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Digital Photography Trends in Self-identity Construction among the Youth

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Abstract:

Picture taking seems no longer predominantly an act of memory intended to safeguard the heritage of a family's pictorial portal. However, it is increasingly becoming a tool for an individual's identity formation and communication. Self-identity construction is an integral component of society, including human interactions, interpersonal connections, relationships, and strong attachment stamps. This expressively incorporates the entirety of one's thoughts and emotions, creating this visual representation of themselves. The study aims to find out how today's youth use photography as a tool in the identity construction of the self. The research adopted the qualitative approach and exploratory research design for the study. However, the interpretivism approach was adopted to provide novel insight into the study. It was revealed from the analyses that perspectives of the youth on photography trends have lots of insights, and digital photography has been the activator of these trends. The paper concludes that photography may represent a true reflection of reality and, in some cases, memory. However, photography trends have come to a point where reflection goes beyond the limit by providing the youth the option to enhance and reconstruct their appearance through photo editing. It also concludes that photography has become a new tool that enables individuals to control the outcome of images. Special emphasis is placed on the youth because they are more exposed to the technological know-how of some of these photographic tools that construct identity through an improved photography trend.

Keywords: Digital photography, communication, media, and self-identity construction

1. Introduction

In contemporary digital photography, photographs can now be shot considerably more readily. Pictures may be shared nearly instantly through the internet to audiences beyond viewing in albums and frames for memory preservation in the earlier years (Crossouard, 2012). Chris (2004) points out that the role and function of western digital photography seem to have changed substantially. Adding to this claim, taking digital photographs is also acknowledged by van Dijck (2008) to no longer be considered as primarily an act of memory intended to safeguard a family's pictorial heritage. Still, it is increasingly becoming a tool for an individual's identity formation and communication. The subject of identity construction is an integral component of the human species. This has been studied and explored in many different venues. In the arts, many have used various materials and techniques to convey their own or projected identity of self and society via visual depiction. Photography as an art is no exception. Hence, self-identity construction using digital photography centres on the use of identity, resulting in a visual self-examination of the past, present, and future (Dowling, 2011). Dowling believes that self-identity construction through digital photography trend depends on the symbolic construction of identity, which entails the expressive metaphorical or symbolic portrayal of thoughts or feelings, resulting in a conceptual visual representation. It is not surprising that the changing role of digital photography, as expressed by these scholars' support of photography and self-identity construction depictions, finds its way to the internet through images of individuals and group posts. Enjoyed by many, particularly the youth, its reception is embraced (Barker & Rodriguez, 2019). It is also evident in the submission of van Dijck (2008), who evidently convinces by noting that digital cameras, camera phones, photo blogs, and other multi-purpose devices seem to promote the use of images as the preferred idiom of a new generation of users.

With these requisites explored, it is interesting to know that scholars have written extensively on the photography of people (Ownby, 2012), selfies (Barker & Rodriguez, 2019), studio photography (Gruber, 2021; Tomaszkiwicz, 1984), portraiture, and photoshoots (Williams, 1987). However, over recent years, the resurfacing of photography trends and its connection to self-identity construction among the youth viewed on the internet (via social media platforms), especially in Ghana, has not witnessed the attention of researchers. So far, there has been almost no discussion on this topic in the Ghanaian frame. There has also been no reliable evidence for studies that seek to investigate photography trends in self-

identity construction among the youth in Ghana to understand the viewpoint as active partakers; hence, a premise for an inquiry for this study. Therefore, this study investigates how Ghanaian youth use photography to establish their personalities at a given time and space, particularly, in conjunction with new fashion trends, birthdays, and organised events or occasions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Photography and Identity Construction

Digital photography has helped humans make sense of themselves and their surroundings since its inception. In some ways, every digital photography is recognised to examine individual identity or location. The camera is used to admire, evaluate, and enhance our understanding of ourselves and others throughout history (van Dijck, 2008). Photographers working today are still concerned with how we place ourselves in relation to our environment. Despite digital photography's prominence as a tool for memory and recollection, other uses have become inherent since it became famous as a household technology. Many researchers (van Dijck, 2008; Crossouard, 2012; Dowling, 2011; Ownby, 2012; Gülaçti, 2018; Schiano, Chen, & Isaac, 2017) have associated photography as a tool for building an identity. The attribution of photography and its building link to identity construction is also interpreted in different dimensions. This review attempts to analyse identity construction from diverse viewpoints where digital photography is used as the primary tool to fuel the identity construction of subjects.

Identity construction is a multi-step process in which people come to a clear and distinct understanding of themselves and their identities. To understand identity construction through a means of visual representation (digital photography), Dowling (2011) identifies the artist (photographer) to utilise the concept of identity construction through their art. For example, in photography, a selected theme depends on what the photographer and subject(s) want to create, which triggers an examination of the subject (individual/group) in the retrospection of the past, assuming the current or continuous life of living.

Interestingly, Gülaçti (2018) draws a convincing reason by acknowledging that digital photography sits in the era of technological development tools and its integration into communication devices with easy and accessible sharing platforms. Gülaçti (2018) identifies the internet as the support of communication and meets the demand for 21st-century living. Noting its reliance on the youth across the globe (van Dijck, 2008), Gülaçti (2018) asserts that it is now a language of a new generation of people who use it to form a 'digital' identity to communicate instantly. As Gülaçti (2008) expresses, language can be deduced as a system understood using conventional means of expression. People, particularly the youth, use available technological support (digital photography) to express themselves using various appearance and visual supporting means, which affect a general pattern of how individuals project themselves. They are generally termed as trends since they are embraced and replicated in different ways individuals use to construct an identity worth sharing amongst themselves.

Harrison (2002) observes digital photography and identity construction from the individual or group inclusiveness point of view. He recognises that the function of digital photography has moved from family representation focus to self-presentation. Harrison's field study acquiesces a significant shift from personal photography being bound up with memory and commemoration towards pictures as a form of identity formation. There is now a focus on the 'self-figure' digital photography that permits various ways of presenting an individual. These significant poses, facilities or structures of impact, places of impact and recognition, and the current or relevant places of interest become the available means that help the individual construct an identity. This is traceable from social media platforms where people share significant information about themselves (Gülaçti, 2008).

Still, on recognising the 'self-figure,' Dowling (2012) points the growing usage as tools for communication and experience. Dowling identifies this digital photography output format supported by novel instruments of identity formation, particularly in allowing users to manipulate their images. Popularly known as software, they allow all possible inclusion of visual means, which solidifies the identity construction phase. Adobe Photoshop, Canva, Adobe Lightroom, and others remain tools that support identity construction to a higher level of impact. van Dijck (2008) now characterises the use and function of the camera in recent times to produce images that bear easy manipulability, individuality, communicability, versatility, and distribution. As van Dijck (2008) noted, assessing these critically, every inclusion can be a step to be factored in identity construction using digital photography. This is because manipulating images generated by the camera is now modern practice for amateur photographers using professional and smartphone cameras.



*Figure 1: High-End Image Skin Treatment on Human Subjects Using Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Lightroom
Source: Researchers Image Bank (2022)*

On the other hand, supported technologies give individuals enough time and sessions for photography for memory preservation and as a means of storage where the individual could make self-assessments with time. In other dimensions, images produced from digital photography are purposed for accessible communication, such as:

- Sharing of ideas on visited locations,
- Expression of an affair,
- Socialisation,
- Reporting on situations, and
- Purposefully created images for message dissemination via the internet

Versatility and distribution as expressed become the means of creating digital photos to be used as enhanced and the ease of distribution across platforms with easy access for likeability of expressions for viral and possible trends.

2.2. Digital Photography Trends and Identity Construction

The world is rapidly changing, and digital photography is swiftly catching up. New ideas, conduct, and tags are upending society and forming new cultural trends. Minimalism and diversity are still trailing trends captured in modern digital photography to represent the diversity of people who inhabit the world (Toss, 2022). These constructs remain the open basis of photography subjects (individuals) in their expressions.

Some minimalistic digital photography trends have looked at honest imagery towards realistic portrayals of youth and old. Toss (2022) exemplifies from his submission indicating the snapping of candid pictures, even if they can or are somehow stylised. Digital photography trends are also witnessed in promoting a more visceral, unfiltered, or unedited approach to beauty. The focus of such photographs is seen in photo trends, with subjects presenting freckles, pimples, lentigo, wrinkles, and scars. Thus, there is a new way of identity construction of self-accepting of flaws and unconventional beauty standards.



*Figure 2: Sample of Candid Shots
Source: Pexels (2022)*

Another interesting digital photo trend Toss (2022) put forward is the selfie style. That is, identified in photos of people taking pictures of themselves. In this trend, a selfie is significant, whether on campus, around a property, home, or vacation spot. Hess (2015) sees the selfie as an assemblage of dimensions contributing to identity construction. Hess indicates that a selfie is a version of the self with its poses speaking to the performance of the self. This, he believes, could be perceived differently by different publics. The impressions that selfies create, which show an amount of the self, the occasion, and the location, could signal imprints enabling viewers to construct particular identities or associated perceptions. However, Warren and Fassett (2014) offer a contradicting view to Hess (2015) and argue the view of an identity as a composition of experiences as influenced by the social, political, and cultural factors that frame and mark those experiences, whereas perceptions are social constructions. Perception might not fit the frame of trying to answer the question "who am I?" which offers specific thoughts on what identity is. Surprisingly, Goffman's theory of the self (the consciousness of your own identity) (1959) suggests that one cannot 'perform or construct' identity without an audience, as these structures of society automatically influence the individual. It can be suggested from theory and assertions that perception plays a role in constructing identity by accepting, shaping, or ignoring perception to make or unmake you in the perspective of adding up to your identity.



Figure 3: Capturing Selfies among Individuals
Source: Researchers Image Bank (2022)

Another recent global digital trend supporting photography and identity construction tools is "film photography". It is identified as a subculture and as the future of digital media. It is an exciting and precise way of illustrating, verifying, and presenting an individual's identity. Developing its traits from still photography, it has become an avenue for impartation, transformation, fun, and hobby expressions (Toss, 2022).

This review concludes by agreeing with the view of Barthes (1981), who agrees by seeing through the efforts of a subject in photography to put up the best smile and trying to look pleased during the shooting. Choosing the best photographs for editing on the phone or the computer and deleting the undesirable ones shows an interplay of the aspects that constitute identity construction through photography.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

This study revolved around the subject of identity construction. Identified variables from the study included identity construction and digital photography, a resource that propels its construction. This established a level of reasoning that ensured the selection of a theory. Thus, there is an approach that facilitates the comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation.

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) was adopted as a lens to study the ideas within which this study belongs. The identity perspective serves as a foundation that underpins the social identity theory to understand social identity theory. Fearon (1999) expressed that identity is a concept that assumes both sameness and difference in that it categorises people based on their commonalities but ultimately references personal uniqueness. To Taylor (2015), identity situates an entity

within a social world, facilitating the construction, defining characteristics, and relationships with other entities. Identity evokes a set of cognitions, feelings, and behaviours associated with such traits and relationships.

The SIT, as adopted by this study, is explained by McLeod (2019) to be first proposed by Henri Tajfel in 1979. It is considered one of the most remarkable contributions to psychology. The SIT notes down groups (e.g., social class, family, football team). The group people belong to is an essential source of pride and self-esteem. Tajfel proposed that groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world.

According to Taylor (2015), research on identity construction will likely investigate the processes by which some people come to be seen as "others", taken for granted and normal. It extends to the practices through which such representations of groups or categories of people are communicated, contested, and reinforced. From this perspective, this study is no exception. The social identity theory sets a baseline for groupings or categorisations of what people or individuals are or feel about themselves. This idea similarly relates to the focus of identity construction studies on the supposed groups for relations by subjects. This study's direction of digital photography trends suggests an array of projections adopted through expressions by subjects in digital photographs. Through digital photography trends, people can express themselves in ideas and concepts that fall and project the groups to which people or individuals are or feel they belong, as expounded by Tajfel (1979). With digital photography trends available across social media platforms today, it supports some people to come to be seen as "others" or regular or taken for granted, as shared by Taylor (2015). Considering digital photography's resources, photos produced are varied in formats for easy circulation and reach. It enables subjects' presentation of constructed self and identity. Thus, it will allow viewers to see such created images for possible reactions. Taylor (2015) concludes on this take, sharing that the underlying assumption, which is not always made explicitly, is that the fixed or essential identity of "who I am" is being voiced so that a participant's talk can be heard or read as direct evidence of their constructed identity, as its expression or reliable reflection.

3. Methodology

This study's general plan and investigation structure adopt the exploratory research design, which seeks to explore the study topic with varying levels of depth (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative research approach provides such a basis (Crotty, 2013) hence its adoption for this study. The qualitative research approach also provides a deeper insight rather than a broader one, especially when the nature of the study is exploratory (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Therefore, the heart of the study sought to provide novel insights and permits the adoption of an interpretivism approach. It utilises subjectivism epistemology for knowledge discovery (Creswell, 2003).

This study focuses on identity construction through digital photography as used among the youth. For this reason, the population for the study was students of the University of Education, Winneba. While there are no closely defined rules for sample size (Baum, 2000), sampling in qualitative research usually relies on small numbers to study in-depth and in detail (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Per this position, the considered sample was five (5) students who were found to be using identifiable landmarks on campus (Students' Centre, University Bookshop, Jophus Anamoah-Mensah Conference Centre, Faculty Block, John Agyekum Kufuor Building) as places to take photographs. Hence the drawing of a sample adopts simple random sampling techniques. Qualitative data were solicited with an interview guide as a data collection instrument used in a face-to-face interview. Data gathered were analysed using thematic data analysis.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Three themes emerged after analysis in the presentation of data for this study. The themes presented capture the findings of this present study. It includes establishing the perspectives of the youth on digital photography trends and how they use that to a project and portray their identities within which the newly constructed self is seen. The second theme shares insights into the base understanding of the youth considering taking photos as a means of self-identity construction. The third theme concentrates on the specific elements in digital photography and trends which is relied upon to establish identity. The five interviewees were the five individuals who willingly contributed to the study.

4.1. Youth Perspectives on Photography Trends and Self-Identity Construction

This theme explores the perspectives of how Ghanaian youth and how they use digital photography trends to establish their self-identities. Qualitative data analysis revealed insightful perspectives on this theme, reflecting the present study's objective. It was again crucial that such perspectives are explored in detail as it presents various indicators that help to strengthen and achieve the objective.

The first interviewee (aged 28) revealed how he first identified digital photography trends. He understands trends to present varied opportunities to show off himself, enabling him to establish his identity. He was explicit as he shared that:

"Although I am always ready, something should call for my attention. Of course, trends do. You check your social media photos, and everyone is doing it."

This suggests that his focus thrives on trends that he deems appropriate and appealing. The first respondent finds them convincing to accept and do what others are doing or following. In an attempt to understand what constitutes the attention factor, the first interviewee shares examples of trends he has been through taking digital photos. He notes that:

"For the past like three years, if there is anything to miss, you know not my birthday pictures. Even if I don't celebrate, I choose to take pictures. Haven't you realised it is the order of the day? I will be seen not ordinarily like this."

The second interviewee (aged 32) from his submission revealed that photography trends spike the interest in taking part in what every photo lover is doing today. The interviewee was very particular about his interest and what he wanted others to see as he partook in a photo trend.

"I will take a picture personally or again follow a trend because of my interest in a particular thing. I would wish to show the class and that I was there some. You know something like that."

To the interviewee, interest contributes to identifying some trends and portraying a personality that he wants to show. The interviewee (aged 30) shared his view that he takes part in specific trends if it is associated with personal development. Further probes reveal personal development cited by the interviewee to be explained by taking pictures focusing on influential personalities. He attempts to portray the level of such people in society by associating himself with such people and taking photos. He shares an interest in how he builds up an identity in how he is found around them, which trends to him. This gets him sky-rocketing numbers of followers and likes on social media. He notes from his submission stating that:

"It is quite interesting for people to know that you were there too. Not only that, but you were with this or that person". Photo trends of the show who you know; I show them off with myself in the picture. I actually have pictures and videos with a number of influential people. It builds upon who I am. I am seen that well. I have a huge following because of that."

The fourth interviewee's opinion shared a different perspective from what had been shared by earlier interviewees. She maintains a candid opinion by looking up to certain essentials that align with the demands of trends, as it still meets her freedom in taking photos. These items mentioned generally account for the content of the photo, which can communicate who she is and where she has been. Thus, it becomes easier to show as evidence of association of oneself to establish an impression to be seen by all. She stated that:

"For personal pictures, I keep them, yeah, but for those I want people to really see, I think a lot of people do that these days. Three things would account for that. Generally, the dress I am wearing, especially if it's new, is the setting and atmosphere of where I find myself."

Comparatively, the first and fourth interviewees' views share a similarity in the frame of what is available with where they find themselves to help portray their identities in their photos. This resonates with the path and requirements of photography trends to a great extent.

4.2. Digital Photography's Function and the User Standpoint

Another set of interesting perspectives that bothered digital photography trends was the need to capture and identify the base understanding of the youth considering taking photos as a means of self-identity construction. The five respondents revealed independent views, which shed more intriguing dimensions. The fifth respondent indicated that photography gives the perfect platform and means for self-presentation, identity, and points of reflection.

"Photography will show your presence. Let's say an event or an activity is done, and you want to share that you were actually present. It will take a photo to say it is that simple. Where you were and how you were can be that visible for someone to say that's you."

"Most importantly, too, memories because it's easy to reflect on things you are seeing. Instagram will show you all pictures of women with protruding stomachs during pregnancy. It's a common trend. But they show that to tell a story after delivery, yeah."

The second respondent also reiterated how photos help keep memories. However, his twist was the inclusion of certain things he finds around, which he never misses to tell a better story when reflecting.

"Taking pictures basically helps you at a particular time to keep memories. I look out for especially elements around that centre on what is happening at that particular time. Anything interesting, situations catch me a lot, and I can see them again sometime if captured."

The fourth respondent re-echoes the second respondent's view. She shares that:

"Photography is necessary because some moments cannot be taken or redone. So, this particular time why don't I make good use of the moment and take photos."

Insights from the first respondent on photography's function were tied to capturing a moment's importance. He stressed the swift happening of moments in which photography provides the means of "freezing moments". In his words he said:

"So, some moments are very timely. If you miss it, it will be challenging to get the same or something that will be equal to it. With photography, you can capture it"

The finding from this theme establishes that individuals who take photographs are much more aware of their reasons and actions based on their understanding of the use of photography. In connecting the dots, individual users first understand digital photography to provide the ultimate means of capturing moments that include trends. It enables them to capture their personalities to create a constructed identity in viewers' minds over time. Therefore, the visibility of photo trends is possible with photography. It can be suggested that participants of digital photography trends in constructing their identities make conscious efforts to position themselves to be seen how they want to be seen.

4.3. Digital Photography and Trends: Elements of Support towards Identity Construction

The emerged theme after analysis reveals how the youth focus on digital photography trends to construct an identity through photos. However, specific elements that help build identity are explored to reveal insights.

The first interviewee shared some specific elements that he believes add credence to how his photos are received when shared. He believes this contributes to the building of impressions of identity and offers a convincing reason why certain places or facilities do so for his full expression of who he is. The interviewee was of the view that:

"The venue or location is my absolute inspiration. It really adds a body of belief to my images. Let me cite an example of this. Be able to enter the Jubilee House in Ghana for one reason or another. This is a place we deem respectable. Certainly, you may want to take a picture even if forbidden. So how I present myself in my photos is easily believed. I will find it to be an honour to see myself there. How will I be seen? Massive, I guess!"

The fifth interviewee similarly shares the point of view expressed above. The two interviewees from their responses believe that specific venues or locations that have gained prominence in their photos add to how they are seen by others who are factored in the construction of identity (van Dijck, 2008). In her words, she shared that:

"To me, location or venue inspires me to take more photos. I have paid money at hotels just to take pictures at designated places for birthdays and pre-wedding photos. Let's say I am invited to have lunch with a friend at Kempinski. Eii! Why won't I take a picture? The location is exactly my point."

The third interviewee also believes that the venue inspires him to take more photos. He said that:

"Everyone likes nice things, and if the location is nice in my pictures, I will not hesitate to take more and more pictures at the venue more and more."

An attempt is made to inquire what exactly at the location contributes to photos of trends to gain insights from the location. The interviewee was of the view that:

"In a general sense, there should be that wow factor. It is something that should catch my attention. Probably, myself, my attire or apparel at the venue. The layout of the location, lighting setups, etc. If I am wearing my best clothes, it could be something I want everyone to see. So, the wow factor here can be the location, at the location or myself as an individual."

The fifth interviewee also adds the environmental factor, available artistic impressions, and works, as well as the popularity of the place. These she voices out to complement most appearances of photos of people who partake in trending photos, with some portraying more impact than others.

"Sometimes, you may find a garden and a poolside. These are the certain things at the location that attracts you. Maybe there is a sculpture piece, some pergolas somewhere. A popular place, too, though. It easily triggers thoughts and raises the question: why don't I take a picture? I do search for amazing places with my photographer. We pay for it because the ambiance alone adds a lot to yourself in your pic."

The third respondent's submission adds to the information the fourth and first respondents put forward. His exposition is seen to create mental images of the identity he wants to put across and be seen as such.

"Yes, maybe there is this statue or monument and even the calibre of people around. In some ways, the photos taken might raise my status to a certain level, and thus people are going to see me differently. I mean those who get to see my photos."

From another artistic position, the second interviewee believes that light is that element through which every other impression is seen. Interestingly, his view resonates with the world view of photography which dwells so much on the light in its different exposures to capture and create images. He indicated that:

"I think for me, light is the inspiration. It is the main trigger, like that's the main element there. With light, there are so many colours. So, these two elements being put together create dramatic scenes worth given the urge to take more photos. The trend of night shots at events is made possible with lights."

In constructing an identity, an effort is made to determine how photography and its associated trends have influenced what people do. Thus, trying to find out if the photography trends have forced or impacted and, in one way or the other, a hardly unrecognised section of an individual in day-to-day activities. This finding was essential to affirm the reasons for the everyday life of taking photos and how it shapes the construction and bearing of an identity.

The third interviewee revealed how taking photos and following everyday trends in photography has made him more conscious when dealing with reality. He believes that the activities and presentations of an individual could show elements of manipulation.

"Photography has opened my eyes to see the different sides of reality. It is evident that photos can be manipulated. Not trusting people and everything you see [He laughed]. More especially how humans, products, and other things are presented. Social media is worse, I tell you."

To the fourth interviewee taking photos has become an everyday thing. Her view establishes the importance of digital photography as established in the study of Harrison (2012). For evidence and accessibility, the interviewee describes this as possibly helpful to works people do as proof of relief and trust.

"...of course, I have been influenced. Taking photos in itself has become a trend now in Ghana. I have something to put down as evidence in whatever way. It is a reference material and accessible when I need it. It is the order of the day because of the humans we have nowadays."

The fifth interviewee also believes that she wants whatever she does to be seen, and taking a photo is the way to go. She again pays attention to occasions and locations she finds herself, possibly for everyone to see her on social media with hopes of becoming a lifestyle blogger.

"Yes, yes... yes, because I turn to take pictures on any occasion, I find myself. I wish to be seen online to have that impression of documenting my life. Taking photos of everything around me really plays a mental game. People know you as this, and that can be truly who you are."

From a photographer's perspective, the first interviewee shared a reflection on the positive means of taking digital photos. He believed that the way people want to be seen is the main reason for a trend being engaged. Given this, these demands from clients have taught him to appreciate the need to offer attention in all efforts needed to bring out the best in taking digital photos. He notes the worth and how appreciable it is for digital photos to have all the good qualities for viewership on social media. He shares in his words that:

"...the paths keep coming in every now and then. We, the youth, call it trending and, as photographers, take photographs, thus following the order of the day. This has taught me to appreciate details. I look at any picture I encounter online with a different perspective. From the little I have learned, people wish to be seen in certain ways, and we help put them there by taking photos."

5. Discussion of Findings

This present study pays attention to the construction of self-identity through digital photography. Therefore, digital cameras, camera phones, and other multi-purpose devices are used. The recent resurfacing of photography use and the development of photo trends among the youth in Ghana. The evident use of photography is witnessed in social media use. However, with no reliable evidence from studies and discussions, this study attempts to investigate photography trends in self-identity construction among the youth who are active partakers in Ghana. For this present study, the data collected was guided by the theoretical focus of social identity theory (SIT). As Taylor (2015) put forward, the SIT is situated within the social world, facilitating the construction and definition of characters.

A finding of this study shows that the active participation of the youth in digital photography trends is a result of varied chances these trends provide in given different avenues of impressions and self-presentation, which builds up in the multi-step process of self-identity construction. To the youth, digital photography trends remain an active means of ensuring constant engagement in the use of digital photography. For example, a trend would likely promote engagement with public figures, birthday shoots, pre-wedding shoots, selfies, and realistic portrayals. This finding corroborates the finding of Tajfel's (1979) study, which identified digital photography trends to allow people to express themselves in ideas and concepts which the people easily relate to.

This study also found how digital photography trends propel the youth to build an association with society's influential personalities. The finding was identified with the interest of building impressions with these influential persons to blend in to construct a self-identity. A possible explanation for this finding can be deduced from the interest in being seen with these influential persons. This finding is also confirmed in the literature of van Dijck (2008), who shares:

- How digital photography trends influence means of association with motifs and
- How the individual wishes to be seen

The finding relates to the study of Taylor (2015). Taylor, in his study, asserted that studies on identity construction are likely to investigate the process by which some people come to be seen by others. A link is identified between the frame of this study and the literature.

The respondents also revealed their understanding of photography to the youth. Photography was identified as a means of self-presentation, identity, and points of reflection. In addition, the finding established the youth to be aware of their reasons and actions based on what photography is. It suggests that the youth, as active participants in photography trends, make conscious efforts to position themselves for their continual self-identity construction.

It is interesting to know that the current study found some elements of digital photography trends which contribute to the portrayal of subjects towards self-identity construction. Among the elements identified were the location of the shoot, new apparel and fashion trends, monuments, moments, luxurious things, and influential persons of society. These elements shared by respondents were indicated to build up on their class and raise expectations as they contribute to constructing the new self. These are also in accord with van Dijck (2008), who postulates that these elements are a means of subject enhancement in photography.

Another prominent finding from this study was how digital photography promoted the use of technology as a means of personality enhancement to position subjects in the frame of self-identity. The finding laid stress on how supportive software like Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Lightroom, Canva, and several mobile applications add means of enhancement. To the respondents (youth), this accounts for building unique identities and impressions using flexible means of adding more to the subject's physique and exterior environments. These contribute to the overall look and appearance.

In an unanticipated relation, the respondents revealed how they also pay attention to the possibilities of these supporting technologies. They stressed how it had become an enticing means to follow digital photography trends as it ensures the possibility of things wished to be seen in a picture. The finding is affirmed in the literature of Dowling (2012), who identified the growing usage of supportive technology tools for communication experience. Dowling emphasized these technologies like the computer responsive software allowing users to manipulate their images. His subsequent submission reveals how the software solidifies the self-identity construction phase using the subject's perspectives and the photographer's experience.

6. Conclusions, Recommendations, Suggestions for Future Studies

In conclusion, the research finding presented here contributes to the knowledge of photography trends and self-identity construction. The findings suggest so through investigating the resurfaced photography trends and their connection to self-identity construction among the youth. This study's outcome reveals the youth's convincing origin as active participants in photography trends. Thus, this was due to the varied chances and avenues photography trends

provide for impressions and self-presentation, which builds up to establishing a self-idolisation and self-identity. Possible means of associations with influential personalities of society, insights into photography trends, elements of self-identity construction, and supportive technologies were among the findings that propelled the youth to construct their self-identity through photos they take. Based on these findings, it could also be concluded that the youth recognize that the subject of self-identity construction does not take place after taking photos and publishing them. Instead, it should be comprehensible that it is a multi-step and continual process of self-identification and presentation that triggers impressions for a construct of the self.

From the outcome and insights from the present study, it is recommended that a possible inclusion of a more significant number of the youth would avail themselves for a similar study so that a more divergent viewpoint in exploring self-identity construction through digital photography trends is projected.

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