

## The Construction of Social Media Reality in The Social Dilemma Film (2020)

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### ABSTRACT

This research explores the construction of social media reality in the documentary film "The Social Dilemma" by applying Robert N. Entman's framing theory. With a focus on descriptive qualitative approach, the study aims to understand how the film presents, constructs, and conveys the reality of social media usage. Framing analysis involves four main concepts: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and treatment recommendations. The findings highlight that the film sharply emphasizes the negative impact of social media polarization, especially concerning information uncertainty and the risk of misinformation, using narrative and dramatization. The film summarizes concrete solutions, including reducing notifications, disabling applications, and limiting screen time, to address the adverse effects of social media. Thus, this research provides profound insights into the construction of social media reality and underscores the urgency of regulating and ethically evaluating algorithms in digital technology.

**Keywords:** *Framing Analysis, Film, Construction of Reality, Social Media*

### INTRODUCTION

Currently, social media activities have become very important for all groups, from adults to children who certainly need social media in their lives. Social media allows many people to interact with each other widely. In addition, social media can enhance social interaction, provide unlimited access to information, fulfill social and emotional support needs. However, it cannot be denied that social media also has unwanted negative impacts. (et al in Andini, 2020). Thus social media plays a crucial role in the lives of the millennial generation. It is not surprising that social media can influence the perspective of many people. In the current era of digitalization and global connectivity, social media has emerged as one of the primary ways to obtain and disseminate information globally. This has led to changes at many levels and age groups in society.

The current surge in internet users has driven developers to produce various new innovations. Many applications have been created to meet human socialization needs. A

real example of this innovation is the emergence of various online social networking applications such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, and others, which allow humans to connect with each other (Hasbullah & Pramonojati, 2022).

People tend to spend more time on social media platforms as the main means of maintaining social connections. The development of social media in Indonesia has a significant influence on most users, both in the form of positive and negative impacts. However, in this case, it cannot be denied that the positive impact of social media itself is less than its negative impact. From a positive perspective, the development of social media has brought positive impacts by making communication and social interaction easier, even when we are far from others.

On the other hand, the significant use of social media also has a major negative impact on education. One of them can be seen from the many children who use social media not for learning purposes, but to spend time on social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and others. This can make children neglect their tasks, lack discipline, and easily copy the work of others. Moreover, the issue that arises in the world of education is the presence of cyberbullying. In this case, all groups, from children, teenagers, to adults, can become victims or even perpetrators.

Certain issues on social media platforms can also quickly spread widely and trigger various diverse responses. Debates between different opinions cannot be avoided, and often there is content that contains hate speech and derogatory words. In addition, polite norms are also ignored, and this platform often becomes a place for expressing religious sentiments, hatred, and offense.

In some cases, social media makes its users addicted and difficult to distance themselves from their gadgets, so that this behavior can change their mindset and even disturb the mental health of the users. Sometimes, we see the fact that people sit close together, but they seem distant. This happens because each individual is busy with their smartphones and exploring the virtual world through social media. This phenomenon is known as "the near becomes distant". Many people are aware of the dangers of this technology and social media, but stopping it is not easy because it has become part of the progress of this era. (Khoerunnisa, 2022)

In reality, social media is able to divide and cause polarization among the users involved. Through the central control of social media in enhancing user comfort by forming limited communities, it actually leads users to be alienated from interaction with the general public. As a result, users become trapped and spend more time within the scope of social media.

The current reality of social media encompasses various issues that have undergone changes. Starting from the use of visual and video content that has become a trend, especially on Instagram and TikTok. Algorithms designed to adjust content to user preferences and behaviors are becoming more complex, creating a more personal and engaging experience. However, privacy and data security issues are also a major concern for users. The issue of spreading fake information (hoaxes) and controversies also continues to color social media, sparking debates about lies and truths in the online world. In addition, social media continues to play a significant role in political affairs and activism.

Wael Ghonim, as quoted in (Rahmawati, 2018), previously asserted that the internet can bring freedom, but eventually expressed regret over the emergence of division and polarization. This dynamic shows that polarization has become a major issue affecting the high level of social media users. Posts supporting one group, highlighting the mistakes of another group, or even openly challenging or confronting another group.

Furthermore, it is also a concern that many users are exposed to propaganda information. Therefore, efforts need to be made to educate to reduce the negative impacts that may arise in the future. The large number of social media users has provided an overview of the significant impact that social media has on society, including in Indonesia.

The delivery of messages in communication requires communication tools that allow messages to be delivered quickly and simultaneously. Currently, various types of media have been developed. Message delivery is no longer limited to print and electronic media, messages can also be delivered to the public through online platforms. There are various approaches in the process of delivering messages to the public. Film is one of the effective tools for understanding media needs and effectively conveying messages to the

audience. Exposure to issue global society is often conveyed through movies, not only through print and electronic media (Lubis & Puspasari, 2023). Messages are packaged to create a new construction of reality.

In the context of mass communication, film has great power to influence its audience. Therefore, film is often used as a tool for socialization to convey important messages to increase public awareness. According to Graeme Turner, film not only reflects reality, but also depicts or represents existing reality. Film reconstructs reality by referring to the cultural values, traditions, and customs that shape it (Sobur, 2017).

Given the presented overview, researchers are interested in examining the construction of social media reality in the film "The Social Dilemma," which is considered the cause of the proliferation of social issues. In this regard, it is said that all social media user activities are controlled by extraordinary human-made awareness calculations. These calculations direct each user to consume content tailored to the scope of friendship, geographical region, and individual interests, thus concentrating on the virtual entertainment stage. The film also provides an understanding of the various social impacts that arise from the use of social media in the public domain.

The film "The Social Dilemma" attempts to depict concerns about social media. This film highlights the roles of people bound in interconnected lifestyles, especially the young generation who are very dynamic in using social networks. Through its story, this film opens an understanding that every human activity related to networking and social media can be monitored, recorded, and estimated by a system explicitly intended for those reasons. "The Social Dilemma" film has received many awards and achievements, indicating recognition of its value and impact, and the film also highlights issues specifically related to the ongoing situation, where the expansion of collaboration in informal communities has become a reality in contemporary culture.

In the film, it is depicted that there is a unique algorithm that filters social media user activities in general, which is called human-made artificial intelligence or Artificial Intelligence. This algorithm allows each user to get a determined content page that is

tailored to the environment, geography, and individual habits, where users generally focus on using social media (Hasbullah & Pramonojati, 2022).

### LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORY

According to the researcher's findings, the film "The Social Dilemma" is a worthy subject for study. At the 2020 Boulder International Film Festival, the film also received the "Impact Film Award". According to the researcher, this film, released in September 2020, is very intriguing because it successfully addresses issues regarding popular digital technology in today's era. Additionally, "The Social Dilemma" serves as a warning about the significant influence of social media usage on humanity. The film received a rating of 8/10 from IMDB (Internet Movie Database) because it is highly recommended for documentary film enthusiasts. Furthermore, the film presents insights from experts and former technology industry workers who provide valuable perspectives on how algorithms and product designs in social media can influence user behavior and thinking patterns. Among them are former Google Ethical Designer (Tristan Harris), former Pinterest Director (Tim Kendall), Jaron Lanier as an author on social media issues, and many other figures with experience working in internet companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

The researcher aims to examine how the film constructs social media. "The Social Dilemma" film is the subject of the research because it addresses relevant and important issues in the current digital era. There is no doubt that the film has a specific message to convey to the public by director Jeff Orlowski, and the film also highlights the construction of negative impacts of social media on society. Therefore, the researcher believes that framing analysis is a better method to assist researchers in conducting the study. The above explains the basis of this research on how the framework of social media reality is constructed in the film "The Social Dilemma". Building on the background described above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled "Construction of Social Media Reality in the Film 'The Social Dilemma'".

This research aims to analyze the construction of social media reality presented in the context of the documentary film "The Social Dilemma." In this context, the study will

investigate the presentation, framing, and narrative in the film to understand how the reality of social media is constructed and conveyed to the audience.

*The Construction of Social Media Reality in the Film "The Social Dilemma"*

This research utilizes Robert N. Entman's framing theory to explore the construction of social media reality in the film "The Social Dilemma." The concept of framing highlights how the selection, presentation, and emphasis on certain aspects of media reality can shape the views and understanding of the audience (Entman, 2022). In depicting the impact of social media usage, the film successfully identifies issues related to systemic global changes due to digital platforms. Key speakers like Tim Kendall provide deep insights, creating awareness of the potential significant impacts in various aspects of global life. Additionally the film visualizes the process of emptying or articulating thoughts related to the impact of social media usage.

Scenes between key speakers Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin open a window to consider concrete steps in designing more ethical technology. Harris's statement regarding expanding the definition of technology success creates an opportunity to reconsider achievement metrics in the tech industry, emphasizing user and societal well-being as top priorities.

In presenting the reality of digital platform implementation, the film provides an overview of the discrepancy between initial expectations and reality. Alex Roetter's statement highlights the difference between technology design and its actual impact, forming an objective understanding of social media implementation. The film also discusses the cultural impact of social media, providing a basis for recognizing remediation options. This is in line with the theory of mass media social construction, where the idea that "Mass media social construction emphasizes that fast data flows and wide communication reach can help frame social constructions in the real world, and this constructed reality can also impact public judgment settings" (Apriadi, 2012).

Ethical questions arise about how society can manage the outcomes of human interactions reflected in social media. Proposed solutions include educational approaches and efforts to increase awareness to promote positive and ethical language

and cultural usage. Furthermore, concrete outcomes of human objectification are reflected in culture and language, which are integral parts of the objective reality of social media within society.

The depiction process of female speaker characters like Cathy O'Neil in the film reveals concerns about society's dependency on technology and the social isolation's impact, demonstrating how social pressure and family dynamics play a role in how individuals internalize technology. Dialogues between these characters elaborate on these impacts more deeply. Furthermore, society's response and regulation towards the impacts of social media also reflect the internalization process. Female speakers expressing concerns about society's dependence on technology shape an internal understanding of social and emotional consequences.

In this context, humans become products of social media construction, creating a more complex understanding of the continually evolving social reality. Therefore, within the framework of internalization, a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological impacts of social media creates a foundation for designing healing and protection measures. Society is faced with the need to develop collective efforts in building digital literacy and mental health to reduce the negative impacts of how social media reality is internalized by individuals.

From the research findings, it can be concluded that it aligns with the theory advocated by Berger (2021), which states that reality itself is not formed logically, nor is it something bestowed by God. Instead, it is formed and developed. With such an understanding, reality appears double or plural. Everyone can have different constructions of a reality. Each person who has certain experiences, preferences, specific education, and social or socializing environments will interpret that social reality with their own constructions.

By summarizing the elements of externalization, objectification, and internalization, the film creates a narrative depth about the unforeseen consequences of digital technology in contemporary society. Entman's framing concept is used to provide visual representation and shape the construction of social media reality that reflects the

complexity and challenges of digital technology usage, in line with Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman's theory of social construction (Berger & Luckman, 2021).

Overall, the improvement steps proposed in the "Treatment Recommendation" stage create a framework for engaging various stakeholders, including technology companies, governments, education, and society, in building a healthier, ethical, and sustainable social media ecosystem. By threading together the elements of externalization, objectification, and internalization, this film not only provides a critical overview of the issues but also stimulates constructive thinking to respond to challenges in the era of social media.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To obtain accurate and comprehensive data and information in this research, the researcher has chosen the method to be applied. This research will use a qualitative approach that is descriptive in nature. The primary focus of the approach in this research is constructivism with the constructivism paradigm as the theoretical foundation. The qualitative approach is used to understand the construction of social media reality in the film "The Social Dilemma". In this research, the researcher uses the framing analysis tool model by Robert N. Entman to achieve the research objectives.

The analysis involves four main concepts, namely Define problem, Diagnose causes, Make moral, Treatment recommendation. The main goal is to analyze how the text is created by highlighting the parts that are considered important or emphasized in the creation of media texts. Thus, this research aims to map and analyze the construction of social media reality in the documentary film. The researcher will collect data through documentation. In examining this research, the researcher uses data analysis techniques, namely framing analysis method. The framing analysis method is an improvement of the media content analysis research method.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

"The Social Dilemma" film sharply highlights the negative impacts of polarization phenomena in the world of social media, particularly concerning information that is not always reliable. This research applies Robert N. Entman's framing theory to analyze how the film shapes the reality

of social media. Scenes in the film depict that social media polarization creates an atmosphere where the truth of information becomes relative, increasing the risk of misinformation with specific impacts on the teenage environment. Through the concept of social construction, the film reflects how society is involved in creating a shared reality related to human behavior and interactions in the world of social media. However, in this article, the framing analysis of the movie "Social Dilemma" using Robert N. Entman's model, only reveals two main functions: defining the problem and diagnosing the cause in each scene. The following is the analysis table:

**Table 1. Scene Defining The Problem In The Movie, The Social Dilemma**

Scene	Findings
 <p>Tim Kendall : "I mean, there are meaningful systemic changes happening around the world because of all these positive platforms. I think we're naive about the other side of that coin."</p>	<p>This narrative creates an awareness of the need for deep reflection on the role of technology in formulating systemic change and how understanding these impacts can guide future decisions and actions. With a straightforward yet assertive style, Kendall raises concerns that require a thorough evaluation of the complex dynamics involved in the utilization of digital platforms.</p>
 <p>Alex Roetter: "Yes, after these were released, they took on a life of their own. The way they're being used doesn't match our expectations."</p>	<p>This statement highlights the significant shift between the initial expectations of digital platforms and the reality of their implementation. Roetter, with his experience in the tech industry, provides a revealing perspective that, after launch, the platform takes a direction that does not always match the original intention. Usage that does not match the initial expectations creates a mismatch between the design of the platform and its actual impact.</p>
	<p>The statement creates a frame that highlights the escalation of threats faced by the global community due to the proliferation of fake news. By choosing words like "more advanced" and "threatening," the news presenter clearly</p>

News Presenter: "Berita palsu menjadi lebih maju dan mengancam masyarakat di seluruh dunia"

details the seriousness of the issue. This statement not only captures the viewer's attention but also provides a narrative of the escalating negative impact of social media and technology on people's perceptions of information.



Scene showing Tristan Harris presenting the negative impact of technology.

In this dialog, Harris clearly identifies a series of problems associated with today's tech industry. By detailing a number of issues involving data security, psychological impact, and political influence, Harris creates a framing that illustrates the complexity of the problem. The use of rhetorical questions at the end of his dialog creates a frame of mind that encourages viewers to reflect and seek a deeper understanding of the root causes of the problems faced in the context of technology.



A scene showing Ben's family relying on the telephone is accompanied by television news.



This scene reflects a deep concern about society's high level of dependence on technology and the consequent social isolation it can cause. This creates an understanding that technology, which is supposed to be a tool to connect, can play a role in deepening social divides and conflicts.



Scene showing Cassandra, Ben, and Mrs. Ben having a dialog about phone dependency.

There is a family engaged in a dialog that illustrates the complex dynamics of technology use in everyday life. This scene creates a picture of social pressure, family perspectives, and the role of technology in everyday life.

Table 2. Scene Diagnose Cause In The Movie, The Social Dilemma

Scene	Findings
 <p>Aza Raskin: "It's a bit trite to say it now, but since we don't pay for the products we use, advertisers pay for the products we use. Advertisers are the customers; we are the ones being sold to."</p>	<p>The explanation provides an in-depth look at how algorithms work, especially in the context of polarization, which plays a key role in guiding user interactions and preferences. Algorithms designed to maintain user attention tend to create polarized information spaces, reinforcing existing views and ignoring a diversity of perspectives.</p>
 <p>Interview scene with Tristan Harris and Justin Rosenstein</p>	<p>It reveals a deep understanding of the causal factors in the public's perception of large tech companies. Harris tweeted, "A lot of people think Google is just a search box and Facebook is just a place to see how my friends are doing." This statement underscores the narrow perception of the true role of these tech companies.</p>
 <p>Justin Rosenstein: "When you think about how some of these companies work, it starts to make sense."</p>	<p>This scene highlights that a lack of transparency in algorithms, especially those that contribute to polarization, can create a limited perception of the reality of information presented by large tech companies.</p>
 <p>Sandy Parakilas: "So, all the data that we're giving out all the time, it's being</p>	<p>The scene provides insight into the lack of human oversight in data management, with an emphasis on the ever-growing level of sophistication of predictive systems. In the context of algorithms, Parakilas details how this process can create uncertainty and risks to user privacy. The narrative highlights that the main driver of these privacy concerns lies with</p>

fed into a system that's barely supervised by humans, which keeps making better and better predictions."

automated systems, particularly increasingly sophisticated polarization algorithms, which have the potential to be misused without adequate oversight.



Scene showing Ben, who is unaware that his data can be sold on social media, and an interview with Aza Raskin.

The scene provides a visual illustration that reinforces the statement, inviting viewers to reflect on the broader impact of business models that rely on polarizing algorithms. Awareness of the complex relationship between business models, algorithms, and polarization helps understand why social media platforms can reinforce existing viewpoints, creating challenges in diversifying the information users receive.



Scene of interview with Cathy O'Neil

A scene featuring a statement by Cathy O'Neil, a data scientist and author of "Weapons of Math Destruction", reveals an in-depth analysis of the impact of algorithms in modern technology. O'Neil emphatically states, "In my opinion, algorithms are opinions embedded in code and they are not objective. Algorithms are optimized according to a definition of success. If a commercial company creates an algorithm to define success for them, that's commercial interest. Usually profit."



Scene showing Ben receiving punishment for not using the phone.

A scene of Ben's behavior shows a tendency towards mobile phone dependency. When faced with a situation where his phone was broken and his mother set a usage limit, Ben could not resist checking his notifications after a few days. In this context, it appears that design techniques and algorithms that are optimized to optimize the user's interaction with their device are triggering dependency behavior.



In the scene, Rosenstein illustrates how algorithms designed to maximize user engagement can generate information that does not necessarily reflect the truth or scientific facts about climate change. The personalized presentation of search results based on an individual's location and interests creates

a scene involving Justin Rosenstein in the movie "The Social Dilemma,"

a narrative that can undermine an objective understanding of complex issues like climate change.



McNamee: "Over time, we have the false impression that everyone agrees with us because everyone on the newsfeed looks like us."

This scene directly refers to the impact of algorithms that filter content to create information bubbles that reinforce existing views. This analysis underscores how polarizing algorithms can affect individuals' perceptions of public opinion, creating an environment where people can be trapped in a false view of the extent to which they agree or disagree with others on an issue.



Scene showing the demonstrators followed by Ben

The interview with Roger McNamee is reinforced by the description of Ben's behavior, in which he is actively engaged in social media and exposed to information that reinforces his own views. Ben tends to ignore alternative viewpoints because social media algorithms direct him to content that matches his predispositions. This illustrates the "echo chamber" phenomenon, which creates a narrow understanding and limits individual views.

In the context of further discussion on "Construction of Media Social Reality in the Film 'The Social Dilemma'", it can be done by detailing how the film builds its narrative. The concept of social construction, as proposed by Peter L. Berger, will be the basis for understanding how the social reality of media in films reflects human interaction and behavior. Thus, the following discussion will discuss in depth how the film "The Social Dilemma" constructs the social reality of the media through externalization, objectivation, and internalization, and how this relates to the social construction theory introduced by Berger and Luckmann.

"Externalization" occurs when individuals realize and acknowledge the negative impact of social media, as reflected in their recommendations. "Objectivation" is seen in the concrete steps taken, such as notification reduction, turning off notifications, or deleting apps. "Internalization" occurs when individuals adopt these solutions as part of

their daily lives, creating a reality where personal responsibility for social media use becomes normalized. By assembling elements of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, the film not only provides a critical overview of the existing problems but also stimulates constructive thinking to answer the challenges in the era of social media.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis conducted by the researcher, it can be concluded that the construction of social media reality in the film "The Social Dilemma" successfully forms a profound construction of social media reality, reflecting the complexity of the impact of digital platform usage. This construction of reality is elaborated through three main stages of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman's social construction, namely externalization, objectification, and internalization. The film effectively defines the problem through a deep understanding of the systemic global impacts, the mismatch between initial expectations and the reality of digital platform implementation, and concerns about technology dependence and social isolation. Overall, this research achieves its goal of analyzing the construction of social media reality in the film "The Social Dilemma." The film not only presents visual representations but also forms a profound construction of social media reality, laying the groundwork for understanding the complex impacts and challenges that arise from the use of digital technology. This conclusion aligns with the research problem formulation and objectives, emphasizing the role of the film as a means to raise awareness and provide a foundation for ethical action in addressing social media dilemmas in the digital era.

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