

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Various aspects of human life globally have changed significantly due to the development of the digital era. New interaction spaces that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries have been created through the development of digital technology and social media. In Indonesia, internet penetration and social media usage have increased drastically in recent years, making social media a primary space for social interaction, especially for the younger generation. This trend aligns with global findings that nearly 97% of young people are now active social media users, indicating that digital platforms have become an integral part of their daily lives (Riaz & Riaz, 2024).

The younger generation is the most active demographic among social media users and the most vulnerable to social media influences. A study by Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020) showed that intense social media use can impact the mental health of young people, including the risk of depression and anxiety. Social validation through social media (likes, comments, and followers) plays a significant role in the process of forming their identity, which is created from their self-perception on social media. This emphasizes the role of social media not only as a medium for entertainment but also as a crucial space in the process of identity discovery. Through an interview with Ms. Norahayu Agustinawati, S.Psi., M.Psi., a psychologist, young people aged 19-22 are in the transition phase from adolescence to young adulthood. This transition to early adulthood is characterized by the process of identity search and the formation of self-esteem that is not yet fully stable, so they are often still in the process of adapting to their social environment and seeking figures and references in shaping their identity. In this condition, social media exposure not only serves as a source of self-perception formation through content that is consumed repeatedly and curated by algorithms.

However, intensive engagement with social media not only impacts psychological aspects but also influences the mechanisms of individual identity formation. Psychologists say that content repeatedly exposed to social media through algorithmic systems has the potential to subconsciously influence the formation of preferences, values, and perspectives. Given that young adults still have stable value systems, this process can shift identity formation from being reflective to being responsive to the digital environment. Serpa (2019) emphasized that the use of digital technology, particularly social media, can trigger conditions of alienation (alienation), a state in which

individuals feel disconnected from themselves and their social environment. This arises because human interactions are increasingly mediated by technology, resulting in a decrease in face-to-face relationships and a loss of authentic communication (Adibifar in Serpa, 2019).

Furthermore, social alienation through digital media can lead to feelings of alienation, low self-confidence, and even social isolation due to the dominance of virtual rather than real-life relationships (Serpa, 2019). This condition aligns with the tendency of individuals who lack clarity about their self-worth, making it easier to experience alienation when the identity they form is not derived from self-understanding, but from external constructions. As a result, individuals potentially become dependent on digital media as a source of validation and experience difficulties in building authentic social relationships. In this context, conventional communication approaches that are instructive or normative become less effective for the younger generation, as at this stage individuals tend to be more responsive to visual and reflective experiences than to direct advice. Therefore, a medium is needed that can convey this issue not only informatively, but also emotionally and immersively.

Title selection "404 Human Not Found" relates to the issue raised, namely the loss of human identity among the younger generation in the digital era. "404" is used as an error code that is recognizable by the younger generation who are accustomed to interacting through digital media and can symbolically mean an error in life. The use of "404" is intended to emphasize the direct connection between everyday digital experiences and contemporary social phenomena. In line with the views of Rybakov, Yarmolich, & Romanov (2021), digitalization and social transformation have encouraged the formation of "quasi-sociality," namely relationships between individuals that are increasingly replaced by symbolic interactions in virtual spaces. This condition explains why the title was chosen, because it is able to clearly represent the challenge of human authenticity which is increasingly reduced to mere digital representations.

Previous research has been limited to psychological and social aspects, with no study of how visual media, particularly short films, can be an effective vehicle for conveying social explorations on the topic of loss of human identity among young people in the digital age. As explained by Stepanov (2020), "the sociological analysis of films... received a great boost from the perspective of viewing feature films as representations of social reality and acknowledging the role films play in constructing identities and reflecting on the semantic resources of social action" However, studies

that integrate the Indonesian cultural context, specifically how digital media is used and how visual approaches are used, are still very limited.

Short films have a unique orientation compared to other cinematic media. As a visual medium, short films have the ability to represent social reality while simultaneously building a reflective experience for the audience. In the context of the younger generation, the use of a vertical format (9:16) is not only relevant from a distribution perspective but also perceptually. The vertical screen used in personal devices such as smartphones creates a more intimate and subjective visual experience, allowing the delivery of issues of identity and alienation to be closer to the audience's everyday experiences. As emphasized in the Russian Sociological Review, “films could now be seen as a form of a representation of social reality... consistently turned cinema into the source material for probing into society’s notions about itself, representation of various groups and communities, and social confrontations and conflicts” (Stepanov, 2020). Thus, short films can provide stronger legitimacy to the behavior of young people who are directly confronted with changing styles of social interaction.

Furthermore, choosing a vertical format (9:16) for short films is a crucial strategy for reaching the younger generation. The vertical screen, familiar to young people through social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, has shaped new visual consumption patterns. This orientation demonstrates that media formats can adapt to young people's digital lifestyles, ensuring that the social messages presented are not only representative but also relevant to the mediums they use daily.

The urgency of visual exploration through vertical short films is crucial given their direct impact on the future of the younger generation. As explained in Russian Sociological Review, “cinema’s anthropological input into the formation of contemporary culture, and the role of cinematic imagination in shaping the public sphere of modern society” (Stepanov, 2020), where film is not only a medium for entertainment, but also a means to build social reflection and collective awareness that is relevant to the context of contemporary Indonesian culture.

In designing this short film, the method used is film production Stages are a systematic framework in the film design process. Research stages are necessary to form the foundation for film design. Through research, relevant issues are explored, audience characteristics are observed, and relevant visual approaches can be determined. Quoting Ratnawati and Alam (2023), research is crucial in production management because it ensures that every creative decision made in

production aligns with the social and cultural objectives of the film. Therefore, research plays a crucial role in ensuring that the film's idea is aesthetically sound and has a clear conceptual and empirical basis.

After going through the research stage, the film production process continues with three main stages. film production stages, namely pre-production, production, and post-production. In the discussion by Provost (2024), the stages of film production include development, pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution. which is part of the film production management system. In the pre-production stage, the initial stages of production are carried out such as concept planning, synopsis creation, scriptwriting, and storyboarding to ensure the visual narrative aligns with the issue raised, namely the loss of authentic human identity through digital media. The production stage includes capturing images and sound according to the script and storyboard. Next, the post-production stage involves editing, adding visual effects (VFX), and more. coloring, And sound design.

The shift in identity formation among young people in the digital age demonstrates a fundamental shift in how individuals understand themselves. As identity is increasingly shaped by digital exposure rather than personal reflection, the potential for alienation and inauthenticity increases. Therefore, exploring this issue through visual media is crucial, not only as a representation but also as an effort to spark reflective awareness in the younger generation. Thus, the vertical short film "404 Human Not Found" was designed with the hope that it would be a work that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also can serve as a means of critical reflection on the phenomenon of the loss of human identity among the younger generation in the digital era. This design focuses on the young generation aged 19 to 22 years and domiciled in the city of Surabaya, where this age group is an active social media user and is in the phase of forming their own identity.

1.2 Identification of Problems

1. Through research conducted by Mustikawati, Sadewa, and Fadholi (2022), the shift in the identity of the younger generation from reality to persona in the digital space has not been widely studied by representing this identity through visual construction using short film audiovisual media..

2. Quoting Stepanov (2020), the phenomenon of the dominance of digital interactions has not been widely expressed in the form of visual narrative which can be a cinematic representation of the decline in the quality of social relations.
3. Through Stepanov (2020), social issues related to identity crisis young generation through visual exploration such as short films, especially vertical short films, is still rarely studied, especially in the context of the visual language and cinematography approach.
4. Through interviews with psychologists, the potential in designing vertical short films as a visual communication medium that is close to the media consumption habits of the younger generation has not been optimally utilized to convey critical & reflective narrative.

1.3 Problem Formulation

1. How are the visual language elements in vertical short films (framing, mise-en-scène, editing rhythm) constructed to build a visual representation of the identity crisis of the young generation in the digital era?
2. How can narrative structure and storytelling approaches in a vertical format build a visual experience that effectively conveys an identity crisis to an audience?

1.4 Limitation of Problems

1. The scope of the study is focused on the social and visual representation of the phenomenon of the loss of human identity in the younger generation in the digital era, especially those affected by the high intensity of social media use and changes in social interaction patterns through the medium of vertical short films.
2. The objects studied are limited to the young generation aged 19-22 years who actively use social media.
3. The medium used is a vertical short film with a screen ratio of 9:16 with a total duration of at least 20 minutes.
4. The design method used refers to the research and development stages. film production stages.
5. The film is designed to present visual reflections and conceptual interpretations of related issues through a cinematic approach.

1.5 Objective

1. Studying the issue of changing patterns of social interaction so that the young generation loses their authentic human identity in real life which is disrupted by the use of social media.
2. Examining how the correlation between the younger generation's preference for interaction through social media with the decline in their social skills, empathy, and ability to build relationships..
3. Designing visual media in the form of a vertical short film that can be an artistic work and also a self-reflection medium that suits the preferences of the younger generation regarding the topic of the loss of human identity among the younger generation in the digital era.

1.6 Benefits

A. Academic Benefits

This design contributes academically through the development of visual communication design studies, particularly in the use of vertical short films as a means of exploring contemporary social issues. This study also aims to enrich theoretical perspectives on the relationship between visual media, youth identity, and digital culture. Furthermore, this study can pave the way for further research using visual studies methods with a sociological approach.

B. General Benefits

In general, this vertical short film serves as a means of reflection and education for the younger generation, encouraging them to be more critical in their use of social media and to recognize the importance of maintaining their identity in the digital age. It also serves as a communication medium relevant to the visual consumption of the younger generation, with the goal of making it more accessible to them.

In addition, this film can be an example of the application of visual media as a means of building social awareness and also offers an alternative digital literacy strategy that adapts to the development of today's visual culture.

1.7 Planning Framework

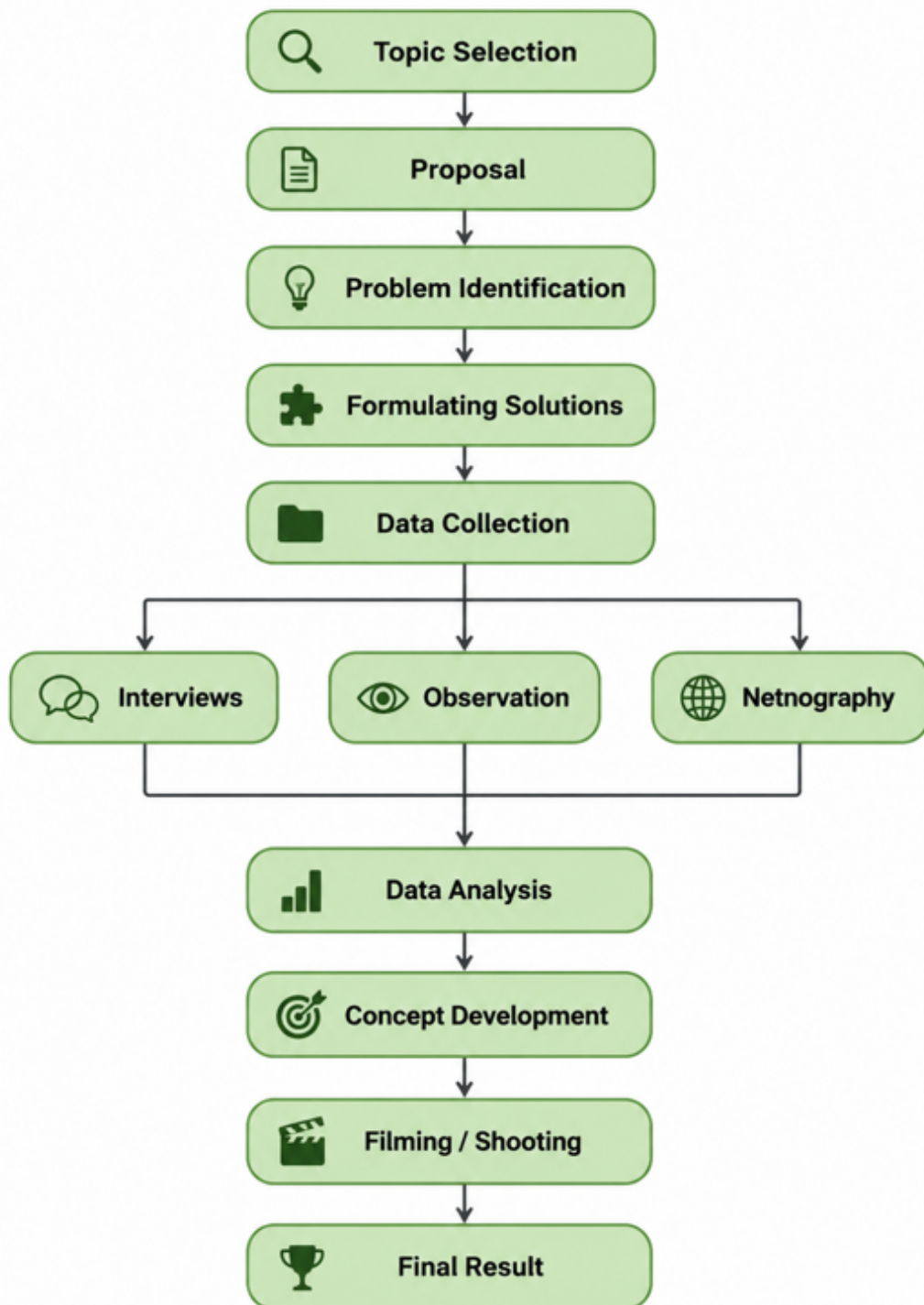


Figure 1.1 Planning Framework

Source: Personal

