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**Editors:**
**Asst. Prof. Dr. Deniz Akçay**
**Res. Asst. Tugay Sarıkaya**
**Res. Asst. Onur Doğan**

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# READING NEW MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS THROUGH DRAMATURGICAL MODEL: The ANSWER to the QUESTION "WHICH ME?" in the CONTEXT of EXTERIORIZATION of MULTIPLE SELVES THROUGH INSTAGRAM

Burcu Kaya ERDEM*, Rabia Zamur TUNCER**

*All the world's a stage,*
*And all the men and women merely players...*

*William Shakespeare*

Who we are? What has the new media technology changed about our sense of "self" and "identity", or about who we really are? Do self-presentations on new media really reflect the "self" concept in its comprehensiveness? If not, which one is the real "self"? One of the most praised thinkers searching for the answers to these questions within the boundaries of communication sciences is Erving Goffman. Goffman's "Dramaturgical Model" containing the "metaphor of multiple identities" as part of social interactionism, providing an opportunity for a meaningful and practical reading of the currently popular academic subject – "examples of self-presentation in new media". Originating from artists, the sense of "self" increasingly recedes from socio-economic, political incentives to which we actually belong, thus our identities. Goffman's formulation of the sense of "self" following his theatrical analogy is significant in order to

* Assoc. Prof. Dr., Istanbul University, Faculty of Communication, E-mail: burcu.erdem@istanbul.edu.tr
** Res. Asst., Istanbul University, Faculty of Communication, Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey, E-mail: rabia.zamur@istanbul.edu.tr

overcome the difficulty of academically reading and elucidating the presentations of "self", which we tend to adapt and abandon as easily as dressing a costume. This study aims to provide the grounds to academically compare the real "self" and "self-presentation" on new media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. The study refers to Goffman's model suggesting that identity is not the sole product of the actor but derives from the dramatic relationship between the actor and the viewer (the influence that others have on one's worries, therefore their identity) and that individuals display a certain idea of "self" in order to be accepted, while contacting with others. A suitable sample for this study is Nusret Gökçe, a new media phenomenon whose new media fame lead to a discussion about the relationship between one's socio-economic circumstances and their fame gained through the new media presentation. Concordantly, Nusret Gökçe's Instagram adventure will be evaluated through netnographic reading within the context of Goffman's "Metaphor of Multiple Identities".

**Introduction**

One of the milestones in the academic works on identity in late modern times was the replacement of the question "Who am I?" which is the origin of multitudes of definitions regarding the identity concept, by the question "how is our identity shaped?" in a discursive way. Hall (2017: 4) focuses on the changing, fictional and fluid structure of identities in this new era and "he accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions."

According to Weeks (1998: 85), identity is "the problem of belonging that is related to what you share with some people in common and what differentiates you from others". According to Jenkins (2008: 17), "Identity can only be understood as a process

of 'being' or 'becoming'. One's identity – one's identities, indeed, for who we are is always multi-dimensional, singular *and* plural – is never a final or settled matter." Another definition deals with identity "… as an antiessentialist, disembodied and discursive process derives more recently from Deleuze's idea of identity as a 'becoming' filtered through authors such as Rosi Braidotti who discussed 'nomadic identity' in 1994 as practive involving 'the affirmation of fluid boundaries, a practice of the intervals, of the interfaces, and the interstices'". (Lister et. al., 2009: 210). Within this theoretical framework, identity is seen as anything but essential or fixed, on the contrary identity is understood as a fluid process in which 'self' and environment are constantly interacting.

It can be maintained that, as a fractured and multiple structure, identity is a permanent process of constituting / constructing. According to Hall (1990: 222), "Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation." As Stone mentions (as cited in Zhao et. al., 2008: 1817), individuals start constructing their identities on each front they come across with other individuals.

> The construction of an identity is therefore a public process that involves both the ''identity announcement" made by the individual claiming an identity and the ''identity placement" made by others who endorse the claimed identity, and an identity is established when there is a ''coincidence of placements and announcements.

The construction of an identity is actualized once the relevant announcement and placement coincide. Timisi (2005: 97-98) describes the individual' identity construction, which includes production of an identity and announcing it, or in other

words positioning of the identity as one wishes, as an excellent means of creating oneself.

Much of the early critical enthusiasm for new online forms of communication stemmed from its construction as in some way the technological embodiment of the then current ideas about fragmented, decentered identities. The identity which is associated with a body in the offline universe is constructed without a body in the online universe. Disembodied online encounters enable people to hide their undesired physical features, and anonymity allows individuals to re-create their biography and personality. In other words, the disembodied and anonymous online environment makes it possible for people to reinvent themselves through the production of new identities (Zhao et. al., 2008: 1818). In his article titled "Virtual Skin: Articulating Race in Cyberspace", Cameron Bailey (2001: 31) describes that the identities are selected and played, changed or assumed as given in the online world which clads a "virtual skin" to the participating individual with the instrument of the language. This is evident as "o*ne presents oneself* in language, as is done in all forms of writing, which require the multifaceted acts of identity construction, selective editing, and telling of lies." Timisi (2005: 97-98) says that, as an architect of identity, the individual wanders through the utopic fantasies of creating himself:

> All fixations which make a person "real" such as gender, race, age, ethnicity, sexual preferences, class and education are dissolved away. The language is transformed into a domain of boundless possibilities from the limited fixations of the body which speaks out itself. The person stops playing with his environment, with the facts regarding his/her position within the society, and reveals himself/herself to others together with his/her selected identities. The relationship between the electronic and organic bodies dissolve away within the boundaries of the language. One organic body is transformed into millions of electronic bodies.

"Regardless of the fact that our virtual identities function as our extensions, they were experienced and perceived as separated from those in embodied physical reality, or as the reality's other" (Guga, 2017). Guga points out to the fact that the discrete separation continues between our offline identities and our online identities, which breaks free from the boundaries of the real world and physical bodies.

According to Schroeder, the virtual culture not only makes the people forget all about their financial problems in this life, but also tempts them with its technologies that offer people to reexpress themselves and the virtual reality systems that offer people to live in artificially-developed virtual worlds, which are limited with dream powers of people. In brief, it seems to be completely possible to escape from the limitations of real life through entering a virtual life that does not exist in reality and an absolute illusion with the help of today's digital image technologies. (as cited in Özdemir & Çetinkaya, 2015: 603).

The central question that emerged from this position was "Who are we when we are online?". Through the telegraph, the telephone, mass media and now online communications we have learned that the self does not subsist only as an embodied presence but also as a networked presence. It is these shifts in the status and experience of identity that are at the heart of Stone's understanding of what she called the virtual age (as cited Lister et al., 2009: 210-211):

> By the virtual age I don't mean the hype of virtual reality technology, which is certainly of interesting enough it its own ways. Rather, I refer to the gradual change that has come over the relationship between sense of self and body, and the relationship between individual and group, during a particular span of time. I characterize this relationship as virtual because the accustomed grounding of social interaction in the physical facticity of human bodies is changing.

Identity is an important part of the self-concept. Rosenberg (1986; as cited in Zhao et al.), defined self-concept as the totality of a person's thoughts and feelings in reference to oneself as an object. Hood (2014: 139) defines the self as "something at the core of someone's existence ... the essence of who someone is." While digital self which contains multiple selves with visual and textual information structured in the digital media and offered to the digital observer/follower also in the digital media is a mask worn by the individual for the purpose of having a positive impression on digital others just like in the offline interactions.

> To differentiate it from the self that emerges from face-to-face interactions with others, I name the self-conceived online under the influence of the "E Audience" the "digital self." The digital self is constructed solely through online interaction without the intervention of nonverbal feedback and the influence of traditional environmental factors. (Zhao, 2005: 395).

The sentence "it is the existence of others which define who we are" as dealt with by Hood (2014: 315) under the subheading "We All Want A Second Life" in his book named "The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity", in which he analyzes the creation process of self in the social media, points out at the digital other. This is because individuals may, in an environment made possible by the online realm, present their digital selves woven with virtual codes to a certain group of watchers by traversing through multiple selves. Hood imagines the user of the social media as someone rediscovers his self, who doesn't get old, who doesn't get sick, who has got an excellent body, who leads extraordinary lives in extraordinary houses. Then, he gives striking examples on the difference between the selves created in the real life and those created in the virtual space. In these examples, the individual attempts to design a self which is desired by the digital others having the qualities as he/she choose of eliminates. Being popular, visible, liked and accepted-recognized are at stake in the digital self-design.

Poster describes this design as "The incursion of cyberspace into the lifeworld of young people in the Internet era creates a type of self that has been described as "decentered, dispersed, and multiplied in continuous instability" (as cited Zhao, 2005: 399). The digital self which faces us as a decentered communication domain, as pointed out by Timisi (2005: 97) is an *excellent possibility to create oneself* as the user may place the visual or textual content as he/she likes to its digital self-thanks to this possibility. The individual now owns his/her copy which is composed of his/her digital components.

According to Zhao (2005: 395), social sharing networks which enable the individual to construct oneself again and in a multiple way attributes four basic qualities to the digital self: The digital self that teenagers come to acquire through interactions with disembodied others in the anonymous online world can be described as (1) inwardly oriented, (2) narrative in nature, (3) retractable, and (4) multiplied. These four characteristics of the digital self are explained in turn below. All of these qualities cited by Zhao make sure that the individual decide by himself/herself the qualities which the individual wishes to reflect.

The fact that the online world is free from the physical space enables that the digital self is constructed by wearing some masks and the "hoped-for, possible self" is displayed at the showcase. "In a fully anonymous online world where accountability is lacking, the masks people wear offline are often thrown away and their ''true" selves come out of hiding, along with the tabooed and other suppressed identities. The nonymous online world, however, emerges as a third type of environment where people may tend to express what has been called the ''hoped-for possible selves" (as cited in Zhao et al., 2008).

According to Markus and Nurius, the actualization of the hoped-for possible self can be blocked by the presence of physical

gating features, such as an unattractive appearance or shyness. A person's conception of himself or herself can be distinguished by two categories: the ''now self,'' an identity established to others, and the ''possible self,'' an identity unknown to others. Possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming (1986: 954):

Possible selves derive from representations of the self in the past and they include representations of the self in the future. They are different and separable from the current or now selves, yet are intimately connected to them. Possible future selves, for example, are not just any set of imagined roles or states of being. Instead they represent specific, individually significant hopes, fears, and fantasies. I am now a psychologist, but I could be a restaurant owner, a marathon runner, a journalist, or the parent of a handicapped child. These possible selves are individualized or personalized, but they are also distinctly social. Many of these possible selves are the direct result of previous social comparisons in which the individual's own thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and behaviors have been contrasted to those of salient others. What others are now, I could become.

Individuals may thus place the visual or textual content, as they desire, to their virtual selves, and open it to the digital other. Cooley (1902), coined the idea of the "looking glass self," encapsulating the notion that we tend to take the role of the other toward ourselves (As cited in Buckingham, 2008: 106). Hood (as cited in Özdemir, 2014: 96) sums the self-illusion of Cooley as "I am not the person I think I am, I am not the person you think I am, I am the person I think you think I am". Each time we interact with the other, that other mirrors us and we present a different agreeable self-based on its reaction to us.

In fact, people have evolved from a mechanism where a few observe the majority into being a part of a mechanism where the majority is disciplined by observing the few. We are facing a multi-dimensional and high-paced world where Bentham's that famous panopticone infuses almost all parts of our life. In this

new stage, what is at stake is a structure in which every moving thing is observed by unseen supervisors and where being observed has become a commonplace by way of being exposed to digital look (and voluntarily) thanks to the electronic technologies. The mobility of the age we are living in eliminates the precision and all the boundaries, while the line between the digital self/selves individuals recreated and the offline self is becoming increasingly uncertain.

**"Digital Selves" As the New Media Representation of the "Multiple Selves", and Goffman's Dramaturgic Approach**

As the leading representative of the symbolic interaction theory, Goffman, in his book "Presentation of Self In Everyday Life" published in 1956, analyzes the presentation of "self" through the everyday life practices and interaction. He establishes the conceptual framework of his dramaturgic approach, which he builds through the social interaction in everyday life and in which he takes the self as a process structured over the roles, by using the concepts he borrowed from the drama (Goffman 1956: 13):

The perspective employed in this report is that of the theatrical performance; the principles derived are dramaturgical ones. I shall consider the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them.

According to Goffman, self is a dramatic conclusion which emerges on the stage where the presentation takes place. Goffman takes the "self" not as a stable structure but as a dynamic structure which is built by interaction with its environment and which includes presentation/staging of a certain role. In other words, Goffman (2009: 235) says that a nicely-decorated and

animated stage directs the watchers to attribute a self to the character portrayed, but this attribute – and this self – was not the cause but the result of the stage exhibited. This means that the self, as the character portrayed, is not an organic thing having a certain place and having the main destiny of being born, growing and dying; it is a dramatic effect arising out of the stage portrayed and the main worry is whether it will be convincing or not.

According to Goffman, the social actor always acts in the face of audience and does various performances to make a positive impression in their eyes. The person becomes socialized according to the expectations of society in a performance being displayed for any group and shows a tendency of presenting an idealized impression regarding her/himself (Özdemir & Çetinkaya, 2015: 606). "A 'performance' may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants… The pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions may be called a 'role' or 'routine.'" (Goffman, 1956: 8-9). The expected sets of behaviors associated with each definition of the situation are called "role". "Role expectations" are sets of beliefs and subjective assumptions that people have about the appropriate conduct for individuals occupying a particular status in a social situation. In each situation, people are influenced by different role expectations, so each definition has a "role set" associated with it, which is a group of complementary behavioral expectations (as cited in Grayson & Shulman, 2017: 53).

In Goffman's (1956: 90) words, each performance has three crucial roles: "those who perform (oyuncular); those performed to (seyirciler); and outsiders who neither perform in the show nor observe it." So it can be said that web pages, social networks, personal blogs etc., provide more opportunity for 'embodiment' though less for interaction. People can present photos of

themselves (and their children), favorite graphics, snatches of speech, and access to a labyrinth of their interests and contacts. The homepage provides a locus for electronic self (Miller, 1995). Hence, "cyberspace have become a new sphere of interaction where users, free from the limits imposed by the physical body, merge with digital environment and begin an endless game of re-creating the self in unpredictable synergetic flows" (Guga, 2017).

Goffman uses the term "front"[1] for the general and unchangingly operating part of the performance staged by the individual, and the term "stage"[2] for the place where the performance is exhibited. "Goffman distinguishes here between 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' behavior. When 'on stage,' for example in a workplace or in a social gathering, individuals tend to conform to standardized definitions of the situation and of their individual role within it, playing out a kind of ritual. Back stage, they have the opportunity to be more honest: the impressions created while on stage may be directly contradicted, and the team of performers may disagree with each other" (Buckingham, 2008: 6).

Members of the "audience" generally see one of these regions, called the "front stage," while the other region, called the "back stage," is generally hidden. Thus, in the back stage, people can take actions that, if seen, would contradict a desired impress ion. For example, a waiter who behaves abjectly at a diner's table can pass through kitchen doors and then, safely out of view, enter

[1] "Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance" (Goffman, 1956: 13).

[2] "Stage, involving furniture, decor, physical lay-out, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it. A setting tends to stay put, geographically speaking, so that those who would use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place and must terminate their performance when they leave it" (Goffman, 1956: 13).

a backstage region where his show of deference can be dropped (as cited in Grayson & Shulman, 2017: 54).

"Front-stage" is the area where the individual develops a self for others. And "Back-stage" is the unknown and private area where the suppressed realities come alive and where no performance is staged. The self in the private area for which there is no obligation to give any account, where the individual does not observe his/her actions and which is a relaxation/escape area may contradict with the "projected self" (digital self) on the stage (Timisi, 2005: 102). That's why the principles of the role to be played by the individual as the owner of the self, reflect the social values and expectations. That means all the roles aimed at creating a self are exhibited in consideration with a certain impression that needs to be created and in compliance with the standards of the society.

In a non-anonymous offline world, individuals will be in a state where the performance requires to avoid or conceal the actions conforming social norms .As Goffman states, social performance of individuals is socialized in accordance with the expectations of society and individuals have a tendency of making an idealized impression. Thus, when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values to the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole (Goffman, 1956: 22-23). And the presentation of the self in an anonymous online world affords an appropriate environment to create possible selves and these possible selves are structured by the individual himself. But one needs to state here that, in environments not wholly anonymous as made possible by Web 2.0. Technology, the digital self of each internet user bears qualities from his/her offline self, and contacts with the relationships included to the real life as named by Zhao as "anchored relationship".

However, the online world is not entirely anonymous. Family members, neighbors, colleagues, and other offline acquaintances also communicate with each other on the Internet. This type of offline-based online relationships is called here ‘‘anchored relationships.” The level of anchorage varies depending on the degrees to which online partners are identifiable and locatable offline. The most important identifying information includes a person’s legal name, residential location, and institutional affiliations. If an online environment can verify such personal information and also make it public, then interpersonal relationships are fully anchored in that environment. An anchored relationship is thus a ‘‘nonymous” (i.e., the opposite of ‘‘anonymous”) relationship. The concept of anchored online relationships as used here refers to individuals who are nonymous online but may or may not know each other offline (Zhao et al., 2008: 1818).

Face-to-face identity is constructed under a variety of constraints. Under these circumstances, identity announcement is influenced by physical settings (e.g., furniture and decoration) and ‘‘personal front” (e.g., appearance, language, and manner) to generate a desired impression on others. (as cited in Zhao, 2008: 1817). Furthermore, personal attributes often control identity placement. It is therefore very difficult for individuals to claim identities and create impressions that are inconsistent with their projected traits. In contrast, online environments enable individuals to engage in a controlled setting where an ideal identity can be conveyed (Mehdizadeh, 2010: 358).

“Goffman’s thesis is that self-presentation is the intentional and tangible component of identity. Social actors engage in complex intraself negotiations to project a desired impression. This impression is maintained through consistently performing coherent and complementary behaviors” (Jensen & Gilly, 2003: 387). “Because of such impression management, events may occur within the interaction which contradict, discredit, or

otherwise throw doubt upon the actor's projection of himself" (**Glaser & Strauss,** 1964: 674). In this sense, our 'selves' are presented for the purpose of interacting with others, and are developed and maintained with the cooperation of others through the interaction.

Individuals target to create an impression in the minds of others. "Impression management is a part of a larger process where people seek to define a situation through their behavior. People seek to define social situations by using contextual cues from the environment around them. Social norms emerge out of situational definitions, as people learn to read cues from the environment and the people present to understand what is appropriate behavior"(Buckingham, 2008: 128). To speak with the Goffman's terminology, the player also tries to manage the impression he/she creates on the audience during a performance.

Goffman (2009: 16-18) mentions two types of observation as revealed on a configured or a non-configured stage: the impression given and the impression emanated. The impression given includes oral symbols or everything that may replace them, while the impression emanated covers a great variety of actions assessed with the expectation considered with the expectation that they may offer some findings about the player. Goffman problematizes the impression emanated which is more dramatic and contextual, and which is assumed to be not targeted.

From this point of view, as a sociologist analyzing the social interaction, Goffman's explanation that the people live their own lives just like actors making roles on the stage found its best meaning in the use of the social media unlike in any other era of the communication history and by using the comfort of the construction of anonymous identity. In other words, it is possible to maintain that the approach created by Goffman based on the offline relations can be adapted to the online environment.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, You Tube, etc. each of which has their own, peculiar networking forms or, to say it in other words, peculiar forms of presenting selves, are the instrument of designing the digital self by direct and/or indirect means. This means that, in online – non-anonymous in particular – environments, too, the individuals present themselves to, and open themselves for interaction with, the population of the observers/followers who are also connected and online by sharing their pictures, areas of interest, favorite posts, etc. While doing this, just like in offline interactions, they target to create a positive impression on a certain population of observers. Hence, the interaction in an online environment becomes real between the user who prepares the content and the observer/follower who receives it.

The self of the user as reflected in his/her Facebook, Twitter or Instagram profile is an extension of his/her identity and/or projection of his/her "hoped-for" identity. Accordingly, the personal showcase of the Instagram users in Turkey created by using the visual and textual materials selected for the purpose of creating the impression they wish and thus to present their self, correspond to the proscenium which is intended to reflect the desired impressions and the posts which are waiting to be approved. There is no doubt that the visual materials like pictures and videos are important as an indicator of the identity which the individual wishes to reflect. In other words, there is sure a message, i.e. an approved announcement of identity, in the examined profile pictures and videos.

**A Dramaturgic "Digital Self" Representation Example in Social Media: Instagram Adventure of Nusret Gökçe**

Increasingly higher use of the social media in everyday life practices and its positioning as part of the social life and even in some cases as the life-transforming agent has brought with it

many social, political, economic and psychological discussion in the context of the techno-societal structures.

The compromise on social media as the most widespread, the most functional and at the same time the most controversial practice of the new media is that the social media has got a power which equals – if not transcends – the power of the traditional media in terms of interpersonal communication, free-time activities, development of and spreading the social relations, create public opinions, and - above all – creating an identity, and presenting this identity to the public and making it more common. In this respect, there are innumerable examples that the social media can transform into a presentation tool for the creation of self and identity as adopted by the users.

According to Göker (2015: 404), who assess the social media in the context of a productivity criterion: "A person's identity, i.e. whom a person is, is highly controversial, and the constituents of the identity are highly complex. However, the social media eases the self and identity presentations of the individuals by putting the identity and self within a certain framework. For example, Facebook allows the individuals to present some clues on their identity by way of the profiles and cover pictures. Additionally, the individuals' capacity to define themselves is extended by opening the attribute boxes such as "hobbies", "book read", "religious faith", "political view, birthplace, "occupation", "education", "languages spoken", etc. This constitutes productive means as specified by Facebook for the individuals to get to know and identify one another. In this respect, social media facilitates representation of the identities on the one hand, and draws the framework of the virtual identities on the other. However, the misleading sides of these identities are also very strong.

The problematic of this study comes out at this point. This is because the social media practices lead to the illusion that the

framework for the identities are genuinely created, on the one hand, and make it possible the production and perpetuation of the inherently "vagrant" and "amphibious" identities which are "hard to tell their belonging", and which are "weird"-"misleading" just for that, on the other hand. In fact, there are such representations of identity in the social media that they – as if they are really capable of creating out of nothing and annihilating completely - exist, are liked and similarly vanish in the same media.

According to Tomlinson (1999: 110), who - based on the concept of "non-places" which he reached from Auge's narration - deals with the social media as a form of super-modernity "non-places in terms of its structure full of uncertainties regarding the physical location, relational character and presentation of identity, "non-places are… bleak locales of contemporary modernity: places of solitude (even in the presence of others), silence, anonymity, alienation and impermanence".

In the context of media representations, social media is the most controversial locale of this universe where increasingly more crumbs and illusion and less information and reality is produced. The most controversial subjects of this locale should of course be about the representations of "virtual identity as a form of self-expression".

The most general definition for virtual identity in the context of the field writing: Virtual identity is a person's identity with which the person satisfies himself/herself by expressing in the virtual environment the peculiarities regarding his/her character, qualities and living in the society which are shaped in the context of the social, economic, ideological or sexual perspective. The reason for adding problems to this definition stems from a psychological acceptance. Accordingly; since the people embrace a medium which has the potential to spread the attitudes and opinions via internet in an easy and express fashion

which attitudes and opinions they could not show in the real life, they feel with their sharing ever closer than before to overcoming the suppression, otherization and the encompassing norms in their subconscious, to belonging to a group/conditions which are impossible in the real life or realizing their expectation to reach their targets easily.

While main arguments in early periods regarding the virtual identity focused on the dangers of the hidden and misleading identities; body of literature subsequently shifted to the danger of the people getting stuck in between the virtual and real identities or getting lost after digressing from their real or basic values, which is also known as personality clash or identity conflict. There are many globalized examples of this new way of presentation of identity matching up with the problems that may stem from the acceptance of multiple identities emerging in the context of Goffman's dramaturgic theory in Turkey too, and as one of the most current of these examples, the identity which Nusret Gökçe constructed and popularized in the social media is the model of this study. According to the said theory, in a non-anonymous offline world, individuals will need to dispense with or conceal the actions not conforming with the social norms on stages where the performances are displayed. Whereas, the presentation of self in an anonymous online world offers conditions appropriate for creating possible selves, and these possible selves are structured by the individual in person. This is such a structuring that the conflict of "possibilities" between the real and virtual identities is seen very clearly, but still it stands there like a magic that forces us to follow. This is very much like the enchanting and provoking potential of the soap opera characters who reach conditions which the economic or social conditions would normally never allow and whispering us "you can make it too".

Nusret Gökçe was born in Erzurum in 1983 as one of the 5 children of a mineworker. He quit school when he was at sixth

grade of primary school. After working as apprentice at a butcher in Istanbul for a long time, he was recruited by a major butcher where he worked together with 10 master butchers actively for 18 hours a day. Nusret owes his proficiency in chopping meat to his heavy work in this butcher where he had to finish a large amount of meat within a short time. He started working in butcher-restaurant concept first at the shopping center İstinye Park in 2007. As a young entrepreneur, he wanted to see other restaurant concepts all around the world so he worked first in Argentina and then in the United States. He worked in the most famous four restaurants of New York without any salary, and the menu he created was published in New York Times. Once he returned to Turkey, Nusret picked Mithat Erdem, long-time friend of his, as angel investor and laid the foundation of his first restaurant with him. He continued operating this restaurant alone until 2009, and Doğuş Group became a partner of it in 2012. Nusret, who worked with a salary of TL 1800 in the past, is now the owner of a butcher-meat restaurants chain (with restaurants in Ankara, Bodrum, Marmaris, Istanbul and Dubai) employing 400 people where foreign customers come to dine in their private jets. And he owes this fame and success to social media more than his professional skills.

## Conclusion

## The Instagram Adventure of "Nusr-et" and its Dramaturgic Concept as an Attempt of a Netnographic Reading

Netnography is a reading method coined by Kozinets (1998: 366) which is described as: "a new qualitative method devised specifically to investigate the consumer behavior of cultures and communities present on the Internet".

Our means of communication evolved together with the web revolution, and upon the acceptance of this revolution by the vast majority of the society, the means of socialization and the media used for setting up identities and emanating these identities have also started changing dimension and digitalizing. In line with the size of this change, the works aimed at investigating the intellectual and practical effects of this change on individuals and societies are diverse. As a matter of fact, this social and cultural revolution brought about by the technology has already penetrated into the lives of one billion people on earth, and assuming that so much data is natural and not processed, one would feel obliged to study the effects of this on individuals, identities and societies. Netnography is a functional reading method for this investigation process, and, in this study, it will be used as a functional but intermediary working step by way of subjecting the creation and prevalence processes of a social media production identity to a critical reading through the referred group behavior beyond observing, documenting and interpreting the group behaviors in the internet in their own setting.

In this regard, a netnographic reading may prove extremely functional for the Instagram followers of Nusret Gökçe, who started as a butcher apprentice born in Erzurum, Turkey from an orthodox Turkish family who quit his education at sixth grade, and who is presently world-famous.

With his Instagram account Nusr_et#Saltbae which enjoys a fame way beyond his success in his work and profession, Nusret has become a global phenomenon with 4.9 million visitors at all parts of the world (including countries where Nusr-et Steakhouses have got no branch) while he himself follows only 173 people.




The word Saltbae, which is universally known as the nickname of Nusret, can be explained as follows: #Saltbae is a label created in lieu with a post of the famous Turkish restaurant operator Nusret in his Instagram page after the post was watched more than 7 million times and shared countless many times and was named for the salting style of Nusret. The word is consisted of “salt” and “bae”. Bae is a short form for “babe” as used for a baby as well as for a person who is liked much. But bae is also an abbreviation for, “before anyone else”.

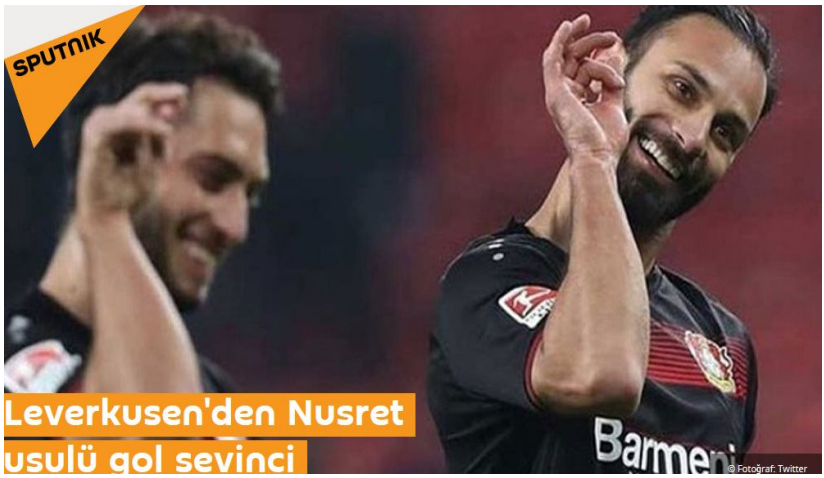





Each post of Nusret which displays his body as well as his strange movements and the places he visits, sometimes accompanied with the celebrities he is photographed with and mostly using the meat as a decoration material beyond his mastery on the subject of meat is viewed by millions each time and receives tens of thousands of likes from diverse places. The followers of the related identity include millions of ordinary people from tens of countries most of whom did not have any business relationship with Nusret and so did not receive any service from Nusret. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that almost all of 173 people followed by Nusret include celebrities and famous people from the business, politics, popular culture and sports such as Queen Rania Al Abdullah, CarlosEduardo, Ronan Keating, Moza bint Nasser, Roberto Mancini, Barack Obama, Robin van Persie, Caroline Fleming, Didier Drogba, Wesley Sneijder, Hacı Sabancı, Mesut Özdil, Alp Kırşan…, and the number of followers of Nusret is more than almost all of these people. The "meat-salting gesture" of this social media identity each post of whom brings to mind questions such as "is there such an entrepreneur in the real life?" or "What is the percentage of his success?" has been repeated by countless many celebrities across the world who posted their shoots repeating the gesture or wearing t-shirts showing his gesture. After hitting the headlines in the British media and being the guest of James Corden in his 'Late Late Show' program in the United States who said 'this man could be Christian Grey of the red meat' due to his meat-salting

movement following the period of high popularity in the social media, the fame of Nusret increased more and more.






The identity of Nusr-et which in the context of netnographic reading looks unaccustomed or irrational from the viewpoint of his present position both in terms of his economy-politics and a business manager and which is created and staged as one of the many identities just in the context of Goffman's dramaturgic theory deserves countless many discussion. This is because although Goffman maintained that the self as an enacted character was a dramatic influence arising out of the stage enacted and that the worry of whether it is credible or not is quite dominant, the modern times' social media is an entirely new media which is followed to the extent this worry is absent and even the identities lose their credibility.

In this media which is conceived as the most appropriate media for the individuals' exhibit or "display" of their pompous consumption behaviors today, what is important and valuable is the potential of presenting to the individuals one's lifestyle in a bizarre and unaccustomed ways and to observe the lives of others, and not to earn credibility as long as coinciding with the identities. This recognition becomes much more meaningful in the social media instruments such as Instagram where the participants are mostly in lower and medium income group.

These virtual identities in which Nusret is among the most successful examples are also a proof that the social media give the individuals the possibility to earn fame and increase their status via the profiles they create. But then who are the consumers of this identity presentation and how are their cultural profiles? The answer to this question will give us some clues about the cultural practices that create the virtual identities of the social media and about the potentials and possibilities of these identities.




**The Turkish comments entered to the randomly selected photographs from Nusret's most "liked" Instagram posts typically are expressions showing envy, cursing, criticizing and sexual messages such as "I'm gonna be like that", "See the guy is shorter than me but look at the girls he is screwing", "Man why don't you reply me, I made you earn so much", "All in all he is a butcher, but what is this?", "Should we start a meat business too?" which show that the follower population is mostly young people from the lower or middle income group and prove their purpose of following this identity.**

**Videos posted on YouTube with titles such as "LIVE LIKE A NUSRET" and #SaltBae" exemplify this profile and the expectations of its follower.**

**Just like almost all famous virtual identities in the social media, Nusret is not playing only his work in the dramaturgic stage he enacted, but sells a lifestyle and the dreams of striking gold and the identity that may result from such a dream.**

**The photograph he posted with the words "The time I could not afford to buy even one t-shirt from Tommy Hilfiger is not far. But now, I can take picture with his owner. Thank goodness" is only the proof of the cliff between the real and virtual identity.**

**Similarly, his reply to a question in his interview with Ayşe Arman on 25 January 2017 testifies his perspective regarding his social media identity: "...My real business is not the show, it is the meat. All this happens because I am good in the meat business. But merely doing my work well would not be enough. We are living in such a world that the work you do should also have a story. You are supposed to sell that story, you are supposed to enchant people, and you are supposed to attract them. All of us are supposed to create a brand out of ourselves. There is no bread to anyone otherwise!... I am a primary school graduate. I have no further education. I have developed myself in time. I am still trying to develop myself further. But I do not forget where I come from at all".**

**Ayşe Arman's comments on Nusret** show how the dramaturgic approach in which Goffman deals with the self as a structured process by way of the roles come to life in the social media**: "He is not the least arrogant type as they tell he was; he is utterly humble. He is not a man like Johnny Depp either. *He is a man***

***who starts his role when he sees a camera or a mobile phone, that's all.***". The only difference is Goffman's assertion that **the principles of the role to be played by the individual as the owner of the self, reflect the social values and expectations. The boundaries of the identities created in the social media are drawn completely by the expectations of the person taking stage, not by the social values.**

And as long as the existing individual or social problems of the people from the social, economic, ideological or sexual perspectives clog their capacity to express themselves just like a mountain, the distance and the degree of irrationality will further increase between the real and virtual identities. Besides, to make this development continue with an increasing speed, it would be sufficient that the followers of the virtual identities have a feeling of deprivation and an expectation "to get away from all difficulties" with regards to otherization, economic hardships, etc., and not only the owners of the virtual identities. This is because the expectations of a virtual identity holder from a social media platform are to receive more liking, recognition, proving oneself to a group, etc., and by using these purposes which are all related with the courtesy of the followers, and there is no barrier before the virtual identity holder to show his/her identity much more different, exaggerated, informed, cultured, richer, etc. Only the person whose content is approved by the people around – getting likes in the social media platforms – continue to post the similar messages, and tries to manage the other people's impressions on his identity by developing different presentation tactics. In other words, the profile/identity founded by the individual in the social media is fed mainly by the envy and curiosity of its followers.

Therefore, the ability to read the roles played or identities displayed at the Goffman's dramaturgic stage can be possible and have a meaning only by way of netnographic readings which deal with the social media consumers within their cultural context.

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