Urgent call for the social construction of reality: how Twitter conversations about the *Ms. Marvel* series address issues for an inclusive society

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Abstract. Twitter allows users to share and discuss their opinions, which creates the urgency to study how the platform shapes its users’ perspectives on diversity in the media. Media is crucial to represent shared beliefs in society. Using the process of the social construction of reality supported by Crystallization assumptions, this study aims to discover how reality is shaped by Twitter discussions about media representation in *Ms. Marvel* (2022), which touches on gender, racial, and religious representations of underrepresented communities in Hollywood. The scope of research focuses on Indonesia, where gender, race, and religion are considered sensitive topics. This study uses the qualitative methodology and a phenomenology approach and collects data using Twitter Advance Search, semi-structured interviews, digital observation, and literature review. Results show Twitter as a medium for digital conversations about religious representation in the series, along with race (relating to culture and ethnicity) and gender as passive topics. When users understand the context in constructing reality, discussions about different religious practices have a positive sentiment. However, to promote an inclusive and sustainable society that upholds tolerance, the objectivation and internalization stages depend on the quantity and depth of information acquired in the externalization stage.

1 Introduction

In this digital era, social media and media representation on television have the potential to influence audiences’ perspectives. Social media creates a platform where one-on-one conversations are surrounded by user-generated content in front of potentially wide audiences [1]. As a social media platform, Twitter allows its users to post short messages, videos, and photos through tweets. The platform’s features, such as replying, retweeting, and liking, encourage users to interact with one another, which contributes to building rich discussions. The instant and open nature of Twitter makes its users more likely to voice their opinions compared to other social media platforms, which presents a more authentic representation of an individual’s true perspectives and behaviors.

The content on Twitter allows the observation of public opinion formation [2], which means the platform acts as an effective medium to influence the public through information and persuasion [3]. This means what users consume on Twitter potentially influences their perspectives and behaviors, as using the platform introduces users to other people’s ideas and opinions that shift their realities. The effects of this reach beyond their life online and reach into their real-life reality. Furthermore, the wide range of reach and the instant characteristics of Twitter enable the ability of messages about current issues to have an audience of millions just in a matter of minutes [4]. This means Twitter has the potential to bring attention to important issues to the public quickly. For example, the 10th Sustainable Development Goal can be mediated by Twitter through online discussions about inclusivity, encouraging its users to be more aware of diversity issues to build more sustainable communities.

An issue that is frequently discussed on Twitter is representation and diversity in the media, especially in film and television. In Indonesia, many people often consume Western media, as Hollywood films and television series often dominate movie theaters and subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) platforms in the country. According to Media Partners Asia [5], Disney+ Hotstar subscribers in Indonesia have exceeded 5 million people, which made history as the first SVOD platform in Southeast Asia to do so. While Disney+ Hotstar offers many Asian and Indonesian films and television series, the most popular ones are produced by Hollywood, where diverse storylines and characters are still difficult to find. A report shows that although people of color achieved or surpassed proportionate representation amidst the main cast of television series in 2020 - 2021, whites still dominate as lead television actors on broadcast, cable, and digital platforms in Hollywood [6]. As an Asian country with the largest Muslim population in the world, many
Indonesians often consume media that seldom represent their communities.

Diverse television content is constantly demanded by diverse audiences [6]. Considering the many Indonesians that watch content on Disney+ Hotstar, especially the ones from Marvel Studios, it is important that they could also see a representation of themselves on the screen to make them feel visible to the rest of the world. Television series are one of the most popular media consumed by the public because they show a perception of reality. For this reason, when a big franchise creates a platform for diverse characters to star in its content, it has a significant meaning for those who are underrepresented.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe, also widely known as the MCU, is one of the world’s biggest media franchises, with its films dominating box offices. The enthusiasm surrounding their content releases extends to Twitter, where fans share their excitement about MCU content and have discussions about it. Because of its wide audience, Marvel Studios has a big platform to represent minorities by portraying diverse stories. In recent years, Marvel has made a good effort to cast more diverse actors and release content with more inclusive storylines. One of their efforts to do so is by releasing Ms. Marvel (2022), a television series on Disney+ (or Disney+ Hotstar in Indonesia) about a young Pakistani American Muslim female superhero. The story follows Kamala Khan, a teenager trying to balance her newly found superpowers, learn about her family history, and navigate high school.

The intersection of Kamala Khan’s identities adds to the uniqueness of the show, as putting a young female person of color who is also a Muslim as the lead of a superhero show has yet to be done in Western media. One of the show’s directors, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, mentioned how one of the benefits of her job was accurately portraying her cultures to educate those unfamiliar with them. She explained to the Hollywood Reporter, “It is so important to have storytellers behind the camera who can bring authenticity to it. We often see Pakistan, or we often see Muslims, but the storytellers are not from that region. And when they are from that region, they bring a heart and soul to the storytelling that is very different.” [7]. Furthermore, Obaid-Chinoy stated, “I will say that my inbox is full of people reaching out from all around the world to say that their children finally have a representation of themselves onscreen. And so I think that that is extremely important. The idea that anybody can be a hero is true representation.” As Ms. Marvel (2022) shines a spotlight on underrepresented communities, it also acts as a bridge for the uninitiated to learn more about the cultures portrayed in the series.

Since the release of Ms. Marvel (2022), many fans believe the series positively represents minority groups in Western media, especially Muslim and Asian communities. Accurate representation is essential because it can create role models and break down barriers between cultures [8], which can educate the uninitiated about cultures other than their own. As Ms. Marvel (2022) portrays Asian Muslims in a positive light, the premiere was welcomed by Indonesians since they could finally see a representation of themselves on the screen. Religion plays a significant part in Indonesian people’s lives and cultures, and the similarities between the cultures portrayed in Ms. Marvel (2022) and the ones that many Indonesians adopt enable them to relate to characters in Western media in a way that has never happened before.

The increased amount of minority shares of television audiences increases social media engagement and ratings for diverse television shows [6]. This can push filmmakers to create diverse storylines and encourage the uninitiated to learn more about cultures that have been underrepresented. New study possibilities are offered by Twitter data to record networked conversations that organically occur in daily life [9], which means Twitter is an unfiltered medium of people’s perspectives and behaviors in real life. This creates the urgency to research what people are saying about diversity and inclusivity in the media, as what they post on the platform is an extension of who they are as people in the real world. This study aims to discover how the social discussions of media representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) construct reality with a sustainable society that upholds inclusiveness and diversity.

2 Objective

This study explores Twitter conversations about media representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) through the social construction of reality lens supported by the Crystallization assumptions by Donghee Yvette Woh and Brian J. Bowe [10] and how it shapes society’s mindset regarding diversity and inclusivity. This study aims to discover how digital technology contributes to shaping the discussions of media representation in Indonesia.

3 Literature review

3.1 Conversations on Twitter

Social media is inherently part of our lives as it is an effective medium to receive and give information. In the past, there have been many studies about the utilities of social media, one of them proving that social media functions as a discursive space for individuals with mental disorders to share information and compassion as well as a platform for mental health service providers to receive feedback [11]. Another study shows that social media is a platform for conversations such as the ones we conduct in our spoken language that is mediated by symbols, writings, images, and videos [12]. Furthermore, social media platforms play a crucial role in the development of new ideas, the spread of awareness, and the exchange of dialogues because of their broad audience and lack of constant hierarchy in their media structure [13]. These studies show that social media proves to be an effective medium for impactful conversations to take place.

This study focuses on Twitter, which this platform grants its users the ability to create conversations with anyone, from friends to strangers [14]. Furthermore, Twitter is one of the most popular social media platforms where people are more likely to communicate their
opinions and thoughts. This is because Twitter is a microblog that allows users to voice their thoughts through tweets. It is with these tweets that people create and participate in conversations about topics that interest them. There are many types of conversations that occur on the platform, from personal dialogues to debates over differences in opinions. One study shows that discussions about certain films on Twitter may cause polarization, emphasizing the powerful impact of social media on creating polarization of various topics, even if they are non-political [15]. The possibility to learn more about audiences' comprehension, attitudes, and beliefs toward topics is made possible by internet users' voluntary sharing of information and personal ideas online [14]. Researchers also find that conversations that happen on Twitter as a natural platform for inconspicuous examining and calculating of interpersonal conversations [9].

Twitter is also a popular platform for fans where they can express their enthusiasm and passion for the things they love, such as movies and television shows. The platform plays a crucial part in facilitating fans to connect and build strong connections with each other [16], as many fans even have dedicated accounts specifically to connect with people with the same interest. In addition to exchanging knowledge about their interests and conducting fan activities, they also utilize this platform to maintain their communities in order to give the other stakeholders of the fandom an idea of conditions that favor the fans’ interests [16]. This can be done by sharing user-generated content through a series of tweets, pictures, and even videos that can be viewed by anyone.

3.2 Representation in the media

Stuart Hall defines representation as the ability to imagine or describe, and he argues the importance of it as language and meaning form culture, and language acts as a form of representation [17]. According to James Carey's ritual view on mass communication, the media is crucial to the representation of shared beliefs [18]. If an event or a group of people is represented in the media, it means it is considered to be significant by the majority of the public. Furthermore, a continuous portrayal of what is considered significant will create a sense of normalcy, which leads people who often watch films or television series to perceive what is considered normal based on what they regularly consume from their screens. Many theorists believe that mass media frequently uphold the status quo and get in the way of social movement efforts for social change [18]. This is proved by the high number of films and television series that portray the majority and how rare it is to find ones that portray marginalized groups in Western media. Television, as an audio-visual media, portrays images that are a result of an electronic construction that was fabricated by the people behind the television program [19]. This indicates that the people behind the scenes play a big role in representation in the media since they are the ones who create the stories the actors will carry for the audience to see. In addition to underrepresentation, misrepresentation also poses a threat to marginalized groups. Marginalized communities are often depicted according to stereotypes that portray them in a negative light, and these representations are then internalized by the group itself and the audience, which impacts society’s perspective and opinions about them [20].

For instance, Hermawan’s research [21] found that Islam and Muslims are often depicted negatively in Hollywood films, where they show constant stereotypes that Muslims are correlated with terrorism, extremism, violence, and fundamentalism. Another example is how women in the media are often portrayed as inferior to men. Women are usually presented as characters who only bring value with their physical appearances and are the companions of men, whereas men are presented as characters who are strong, powerful, and the ones who have important tasks – which are the result of the traditional patriarchy-based construct [22]. In Indonesia, patriarchal values are still upheld by its people. As a nation that inherited patriarchal culture from their previous colonizer, some parts of Indonesian society still have strong patriarchal values in which they believe that men are in sole control of everything [23], which could influence how Indonesians view female representation in the media. Moreover, Muslim women, in particular, face major underrepresentation in the media [24].

Filmmaking in Hollywood acts as a platform for Western ideologies; their crafts are frequently constructed to meet the gaze of white audiences, in which Asian Americans are often portrayed as objects that are meant to match the mold from Western perspectives [25]. While casting decisions, acting performances, and visual politics all play a role in how Asian Americans are portrayed in US media, vocal and racial accents also contribute to the racial identification and distinction of Asian Americans, South Asians, and particularly Indian and Ibadan people [26].

The lack of accurate and proportionate representation of minority groups in the media perpetuates inequality and “standards” regarding what society considers to be “normal”, indirectly resulting in those who do not acquire certain characteristics that the majority feel alienated or insignificant. Accurate representation in the media is crucial in shaping a diverse and inclusive society, as the content we consume shows a perception of reality.

3.3 Social construction of reality

Leeds-Hurwitz, in Encyclopedia of Communication Theory [27], explains that social construction theory explains the processes through which individuals collectively form their worldviews. Though it is a sociology theory, she argued that communication plays a central part as it is through language and interaction that reality is constructed. Social construction is divided into three steps: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. According to Hiebert, externalization refers to how individuals construct their social environment through human activities [28]. Furthermore, he refers to objectivation as how individuals perceive daily life as a planned, ordered reality that forces itself upon what appears to be independent of human beings. Lastly, he stated that internalization refers to how
individuals come to understand how institutional orders are legitimized. The social construction of reality process is explained in Figure 1 [29]:

![Fig. 1. The process of the social construction of reality.](image)

This theory was then adapted for the mass media, which focuses on how the mass media partake in people’s construction of reality. When discussing new media, the social construction of mass media lacks an integral part of social media, which is the two-way interactions instead of the one-sided communication by traditional media such as newspapers and television. Since the flow of information differs from traditional media, Donghee Yvette Wohn and Brian J. Bowe introduced Crystallization as a way to understand social media from the perspective of the social construction of reality.

Crystallization proposes that social networks assist individuals in filtering the plethora of information they receive from media sources, including social media [10]. In the world of social media, they explained that an individual’s exposure to information affects the individual’s sense of reality and behavior toward the information itself. They explained that it is because the information is derived from the individual’s online network, which includes the attitude of the person communicating the information, indicating that beliefs and attitudes are shaped by social influence. Furthermore, their study suggests that social media allows its users to eradicate space and time limitations and observe other users’ attitudes toward a certain topic.

Wohn and Bowe propose seven assumptions that Crystallization is attuned by. The first assumption is that information sources include alternative media, mainstream media, and social networks. The second assumption states that an individual’s communication patterns with the information sources influence their accessibility to the information. In the third assumption, Wohn and Bowe suggest that an individual’s relationship(s) with the source(s) of information and the number of source(s) will influence their assessment of the salience of the information. Furthermore, the fourth assumption proposes that an individual’s reaction towards the subject matter of the information will be determined by their relationship with other people and those people’s reactions. The result of these assumptions is stated in the fifth assumption, which argues that perception of reality will gradually be developed by individuals over time. Following the development of perception of reality, the sixth assumption describes that the construction of reality will crystallize in groups at the macro scale. Lastly, in the seventh assumption, Wohn and Bowe explain that the characteristics of the individual, as well as the characteristics of the individual’s social network, will regulate the Crystallization process.

Wohn and Bowe also explained that the algorithms of the social network site also impact an individual’s exposure to information in their social network. On Twitter, users are given the option to follow whichever account they like, and the types of accounts they follow will determine what their social network feed looks like, thus influencing the kind of information they receive and their attitudes towards it. Therefore, the process of the social construction theory supported by the Crystallization assumptions is ideal for studying how Twitter influences a user’s perception of reality.

### 4 Methods

This study uses a qualitative methodology that analyzes the conditions of natural objects in which the research results emphasize meaning, not generalization [30]. The phenomenology approach was used to analyze occurrences that appear from the researcher’s consciousness [31]. Primary data for this study was obtained by the Twitter Advanced Search tool. This tool obtains retrospective events and allows researchers to find particular subsets of data by creating custom search filters [32] and have been used in previous studies. Aside from acquiring relevant tweets for the study, this tool also assists in filtering tweets with the highest engagements.

**Table 1.** Filter used for Twitter Advanced Search tool to determine informants of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Any of these words</th>
<th>Ms Marvel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of these words</td>
<td>Representasi, gender, perempuan, cewek, Islam, Muslim, Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replies</td>
<td>On, Include replies and original Tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links</td>
<td>On, Include Tweets with links</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The specific keywords were used to identify any possible Twitter discussions about the three aspects of media representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) that will be explored in this research, which are gender (female), religion (Islam), and race (Asian). Furthermore, this study focuses on Twitter users who uploaded tweets using the Indonesian language, in which gender, race, and religion proved to be sensitive discussion topics in the country. Based on the filtered tweets, interview informants were chosen by selecting Twitter users whose tweets fit the aforementioned criteria and are ranked in the top 20 tweets with the highest “likes”, representing high engagement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the chosen informants, who are personal account users and admins of community accounts on Twitter to create data variety. Data collection methods also include participant observation, in which the researcher actively participated in and observed Twitter discussions about Ms. Marvel (2022), and a literature review of previous studies.

Data limitations of this study include studying Twitter users whose tweets discussing representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) were uploaded from 2021 until 2023, as the series was released in 2022 and triggered online discussions from one year leading up to the release until one year after. Data reduction is used to analyze the
acquired data, which is a method that selects key aspects, finds themes and patterns, and summarizes the data, which will present a clearer picture [30].

5 Results and discussion

Ms. Marvel (2022) portrayed characters with characteristics that are underrepresented in Hollywood, which include females (gender), South Asians (race), and Islam (religion). The audiences’ discussions about Ms. Marvel (2022) on Twitter reinforce the impact of the series. This presents a big opportunity for Ms. Marvel (2022) to create discussions about media representations among Twitter users in Indonesia. These discussions shape the constructed reality regarding society’s mindset toward diversity and inclusivity in the media, especially television.

5.1 Social constructed reality relating to Twitter discussions about media representation in the Ms. Marvel series

This study discovered Twitter to be the most dynamic social media platform for discussions, as it has a wide audience and features that encourage interaction among users. The more open and accessible nature of the platform facilitates its users to be exposed to a plethora of online discussions from users with different perspectives.

LA, one of the informants, mentioned that Twitter has a more open discussion space than other platforms where users can share different opinion angles, leading to “wild” discussions. An example of this occurrence is when RR, another informant, created a viral Twitter thread explaining the differences between Islam practices in Indonesia and the ones portrayed in the series, in which users with knowledge about the subject jumped into the conversation to provide their input. RR believes this gives her and the Twitter audience more insight into the matter from a different perspective.

The users that the informants follow on Twitter influence the tweets they see on the platform, confirming the second assumption of Crystallization [10]. Because the informants follow accounts that are related to movies or the movie industry, the tweets they often exposed to are also about movies and the movie industry, which shape their realities. Because of this, the informants are more likely to be involved in movie-related discussions. This may also be a result of Twitter’s algorithm, as it can filter the information on an individual’s account based on their interest. This raises the question of whether social media reinforces our beliefs because the algorithm shows content that we want to see.

The findings of this study suggest that Twitter users with personal accounts will more likely be exposed to information outside of movies. VQ is an informant that uses Twitter to read current issues about the world and share information about topics he loves. To do so, he follows community accounts to gain knowledge as well as personal accounts. RR also has a personal Twitter account, and she also follows accounts that are unrelated to films, such as personal, automated base, and public figures. The types of accounts they follow affect their timeline, which exposes them to a wider variety of information. On the other hand, as community account admins, LA and EF (another informant) are more restricted in terms of whom their community accounts can follow, making their Twitter timelines more movie focused.

It is also found that the informants are more likely to trust a piece of information they read on Twitter based on the sources and their backgrounds, image, and popularity. For example, VQ mentioned that how a tweet is written is important for him to be influenced by its content, indicating that a source’s writing skill is one of the factors he looks out for. If someone possesses the characteristics mentioned that fit their desires, they will more likely be influenced by the information, proving the fourth Crystallization assumption [10]. The quantity of the information on Twitter would not matter as much if it were posted by accounts that users deem not credible. Furthermore, this study also proposes that informants with a personal Twitter account has more freedom in the kind of tweets they upload than the informants who are admins for community accounts. LA and EF are restricted to only post movie-related tweets and are more likely to stay away from discussions relating to sensitive topics, whereas RR can touch on sensitive topics more freely. It is assumed that this is because the admins are part of a larger community with a high number of followers, which means they have a higher tendency to cause conflict if they post something their followers disagree with.

The seventh assumption of Crystallization assumes that the individual’s characteristics will regulate the process [10]. This is proven as most informants are not easily influenced by the information they are exposed to on Twitter. After being exposed to a piece of information, they will filter it with their own values and beliefs before deciding to accept or reject the information. However, an interesting finding of this study counters the social network aspect of this assumption. Most informants are aware of the importance of tolerance towards diversity despite their encounters with Twitter users who do not. They saw users making a fuss about the differences between the Islamic practices portrayed in Ms. Marvel (2022) and the practices they are accustomed to. They were not easily consumed by the hate and negativity regarding the series on Twitter and tried to be more mindful when stating their opinions on the platform not to offend any parties.

This study also found how Twitter users in Indonesia construct their realities about representation in the media through three stages: externalization, objectivation, and internalization [28]. The externalization stage occurs when individuals gather information from a society that has already been formed through habits. In the case of Twitter discussions about Ms. Marvel (2022), users learn about their social space by seeing other people’s tweets relating to the media representation of gender, race, and religion in the series. They observe other users’ attitudes toward information to develop a sense of objective reality based on what they see. The Twitter algorithm influences the externalization stage, as it filters the plethora of information on the internet based on the individual’s...
interests. The users the individual follows on Twitter also influence this stage because it is their tweets that the individual’s timeline is shaped with. Next, in the objectivation stage, users attempt to give meaning to the tweets they see on their Twitter timelines. In this stage, they learn and try to make sense of other users’ attitudes toward the media representation of gender, race, and religion in Ms. Marvel (2022). The meaning users have given to what they consume on Twitter shapes their symbolic reality. Finally, social reality is constructed in the internalization stage after learning about other users’ points of view and opinions. The users have developed a subjective reality about the representation of gender, race, and religion in Ms. Marvel (2022), and is now reflected in their behavior through their tweets. The process of how media representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) is socially constructed on Twitter is explained in Figure 2.

![Fig. 2. The social construction of reality process of media representation in the Ms. Marvel series on Twitter.](image)

5.2 Social construction of gender representation in the Ms. Marvel series

EF believed that gender is not a popular topic discussed amongst viewers because the series focuses more on how Kamala navigates through the world as a teenager with superpowers rather than emphasizing how gender roles affect her life. Furthermore, the female representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) was presented more prominently in a side character’s storyline, in which RR recalled a tweet from a user that expresses their admiration of Nakia, one of Kamala’s best friends in the series, and her bravery in stepping up to be a board member in her community’s mosque. How gender representation is not explicitly shown in the main character’s storyline could also be the reason why it is not much discussed among the viewers.

This study suggests that audiences would be more likely to notice and discuss gender representation if it is shown more explicitly in the media. This could be related to Indonesia’s society which leans toward being patriarchal [23]. Audiences would take more notice of a female superhero being a strong female character when she adopts patriarchal traits, such as polished and trained strength. An example of this is the audience’s reaction to the Indonesian female superhero film Sri Asih (2022). Based on digital observation, there were online conversations about how muscular and athletic the main actress’ body frame is in the movie, which contrasts with the patriarchal view of how it is only the male characters who are presented as strong and powerful [22], which also applies to their physical appearance. Because Indonesian society accepts patriarchal culture, seeing a female character that breaks that barrier sparks audience interest.

On the other hand, Kamala Khan did not explicitly counter patriarchal values in Ms. Marvel (2022), which leads to its audiences not paying much attention to gender representation in the series.

These findings explicitly influence the externalization stage, as the individual observes that Twitter users do not discuss gender representations much. Because Twitter users do not see others discuss gender representations in Ms. Marvel (2022), they symbolize the lack of tweets as not being as important as the other aspects of the series in the objectivation stage. Thus, in the internalization stage, the individual develops a subjective reality where gender representation is not an integral part of the series. This reality is reflected in their behavior, in which they do not tweet anything about it since they have deemed it to be unimportant. It can be concluded that the social construction of the reality of gender representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) did not have a significant development on Twitter. The process of how gender representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) is socially constructed on Twitter is explained in Figure 3.

![Fig. 3. The process of the social construction of gender representation in the Ms. Marvel series.](image)

5.3 Social construction of racial representation in the Ms. Marvel series

LA mentioned that racial and ethnic representations are currently trending in Hollywood productions. However, racial representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) was not a popular topic discussed among Indonesian Twitter users because they were more interested in South Asian cultures and history. For example, LA stated that The Partition was widely discussed on Twitter in Indonesia. The same also applies to superhero films made by the Indonesian film industry. Based on digital observation, it is found that Indonesian audiences feel proud when the Indonesian film industry attempts the superhero genre since Hollywood is usually the one that excels at making films in the genre. They also get enthusiastic about seeing how the Indonesian culture plays a part in the superhero storyline and do not discuss much about the racial representations portrayed in the films.

EF mentioned that audiences would more likely have discussions about racial representation in the media if the film or series’ casting decisions differ from the source materials. Also based on digital observation, there are
Indonesian Twitter users who complain about the Indonesian film industry’s attempt at representation. They express their disappointment for only casting popular celebrities from the capital city rather than people from the actual regions used in the story. However, in the case of Ms. Marvel (2022), fans were mostly satisfied with the casting decisions since the main character stayed faithful to the comics. This influences the individual’s externalization stage, in which they learn that racial representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) is a topic rarely discussed because of the fans’ satisfaction with the casting decisions. The lack of discussions about racial representation could be because, despite consuming a lot of white-dominated media, Indonesians also consume many non-Western-produced media with non-white characters. Because of this, seeing Asian characters represented in a series produced by a major Hollywood studio might not have a significant impact on them. Furthermore, the distance in context between Ms. Marvel (2022) and Indonesians could also be a result of the discussion’s absence regarding racial representation. Indonesians are less able to identify themselves in the series because they have a weak sense of belonging to the scenarios and conditions in the series, resulting in them not feeling explicitly represented.

In the objectivation stage, the individual assigns the meaning of racial representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) does not hold as much significance as the ethnic and cultural representations. This creates the individual’s subjective reality in the internalization stage, where they believe ethnic and cultural representations play a more integral part in the series than racial representation. This developed reality is reflected in their behavior on Twitter, in which they are more likely to tweet about ethnic and cultural representation in Ms. Marvel (2022). The process of how racial representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) is socially constructed on Twitter is explained in Figure 4.

![Fig. 4. The process of the social construction of racial representation in the Ms. Marvel series.](image)

5.4 Social construction of religious representation in the Ms. Marvel series

Out of gender, race, and religion, Indonesian Twitter users were particularly interested in the discussions relating to religious representation portrayed in the series. Discussions involving religious representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) were mostly about how Indonesian audiences relate to the characters, which is a rare occurrence. Fans were enthusiastic about discussing the characters’ experiences on the screen, such as celebrating Eid and Islamic weddings, because they are similar to what Indonesian Muslims also experience. VQ mentioned that Ms. Marvel (2022) stood out to him because it highlights Kamala’s experiences as a Muslim and represents cultural and religious diversity in the narrative of the story. Because of this, he tweeted about scenes that showcase religion playing a role in the story of the series which he resonates with. The “likes” engagement that his tweet received indicates how there are others who also resonate with the Islamic representation in the series.

LA and EF recall that many users were particularly excited when discussing the scene of the missing shoe incident at the mosque. Simple scenes showcasing the characters going through everyday activities that they resonate with. The “likes” engagement that his tweet received indicates how there are others who also resonate with the Islamic representation in the series.

This influences the externalization stage, where the individual learns that others relate to the religious representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) due to its extended discussions (and the high engagement that those tweets have) on Twitter. In the objectivation stage, the individual adopts the meaning of the significance of Muslim representation in the media. Lastly, in the internalization stage, the individual develops the reality in which positive Islam representation in the media is important and welcomed. This reality is shown through their behavior on Twitter, where they tweet positively about the Muslim representation in Ms. Marvel (2022). The process of how religious representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) is socially constructed on Twitter is explained in Figure 5.

![Fig. 5. The process of the social construction of religious representation in the Ms. Marvel series.](image)

Aside from the overall positive discussions welcoming the religious representation in Ms. Marvel (2022) on Twitter, there were also many discussions regarding the religious practices portrayed in the series. RR commented that there were people who made a fuss out of the differences in religious practices in Indonesia and the ones portrayed in the series. She saw protests on Twitter from fans, commenting that Kamala’s actions were disobedient or different from what they knew to be
the correct way of practicing the Islamic religion. It could be suggested that this is related to how the users are usually exposed to Islamic practices in the Indonesian culture and are not used to the Islamic practices adopted by other cultures. This led them to believe that Islamic practices other than the ones they know are incorrect.

However, constructive discussions dominate the conversations about the different religious practices. RR wished to help others see that the Islamic representation in the series is correct, which encouraged her to make a Twitter thread explaining the situation, proving the third Crystallization assumption. Furthermore, there were other people who contributed their knowledge about Islamic practices in other cultures by replying to RR’s Twitter thread, which further enriched the discussion content. This is when externalization occurs. It allowed users to discover new knowledge about Islamic practices from other cultures, thus broadening their mindset. However, it is worth noting that Indonesian Twitter users might be more critical of the representation if the content were made by a fellow Indonesian Muslim. Since Ms. Marvel (2022) was produced by Hollywood (whom Indonesians might view as “outsiders”), they might be more lenient in their criticism. The overall discussion sentiment was positive, which indicates Indonesian Twitter users’ willingness to expand their understanding and perspectives about cultures other than their own.

The following stage is objectivation, where the individual makes sense of the tweets they saw about different religious practices in Indonesia and in the series. The high number of engagements and positive reactions to the tweets about differences in religious practices in Indonesia and in the series show the overall accepted reality by society, which is the acceptance of diversity in terms of religious and cultural practices. The individual develops a symbolic reality in which they associate learning about other cultures as an encouraged behavior. Therefore, in the internalization stage, the individual accepts the notion of expanding their knowledge and upholding tolerance and promotes an inclusive society through their positive attitude towards diversity. The process of how tolerance to diversity in Ms. Marvel (2022) is socially constructed on Twitter is explained in Figure 6.

![Fig. 6. The process of the social construction of tolerance to diversity in the Ms. Marvel series.](image)

This finding suggests that Ms. Marvel (2022) significantly impacted the construction of the reality of religious representation in Indonesia, in which they are more willing to learn about other cultures and develop acceptance of differences. The objective of the series’ creators of portraying Islamic and Pakistani cultures to educate those unfamiliar with them is obtained. Furthermore, the large number of enthusiastic tweets with positive reactions to the Islamic representation in the series also shapes the reality that positive media representation does matter and holds a significant value in people’s lives. Based on this finding, it can be argued that positive Islam representation in the media is crucial.

## 6 Conclusion

This study analyzed Twitter discussions about the media representations in Ms. Marvel (2022) in Indonesia. The discussions were influenced by the process of how Twitter users construct their social realities. This study finds the externalization stage to be the most crucial because the quantity and depth of information acquired in this stage influence the objectivation and internalization stages. Moreover, Twitter’s algorithm could also influence what the individual is exposed to at this stage.

Out of gender, racial, and religious media representations, Twitter discussions about Ms. Marvel (2022) in Indonesia mostly revolve around religion, followed by race (relating to culture and ethnicity) and gender as passive topics. Most Twitter users were enthusiastic in discussing how they are able to relate to the characters and scenes that portray Islam positively, proving the importance of positive Islam representation in Western media. They also show a mostly positive attitude in discussions about the differences between the Islamic religious practices in Indonesia and the series.

Twitter, as digital technology, provides a more practical medium for online conversations. However, the platform cannot shape discussions to develop a sustainable society that upholds inclusiveness and diversity if there is no interest from its users. Gender representation in the series was rarely discussed due to how Indonesians adopt patriarchal values and Ms. Marvel (2022) presents female representation more prominently in a side character’s storyline. Furthermore, the mostly absent discussions regarding racial representation could be a result of the distance in the context between the series (filmmakers, stories, and characters) and the Indonesian Twitter users. Challenges arise in Crystallization when the individual is not aware of the importance of context in the social construction of reality. If they ignore the context, they will promote exclusivity instead of inclusivity because they perceive ideas that are different from what they know to be incorrect.

## References


5. Media Partners Asia, *MPA AMPD SEA Q1 2022 Press Release*, (Singapore, 2022)


