

Identity Presentation in Face Book Posts: The Kenyan Situation

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Abstract

The Internet technology is dramatically changing the landscape of identity construction by mobilizing people around the world to re-conceptualize their image. This paper argues that although once identity was ascribed by family name and reputation, social status, education and such like factors, Face Book users now exert the utmost influence in shaping their virtual image to reflect both actual and ideal identities. It goes on to contend that Face Book provides an optimal format for users to keep a personal narrative going in which they integrate events which happen in the external world, and sort them into an ongoing' story about the self. The paper uses a research design that is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Purposive sampling procedure was used to arrive at the sample for the paper which consisted of eight Facebook friends in the 22-35 age bracket. This is the age that was found to use Facebook more in Kenya. This narrative on self is presented on Face Book in the feature called Timeline. One is able to access histories on an individual's posts and photos, all that make up to re-construct the identity of this individual.

Identity construction, face book, timeline, personal narrative, posts

1. Introduction

There are various ways of examining Identity presentation. However, in this paper, Identity presentation by the participants is examined in two ways following one of Goffmann's (1969) key arguments about online identity presentation as stated in Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013). Goffman's key argument is that individuals have both expressions that they 'give' and those that they 'give off'. In the case of the former, impressions that the individual intends to produce are communicated, but with the latter, impressions that were not intended to be given are received by the audience. In looking at how the participants 'give' their identity, profile pages of the participants are examined. On the other hand, in order to get the identity that is 'given off', the participants' posts are analyzed. Therefore, this section begins with a look at the profiles that the participants have created themselves and proceeds to look at specific posts written by participants that 'give off' their identity. This is solely by looking at the language and content of the information in the posts or alternatively, what the participant says of themselves and what others say of them.

2.0 Facebook Profiles of the eight participants

Participants create an identity they wish to be identified with anytime they post anything on Face Book (herein after FB) or anytime someone else views their walls. The first way as has been said is through profile names and photos they use on their profile pages. The uniform format of all Facebook profiles challenges users to be more expressive and strategic to distinguish their identity. As such each person presents themselves in the manner in which they would like to be viewed by all who use FB. As in other social situations, users construct and present their identity through the profile. Pelluchete and Karl (2010) explain that FB provides a profile template which prompts for different kinds of personal information (e.g., location marital status, favorite quotations, political affiliation, favorite music and education), [and] users have considerable freedom to provide such information or not and to post any other information or pictures of their choice. Facebook participants therefore use their creativity to define themselves. The first thing that a user does when they sign in to Facebook is to create a profile of themselves. Whether users furnish 'real' information about themselves or not depends on an individual. However, the point to always note is that the information given is visible to the public or the people the user selects, therefore furnishing information that reflects positively on the user is of importance, keeping in mind that the same information can be shared to other inter relates sites like groups that one joins for instance LinkedIn, academia and others. Because the friends one has on Facebook are likely offline friends, the information provided is already known so there is no need to misrepresent oneself, unless of course it is for good reasons some of which will be interrogated in this section. To begin this discussion, the summary of the names and description of profile photos each participant had on their profiles is given in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Profile name and type of photo for the eight FB participants

Participant	Profile name used	Profile photo used
M1	Real name	Daughter's photo
M2	Made up name	Self
M3	Made up name	Daughter's photo
M4	Real name	Self
F1	Nickname and real second name	Self
F2	Real name	Daughter's photo
F3	Real name	Self
F4	Real first name, nickname and real second name	Self

The most straightforward form of identification is the participant's profile name (i.e. FB account name). This information is automatically included in the header by the posting software. It appears in the posts made by the user. The account name may be the only overt identifier in the posting, therefore making it an important clue to the identity of the participant. For the sake of anonymity, the names used shall not be disclosed, however, a discussion of the choice of name is important; whether the names were real or pseudonyms. For **M1**, his profile name is his real name and he has for his profile photo his daughter's photo. While he might be construed to be masking his identity by not providing his photo, his name that appears in all his posts and what he is known as in FB circles is real. There is a match in his online identity and offline identity. By displaying his daughter, he is showing his love for her, and unmasking his father role publicly. **M2**'s profile name is not his real name, although the photo he uses is a full body photo of himself. He is one of the youngest in the group and still a university student. His innovativeness comes forth in his choice of name and so as not to mislead people, he ties his name with a real identity of himself. Being single also warrants him to publicly display a positive image of himself to would be partners, hence the 'cool' full picture of himself (He is smart and not goofy in the photo).

M3 uses a made up name and his own photo in the profile. This is to ensure that he is easily recognizable. Many other people choose interesting profile names and it is acceptable as a trait of identity presentation on FB. **M4** on the other hand, uses his real name as well as a picture of himself with his daughter as his profile photo. He is obviously comfortable in his own skin because the picture he uses is one in which he is on a floater swimming together with his daughter. Perhaps, the identity he is striving to create is a fun loving individual and father and one who has no apologies to offer (a man using a tube to swim?). He might not have intended for such a display of himself, but nonetheless, such an identity comes through anyway.

F1 uses her nickname (that she is known offline by) that is not made up one because that is her 'name' anyway. The use of the second name is to make it easier to recognize her. When searching for people, one uses the real name of the individual or alternatively use the Facebook account name, if one is conversant with it. It therefore makes sense to use at least one name that others can easily recognize, or a photo that easily identifies oneself. This is the case for the participants who choose to use their real photos and/or real name. **F1** also uses her a photo of herself in her profile page. The photo she has used of herself is very flattering. Creating a beautiful, captivating image of herself is particularly important to this participant because of her job as a reporter. Media personalities are usually 'chic, elegant, poised and attractive'. In a bid to present this image, she uses one of her most, if not her most flattering photos of herself to identify herself with as the first identity people interact with. Indeed, **F1** has managed as Goffman aptly puts it, to 'perform' in order to project a desirable image (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2013)

F2 uses her real name together with her daughter's photo as her profile photo. The identity she creates right from the onset is a mother identity. She unmask herself honestly, displaying her status as a loving, responsible mother. Sometimes using the family identity wards off unpleasant flirtations from unsuspecting people who might be out there looking to hook up with single entities. Therefore, such an identity 'protects' the boundaries of interaction. **F3**, chooses to use her real name together with a photo of herself to identify her on her profile page. She authentically presents herself. As will be seen later, she is the most bold and assertive female participants from her posts, and this impression is formed early in her profile page. She does not fancy modifying her identity in anyway, either by using a nickname, made up name or someone's photo as herself. What you see is what you get with **F3**. On the other hand, **F4** uses her real first name, her nickname and her real second name. She modifies her name with the addition of a nickname and interestingly, chooses a humorous and naughty photo of her face, with lips pouting as if giving a kiss. The photo is not sensual, rather it comes off as funny. Therefore, the identity she displays is humorous and playful. Indeed this identity is corroborated by the content and language of her posts. Moving on is a look at the participants' posts in order to interrogate the identity that they 'give off'. Table 1.2 summarizes the information given consciously by the participants about their identity in the profile pages.

Table 1.2 Information on the Profile Data of the FB group

Participants	Location	Status	Married	Photos Uploaded	Number of Activities	Likes/	Joined	Groups	Friends	Number of Mutual friends with the rest of	Education	Level of	Profession
M1	Bosnia	Married		100	Music-4, Man U		35		1,653	18	No more education		
M2	Nakuru	Single		40	TVshows-14, Movies-4 23,Music-48, Books-17,Apps and games-4				649	11	University student		
M3	Nairobi	Married		20	Music,TVshows-4,Apps and games- 1		15		665	26	University graduate		KDF
M4	Nairobi	Married		283	Music-4, Football Arsenal		33		1514	40			KDF
F1	Nairobi	Single		106	Movies-48, Music-7, TVshows-67,Books-19Apps and games-3		13		830	19	College graduate		Reporter
F2	Mombasa	Married		135	Music-26,Movies-29,TVshows-18		25		435	37	College graduate		Sales/Marketer
F3	Nairobi			243	Sports -10, Music-30 TV shows-35, Books-6		14		1019	35	University graduate		
F4	Malindi	Single		256	Music-24, TV shows-21 Books-18		20		992	36	University graduate		lecturer
Totals				1183			159		7760	219			

Source: FB Profile page of the users.

KEY: M-Male participant, **F- Female** participant

If the box is empty, it means no information was furnished at that level

A quick discussion of the information provided in Table 1.2 captures the following identities that are either “given” or “given off” by the participants.

M1:

He lives in Bosnia (This is a fictitious location as will be demonstrated shortly). By giving a fictitious location, M1 is masking his identity but through his posts, he eventually reveals his real location, though unintentionally, what this research calls, “giving off” identity. He is married and he likes music and Manchester United. He is a member of thirty five FB groups. He has a total of 1,653 FB friends, eighteen of which are mutual with the rest of the group. Again he offers a fictitious education background, ‘no more education’, and opts out of stating his profession. This speaks to literature on anonymity on FB. There are areas about his identity in which he chooses to remain anonymous for his own reasons. He maintains his privacy to a certain degree by not divulging all of his information publicly on FB. Further from his posts, it is deduced that he is conversant with English, Kiswahili and Kamba languages and on many occasions code-switches using the three languages. The names he has for his location and education background identify him as a humorous person, not so much a liar. His actual location is given in his posts unconsciously. Consider the following post:

Text 1

1. **MI**: <LAZANIA- at the panari hotel>
(Lasagnia at the panari hotel)

2. **MI**: <akiau? Uka mwa boss umelost, njia ya kwenda machakos ndio hii....panda juu kidogo fika cabanas.....dave ,nko area sasa, kesho vipi!>
(Swearing, just come, boss you are so lost, the road to machakos is this...go up a little, reach Cabanas....dave, I am around now, how about tomorrow!)

MI is posting that He is having Lasagna at Panari hotel that is situated along Mombasa road, in Nairobi, so how then can it be possible he stays in Bosnia? He also is giving directions to a friend, Dave, of getting to Machakos, and he tells the friend to go in the general direction of where he is and go ahead, confirming also he is just in the vicinity. At other times the user also gives his location by 'checking in' as Ongata-Rongai, Nairobi, 'Purpose Center'- Church along Mombasa road. Therefore, it is not wrong to infer that indeed the user is located in Nairobi and not Bosnia as indicated on his profile.

The information about his location, work and education seem inaccurate and can be construed as lies, however as Pempek et al., (2009) notes, if an owner presented inaccurate or enhanced information on their Facebook profile, their online friends, who also know the user from offline contexts, would realize that the user was not telling the truth (Pempek et al., 2009). As a consequence of this offline to online sequence, statements about interests and values are likely to be authentic (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2007; Lampe et al., 2006; Pempek et al., 2009; Ross et al., 2009). Therefore, his identity presentation is authentic, and instances where there are inaccuracies, are for reasons like not revealing a lot of private information to the public. That there are some information about him that he gives that are fictitious does not put him together with the with the 83 million users of FB with a fake profile. Another inference about him is that, he is a serious family man, why else would he state he is married and post his daughters photo. The following post confirms that indeed the information furnished is true.

Text 2

1. **MI**: [Shared a photo of a local TV. Star (mama Baha, of Machachari) then says this below the photo]
< wah! I'll never 4gt the day I said she cute, na nilikuwa kwa nyumba, since then I watch from the bedroom wengine wakiwa sito!!He he he>
(expression of disbelief, I will never forget the day I said she is cute, and I was in the house since then I watch from the bedroom while others are in the sitting room)

This post corroborates **MI**'s identity as a family man who by fault of complementing another woman other than the wife suffers embarrassment and has to watch the programme alone in the bedroom lest he messes up again. In his post **MI** manages to create an impression of a person who likes travelling and enjoying the fine things in life, if the places and food he mentions in his posts are anything to go by. He is also friendly and sociable by the number of friends he has on FB. He is also humorous, going by some of his posts like:

Text 3

1. **MI**: <so the rain might have crossed (mbua niyiingie e!)

The joke is in the word 'crossed'; the direct translation from vernacular to English; the expression becomes funny and awkward in English and that is why he puts the same thing he has in English in Kamba. Or consider the next post:

Text 4

1. **MI**: <Kizungu ni noma...>
(English is hard...>



2. **MI**: < Hehhehe...mwalimu wa xxx >

..... Akii nuvungu Muthei ...

(it is all a lie)

3. **M1**: <weh...ninisi mwalimu waku we...eka ulea.....>

(exclamation, I know your teacher, stop denying it)

1. **MI** <Dear God,i really miss using my ATM CARDS.....pls do something in Jesus name i pray.....>

(Dear God, I really miss using my ATM CARDS....please do something in Jesus name I pray)

1. **MI**<jameni naomba serikali iingilie kati..safaricom mnaninyanyasa....nanunua bundles ata kabla nilog in...ati zimeisha....kwani bluetooth inatumia bundles...!!!!>

(Really, I pray that the Government intervenes....Safaricom you are mistreating me....i buy bundles and even before I log in....they are over....does Bluetooth use bundles...!!!!)

2. **MI** <Hii jua na njaa...haileti shangwe....jua inapiga mpaka kona bana ikifuata msee...!!!!>

(This sunshine and hunger.....it is not bringing enthusiasm.....the sun is rounding a corner until it reaches someone...!!!!)

3. **MI** <Faith sua yii yilikite nginya muvuko mwa>

(Faith this sun has reached even the pockets (exclamation))

1. **MI**:

Ukiangusha 5 bob

January



M1 makes fun of one of his friends by alleging that the teacher who has difficulties taught his friend. He uses prosodic spelling to indicate his laughter and insists that he actually knows the friend's teacher. Of course, this is for humors sake. **M1** comes off as funny too when he posts about financial difficulties. Although lack of money is serious business, his posts are funny. Consider the way he talks about the sun; a metaphor for financial difficulty. He personifies the sun and says it can turn a corner just to follow an individual, and that it has reached the pockets of someone. In posting also a photo about January and the lack of money, he is also making fun of people's financial situations in a month perceived by many to be difficult. Such posts "give off" a humorous identity of **M1**. Therefore, the information furnished by **M1** about himself is true, and where not, it is not for the purposes of lying but to keep some mystery about him.

M2

Is a Nakuru dweller, who is also a university student and belongs to only four groups. He is obviously not interested in belonging to many groups like the rest of the group. He has fewer groups he is interested in joining, perhaps because of the constraints of academics and also because at his young age (he is the youngest in the group) he would rather be socializing than contributing to 'boring' group discussions. He has 649 friends, eleven of which he shares with the rest of the group. In the entire group he together with F1 are the only one who love 'Apps' (Computer Technology applications such as playstore for games) The reason is he is relatively younger as opposed to the rest of the group and as such technology appeals to young computer users like him more. He also likes animations which is appropriate for his young age. He is a 'mama's boy and this comes out in his posts like:

Text 5

1. **M2**:<Spending my Friday evening with my mom I luv u mom u the best>

(spending my Friday evening with my mum I love you mum you are the best)

1. **M2**: <grt day the whole family is going to be together dad mum sis bro and young me>

(great day the whole family is going to be together dad mum sister and brother and young me)

These posts confirm the identity that **M2** gives of himself; that of a young single guy who adores his family and is attached to them.

M3

This participant lives in Nairobi, is married and like MI puts his daughter's photo as his profile picture. This

identifies him as a doting father, proud of his child. He belongs to fifteen FB groups, and has 665 FB friends, twenty six of whom he shares with the rest of the group. He is a university graduate as well as a Kenya Defence Officer (KDF). So far his identity as given in the profile is true and there are times in his posts that the same identity is given unconsciously. For instance, the information about his profession and the fact that he is married and has a daughter is corroborated for example in Texts that follows:

Text 6

1. **M3:** *photos that he has uploaded*



2. **M3:** *<Pongezi to all airforce guys on this big day...>
(Congratulations to all airforce guys on this big day.....)*

.....
.....

3. **M3:** *<MAB...>
(Moi Air Base- This is one of the Airforce units in Kenya)*

- 1.**M3:***< He who salutes the flag, serves the flag and whose coffin is draped by the flag, is the true hero.
RIP our uniformed patriots.>*

1. **M3:** *< Daddy duties.....> — at [The Nairobi Hospital](#) (posted a picture of his daughter near a slide dressed in hospital clothes and a bandage on her hand)*

2. **M3:** *<iko poa sasa, fever za wajunior tu. cheers for asking.> (it is okay now,it is just fever for the juniors, cheers for asking)*

1. **M3:** *<Fatherhood stress.....> — at [Getrudes childrens Hospital](#)*

1. **M3:** *<Building the future for my daughters... Mwanaume ni effort...> (Building future for my daughters.....A man is effort....)*

2.*<Mwanaume ni mfuko..effort peleka kwa mjengo....he he he>(A man is measured by his pocket.....take effort to construction....he he he)*

M3's identity as a military officer, is "given off" much the same way as Goffman (1969) posits about identity presentation. The photo he uses in the first post, and what he writes places him within the context of the military, more specifically, the Airforce. The Airforce regalia in the photo and the mention of the Airforce in his second photo place him within the context of the Airforce. His knowledge of military procedure as he posts what happens during the burial of a fallen soldier, confirms his occupation as true and authentic as stated in his profile. His identity also as a doting, responsible father emerges in the posts that he makes. He updates his status twice when his children get sick. In the first instance, one of his daughters is admitted at the Nairobi hospital for a broken arm. His next status update is at the Getrudes childrens hospital when another of his daughters falls ill with a case of fever as he aptly puts it in the post. This shows him as a responsible and loving father.

He also posts that he is building the future of his daughters, by putting in effort. When a user who is not part of this study makes a joke of what he has posted, **M3** posts again that a man is a man because of the money he has in his pocket and not for his effort. This means that a man should be financially stable and that is what he meant when he said he was building his daughters' future: looking for money to sustain them. The phrase "mwanaume ni mfuko effort peleka kwa mjengo" is a catchy contemporary phrase that is used to epitomize the essence of masculinity. That a man is judged by his financial status, not his physical strength. This phrase has is understood from a Kenyan context, no wonder it is rendered in Kiswahili language. Although **M3** posts most of his status in English, in this instance has reverted to Kiswahili because English would not have carried his implicature as he had intended it, In fact, in translation, the meaning of the phrase is not lost. That he is a

graduate comes across in his posts. He uses Standard English mostly, and is careful in his spellings. His military training and discipline is displayed (given off) in the choice of his vocabulary: compare the use of the word ‘daddy duties’ instead of ‘daddy chores or responsibilities’. ‘Duty’ is a frequent word used in the military.

M4

This participant lives in Nairobi as well, is married and likes music, football and particularly Arsenal. He belongs to thirty three FB groups, has 1514 FB friends, the second highest in terms of friends. This shows that he is highly sociable online and shares forty mutual friends with the rest of the group. He deliberately opts out of giving information about his educational background but gives KDF (Kenya Defense Force) as his profession. For his profile photo, he uses his own photo with him and a colleague on top a United Nations (UN) vehicle in military uniform. This identity of military man is exemplified by photos and posts that he makes on his wall. Consider, the following:

Text 7

*1 M4: < aki afande tumetoka butchery kunywa supu >
(truly sir, we from the butchery to drink soup)*



2.....

3.....

*3. M4: <I had to set them free enyewe walikuwa wananuka butchery he he very innocent >
(I had to set them free anyway they were smelling butchery he he very innocent)*

The photo of two soldiers that are drunk giving the excuse of coming from the butchery and **M4** commenting that he had to let them off might not be a true occurrence. However, the military joke is appropriate and familiar with someone in the military, therefore, it is safe to conclude that **M4**'s identity as a military man is indeed true. His identity is often “given off” also by the choice of the word ‘afande’ (sir) which is a title given for someone of a superior rank. This word is used by uniformed people or people familiar with military codes. “Giving off” identity as military personnel can also be illustrated by text 23 that follows:

Text 8

1. M4: <Bravo correct! Charlie wrong! >

This post uses codes that the military use, ‘bravo’ and ‘charlie’. It authenticates the identity that **M4** used of being a KDF professional. This portrays **M4**'s identity as truthful and believable. Another identity that **M4** does not give about himself but which is “given off” in his posts is his love for cooking, especially baking cakes and the fact that he is an entrepreneur as well. He posts many photos of one bake-off or another, photos of cakes and food. Consider the following posts. He is also referred to as “the cake man” by other FB users and on several occasions he mentions “227 bakers” as the name for his cake business.

Text 9

1. M4: <Another Birthday frm 227 Bakers! >



M4: <[Two Two Seven Bakers](#) being awarded 2013 1st runner up Theme cake at The Cake festival.....my two lovely sis Jacky n Rozie ..u make me proud.>



The Cake Festival

M4:<Two Two Seven Bakers with their 1st runner-up Theme Cake.>

M4's identity as an entrepreneur is not given explicitly but rather unmasked in the course of his interactions on FB. He obviously loves his cake business going by the various photos he posts on his wall. Like the other CMC users, he uses conventional spellings and codeswitching, both linguistic features which are admissible in CMC, **FI**

The first female participant comes from Nairobi. She is single and as such used her own picture as her profile photo. She loves activities like movies, music, TV shows, Books, Apps and games. This is one of the longest list of likes in comparison to the rest. This points to the fact that she has plenty of time to fill with all these activities, perhaps because she is free from marital responsibilities and being single can afford to indulge in all those activities. She, together with **M2** are the only other participants who like Apps and games. This shows how she is into technology and its new innovations, and her capability and competence in interacting with new technology (owing from her profession). She is also a college graduate and a reporter by profession. This information is true going by the things she posts. Consider:

TEXT 10

1. **F1:** <The things we do in the studio after prime time news! I have a very beautiful BFF! She is an angel too! Say cheese! >
(The things we do in the studio after primetime news! *I have a very beautiful best friend! She is an angel too! Say cheese! (Mimicking the action before a photo shoot)*)
1. **F1:**<Near a TV? My interview with the Agriculture CS Felix Koskei is on... Jubilee, One Year On. Watch it now *****>
1. **F1:** <Lights...Camera...Action...Photo shoot! Lol! Okay had a great morning interviewing the CS for Agriculture Felix Koskei. Next time, I will get the President! Watch the interview on ***** tomorrow ... Jubilee, One Year On!>
(Lights....camera....Action....Photo shoot! Okay had a great morning interviewing the Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture Felix Koskei. Next time, I will get the President! Watch the interview on**** tomorrow,Jubilee, one year on!)

From the posts it is clear that indeed the identity that **F1** gave of herself as a reporter is true. She obviously doesn't frame her posts consciously to fit into that identity, but unconsciously, her job and experiences leak into her posts. What is interesting is her use of language in the posts. Although there is pro-dropping, and ellipsis of some elements in the sentences like 'are you near a TV?' 'Okay I had.....' most of her posts are grammatical, with very few instances of non-standard orthography. Clearly, her educational background and profession dictates her language. Instances of non-standard orthography indicate her need to fit in the group and conform to CMD, like 'BFF' and 'LOL'.

Although **F1** has not mentioned anything in her profile page about her religious inclinations, it comes out in her posts that she is very religious thus her identity as a religious person is "given off" (Goffman 1969). Consider Text 11 below:

TEXT 11

1. **F1**: <Made *WHOLE* to make *WHOLE*! Its just amazing how God can restore a totally broken heart, mould it a fresh, like the wonderful Potter He is. It was intended for evil BUT GOD... In 2013 satan took a lot from me, this year, he got nothing over me, he is done taking, everything that is mine is MINE! And you my friends, I will not stop sharing God's grace with you, GOD SPEAKS, I WRITE, so brace yourself, the good just got better!....>
1. **F1**: <There comes a time in life when you have to stand up for something... A time came when God's word became my stand! In my own little way #IamTheSermon and my life is my testimony! #TeamJesus>
1. **F1**: < FEAR cannot and will never triumph over FAITH, but FAITH can and will always triumph over FEAR! Fight that battle on your knees! PRAY, Child of God!>
[#IamAWarriorOnMyKnees](#)
[#PrincessWarrior](#) ¹⁰⁰

F1 presents herself authentically as a Christian through her posts and this adds onto the identity that she has created on her profile page. In reading her posts, her identity continues to be made, therefore, identity is not so much what the participant writes on their profile, but what is continually given in the messages, pictures and comments one makes.

F2

The second female participant is from Mombasa, is married and has the daughter's photo as her profile photo. She loves music, movies and TV shows and has 435 FB friends, thirty seven of whom she shares with the rest of the group. She is a college graduate and a sales/marketer by profession. She is a loving mother and it shows in her posts.

Text 11

1. **F2**: <happy b.day to my pretty daughter.....>
(happy birthday to my pretty daughter...>
2. **F2**: < Thanx on her behalf guys, am one lucky woman to have her, she has brought so much joy in ma lyf>
(Thanks on her behalf guys, am one lucky woman to have her she has brought so much joy in my life)

It can be said that the first post is not intended for her daughter per se (her daughter obviously is not a member on FB) but just an indication to others that she remembers and acknowledges her daughter. It is an expression of the love, pride she has for her daughter. In typical CMC language, she uses non-standard orthography and homophone spellings as well.

F3

The third female participant leaves out the information about her marital status as well as her profession. Perhaps for her this is personal information that she does not deem necessary to share with the rest of the world. However, she is comfortable sharing her picture as it is her profile photo, even uploading photos of herself several times in her posts. She has sports like one of the activities she likes unlike the other ladies who have not included it, indicating she is an out-door kind of a person. She also likes music, TV shows and books. She has 1019 FB friends, thirty five of whom are mutual friends with the other members of the group. The veracity of information given by this participant and the others might be explained, in part, by the prevalent sequence of friendship formation, in which individuals typically become online Facebook friends after being offline friends. Unlike many other social networking sites (e.g., Badoo, Habbo), offline relationships tend to lead to Facebook relationships, rather than the other way around (Lampe et al., 2006; Ross et al., 2009). F3 is also a university graduate. She likes code-switching in her posts and this fact makes her ethnic identification easy. It can be deduced from the code-switching that she belongs to the Luhya community.

Text 12

1. **F3**: <ouch with the same bugger again hope ths tym il have fun nt regrets again.omundu!>
(ouch with the same bugger again hope this time I will have fun not regrets again (colloquial

expression in Luhya language for the word guy)

3. **F3:** < hahaha no prob mulamua > (expression of laughter, no problem mulamua (in-law, in luhya)

1. **F3:** < uluhya ni gharama bhane! > (being a luhya is a costly, exclamation)

Other posts by F3 paint her as outspoken, a party-girl and not afraid to speak her mind. This is evident in the following posts in which she writes after she had uploaded a photo of herself sitting around a table with half the table, full of alcohol. This is one of many instances where she uploads pictures of her with friends drinking and partying.

Text 13

1

2. **F3:** < wanasemanga vunja mifupa kama bado meno ikooooo!!! >
(they say, crush bones while the teeth are still there (famous expression for having fun)
exclamation mark (lengthening practice).

3

4. **F3:** < heck yes gurl, NO APOLOGIES!! Wacha nijipe raha mwenyewe. >
(heck (swearing) yes girl, NO APOLOGIES (capitalization for stress, exclamation mark) let
me give myself fun)

1.

6. **F3:** < Ndivyo ninavyo fanya sasa hizi coz I ONLY LIVE ONES Y.O.L.O >
(that is what I am doing this time because I ONLY LIVE ONCE (capitalization for stress)
Y.O.L.O (abbreviation for 'you only live once')

7

8

9

10. **F3:** < hehehehe! guys today I feel generous mwenye anataka gej leo nitafute nitakuwa tao saa
mbili unusu lol! >
(expression of laughter, exclamation mark, guys today I feel generous whoever wants alcohol
today should look for me I will be in town at half past eight, lol (laugh out loud)

13. **F3:** < Exactly nyabo we only live ones n I got 1 life to live. So am living my life to the fullest @sifa >
(Exactly nyabo (girl in Kiganda) we only live once and I got one life to live. So I am living my
life to the fullest)

14

15. **F3:** < am a grown ass woman I know my limits thank u >
(I am a grown ass (swearing) woman I know my limits thank you)

1. **F1:** < I am who I am. I like what I like. I love what I love. I do what I want. >

From the post, it is evident that the identity that F3 presents is of an assertive lady who is bold, enjoys life, fun-loving and unabashedly unapologetic. She says she is herself and she loves herself the way she is. In the second post, F3 uses a Kiswahili idiom, which implies that one should have fun and enjoy life when they still are able to, meaning she will have as much fun as long as she is able to. In her fourth post, she adds that she will make herself happy and has no apologies as she does that. In her subsequent post, F3 uses the acronym "YOLO" (you only live once) to justify her fun filled life. The acronym also makes her identify with the young generation who use that acronym to describe their fun seeking lifestyle. F3 also adheres to the language of CMC which is characterized by unconventional spelling, acronym and code switching. Her next post uses codeswitching of Kiswahili and Sheng. In using these two languages, other than English, F3 is in a way contesting the English hegemony (Nabea 2009) just as much as she is defying people's definitions of how she should live her life. Indeed in the 15th post, for that day, she states categorically that she is a grown woman and that she is entitled to do what she does; take alcohol, because she knows her limits. Another identity of F3 that is "given off" (Goffman 1969) from her posts is that she can be feisty when provoked and thereby ends up using language that can be perceived as foul or 'flaming' to use the social media description, like in the following posts.

Text 14

1. **F3:** < Any fool can be a father, but it takes a real man to be a DADDY. >

.....

2. xxx wewe ndio mjinga kupindukia, takataka wewe, if u don't like my post, DON'T LOOK, Don't like, &
DO NOT comment, kasia wewe
(you are the greatest fool of them all, you are rubbish, if you do not like my post, don't look,
don't like and do not comment, useless person)

1. **F3:** *<I'd rather have a tiny amount of real true close friends, than a large amount of fake ass stupid bitches!*

—  *drinking knight whiskey at [House of Rhumba](#).*

F3 has posted a comment on what she thinks it means to be a father. After her post, an unmentioned man comments at her post and calls her stupid for having said what she said. This comment infuriates **F3** who posts as a reaction to the offending post directed at her. She becomes offensive towards the person who criticized her post. Her next post that she makes on a different occasion has offensive words too. It should be mention that these outbursts that are accompanied with offensive language are occasioned by some provocation, although this is no way meant to be an excuse to justify the offensive language. **F3** is young, hip and adventurous, this is got from the Sheng language that she infuses in her posts, expressions like 'gej' for 'alcohol', 'tao' 'for town' and the colloquial spellings of 'lol' for 'laugh out loud', 'Y.O.L.O' for 'you only live once'. **F3** also "gives off" the impression that she is a football fanatic. Consider the post below:

Text 15

1. **F3:** *<Haters!,you can now suck your heart out.Ingwe ni yetu milele.Thank you Lord God Almighty for the win today.May your name be glorified. Keep calm haters & looove ingwe. [[afcleopards]] OURS FOREVER. Obhulala na amani.>*

(Haters!, you can now suck your heart out. Ingwe is ours forever. Thank you Lord God Almighty for the win today. May your name be glorified. Keep calm haters and love (lengthening practice) Ingwe. [[afcleopards]] OURS FOREVER. Luhyia-Sleep peacefully)

From the text above, **F3** in one of her updates posts about the win that AFC Leopards (Ingwe) get in a match. She is taunting the opponents of 'Ingwe' (AFC Leopards – a local football club) while hailing 'Ingwe' and paying allegiance to her team. Without knowing, she also manages to "give off" her ethnic identity as Luhyia, from the code-switching she makes. Several other times, she has codeswitched from English or Kiswahili to Luhyia, emphasizing this identity. Severally, she has posted photos of herself at a football match or at home wearing the AFC Leopard's blue and white stripped jersey, and scarf. The next text reinforces this identify of an AFC Leopard fan.

Text 16

1. **F3:** *(posted picture of herself adorned in AFC Leopards regalia)*

2

3. **F3** *<wewe wacha zako sasa nimevaa skinny ya white na jersey, scarf ya ingwe na niko na avuvu kwa handbag>*

(You stop, now I am wearing white skinny (sheng name for the tight trousers) and jersey, an Ingwe scarf and I have a vuvuzela in the handbag)

1.....

2. **F3:** *<nabado shapiki sugu wa chingwe>*
(and still a great fun of Ingwe)

F3 corrupts the Kiswahili word "shabiki" to "shapiki" to make it sound the way a Luhyia speaker would mispronounce the words because of L1 interference. Not only is she embracing her Luhyia ethnicity, but she is also being playful by picking on a language stereotype for her ethnic group. Her love for her football team is seen in her dressing too. Her youthful identity also comes out in her dressing (skinny trousers) and her sheng infused language.

F4

The last lady participant hails from Malindi. She is single and as such has used her own photo as her profile photo. Of interest is not so much that she has used her own photo but the type of photo. The photo she uses, is of her face where she pouts her lips as if to offer a kiss. This can be analyzed in several ways; she is cheeky, naughty or just funny. She likes these activities: music, TV shows and books and belongs to twenty FB groups. She is very active online and her posts are mostly humorous. She has 992 FB friends of whom thirty six are mutual with the group. She is a university graduate and a lecturer by profession. On her posts her humorous and funny identity is revealed further, a good example is Text 32 that follows:

Text 17

- 2.**F4:** *< Kekekekeke if I ever appear in court and the judge yells "order! Order! Order!, I wanna stand and say, Thank you your honour;I will have a double whiskey with cola and a lemon garnish" and then sit down calmly just to see the look on the judge's face! :-)>*

(expression of laughter, if I ever appear in court and the judge yells "order! Order! Order!, I want to stand and say, Thank you your honour;I will have a double whiskey with cola and a lemon garnish" and then sit down calmly just to see the look on the judge's face! smiley)

1. **F4:** *< after many years of searching, im glad to say that iv finally found LOVE... on page 556 in the dictionary! >*

1. **F4:** *<i cant get out of bed now! these sheets have accepted me as one of their own and if i leave, i will not gain their trust again.>*

Clearly, **F4** is humorous and funny and this comes across through her posts. She did not need to state in her profile that she is funny, this trait is evident from her posts. This creation of identity that is “given off” through participants’ messages and photos is by far the most authentic. Sometimes people can lie or even exaggerate their identities on their profiles but their posts tell it all.

3.0 Conclusion

In this paper we have clearly argued and shown that most of the information on a profile page is furnished by the user and is available on their FB walls. As argued in the paper, FB requires one to register and create a profile when joining the site as a new member. This provides opportunities for users to present themselves authentically, to cast themselves in a positive (or negative) light, or even to fabricate some other image. The notion of identity presentation on FB, is an extraction of the language used, photos posted, and the information furnished by the participant on their profile page as well as on their walls. The idea of an individual person distributing private information in a public way online presents a performance factor that affects the end product. Collectively also, the identity of the Kenyan FB users can also be said to be civil to some extent. The presence of swear words, profanities and vulgarity has been observed to be low. Even in instances where the participants were aggrieved, the expression of anger and disagreement did not flare up to the extent of being termed as “flaming”. However, this is not to say that Kenyan users do not use vulgar, profane language, only that the extent is not considered overboard. In fact, in this paper, this kind of language was observed in two of the participants as has been illustrated. Therefore, it fare to conclude that Kenyans on FB are not given to ‘flaming’ but are rather cordial, friendly and entertaining in their language use.

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