



BREAKING THE MIRROR: 'I LOVE ME' MOVEMENT AND THE REBELLION AGAINST BEAUTY IDEALS ON MEDIA X

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine how the "I Love Me" movement utilizes social media to challenge conventional beauty standards and promote values of diversity and self-acceptance. The urgency of this research arises from significant issues faced by modern society, where social media often promotes beauty standards that are not only unrealistic but also exclusive and detrimental. These standards can potentially cause body image disorders and social anxiety, especially among teenagers and adults, making this research not only academically relevant but also crucial for public health and social policy. This research employs a qualitative approach with netnographic methods within a constructivist paradigm to understand the dynamics of communication and self-representation on social media related to the "I Love Me" movement. The study was conducted by collecting primary data through the social media analysis application Keyhole, which provides frequency, reach, and types of interactions related to the campaign or hashtag used by the movement. Secondary data were also gathered from various sources including books, scholarly articles, and media reports discussing beauty standards, the influence of social media, and related social movements. Data collection techniques include systematic media observation and documentation, and data analysis was performed using the methods of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which involve data conditioning, categorization, and systematic conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the "I Love Me" movement has successfully created a dialogue that supports physical diversity and promotes mental health by challenging the dominant commercial and harmful beauty narratives. The movement demonstrates its effectiveness in leveraging social media to change beauty perceptions, reduce stress and pressure related to body image, and support self-acceptance and beauty in all forms.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, social media has become an inseparable part of daily life for most of the global population, with approximately 5.22 billion users recorded as of early October 2024, representing 63.8% of the world's population [1]. This widespread adoption reflects a deep interconnection between digital technology and human interaction. Over the past year, the number of users has increased by 256 million, averaging 8.1 new users every second, indicating growing accessibility and appeal across diverse social segments, driven by improved internet infrastructure [2]–[4]. Furthermore, 94.5% of internet users globally engage with social media monthly, reinforcing its role in forming and maintaining social networks [5], [6], although this may include duplicate accounts. Notably, 86.3% of adults aged 18 and over are active social media users [1], underscoring its significance not only for youth but also for adult communication and interaction.

A study conducted by GWI reveals that the average social media user is active on approximately 6.8 different platforms per month and spends an average of 2 hours and 19 minutes per day on social media. From a time-use perspective, this means people spend about 14 percent of their waking hours using social media [7], [8]. In this context, social media has become one of the dominant activities in the daily lives of many individuals.

Globally, over 12 billion hours are spent on social platforms each day, equivalent to 1.38 million years of human existence—highlighting the profound impact of social media on time structure and daily life worldwide. Beyond facilitating social interaction, these platforms significantly shape perceptions of beauty standards [9], [10], often promoting idealized and unrealistic images—typically thin bodies and flawless skin—that influence how individuals view themselves and others. While global trends have popularized certain beauty ideals, cultural and geographical differences persist in defining attractiveness, creating complex pressures for individuals to align with both local and global expectations. Such pressures frequently lead to harmful effects, including social anxiety, skin whitening practices, and extreme dieting [11], [12], with many, especially women, feeling compelled to undergo drastic physical changes to meet these imposed ideals. In response, movements like “I Love Me” have emerged to challenge these norms [13], [14], rejecting narrow beauty ideals and promoting da’wah values centered on self-acceptance and the celebration of diverse beauty—serving as a vital counter-narrative that encourages a more inclusive and empowering understanding of self-worth.

This research reflects an in-depth analysis of the “I Love Me” movement, which aims to challenge and disrupt conventional beauty norms often considered exclusive and unrealistic. This movement utilizes digital platforms, particularly Media X, as the primary arena to voice advocacy messages supporting self-acceptance and diversity, contrasting with the beauty standards often associated with perfect and unattainable images. This study delves into the values promoted by this movement and how they influence societal perceptions and behaviors towards beauty in a broader context. The author gathered 1,000 previous articles using the Publish or Perish application for critical analysis. After data collection, the author visualized the data using network analysis and density analysis with the VosViewer application, the results of which are as follows:

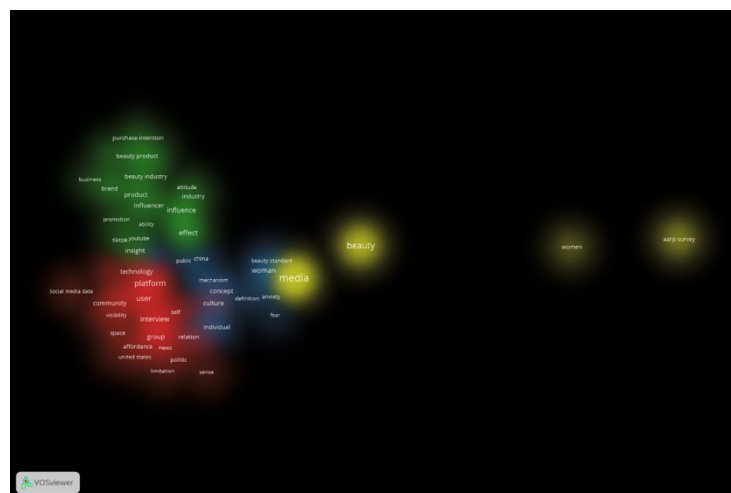


Figure 2. Density Analysis of Previous Research

From the density analysis related to beauty standards on social media, there is a strong concentration on the interaction between 'media' and 'beauty'. This indicates that previous research has intensively examined how social media as a communication tool influences beauty perceptions and the formation of beauty standards. The close relationship between the nodes 'media' and 'beauty standard' emphasizes the role of social media in shaping and reinforcing often unrealistic and homogeneous ideal images of beauty. This creates an environment where users, particularly women, are continuously confronted with ideal images that can affect their self-esteem and body perceptions. This research also notes the role of 'influencer' and platforms such as TikTok and YouTube as mediums that reinforce messages about aesthetics and appearance, showing how trends and popular views about beauty are exchanged and reinforced on a global scale.

However, there is a significant gap not extensively addressed by previous studies, namely the exploration of da'wah values in the context of movements that reject conventional beauty standards. This research attempts to fill this gap by examining how movements that promote diversity and self-acceptance act as a form of resistance against the dominant beauty narratives produced by social media. With a focus on da'wah values, this research not only looks at resistance to existing beauty norms but also how these movements influence broader social perceptions and behaviors. It offers a new perspective that challenges conventional views and introduces a discourse on beauty that is inclusive and sees differences as strengths, not deficiencies. Through this approach, the study paves the way for a deeper understanding of the social and cultural dynamics shaping beauty standards in the digital era, while providing new insights into how da'wah values can be leveraged to advocate for positive social change in the context of beauty.

The study by Anderson et al. [15], titled *"Shifting the Standard of Beauty: Beginning of the Body Inclusive Model,"* likely employs literature analysis to explore the inclusivity of body shapes within beauty standards. While their findings indicate a shift toward more inclusive beauty ideals, this research differs by focusing on resistance to conventional beauty norms and highlighting the da'wah values embedded in the "I Love Me" movement. Conte et al. [16], in their study *"Analysis of the relationship between beauty standards imposed by social media and their impact on the possible formation of anxiety and depression in young women,"* use quantitative methods to measure social media's influence on beauty standards and mental health, showing a significant correlation with increased anxiety and depression. In contrast, the present study addresses these issues through a da'wah-based advocacy framework. Hafeez and Zulfiqar [17], in *"How False Social Media Beauty Standards Lead To Body Dysmorphia,"* apply a qualitative approach to examine perceptions among individuals affected by distorted beauty norms, offering a more specific focus than this research, which broadly engages with the da'wah-driven rejection of beauty ideologies. Meanwhile, Piccoli et al. [18] investigate *"The relationship between Instagram activity and female body concerns: The serial mediating role of appearance-related comparisons and internalization of beauty norms"* through survey and statistical methods, revealing how Instagram usage negatively affects self-perception. Their findings contrast with this study, which emphasizes the "I Love Me" movement's efforts to promote self-love and resist dominant beauty pressures.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach using the netnographic method within a constructivist paradigm to explore how the "I Love Me" movement challenges conventional beauty standards promoted through social media [19], [20]. Netnography, an online adaptation of ethnography, allows researchers to deeply observe and analyze user behaviors and interactions in digital environments [21]. The study focuses on communication dynamics and self-representation on social media platforms, with primary data collected through the Keyhole social media analytics tool, which offers insights into frequency, reach, and types of interactions related to specific campaigns or hashtags. In addition to primary data, secondary sources such as books, academic articles, and media reports related to beauty standards, social media influence, and similar movements will be reviewed. Data collection will involve media observation and systematic documentation across platforms to compile relevant content discussing the "I Love Me" movement. The analysis will aim to uncover the broader context, motivations, and public responses to the initiative.

Data analysis will be carried out using the methods of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which involve data condensation, category construction, and systematic conclusion drawing [22]. To ensure the validity of the findings, this research will use source triangulation, where data from various sources will be compared and contrasted, as well as expert triangulation involving media communication experts who will provide assessments of data interpretation [23]. This triangulation will help verify the accuracy and depth of the analysis and strengthen the validity of the conclusions drawn in examining the effectiveness and impact of the "I Love Me" movement within the context of social media.

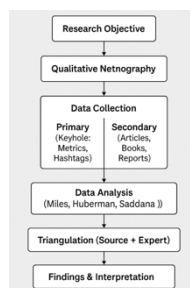


Figure 3. Methods Flowchart

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Dynamics of Standard Beauty in 'X' Media

Dynamics of Beauty Standards on Media X Media X presents the issue of commodified and disseminated beauty standards, a social media platform that has significant influence in shaping public perceptions of beauty. By observing how Media X promotes certain images of beauty that are often idealistic and unrealistic, this subsection aims to analyze and understand the influence of these representations on social norms and individual behavior. This discussion will explore how narratives about beauty created through this social media not only affect aesthetic standards but also shape the dynamics of social interaction and self-identity construction in society.

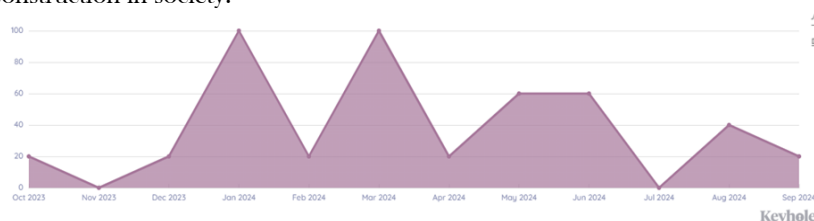


Figure 4. Interest Overtime

The graph above shows fluctuating trends in interest in the "I Love Me" movement from October 2023 to September 2024, as tracked through the Keyhole application. A significant rise is observed in December 2023 and March 2024, with peak interest reaching about 80 points, indicating the presence of an event or campaign possibly related to self-empowerment or response to conventional beauty issues. After each peak, there is a sharp decline, indicating the possible end of the activities that triggered this interest. However, the overall pattern shows that interest in this movement remains present and fluctuates periodically, indicating an ongoing dialogue in society about beauty standards and self-acceptance, aligned with specific activities or events that influence public awareness and support.

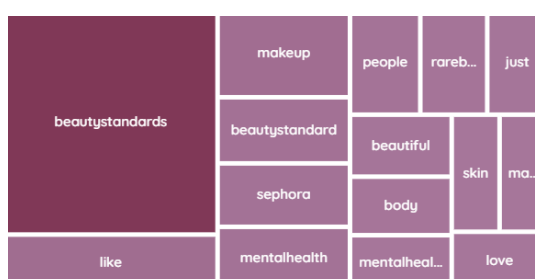


Figure 5. Word Cloud

This word cloud illustrates various terms frequently associated with the "I Love Me" movement in online discussions, highlighting keywords such as "beautystandards," "mentalhealth," and "body," reflecting the main focus of the dialogue occurring on social media. Terms like "makeup" and "skin" indicate the linkage of beauty topics with physical appearance, while "love" and "mentalhealth" suggest a growing understanding that self-acceptance and mental health are crucial components in the debate about beauty standards. By including "Sephora," a brand associated with cosmetics, this data also indicates how commercialization and the beauty industry participate in this conversation, showing the complex interplay between commerce, health, and self-image in the context of this movement.

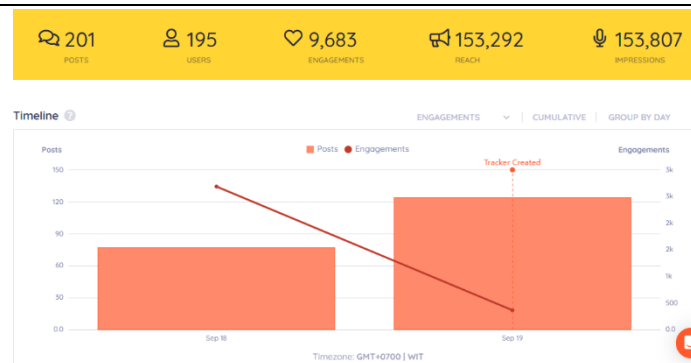


Figure 5. Post, Timeline, and Engagement

The graph displayed illustrates the dynamics of posting and engagement levels in a social media campaign, measured by the number of posts, users involved, total engagement, reach, and impressions generated. On September 18, there is a significant spike in the number of posts followed by a sharp decline, while the engagement level sees a strong increase reaching its peak around September 19. This data indicates that although the number of posts decreased, the quality or relevance of the content may have increased, thus generating higher engagement. The broad reach and impressions indicate that the campaign successfully attracted attention and interaction from a significant audience, demonstrating its effectiveness in communicating its message and resonating with a broader audience.

Table 1. Beauty Standard Phenomena on Media X and the 'I Love Me' Movement

Conversation Theme	Description of Conversation	Response of the 'I Love Me' Movement
Celebrity Beauty Ideals	Tweets that highlight celebrities as beauty standards, praising beauty as "like a princess" or "perfect."	The "I Love Me" movement emphasizes natural beauty and self-acceptance, reducing the focus on unrealistic ideals.
Beauty Based on Race	Some tweets depict beauty standards specific to certain races, such as Korean beauty.	Advocates for diversity and inclusivity in beauty standards, challenging racial stereotypes.
Commercialization of Beauty	Tweets related to commercial beauty brands like "Sephora," which often reinforce certain beauty standards.	Encourages critique of how the beauty industry manipulates standards and promotes products through social expectations.
Decentralization of Beauty	Discussions on how beauty standards are becoming more decentralized.	Supports the idea that beauty is unique and personal, encouraging more diverse and inclusive narratives.

In the current context of social media, beauty standards are often associated with idealized celebrity images, with many tweets describing them as "like a princess" or "perfect," reinforcing narrow ideals of attractiveness [24], [25]. The "I Love Me" movement responds by promoting natural beauty and self-acceptance while challenging unrealistic and unattainable standards. Additionally, race-based beauty perceptions—such as the idealization of Korean features—reflect how racial identity influences beauty norms. In response, the movement advocates for diversity and inclusivity by challenging stereotypes and embracing all forms of beauty, regardless of ethnic or racial background. The commercialization of beauty further complicates this issue, as major companies like Sephora perpetuate specific ideals through targeted marketing, shaping what is considered trendy and desirable [26], [27]. The movement critiques such practices, encouraging the public to question industry-driven norms.

The growing concept of beauty decentralization reflects a shift away from rigid, homogeneous standards toward broader acceptance of diverse forms of beauty. This discourse highlights an increasing societal awareness of individual uniqueness [28], [29]. The "I Love Me" movement reinforces this shift by promoting inclusive narratives that challenge the notion that only a singular beauty ideal is valid. Within the framework of social anxiety theory, this shift can be understood as a response to the pressure individuals face to meet unrealistic aesthetic expectations, often resulting in anxiety and negative self-image [30]–[33]. As a counterforce, the "I Love Me" movement provides a more supportive and inclusive environment where individuals are valued as they are, free from the constraints of rigid beauty norms.

According to the network society theory by Manuel Castells [34], social media serves as a communication network that enables the rapid dissemination of these beauty norms. In this network,

information flows horizontally and often without filters, effectively reinforcing certain trends and standards [35]. The "I Love Me" movement, in this context, utilizes the same network to counter the dominant narrative by spreading messages that contradict mainstream beauty ideals, employing similar strategies to achieve an opposing impact.

The "I Love Me" movement, in facing the dynamics of beauty standards on social media, demonstrates the power of collective action in a decentralized network, consistent with the network society theory. This movement not only offers an alternative to exclusive beauty standards but also provides community-based solutions that support mental health and social sustainability. It illustrates how resistance to dominant norms can be built and strengthened through the same social networks that once reinforced those standards.

Sentiment and Advocacy Values of the 'I Love Me' Movement on Media X

This subsection aims to delve deeper into the sentiments and advocacy values embodied in the "I Love Me" movement as presented on Media X. As a powerful digital platform, Media X allows various narratives and discourses about beauty standards to flourish, providing an opportunity for the "I Love Me" movement to voice an approach that counters conventional beauty norms. Through in-depth content analysis, this subsection will evaluate how this movement articulates advocacy values that support self-acceptance and diversity, as well as how it successfully influences societal perceptions and attitudes towards more inclusive and sustainable beauty standards.

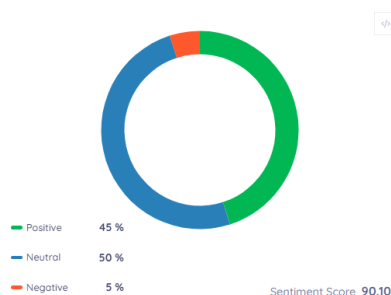


Figure 6. Sentiment Analysis of the 'I Love Me' Movement on Media X

The pie chart displayed illustrates the distribution of sentiments towards the "I Love Me" movement on a social media platform, showing a majority of responses are positive or neutral with 45% positive sentiments, 50% neutral, and only 5% negative. A high overall sentiment score of 90.10 confirms that the movement is generally well-received by the platform's users. The strong positive sentiment indicates the movement's success in conveying messages that resonate with users, supporting ideas about self-acceptance and inclusivity in beauty standards. The neutral responses might indicate acceptance without strong feelings or unawareness of the depth of the issues. Meanwhile, the small percentage of negative sentiments could be an indicator of a minor resistance to changes in beauty norms or perhaps skepticism about the movement's effectiveness in making real changes. This analysis reveals not only widespread acceptance of the movement but also the challenges that might be encountered in efforts to change broader and deeper beauty perceptions.

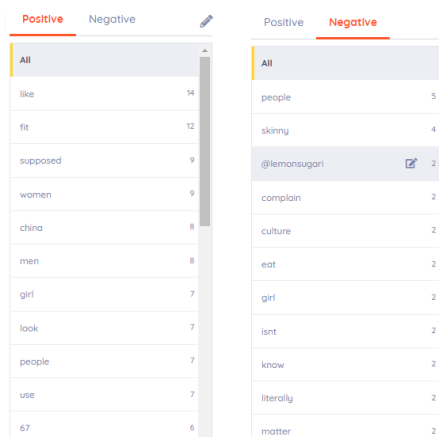


Figure 7. Accumulation of Positive and Negative Sentiments

The representation of positive sentiment from the data above indicates that words such as "like," "fit," and "supposed" frequently appear in discussions related to the "I Love Me" movement. The high frequency of the words "like" and "fit" may reflect support or admiration for the ideas promoted by the movement, such as body acceptance and the rejection of conventional beauty standards. The word "supposed" may suggest dialogue or questioning regarding social expectations, indicating critical reflection on what is considered normative. The use of these words in a positive context suggests that the movement's messages have successfully inspired consideration of how beauty standards and gender roles are internalized and debated within society.

Meanwhile, the negative sentiments observed in the data include words such as "skinny," "complain," and "culture." The word "skinny," appearing in a negative context, reaffirms criticism of the emphasis on body weight or shape as an ideal beauty standard [36], [37], [38]. This may indicate concern or rejection of unrealistic body images often promoted through social media. The words "complain" and "culture" in a negative context may reflect dissatisfaction or critique of existing cultural norms that continue to reinforce certain stereotypes or social standards. These observations reveal resistance to established narratives and demonstrate the complexity of responses to efforts aimed at changing beauty perceptions.

The "I Love Me" movement carries a critical mission in addressing narrow and often unattainable conventional beauty standards [39]. Its rejection of such norms aims to broaden the discourse on justice and equality—principles that are also strongly emphasized in Islamic teachings. The movement encourages individuals to challenge socially constructed ideals of beauty and promotes the acceptance of all body shapes and sizes, aligning with Islamic values that prioritize justice and acknowledge each individual's uniqueness as a creation of God. One of the movement's core pillars is women's empowerment, inspiring women to define beauty on their own terms rather than through societal or media-imposed lenses. This not only fosters autonomy and strength among women but also reflects Islamic values supporting empowerment and independence. It provides a space for women to express and celebrate their beauty free from biased social norms [40]–[42]. Additionally, the movement emphasizes mental health—often overlooked in beauty discourse—by advocating for reduced stress and pressure linked to unrealistic standards. This focus aligns with Islamic principles of holistic well-being, encouraging a balanced harmony between mind, body, and soul [43], [44].

Inclusivity and diversity are core values championed by the "I Love Me" movement, which challenges beauty stereotypes and embraces all forms of beauty, encouraging society to celebrate human variation. These values resonate with Islamic principles of brotherhood and equality, where every individual is honored regardless of race, body type, or background [45]–[47]. The movement also critiques the commercialization of beauty, which often exploits women's bodies for profit. In response, it advocates for ethical and responsible consumption—a concept aligned with Islamic teachings on selflessness and simplicity—emphasizing social responsibility in consumer culture [48], [49]. Within the framework of social anxiety theory, the movement acts as a buffer against societal pressures to conform to unrealistic beauty ideals. This theory posits that a disparity between self-perception and social expectations can result in anxiety and mental health challenges. The movement offers a constructive alternative by encouraging individuals to embrace their uniqueness without fear. Moreover, in light of Castells' network society theory, the movement strategically employs social media to disseminate its messages and reshape societal norms [35]. As a dynamic communication tool, social media enables rapid, expansive dissemination of progressive ideas, and the movement harnesses this power to challenge and reframe dominant beauty standards, illustrating the capacity of networks to mobilize advocacy and influence cultural change.

The narrative above not only demonstrates how da'wah values are integrated into the "I Love Me" campaign but also illustrates how modern social theories—such as social anxiety theory and network society theory—can be applied to analyze and understand the impact and dissemination of this social movement in a broader context. This movement presents a practical example of how religious values can be translated into impactful social action, using technology and social media to advocate for social change.

Discussion

In the discussion of the "I Love Me" movement, we witness how social media has become a primary platform that not only connects individuals but also shapes their perceptions and behaviors regarding beauty. Social media, with its broad reach and interactivity, facilitates the dissemination of new ideas and provides a space for initiatives like "I Love Me" to challenge existing norms and promote self-acceptance [50], [51].

The "I Love Me" movement effectively utilizes social media to advocate values such as diversity, inclusivity, and mental well-being, representing a shift from platforms being tools for self-promotion to instruments of empowerment. By promoting the acceptance of all forms of beauty, the movement challenges narrow ideals often reinforced by the beauty industry and media. According to Castells' network society theory, social media functions as a "space of flows" enabling rapid, boundaryless information

exchange [52]; the movement leverages this dynamic to sustain alternative narratives through increased connectivity. However, the same platforms can foster social anxiety due to unrealistic beauty standards, as explained in social anxiety theory. In response, the movement creates an affirming environment that counters such pressures with messages of self-acceptance and mental health support.

Social anxiety theory also highlights how elevated social expectations can shape individuals' self-perceptions and views of others [53], and by promoting counter-narratives, the "I Love Me" movement potentially eases the pressure to conform to harmful beauty ideals, thus supporting healthier body image attitudes. Globally, the movement shows how local initiatives can gain universal traction, as body image and beauty concerns transcend cultural boundaries, enabling ideas of social justice and inclusivity to influence change worldwide. Nonetheless, the movement faces challenges that reflect the complexities of shifting social norms [54], [55]; resistance often comes from groups who see traditional values as necessary to preserve. This tension between traditional and modern ideals reveals important dynamics within evolving societies. Gender inclusivity is also a critical area for further study, as while the movement resonates strongly with women, its implications for men's perceptions of beauty and self-worth are equally relevant. More broadly, the use of social media reflects a transformation in how advocacy is mobilized—enabling rapid dissemination, immediate feedback, and real-time strategic adaptation. As a case study, the "I Love Me" movement reveals both the power and limitations of technology in promoting social development; while digital platforms amplify advocacy efforts, lasting success depends on achieving deep, enduring shifts in cultural values and behavior.

The novelty of this research lies in its application of netnography to explore the influence of social media in shaping and responding to beauty standards through the "I Love Me" movement, with a specific focus on the integration of da'wah values within the movement's narrative. Additionally, this research is unique in examining how the movement utilizes digital platforms to challenge conventional beauty norms and promote diversity and self-acceptance in a global context. By exploring the intersection between social anxiety theory and network society theory, this study offers a new perspective on the dynamics of social power and the role of technology in advocating social change, providing key insights into the mechanisms behind shifting social norms in the digital era.

4. CONCLUSION

This research highlights how the "I Love Me" movement leverages social media as a tool to challenge and deconstruct conventional beauty standards, which are often unrealistic and exclusive. The movement has successfully promoted values of diversity and self-acceptance, offering a more inclusive and healthier alternative to the dominant beauty representations in social media. By supporting beauty in all forms and sizes, this movement not only raises awareness of the importance of mental health but also reduces the social pressures associated with body image. The outcomes of this movement indicate a shift in social attitudes towards greater support for self-acceptance, which can reduce social anxiety and strengthen community mental health.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that similar social movements adopt a more structured approach in using social media to maximize their reach and impact. The development of creatively resonant content could attract more attention and provoke more substantial interactions from users. Additionally, collaborations with influencers and major social media platforms should be enhanced to broaden the effectiveness of campaigns. On the policy side, stakeholders in health and education should design programs that educate the public about the impact of social media on beauty perceptions and mental health. These programs should aim to develop critical media skills and enhance awareness of healthy and realistic beauty diversity. Consequently, a society more resistant to unrealistic aesthetic pressures and more supportive of diversity and inclusivity will be fostered.

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