

# Virtual Identity of PSS Sleman Fans on Twitter Account @CampusBoys1976

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

Virtual Identity  
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The transformation of communication technology has improved fan cultural practices and produced new media that can encourage the formation of virtual fandom. New media such as Twitter became a practical alternative to the virtual fandom of football clubs in forming the desired identity. This study aims to find out how fans of the PSS Sleman football club built a virtual identity on the Twitter account @CampusBoys1976. The research method used is the netnography method with the technique of collecting participant observation data and literature studies. The results showed that Twitter accounts @CampusBoys1976 use three ways to build a virtual identity as PSS Sleman fans who provide support through literacy culture, which were displayed on Twitter pages, activity on Twitter, and the use of text language associated with Twitter affordances and events that occur.

## 1. Introduction

Twitter is a site that provides a rich source of production for fans (Smutradontri & Gadavani, 2020). As a medium of communication, Twitter is used by fans because it can provide good services for communicating, especially in the context of mass communication (Yuniasti, 2021).

Twitter has affordances that can support virtual fandom activities in building virtual identities. Affordances are a feature that can limit as well as be a potential for an activity (Jaidka et al., 2019). Siegert et. al. (2020) identifies Twitter's capabilities into four parts, such as visibility (ease of access to information), persistence (sustainability of information presence), association (links to people, organizations, and information), and editability (information can be edited continuously).

Identity is important for the continuity of the existence of individuals or groups to distinguish themselves from others (Smutradontri & Gadavani, 2020). Through computer-mediated communication, virtual identities are displayed in the form of textual descriptions of oneself and avatars, which are realized characters (Anil Kumar et al., 2017; Joiner & Technologies, 2018). The construction of identity can be seen as a process of meaning-making carried out by people selectively organizing their experiences into a coherent sense of self (Papacharissi, 2011).

The virtual identity of fans on Twitter is formed through the displayed profile, their activities on Twitter such as tweets and retweets, the process of exchanging factual information, the use of emoticons and text language, as well as the interaction and communication of fellow fans. (Ezani, 2019; Farkhaty, 2019; Lainsyamputti, 2021).

Previous research still focuses on K-Pop fan accounts. In addition, there has not been an analysis of the interrelationships between Twitter affordances and events or trends that occurred during the research period that may affect the virtual identities formed.

In addition to K-Pop fan accounts, on Twitter, there were variations of other fan accounts such as football club fan accounts. As a fan account of football club PSS Sleman, the Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 is managed by fans whose ownership is not private property but a virtual fandom.

Twitter accounts @CampusBoys1976 are managed by admins so that all forms of text production and reproduction (writing, photos, images, videos, and audio) are controlled by certain parties.

This study aims to analyze the virtual identity of the Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 through the displayed profile, activities performed, and text language on Twitter during 2022. The study will also look at the role of affordances that Twitter has and events that occurred during the research period with virtual identities built by virtual fandom @CampusBoys1976.

## 2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a netnography method. Netnography uses publicly available information in online forums that can contextualize human adaptations to their environment through the consumption of technology, which affects identity, cultural practices, values, hierarchies and other social structures (Kozinets, 2010; Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021).

The object of this study is the fan account supporting PSS Sleman on Twitter @CampusBoys1976 in 2022 with the technique of collecting participant observation data (Seim, 2021) and a literature study (Sugiyono, 2017). This study uses analytical techniques proposed by Kozinets (2010), through steps such as coding, noting, abstracting and comparing, checking refinement, generalizing, and theorizing.

## 3. Result and Discussion

Twitter-owned affordances and events that occurred during the research period influenced the process of forming the virtual identity of the fan account @Campusboys1976 based on the profiles displayed and their activities.

First, through the displayed profile. Profiles on Twitter contain the username, biography, user location, external links, profile photos, and cover photos (Esteve et al., 2019). Fan accounts @CampusBoys1976 is a public accounts, so the information contained in the profile can be easily accessed (visibility) by followers and non-followers.



**Fig. 1.** Home Twitter Account @CampusBoys1976

- Username. The use of the word "Campus" represents that the fandom originated among students and the word "Boys" that follows stands for "Beyond the Ordinary for Yelling and Singing". Then the number "1976" strengthened his identity as a fan of PSS Sleman because the number 1976 was the year the football club PSS Sleman was founded.

- Biography. The biography "PSS Sleman our way of life. Kuliah, Kudukung, Kubanggakan!", affirms their background as students who not only study but also participate in supporting and boasting of PSS Sleman.
- User Location. In the location section, the geographical "SLEMAN" is the location where the PSS Sleman football club was born.
- Link. The existence of the link [campusboys1976.com](https://campusboys1976.com) connects the Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 with their sites that is the Campus Boys 1976 Community website which contains information about members, galleries (photos & videos), activities, and articles related to PSS Sleman and issues around football.
- Profile Photo. The use of a plain black profile picture signifies a form of mourning for an event in the realm of football. Two events occurred, such as the death of PSS supporter Sleman and the Kanjuruhan Tragedy.
- Cover Photo. The use of a cover photo with a background photo of a supporter in the stadium with the logo of the Campus Boys 1976 Community plus the words "Kuliah, Kudukung, Kubanggakan" only repeats the form of information conveyed through profile photos and biographies.

The selection of usernames and profile photos became identities that helped Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 to be recognized as a virtual fandom that originated among students. Meanwhile, other profiles, such as biography, user location, link, and cover photo show the identity of the Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 as a fan of the PSS Sleman football club. So, through the profile displayed, the Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 wants to be known as a PSS Sleman fan account with a student background.

Secondly, through their online activities. With the development of internet technology, fan participation in supporting their idols acts as a producer who produces content in the form of text, videos, and others. Virtual fandom activities are more oriented towards production goals than the processes and techniques used (Jingke & Jiayi, 2021).

- Sharing PSS Sleman Match Information. The Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 produced text related to PSS Sleman especially about main club match information, U-17, and U-18 by utilizing the tweet feature. In addition, to utilise the retweet and reply features to reproduce text from followers and official Twitter accounts @PSSleman.
- Appreciation & Evaluation of PSS Sleman Match. Appreciation & evaluation is given to the selection of players and a series of other match processes, ranging from ticket screening mechanisms to how the match goes. In carrying out this activity, @CampusBoys1976 are more dominant in producing their text by utilizing the tweet feature.
- Writing Articles. By the selection of usernames attached to student life, @CampusBoys1976 are active in producing articles. Several events led to the production of the article, such as the threat of relegation to PSS Sleman, the death of PSS Sleman supporters, and the issue of sexual harassment in the tribune. To carry out this activity, the tweet feature is used by including a link to the website. There is a character limit of 280 words when producing tweets, the information produced can only contain the main information. So that as a form of continued information (persistence), they put a link that contains complete information for their followers.
- Essay Writing Competition & Gelar Wicara. Related to the events of the 6th anniversary of the Campus Boys 1976 Community, there were two types of activities which are an essay writing competition and a Gelar Wicara with the theme "PSS Past, Now, and Later". Utilizing the tweet feature, @CampusBoys1976 produces text in the form of writing and posters to inform the essay writing competition. As for the Gelar Wicara, which is a discussion panel (talk show), a tweet feature in the form of an audiogram is used in sharing snippets of information discussed during the Gelar Wicara.
- Criticism of the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI). The presence of criticism of PSSI is related to the Kanjuruhan Tragedy. The incident killed 134 souls after the completion of the match between Arema FC vs Persebaya (CNN Indonesia, 2022). The production of texts could be seen in the form of writings and posters that contains points of demand against PSSI as the

national football federation which is considered the most responsible for the events that occurred. In addition, text reproduction was also used on the official tweets of the PSSI account which were considered weak in sympathy for the conditions that occurred. Criticism of PSSI received a high response, for example, tweets in the form of posters that received 1591 retweets and 2649 likes. The existence of an affordance association causes a large number of retweets and likes to expand the possibility of text being read by users on Twitter.

- Running a Campaign. Taking advantage of the tweet feature containing writings and posters, @CampusBoys1976 held a "Fight Scalper Practice" campaign. This campaign is here to respond to the rampant practice of match ticket scalpers. The scheme offered is simple, where followers are asked to report the scalper's activities through the reply to the column on the tweet provided or via email sleman@campusboys1976.com by including evidence in the form of screenshots.

Virtual fandom on Twitter leverages text production activities to build and strengthen virtual identities. To distinguish themselves from other PSS Sleman virtual fandoms, the Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 carries out activities oriented towards literacy culture. Through a literacy approach, virtual fandom @CampusBoys1976 seeks to resolve issues related to PSS Sleman and football.

Third, through the language of the text on Twitter. Text on Twitter has a structure that fits grammar, abbreviations, acronyms, and emoticons (symbols used to indicate expressions) (Yanuarti, 2021).

- Emoticons. In showing self as a PSS Sleman fan, the Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 uses heart and circle emoticons. The colour options used are black, white, and green. The black emoticon represents the identity of Brigata Curva Sud (BCS), while the white and green emoticon represents the identity of PSS Sleman. So that the use of black, white, and green emoticons is aligned to give the meaning of being interconnected between virtual fandom @CampusBoys1976 as part of BCS and PSS Sleman.
- Argot language. Argot refers to the distinctive language that each community speaks (Kusnarto & Sujinah, 2019). Two distinctive words often appear, such as PMS and Super Elja. "PMS" which is short for Pre-Match Syndrome, is a term used in the PSS Sleman fan community to describe the fan activities before the PSS Sleman match begins. While "Super Elja" is short for Super Elang Jawa. Elang Jawa is the name of a bird that is used as the mascot of the PSS Sleman football club. Super Elja became the argot language used to encourage PSS Sleman.
- Language. In the production and reproduction of text on Twitter, @CampusBoys1976 use Javanese, Indonesian and English. The use of Javanese as a form of representation of their home region and the football club PSS Sleman. Because the information is displayed publicly, it requires other, more common languages for the dissemination of information, such as Indonesian and English.

The use of emoticons and argot language by virtual fandom @CampusBoys1976 express virtual emotions and feelings and strengthens the identity as a PSS Sleman fan in a virtual fandom. Meanwhile, the use of different languages is an attempt to express emotions appropriately and help convey messages more effectively.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Twitter account @CampusBoys1976 built its virtual identity as a virtual fandom that in support of PSS Sleman chose a literacy culture approach. The first stage, building a profile as a virtual fandom who has a background as a student. The existence of a student profile that is owned, makes @CampusBoys1976 express their support through literacy activities. While doing the activities, this virtual fandom uses emoticons, argot languages, as well as Javanese, Indonesian, and English. Virtual identity through literacy culture is formed because virtual fandom @CampusBoys1976 is active in the production and reproduction of text on Twitter. Cultural differences produce different approaches to shaping virtual identities. So, for subsequent researchers, it is recommended to take research objects that have cultural differences from the culture of football club fans in Indonesia.

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