. The implications of this phenomenon are profound, as Instagram not only shapes individual identities but also influences public perceptions of diversity and representation in the digital age.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the visual aesthetics on Instagram have a significant impact on the formation of social identity and user behavior, particularly among teenagers and younger generations. Instagram, as a visual platform, not only provides space for individuals to express themselves but also serves as a powerful tool in shaping social norms, especially in terms of beauty,

lifestyle, and social status. Users are frequently exposed to idealized images, often depicted by influencers and digital celebrities, which often do not reflect reality or everyday life. This leads to a phenomenon known as social comparison, where individuals feel inadequate or not good enough if they fail to meet the beauty and lifestyle standards promoted on the platform. The psychological impact of this phenomenon can result in increased anxiety, depression, and body dissatisfaction, particularly among young users, especially women. On the other hand, Instagram also offers opportunities for marginalized individuals and groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community and certain ethnic groups, to express and celebrate their identities. The platform allows them to share cultural narratives and build supportive communities, ultimately enriching the diversity and inclusivity within the digital space. Overall, this research highlights the importance of being aware of the influence of visual aesthetics in social media on mental health and the formation of social identities. Therefore, it is crucial for users to develop better digital literacy and to promote more authentic and positive content on these platforms.

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