

The Impact of Social Media on Low-Income People

Yage Zhu^{1,a,*}

¹*School of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Xi'an University of Technology, Xi'an, China*
a. 3202221012@stu.xaut.edu.cn

**corresponding author*

Abstract: This paper explores the impact of social media on low-income people, especially in the context of the Internet celebrity economy. By analyzing the current development of social media and the trend of the Internet celebrity economy, the paper reveals how social media provides low-income people with opportunities to present themselves and improve their economic situation. Through specific cases, this paper shows how low-income people use social media to achieve identity and economic transformation, and the impact of this transformation on individual psychology and values. Finally, the paper analyzes the multifaceted impacts of social media on society, life, and the economy, including promoting social inclusion and diversity, improving the quality of life of low-income populations, and providing new economic growth points. This paper aims to gain a deeper understanding of the multiple impacts of social media and how it can be utilized to provide low-income people with more development opportunities and support for the continuous progress and development of society.

Keywords: Social media, internet celebrity economy, low-income people, economic growth points, social inclusion

1. Introduction

Neil Postman, a famous American sociologist, wrote in his book *Entertainment to Death*: "Our politics, religion, journalism, sports, education, and business have all become willingly subordinate to entertainment, without complaint or even a word, with the result that has become a species of entertainment to death [1]. In today's increasingly deep digitalization process, social media has penetrated every aspect of people's daily lives, shaping the mode of communication, value dissemination, and even the economic structure of modern society. It has not only changed the way of information dissemination but also given rise to a brand new economic phenomenon - the Netflix economy. In this context, social media has shown people a diversified stage on which anyone can show himself, share his life, and gain economic returns through sharing. Of particular interest is how this phenomenon has affected low-income people. Are they finding life-changing opportunities through social media? Or has social media inadvertently exacerbated social inequality?"

For many low-income people, social media is not only a platform for communication and entertainment but also a window for self-expression and realization of values. It provides these people with a brand new stage that is not limited by time and space, allowing them to show their talents, connect with the world, and even change their destinies. Driven by the internet celebrity economy, people have seen countless cases of ordinary people turning into social media stars. In some of these

cases, people have gained attention, recognition, and financial rewards by showcasing their specialties, skills, or life moments. However, the backstory is not always so simple and optimistic.

This study aims to explore the impact of social media on low-income populations, with a particular focus on the multiple dimensions of this impact in the context of the current online celebrity economy. Through empirical research and in-depth analysis, one will explore the opportunities and challenges that social media offers to low-income people and analyze the social, cultural, and economic motivations behind them. One will examine how social media affects the transformation of their identity, values, and social status while focusing on the impact of social media on their psychology and quality of life. It is hoped that an in-depth exploration of this issue will shed more light on the understanding of the role of social media in modern society, especially its impact on vulnerable groups.

2. The Development Status of Social Media and the Development Trend of the Internet Celebrity Economy

With the popularization of the Internet and the continuous progress of technology, social media has become an indispensable part of modern society. It has not only changed the way people communicate but also given rise to a brand new economic model - the Internet celebrity economy [2]. Social media platforms such as Weibo, TikTok, and WeChat provide space for individuals and enterprises to show themselves and promote their products, and at the same time provide channels for audiences to obtain information and entertainment.

The growth of the Internet celebrity economy is of particular interest. Through social media, many ordinary people have been able to express themselves and earn significant attention and income by sharing their lives, skills, or opinions. Trends in the Internet celebrity economy show that individuals and groups with specific skills or characteristics can earn income through social media platforms and have the potential to develop a long-term fan base. At the same time, advertisers and enterprises are inclined to promote their products and services through cooperation with Internet celebrities, which further boosts the development of the Internet celebrity economy.

Behind the Internet star economy, data analysis and algorithm optimization also play an important role. Social media platforms continue to optimize their algorithms, allowing content creators and advertisers to accurately find their target audiences, while also providing users with more personalized content recommendations, forming a virtuous interactive cycle.

Continuing to explore the development of social media and Internet celebrity economy from different perspectives, one can observe the following trends and phenomena:

Social media platforms are trying to innovate and expand their service functions to attract more users and content creators [3]. For example, many social media platforms have introduced a variety of functions such as short videos, live broadcasting, shopping, etc., making the platform not only a place for information exchange but also a comprehensive experience platform for entertainment, learning, and shopping. This diversified development model not only enriches the user experience but also provides content creators and advertisers with more opportunities for cooperation and revenue generation.

With the promotion and application of 5G communication technology, the communication efficiency and real-time interaction of social media have been greatly improved. High-speed networks allow for smoother uploading and playing of video content, and real-time interaction makes communication between users and content creators more direct and efficient. These technological advances provide strong support for the development of social media and signal that social media will continue to grow at a rapid pace in the future.

The regulation of social media and the Internet celebrity economy by the government and society has also been gradually strengthened. Through the enactment of relevant laws and regulations, social

media platforms and Internet celebrities are regulated and managed to protect the rights and interests of consumers and maintain a good online environment. For example, in response to false advertisements and undesirable content on social media, the relevant authorities have introduced a series of regulatory measures.

Network security and user data protection have also become important issues that cannot be ignored in the development of social media. With the continuous accumulation of social media data, how to ensure the security and privacy of user data and prevent data leakage and abuse has become an important issue that social media platforms must face and solve.

The development of social media and the Internet celebrity economy is in a period of rapid change, accompanied by technological advances and social regulation, which foretells that the future of social media will continue to develop in a more diversified and standardized direction [4]. At the same time, it also provides broader display and innovation space for the majority of netizens and content creators and promotes the information exchange and economic development of the whole society.

3. Economic Status and Developmental Constraints Barriers for Low-Income People

Low-income people have often faced many economic status and development constraint barriers in the past [5]. According to Zhu Rui's study, they may be trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty due to difficulties in accessing better employment opportunities because of lower education, lack of skills, or geographic constraints [6]. As pointed out in Shi Yuchen's study, the traditional economic system and job market are often unfavorable to them, making them lack the opportunities and resources to change their economic situation [7].

In some areas, low-income people may also face social discrimination and a lack of network resources, which further increases the pressure on their lives and barriers to development. The traditional social structure and economic system can hardly provide them with space and opportunities for sustainable development.

However, the rise of social media provides a new platform for low-income people to show and develop themselves. Through social media, they can showcase their skills and talents in a low-cost way and reach a wider audience through the Internet, thus gaining possible economic income and social recognition. The development of social media not only provides new opportunities for low-income people but also offers the possibility of social equity and inclusiveness.

In this process, the government and the community should also pay attention to and support the efforts of low-income people to use social media to change their economic situation. As suggested by Gao Huan, this can be done by providing the necessary training and educational resources, as well as optimizing the relevant laws and regulations, to promote the positive impact of social media on low-income people and provide them with opportunities for sustainable development [8].

3.1. Identity and Economic Transformation

The rise of social media has provided an important arena for low-income people to potentially transform their plight by showcasing their abilities and talents [9]. First, social media platforms have significantly lowered the barriers to personal presentation and communication, giving low-income people more opportunities to reach a wide audience. They can express themselves, share their lives, and demonstrate their skills by posting their content, such as videos, images, or text.

Secondly, social media offers low-income people the possibility of economic income through a variety of ways, such as rewards, advertising cooperation, and merchandising. Not only can they earn income through these channels, but they can also build their own brands and fan bases through social media, which in the long run will help them achieve economic and social status.

Once again, social media provides channels for low-income people to interact with society and gain recognition. Their efforts and talents can be seen and recognized by more people, thus improving their social status and self-identity. For example, some migrant workers have won the respect and support of netizens by posting videos of their labor, which show the process and results of their hard work [10]. Some residents of impoverished areas have attracted the attention of buyers and investors by displaying their handicrafts through social media. Some low-income people have become opinion leaders in their fields by sharing their life experiences and skills.

3.2. Psychological Mechanisms and Values

With the popularization of social media and the rise of the Internet celebrity economy, more and more low-income people have the opportunity to gain recognition and economic gains in cyberspace by displaying their talents and abilities. This shift in identity is not only an external improvement in economic status but also contains multiple changes in the psychological level of individuals. The following aspects of this phenomenon are analyzed in depth.

Sense of Recognition and Self-Esteem Boost. When an individual's efforts and talents are recognized and appreciated on social media, they receive a stronger sense of recognition and a boost in self-esteem. This positive feedback can inspire individuals to continue to work hard and create, creating a virtuous cycle.

Social Comparison and Expectation Management. Social media allows low-income people to visualize the differences between themselves and others, and the psychology of social comparison plays an important role here. At the same time, success stories can set positive expectations for them, but too high expectations may also cause stress.

Sense of belonging and community identity. Through social media, low-income people can find communities with similar interests or experiences and feel a sense of belonging and community identity. This sense of belonging will further enhance their activity and creativity on social media.

Self-presentation and branding. Social media provides individuals with opportunities for self-presentation and branding. Low-income individuals can present a positive, upwardly mobile personal image by carefully designing their social media accounts.

Values are shaped and transmitted. As an individual's influence on social media increases, their values are spread and recognized more. At the same time, the feedback from social media will also influence and shape their values to a certain extent, making them more positive. Economic gains and improved quality of life. As economic gains increase, the quality of life of low-income people improves significantly, which will in turn increase their reliance on and trust in social media.

The development of social responsibility. Internet celebrities, especially those with a certain degree of influence, play an important role in spreading values and social responsibility. Successful Internet celebrities are often aware of their social responsibility to spread positive energy and positive messages to more people.

By analyzing the psychological mechanisms and changes in values of low-income people's identity transformation through social media, one can better understand the impact of social media on individuals and society, as well as how social media can be used to provide more development opportunities for low-income people [11]. At the same time, it also provides a valuable reference for the future development of social media, which prompts society to support and promote low-income people to realize self-improvement and social integration through social media from various aspects.

3.3. Future Developments

In the face of the growing influence and ubiquitous use of social media, it will undoubtedly continue to play a crucial role for low-income populations. With the continuous evolution of 5G, artificial

intelligence, and big data technologies, social media will be equipped with even more powerful functions, and the efficiency and coverage of content dissemination are expected to be significantly improved.

In the future, social media is expected to further lower the barriers to content creation and distribution, opening a window through which more low-income people can enter and improve their economic and social status through social media. Social media not only provides a platform to showcase one's talents and skills but also helps low-income people find and create new economic opportunities. On such a platform, even small-scale solo entrepreneurs and artists can find potential customers and audiences by showcasing their work and talents.

The integration of social media and e-commerce will be further deepened, providing more income channels for low-income people. For example, the continued development of models such as live sales and social e-commerce will provide more economic growth for low-income people. Not only that, but this integration may also drive the creation of new business models and employment opportunities. On this highly interactive platform, every individual has the potential to become a creator, utilize his or her creativity and expertise, and earn income through the social e-commerce platform, thereby improving his or her economic situation.

As the awareness and influence of social media continue to grow, social support and recognition of low-income people's use of social media to improve their economic status will also increase. The government and social organizations are also likely to introduce more policies and programs to support and promote the economic and social advancement of low-income people through social media. This includes providing relevant training and education programs to help them improve their performance on social media, as well as formulating relevant regulations and policies to protect their rights and interests.

Social media not only provides valuable opportunities for low-income people but also injects new energy and possibilities for social inclusion and equity. In the days to come, there is good reason to expect that low-income people will be able to realize a better life and higher social status through social media. Social media will become an amplifier of their voices, enabling them to showcase themselves on a broader platform, realize their value, and gain more development opportunities and social support.

In this era of highly developed information, people should pay more attention to those who are in a lower position at the socio-economic level, and help them get out of their predicament by making use of the existing technologies and platforms to realize the enhancement of their self-worth and improvement of their economic status. In this process, every individual effort deserves to be seen and respected, and every small improvement deserves to be encouraged and recognized. Through the powerful tool of social media, people have the opportunity to build a fairer, more inclusive, and pluralistic society, so that everyone can find his or her place in this arena and maximize his or her self-worth.

4. Impacts

4.1. Social Impacts

The impact of social media on low-income people is far-reaching and multifaceted, and it has brought about significant changes at the social level [12]. First of all, social media enhances social inclusiveness and fairness. Through this platform, low-income people have been able to express themselves and deliver their voices and stories to a wider audience, thus enhancing social inclusiveness and equity to a certain extent. This not only enhances social understanding and concern for this group but also further promotes social support and assistance for the disadvantaged at the policy and cultural levels. Second, social media promotes the diversification of social values. The life

experiences and values shared by low-income people on social media have contributed to the richness of social and cultural pluralism. Their stories and success stories not only provide a positive social role model but also inspire motivation and upward mobility in the wider community. Finally, social media also reinforces social responsibility and citizenship. Some Internet celebrity who are successful on social media usually recognize their social responsibility and actively spread positive energy and messages. This kind of behavior promotes positive values on a wider scale and also strengthens the sense of citizenship and responsibility of the whole society to a certain extent.

4.2. Life Impact

Social media has had a profound impact on low-income people at all levels of life, not only significantly improving their quality of life but also opening a door full of possibilities for their personal development and social network expansion [12]. On the economic level, the benefits of social media are directly reflected in the improved living conditions of this group, enabling them to enjoy higher quality education, more advanced healthcare services, and a more livable living environment. This not only sublimates their quality of life on the material level but also gives them more support and satisfaction on the spiritual level. At the same time, social media has become an important platform for their personal growth and self-realization. Here, low-income people can realize their value by presenting themselves, learning new skills, and receiving feedback from various sources, thus increasing their self-confidence and gaining a significant psychological boost. Further, social media provides them with invaluable opportunities to expand their social networks. They are able to meet people from different backgrounds and fields on this platform, enriching their social experiences, deepening their understanding of different cultures and values, and thus enriching and broadening their horizons of life. More importantly, social media has become a space where they can break through the limitations of social class and economic status, and through their self-expression and self-efforts, break down the traditional barriers to social mobility, and realize the leap from low-income class to a higher socio-economic status. On such a platform, people are no longer strictly limited by material conditions, and every hard-working individual has the possibility to gain social recognition and economic rewards through their talent and hard work. Such a phenomenon not only reflects the social progress brought about by social media but also heralds more possibilities for the future of society in terms of inclusiveness and mobility.

4.3. Economic Impact

Social media exerts a profound and multidimensional impact on the economic status of low-income people and their regions [13]. At the individual level, social media has paved the way for low-income people to make rich and colorful economic gains, which include but are not limited to advertising revenue, live streaming rewards, and product sales. These sources of income not only substantially improve their economic situation to some extent, but also give them hope and motivation to change their fate through their efforts at the spiritual level. What's more noteworthy is that social media has given birth to new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, such as self-media operation, live streaming salesman, and other professional roles, presenting a diverse and creative economic development path for low-income people. On this brand-new platform, they can fully display themselves, realize their value, and gain due financial rewards by providing valuable content or services [14].

On a more macro socio-economic level, successful Internet celebrities or social media influencers can often be a driving force for regional economic development. By promoting local products and tourism resources, they not only create more local employment and business opportunities but also provide strong support for regional economic development and prosperity. Their influence can even

change the economic landscape of a region to a certain extent, driving the development of local industries by enhancing local visibility and attractiveness. Therefore, the impact of social media is not only limited to economic benefits at the individual level but also stimulates new economic growth points and momentum at the social and regional levels to a certain extent.

From these phenomena, it can be seen that the power of social media is not only reflected in connecting people in the exchange of information but also in the socio-economic changes it can drive. It provides a stage for low-income people to show themselves equally so that they have the opportunity to change their economic situation through their efforts; at the same time, it also provides new opportunities and directions for the development of the regional economy and has become an important force to promote social and economic development.

The above three influences are intertwined, demonstrating the multi-dimensional impact of social media on low-income people and the broader society. Through in-depth analysis and understanding of these impacts, people can better grasp the development trend of social media, provide more support and opportunities for low-income people, and promote the continuous progress and development of society.

5. Conclusion

The rapid development and popularization of social media have paved an important path for low-income people to express themselves, improve their economic level, and change their social status. This platform has not only provided them with rich channels of economic gain at the individual level - including advertising revenue, live streaming rewards, and product sales - but has also created new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities at a broader social and cultural level, such as professions like self-media operations and live streaming salespersons. In addition, successful Internet celebrities or social media influencers can often be drivers of regional economic development. By promoting local products and tourism, they not only create more local jobs and business opportunities but also provide strong support for regional economic development and prosperity. Such a transformation not only improves the quality of life of low-income people at the material level but also brings great satisfaction and self-confidence to their spiritual world.

However, it is worth emphasizing that these opportunities presented by social media do not automatically materialize for each individual; they require the combined efforts of the individual, broad social support, and a sound policy environment. While promoting the use of social media resources by low-income populations to achieve sustained development and progress, social media platforms and policymakers also need to take active steps to ensure that social media becomes a positive force for social equity and progress. In this era of rapid digitalization, how to properly guide and support low-income people so that they can make full use of social media as a powerful tool to leapfrog from the low-income bracket to a higher socioeconomic status is undoubtedly an issue that deserves in-depth consideration and exploration by all sectors of society.

References

- [1] Zifei, S. (2018) *Research on the Phenomenon and Development Trend of "Internet Celebrities" in the New Media Environment*. Chengdu University of Technology.
- [2] Micheli, M. (2016) *Social Networking Sites and Low-Income Teenagers: between Opportunity and Inequality*, *Information, Communication & Society*, 19, 565-581.
- [3] Pouwels, J.L., Keijsers, L. and Odgers, C. (2022) 'Who Benefits Most from Using Social Media, the Socially Rich or the Socially Poor?', *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 47, 101351.
- [4] Chantarat, S., Barrett, C.B. (2012) *Social Network Capital, Economic Mobility and Poverty Traps*. *J Econ Inequal* 10, 299-342.
- [5] Massey, D.S. (2022) 'Larissa Adler Lomnitz: Anthropologist Who Showed How the Poor Used Social Networks to Survive and the Rich to Thrive', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119, 33.

- [6] Congcong, S. (2022). *Study on Flexible Employment of College Graduates from Low-Income Families under New Business Mode*. Shandong University.
- [7] Zhu R. (2023). *Research on the Employment Effect of China's Digital Economy Development*. Jilin University.
- [8] Shi Y C. (2023). *Research on the Impact of Internet Use on Labor Employment*. Nanjing University of Finance and Economics.
- [9] Gao Huan. (2023). *Study on the Impact of Digital Economy Development on the Upgrading of Employment Structure*. Liaoning University.
- [10] Letki, N., & Mieriņa, I. (2015). *Getting Support in Polarized Societies: Income, Social Networks, and Socioeconomic Context*. *Social Science Research*, 49, 217-233.
- [11] Schnitzler, K., Davies, N., Ross, F., Harris, R. (2016) *Using Twitter™ to Drive Research Impact: A Discussion of Strategies, Opportunities, and Challenges*, *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 59, 15-26.
- [12] Voices of people. (2017) *Nick. Well, Quickly Grassroots Web Celebrity Fantasy Jianghu*. Nanjing university.
- [13] Yilin, L. (2022) *Research on the Production Situation, Content, and Effect of Rural Female Bloggers' Short Videos: From the Perspective of Economic Income and Self-Actualization*. *Popular Literature and Art*, 14, 116-118.
- [14] Bingkun, H. (2021) *Trill "Web Celebrity" Short Video Phenomenon Research*. Nanchang University.