

Metahuman AI as a New Media in Mass Communication (Phenomenological Study at Nike Ardilla's Metahuman Concert at Synchronize Fest 2024)

Husnita

Faculty of Social Communication, Universitas Telkom

husnita@telkomuniversity.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the use of Metahuman AI technology in contemporary music concerts, focusing on the virtual performance of Nike Ardilla at Synchronize Fest 2024. The main objective is to explore how the emergence of metahumans as a new form of digital embodiment reshapes fan behavior, cultural participation, and the dynamics of digital mass communication in the posthuman era. Using a phenomenological approach (Schutz, 1967), this research employs qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, direct field observations, and social media content analysis to capture the subjective experiences, meanings, and emotional responses of audiences engaging with virtual performances.

The theoretical framework draws upon Digital Mass Communication Theory (McQuail, 2010), emphasizing interactivity, virtuality, and convergence; the concept of Mediated Presence (Couldry & Hepp, 2017), which views media as a social environment; and Convergence Culture (Jenkins, 2006), which explains the evolving relationship between media, technology, and audiences.

The findings reveal that Metahuman AI functions not merely as a technological innovation in entertainment but as a symbolic and affective medium that reconstructs the collective identity of both the artist and her fans. The virtual return of Nike Ardilla through Metahuman technology evokes nostalgia and deep emotional resonance, transforming audiences from passive spectators into active participants who co-create meaning within digital spaces. This study further demonstrates that digital mass communication has evolved beyond linear information transmission into an immersive, participatory, and emotionally charged environment. Within this mediated space, technology operates as both a cultural artifact and an emotional actor, capable of bridging temporal boundaries, reanimating memory, and fostering a renewed sense of belonging in contemporary digital culture.

Keywords: Metahuman AI, digital mass communication, phenomenology, fans, popular culture

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in the last decade has significantly changed the landscape of the entertainment industry. One of the highlights is the presence of *Artificial Intelligence* (AI) technology that can create virtual human representations, or known as Metahumans. Metahuman is a hyper-realistic digital avatar designed to resemble a real human

through a blend of three dimensional (3D) modeling technology, artificial intelligence (AI)-based animation, and advanced visual data processing. According to *Epic Games* (2021), *Metahuman Creator technology* was developed to deliver a realistic representation of a digital human with precision facial expressions, skin texture, and body movements in a short period of time. In the view of Nakamura (2020), digital

representation like this is not just a technological simulation, but a form of "*digital embodiment*" of the embodiment of the human body in a virtual space that has a social and emotional dimension. Furthermore, Vincent Mosco (2017) asserts that the development of AI avatars marks a new chapter in the relationship between humans and machines, where physical boundaries are replaced by symbolic interactions. Thus, Metahuman technology enables the creation of new interactions between artists and fans, presenting an immersive, participatory, and cross-temporal communication experience without the physical presence of the artist.

In the realm of the development of increasingly sophisticated and complex media communication technology, the presence of digital technology not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a space for social interaction that brings together users in an increasingly complex virtual environment (Qorib, 2025). The phenomenon of the presence of digital artists Metahuman AI which presents artists in digital form is a manifestation of the evolution of communication technology that is getting closer to virtual and interactive reality. In this context, Metahuman AI not only represents the artist's figure visually, but this technology is also able to mimic facial expressions and movements of the human body." and even a speech style that resembles a real human. This technology allows the creation of digital figures that can interact in real-time with the audience, creating a much more immersive experience than conventional communication.

This change reflects a shift from linear communication to immersive communication.

Linear communication is a form of one-way communication, where messages are relayed from the sender to the receiver without any significant direct interaction or feedback. An example is television or radio broadcasts, where the audience is only a passive recipient of the information conveyed. In contrast, immersive communication involves the active participation of the audience in the communication process. Audiences not only receive messages, but also help shape and modify meaning through direct interaction with content or communication mediums.

Immersive communication is characterized by the use of technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) that enable multisensory and interactive experiences. In the context of Metahuman AI, immersive communication occurs when audiences can interact with the artist's digital figure through various platforms, such as social media, streaming apps, or even virtual worlds. This interaction can be a conversation, a song request, or a response to the digital artist's expressions and movements. Thus, the boundaries between the real world and the digital world are becoming increasingly blurred, and the communication experience becomes more personal and dynamic.

This phenomenon also changes the role of the audience from just a consumer to a collaborator in the creation of meaning. Audiences can influence the narrative, style, and even identity of Metahuman AI through the interactions they make. This opens up new space for creativity, personalization, and deeper emotional engagement. In the entertainment world, for

example, digital artists can customize their appearance or style of music based on audience preferences and responses, creating an experience that is unique to each individual. However, behind the great potential of immersive communication, there are also ethical and social challenges that need to be considered. Digital identity, privacy, and authenticity are becoming important issues in an era where the boundaries between humans and machines are increasingly blurred. Therefore, a critical understanding of this technology is indispensable so that immersive communication can be used wisely and responsibly.

In the world of global entertainment, the application of this technology is not new. For example, the hologram of Tupac Shakur's concert at Coachella (2012) became one of the most iconic moments that marked the beginning of the phenomenon of "virtual artist awakening" in the music industry. Since then, avatar and hologram-based concerts have continued to grow, from Hatsune Miku in Japan to Whitney Houston's hologram concert in Europe. This phenomenon shows that digital media is able to reconstruct the presence of artists in the form of a very convincing virtual representation.

Indonesia is not left behind in this trend. At Synchronize Fest 2024, one of the largest music festivals in Indonesia, Metahuman AI technology was used to re-display the figure of Nike Ardilla, the legendary Indonesian singer who died in 1995. This appearance is in the public spotlight, not only because of its technological aspect, but also because Nike Ardilla is a cultural figure with a very loyal fan base for decades after his death. According to the

Detik.com (2024) report, the show was watched by tens of thousands of viewers live, and millions more talked about it via social media. The hashtag #NikeArdillaMetahuman even included in the list of trending topics on Twitter/X Indonesia with more than 50 thousand tweets in 24 hours.

A similar phenomenon was found in the study of Satyanandani et al. (2023) that highlighted the formation of virtual self-image on Instagram through digital dramaturgy. The concept of front stage and backstage can help understand how fans build expectations for the presence of virtual artists like Nike Ardilla in Metahuman concerts. Although the context is not concert performance or metahuman, this use of digital identity dramaturgy can be used as a basis for analyzing how fans play a role in welcoming or responding to virtual artists, how they enter the digital stage, and how virtual images are formed and experienced. Samanda's (2025) research Analysis of the Communication Model in Greta Thunberg's Environmental Campaign on Instagram also shows how digital rhetoric on visual platforms such as Instagram builds audience emotional engagement through a blend of ethos, pathos, and logos. A similar mechanism occurs in virtual concerts, where technology becomes a medium of persuasion and emotional connection.

This shows a shift in digital mass communication. If in the past, music concerts were only understood as a form of offline performance that relied on direct interaction between artists and audiences, now concerts are also an immersive experience space where digital media brings back artists who physically

no longer exist. This raises an interesting question. How do fans interpret the presence of their idol in the form of a Metahuman? Is digital media merely an "entertainment intermediary," or has it become part of the construction of social and emotional reality?

From the point of view of mass communication, Metahuman AI can be seen as a new media that functions more than just a message conveyor. Their presence represents what Couldry & Hepp (2017) call *mediated presence*, which is a condition when the media not only conveys information, but also creates a real social presence for the audience. In addition, this phenomenon reinforces the concept of convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006), where the boundaries between old and new media are increasingly blurred, and audiences actively participate in distributing and interpreting content.

In particular, this study aims to examine how Nike Ardilla fans, most of whom experience their idol figures through the medium of recording, archival, and collective narrative, interpret the re-presence of their idols in the form of Metahuman at Synchronize Fest 2024. Thus, this research not only discusses technology as an innovation, but also the emotional, social, and cultural experiences created through the interaction between media, virtual artists, and fans.

Based on the above background, the problems to be studied in this article are formulated in several research questions:

1. How does Metahuman AI as a new medium shape the mass communication experience in music concerts?

2. How do fans interpret the presence of Nike Ardilla's Metahuman AI at Synchronize Fest 2024?

3. What are the implications of the Metahuman concert phenomenon on the study of digital mass communication and popular culture?

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the role of Metahuman AI in the transformation of digital mass communication at music concerts.

2. To analyze the fans' subjective experience of the presence of virtual idols.

3. To explain the phenomenological implications of digital mass communication through a case study of the Metahuman Nike Ardilla concert at Synchronize Fest 2024.

Several previous studies can be used as a reference in this study, including:

1. Jenkins (2006) in his book *Convergence Culture* emphasizes that audiences in the digital era are not only passively receiving information, but also active in shaping meaning through cross-media interaction. This concept is relevant to Metahuman concerts, where fans not only watch, but also talk, share, and reconstruct the concert experience through social media.

2. Couldry & Hepp (2017) proposed the concept of *mediated communication* which sees media not just as a means of communication, but as a social environment that shapes human interaction. The presence of Metahuman Nike Ardilla in the concert can be understood as a form of *mediated presence*, namely the creation of a social presence of artists through digital media.

3. Nakamura (2020) examines digital avatars

and embodiments in popular culture, showing how avatars are able to establish new identities while expanding the artist's existence in virtual spaces. This study becomes an important cornerstone for understanding the Nike Ardilla Metahuman as a revived representation of virtual identity.

4. Suryani (2022) conducted a study on hologram concerts in Indonesia that highlighted how technology can evoke collective nostalgia and strengthen cultural memory. This finding is relevant to the case of the Nike Ardilla Metahuman, where the concert is not only a spectacle, but also a means of reconstructing the memory of fans.

5. Ambat et al. (2025) on AI representation and visual accuracy show that artificial intelligence-based technologies are not just tools, but rather cultural actors that influence the perception of reality. This view is in line with the study's findings that Metahuman AI not only presents artists, but also produces new forms of social presence that are both emotional and symbolic.

McQuail (2010) in *Mass Communication Theory* emphasizes the characteristics of new media which include interactivity, virtuality, and convergence. These traits are evident in Metahuman's concerts that combine music, technology, and the digital participation of fans. From the previous research, it can be seen that there are still limited studies that specifically examine the phenomenon of Metahuman AI in the context of music concerts in Indonesia, especially through a phenomenological approach. Thus, this research has academic and

practical significance in enriching the study of digital mass communication, media technology, and popular culture.

Based on the above explanation, this study positions the Metahuman Nike Ardilla concert phenomenon as a meeting point between technology, media, and popular culture. The phenomenological approach is used to delve into the subjective experiences of fans, who are important actors in understanding how digital mass communication works in the context of AI-based concerts. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the study of mass communication, as well as open up new perspectives on the role of digital media in creating emotional and social presence. The development of information technology has brought about a major transformation in the practice of mass communication. If traditional mass communication refers to print, radio, and television media, now digital mass communication emphasizes the role of the internet, social media, and AI-based technology in message distribution. McQuail (2010) stated that new media has characteristics in the form of interactivity, virtuality, and convergence. Interactivity allows audiences to actively participate, virtuality creates immersive experiences, while convergence combines multiple media platforms into a single ecosystem.

In the context of Nike Ardilla's Metahuman concert at Synchronize Fest 2024, digital mass communication is seen in the form of:

1. Live distribution of concert content through social media and streaming platforms.
2. Fan participation in discussing, documenting,

and disseminating the concert experience digitally.

3. The presence of virtual artists represented as part of the collective experience, not just passive entertainment.

Metahuman AI is the development of digital avatars that are constructed to resemble real humans with three-dimensional technology, face modeling, body movements, and artificial intelligence algorithms. This technology was popularized by Epic Games through Unreal Engine with *the Metahuman Creator* product which is able to create realistic avatars with high detail. In the entertainment world, Metahuman acts as an alternative representation of artists or characters who can appear in concerts, films, and commercial campaigns. Nakamura's (2020) study shows that digital avatars not only serve as visual representations, but also as a form of "embodiment" that can build an emotional bond between the virtual artist and the audience. This is evident in the Hatsune Miku phenomenon in Japan, where fans celebrate the presence of virtual artists like real artists. The presence of Nike Ardilla Metahuman in Indonesia shows another dimension, namely the use of technology to revive legendary artists who have passed away. This concert is not just a visual simulation, but a reconstruction of the cultural identity inherent in the figure of Nike Ardilla. Thus, Metahuman AI becomes a medium for collective memory reconstruction. In the case of Nike Ardilla, fans interpreted her figure as an icon of the 1990s era. Even though the artist is gone, the loyalty of his fans persists through community, social media, and memorial activities. According to Suryani (2022), hologram-based concerts can

evoke a sense of collective nostalgia, where the audience re-experiences the past in the form of digital representations. This is relevant to the Metahuman Nike Ardilla concert which is not just entertainment, but also an "emotional encounter" between fans and their idols. Digital Mass Communication Theory (McQuail, 2010) identifies several new media features that are relevant in this study:

1. Interactivity. The audience is no longer passive, but active in producing and spreading meaning.
2. Demassification. Audiences have become more segmented yet still connected through digital platforms.
3. Media Convergence. Integration of various forms of media in one digital ecosystem.
4. Virtuality. The media creates an alternative reality that is perceived by the audience.

The concept of *Mediated Presence* put forward by Couldry and Hepp (2017) offers an in-depth understanding of the role of media in modern human social life. In their view, the media is no longer just a communication tool that conveys messages from one party to another, but has evolved into a social environment that actively shapes human experiences, perceptions, and interactions. Media becomes a space where identity, relationships, and social presence are built and felt, even when the individual in question is not physically present.

Mediated presence refers to the ability of media to create a sensation of a person's presence in a social space, even if the person is not physically there. This presence is mediated by technology whether through voice, images, text, or digital interaction that allows audiences to feel

emotionally and socially connected to other individuals. Examples can be found in various forms of digital communication such as video calls, live broadcasts, social media, or even digital avatars and representations in the virtual world.

This phenomenon is becoming increasingly relevant in today's digital age, where the boundaries between physical and virtual spaces are increasingly blurred. A person's presence on social media, for example, can give the impression that they are "present" in the lives of others, even if there is no direct physical interaction. Uploading photos, comments, or daily stories creates a narrative of presence that can influence the audience's emotions, opinions, and social relationships. In this context, media serves as a bridge between physical reality and digitally formed social reality.

The concept of *mediated presence* also has important implications in the world of entertainment, education, and mass communication. An artist performing in a virtual concert, a lecturer teaching through an online platform, or a public figure delivering a message through video on social media all of them are presenting themselves socially to an audience through the media. Their presence is perceived, interpreted, and even shaped by the interactions that occur in the media space.

Furthermore, *mediated presence* highlights how media shapes collective experiences. When millions of people watch a live broadcast of an event, they share the same moment despite being in a different location. Media creates a shared space where social presence can be felt

simultaneously by many individuals, forming a sense of community and collective identity.

As such, this concept challenges traditional understandings of social presence and interaction. He invites us to see the media not only as a channel of information, but as a living space that actively shapes the way we feel, understand, and interact with the world and fellow humans. In an increasingly digitized world, *mediated presence* is key to understanding contemporary social dynamics and how technology shapes the human experience in a profound way.

In the Metahuman Nike Ardilla concert, *mediated presence* occurs when fans feel the presence of the artist even though it is only through digital representation. This shows that the media is able to create an "emotional reality" that is no less powerful than physical presence.

Convergence Culture (Jenkins, 2006) emphasizes that the digital era is characterized by media convergence, audience participation, and cross-platform interaction. Audiences now play an active role in producing, distributing, and interpreting content. The Nike Ardilla Metahuman concert phenomenon shows fans not only watching concerts, but also documenting, sharing, and discussing them on social media. Mainstream media and alternative media mingle in spreading concert narratives. The meaning of the concert is formed through collective participation, not just from the event organizers. Schutz's phenomenology (1967) emphasizes that individual experience must be understood from a first-person *perspective*. Social reality, according to Schutz, is formed through subjective experiences shared in social interactions. In this

study, phenomenology was used to understand how fans interpret their experiences of watching the Metahuman concert. Schutz's perspective helps uncover the hidden meaning behind expressions of nostalgia, emotion, and emotional connection with artists who are physically gone. Based on the literature review above, this study will use three main frameworks:

1. Digital Mass Communication Theory (McQuail, 2010) to understand the transformation of media in presenting immersive experiences.
2. The concept of Mediated Presence (Couldry & Hepp, 2017) to explain how media creates an artist's social presence through digital representation.
3. Convergence Culture (Jenkins, 2006) to analyze fan participation in interpreting and distributing the concert experience.
4. Schutz's phenomenology (1967) as a methodological approach to explore the subjective experience of fans.

Harold D. Laswell's (1948) classical communication model, which formulated the communication process in linear form "*Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect*" is one of the main foundations in the study of communication science. This model provides a systematic analytical framework to understand the flow of communication from sources, messages, channels, recipients, to communication effects. However, in the context of the development of cutting-edge digital communication technology, especially the phenomenon of the Metahuman Communication Experience, this framework needs to be expanded and modified to capture the dynamics

of communication that is increasingly immersive, participatory, and emotional.

Metahuman Communication Experience Model



This model adopts the Laswell communication structure (Who- Say What- Channel- To Whom- Effect) into a metahuman context with additional feedback loops and digital audience participation.

1. Metahuman Entity as a Communicator (Who)

In the classical model, a communicator is understood as an individual or institution that conveys a message. In the context of metahuman communication, the position of the communicator undergoes a fundamental shift. Communicators are no longer limited to individual humans, but can be digital entities based on artificial intelligence (AI) technology. The Metahuman figure, as in the Nike Ardilla Metahuman concert at Synchronize Fest 2024, is a form of digital representation of the artist managed by the creative team and AI system. Thus, the role of communicators undergoes a transformation from a human agent to a technology-based cultural actor, who not only conveys messages, but also shapes the experience of social presence digitally.

2. Digital Performance and Emotional Narrative as Message (Says What).

Communication messages in the metahuman context are no longer limited to verbal speech, song, or textual content, but instead include multisensory digital narratives consisting of

sounds, hyper-realistic visuals, facial expressions, gestures, and structured emotional elements. This message is performative and aims to create an immersive communication experience. Therefore, messages in the metahuman model are understood not only as "information content", but also as strategically constructed collective emotional experiences.

3. Immersive Media Ecosystem as a Communication Channel.

Communication channels in the classic Laswell model are generally one-way, such as print, radio, or television. In contrast, in the metahuman communication model, communication channels are represented by an immersive media ecosystem consisting of various digital platforms such as hologram stages, virtual reality (VR) and augmentation (AR) technologies, streaming platforms, and social media. The characteristics of these channels are convergent, interactive, and multimodal, allowing audiences to experience a more intense and personalized digital presence.

4. Co-creating Audience as a Recipient (To Whom)

The audience in metahuman communication no longer plays the role of passive receiver, but becomes a co-creator in the communication process. They actively participate in the formation of meaning through various forms of interaction, such as comments, reuploads, creation of derivative content, and discussions in the digital space. This role signifies a shift in the relationship between communicators and communicators from linear relationships to participatory relationships that take place simultaneously and in layers.

5. Mediated Presence and Cultural Negotiation as Communication Effects.

The effects of communication in the metahuman context do not stop at cognitive or behavioral changes as in the traditional Laswell model. The effects that appear are affective and cultural, including nostalgic experiences, deep emotional resonance, and mediated presence, which is the sensation of the artist's presence that is physically absent but is still "presented" through digital media (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). In addition, this effect also triggers the negotiation of cultural meaning, where the audience reinterprets the identity, technology, and cultural symbols inherent in the figure of the artist and the performance.

6. Digital Feedback and Amplification (Feedback Loop)

One of the important modifications in the adaptation of the Laswell model to the metahuman context was the addition of an open and continuous feedback mechanism. Audience interaction through social media and digital spaces not only serves as a response to messages, but also reinforces narratives, expands the reach of messages, and shapes public discourse. This mechanism suggests that metahuman communication is cyclical and interactive, not just linear. Thus, the effect of communication does not stop at the audience, but returns to the communicator and the media ecosystem, forming a new continuous communication cycle. The adaptation of Laswell's model in the context of the Metahuman Communication Experience shows a paradigm shift from linear communication to technology-mediated

participatory and emotional communication. Communicators are no longer just humans, but also digital entities that play the role of cultural actors. Messages are no longer just information, but performative experiences. Communication channels are not a single medium, but a converging immersive ecosystem. The audience becomes a co-creator, not just a recipient. The effect of communication extends into affective experiences and cultural negotiations, while digital feedback creates a dynamic circulation of meaning. Thus, this model offers a new conceptual framework for understanding contemporary digital mass communication practices that further blur the boundaries between physical and virtual reality

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of this research is to explore the subjective meaning that fans have of the Metahuman Nike Ardilla concert phenomenon at Synchronize Fest 2024. As stated by Creswell (2018), qualitative research allows researchers to understand social phenomena from the perspective of participants by exploring their experiences in depth.

Phenomenological design is used to understand fans' "lived experiences", which are real experiences felt while watching a Metahuman concert. According to Schutz (1967), phenomenology seeks to reveal the structure of human consciousness through subjective experience. Thus, this method is appropriate to answer research questions regarding how fans interpret the presence of idols in virtual form.

The research was conducted at Synchronize Fest 2024, an annual music festival in Jakarta that was the location of Metahuman Nike Ardilla's first performance. The festival was chosen because it presents a unique phenomenon in Indonesia's entertainment landscape: the use of AI technology to resurrect the figure of a legendary artist.

The subject of the study was Nike Ardilla fans who watched Metahuman's performance, both live on location and through digital broadcasts. Fans were chosen because they are parties who have an emotional and social attachment to Nike Ardilla, so their experience can illustrate the dynamics of audience acceptance of this technology.

Participant criteria were determined by purposive sampling (Patton, 2002), with the condition:

1. Have attended Synchronize Fest 2024 or watched the Metahuman Nike Ardilla concert online.
2. Are fans or have an emotional attachment to Nike Ardilla's work.
3. Willing to be interviewed and provide in-depth information about their experience.

A total of 10 participants were selected for in-depth interviews, with diverse compositions in terms of age, gender, and social background. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and social media analysis, and then analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which aims to explore the subjective meaning of the fan experience of the Metahuman Nike Ardilla concert. According to Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009), IPA is an analytical approach that focuses on trying to

understand individual experiences through an in-depth interpretation of participants' narratives. The analysis process is carried out through several stages (1) Data Transcription. All in-depth interviews are recorded (with the participant's permission) and transcribed verbatim to maintain the integrity of meaning. (2). Initial Reading and Comprehension. The researcher repeatedly read the interview transcript to understand the context of the participants' experiences as a whole. (3) Coding. The identification of the initial themes was carried out by coding the key parts of the participants' narratives related to emotional experiences, perceptions of technology, and interpretations of the presence of virtual idols. (4). Categorization of Themes. The initial themes are then categorized into main themes and sub-themes, such as collective nostalgia, digital presence, active participation, and ethical ambivalence. (5) Phenomenological Interpretation. The researcher conducted an in-depth interpretation of these themes by referring to theoretical frameworks (mediated presence, convergence culture, and Schutz phenomenology), so that the meaning contained in the fan experience can be comprehensively revealed. (6). Narrative Preparation. The analysis was structured into an interpretive descriptive narrative that described the subjective experiences of fans and the dynamics of digital mass communication that occurred in the Metahuman concert.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data in this study, several validation techniques were carried out as follows (1) Triangulation of Sources and Methods. Data was collected from a

variety of sources (interviews, field observations, and social media content analysis) to ensure the consistency of the findings. This triangulation helps to strengthen the reliability of interpretation and reduce researcher bias. (2) Member Check. After the initial transcription and analysis process, the researcher confirmed the findings to several participants to ensure that the interpretations made were in accordance with their experiences. (3). Peer Debriefing. Researchers discuss findings and interpretations with peers or supervisors to obtain critical input and avoid purely subjective interpretations. (4) Audit trail. The entire research process, from data collection to analysis, is systematically recorded so that it can be traced back to maintain transparency and consistency. (5). Researcher Reflexivity. Researchers maintain reflective awareness of their positions, experiences, and potential biases in the research process, so that the interpretation of data is more objective and accountable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Idol's Digital Presence: "Nike Ardilla Comes Back to Life". One of the most dominant findings in the interview was the fan's feeling that the Nike Ardilla was "brought back to life" through the presence of Metahuman. Most of the participants stated that they were moved and gave goosebumps when they saw the figure of Nike Ardilla appearing on the Synchronize Fest 2024 stage.

A 40-year-old participant with the initials AB who claimed to be a fan since the 1990s, said, "I was like going back to my youth. It feels like Nike is really in front of me again. I cried, not

only because of longing, but also in awe of how technology could make this real." This statement shows how mediated presence (Couldry & Hepp, 2017) works. The digital presence created through Metahuman can create such a strong sensation of social presence, so fans interpret it not just as a technological simulation, but as an emotional encounter with an idol. In addition, this experience also shows the concept of virtuality (McQuail, 2010), where the virtual reality displayed feels real to the audience. While fans are aware that what is performing is only a digital representation, their emotional experiences show that the line between real and virtual is becoming less clear or transparent.

2. Nostalgia and Collective Emotions. Almost all participants associated the experience of watching Metahuman Nike Ardilla with a sense of nostalgia. For older fans, this concert is a means to relive childhood memories, hit songs, and emotional memories attached to the figure of Nike Ardilla. A 35-year-old participant with the initials CT, revealed, "When Nike appeared on the screen, I immediately remembered my high school days. His songs used to always accompany him. It's like being forced to step back into the past, but in a very modern way." This collective nostalgia is not only experienced individually, but also socially. Field observations showed that many spectators sang along while crying or hugging each other as popular Nike Ardilla songs played. This is in line with Suryani's (2022) finding that concerts based on hologram or digital technology are able to awaken *collective memory*.

In addition, social media reinforces the collective dimension of this nostalgic

experience. The hashtag #NikeArdillaMetahuman was filled with personal narratives that then shaped the public discourse about the "Nike Ardilla that is back." Thus, this concert is not just a musical performance, but a cultural ritual that unites fans in a shared emotional space.

3. Transform the Concert Experience. Fans' experience of Metahuman concerts is different from conventional music concerts. For some participants, this concert presents a more immersive experience because it brings together visual technology, music, and emotional narratives. One of the 27-year-old participants stated, "If it's a regular concert, I only watch the artists on stage. But this concert is like watching a movie, a concert, and nostalgia at the same time. It feels mixed, unique, and cannot be compared to a regular concert."

This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of Convergence Culture (Jenkins, 2006). Nike Ardilla's Metahuman Concert combines various forms of live music media, digital technology, immersive visuals, and social media interaction in one complementary experience. Audiences are not only spectators, but also producers of meaning through their active participation in the digital space.

This also reinforces the idea of demassification (McQuail, 2010), where audiences are no longer homogeneous. Some fans emphasize the nostalgic aspect, others highlight technology, and others celebrate the presence of artists in a new form. Thus, the concert experience becomes multidimensional and segmented but remains connected through digital media networks.

4. Social media as a concert extension space.

Analysis of social media content shows that Metahuman's concerts do not stop at the physical stage, but rather expand into digital spaces. Thousands of photo posts, videos, and comments about the appearance of the Nike Ardilla Metahuman are circulating on Twitter/X, Instagram, and TikTok.

Fans use social media to record personal experiences, for example a short video upload of the moment the Nike Ardilla appears on the screen. Building a collective narrative, such as a long thread about Nike Ardilla's career journey and its relevance to the younger generation. Criticizing as well as appreciating, there are fans who appreciate technology, while others question whether it is ethical to present deceased artists in digital form.

This phenomenon is in accordance with the concept of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), where the audience does not just receive messages, but also produce and disseminate content. Social media expanded the concert from a spectacle to a public discourse that continued to live on after the event was over.

5. Ambivalence between admiration and anxiety
While the majority of fans are moved and amazed, there are also ambivalent narratives that emerge. Some participants questioned the ethical and authentic aspects of this Metahuman concert. A 32-year-old participant stated: "I was moved, but there was also a strange feeling. Nike is dead. Is it appropriate for us to present it again in digital form? It feels like it's violating the privacy of a person who is no longer there." This criticism shows that there is a cultural tension in accepting metahuman technology. On the one hand, fans feel nostalgia and happiness; On the

other hand, there is anxiety about the boundary between respect and commodification.

From the perspective of digital mass communication theory, this ambivalence can be understood as part of the process of negotiating meaning (Hall, 1997). The audience does not passively receive the message but actively negotiates whether they accept this concert as a tribute or as a form of exploitation.

6. Media as Cultural Actors. The results of this study show that digital media, in this case Metahuman AI technology, is no longer just a communication channel, but has become a cultural actor. The presence of the Nike Ardilla Metahuman creates a meeting space between the past, technology, and the audience of the present. This concert confirms Couldry & Hepp's (2017) view that media is the social environment that shapes the way we experience reality. Through Metahuman, the media not only brings back legendary artists, but also builds new emotional experiences that bind fans across generations. Thus, the Metahuman Nike Ardilla concert phenomenon shows a major transformation in digital mass communication from just transmitting messages to creating immersive experience spaces where technology, culture, and emotions interact in complex ways

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of interviews, observations, and social media content, the following conclusions answer the purpose of the research:

1. Metahuman AI is proven to function as a new medium that transforms the way mass communication takes place in the entertainment

realm. The presence of Metahuman presents an alternative reality (*virtuality*) that is felt by the audience. The concert not only takes place on stage, but also expands through social media, forming an interactive, convergent, and immersive digital mass communication ecosystem. Thus, Metahuman AI drives the shift in mass communication from mere transmission of information to the creation of collective cultural experiences.

2. Fans interpret the presence of the Nike Ardilla Metahuman with complex emotional nuances, ranging from awe, emotion, to nostalgia. Most think as if the "Nike Ardilla is coming back to life," demonstrating the power of *a mediated presence* (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). However, there is also ambivalence in the form of ethical anxiety about authenticity and the feasibility of representing a figure who is no longer there. In other words, the subjective experience of fans is not homogeneous, but rather full of negotiation of meaning according to their generational background, emotional closeness, and perception of technology.

1. 3. With a phenomenological approach, this study shows that digital mass communication in the Metahuman era is not only understood as a one-way message flow, but also as a *lived experience* that is interpreted by fans in depth. The Nike Ardilla Metahuman concert becomes an intersubjective space where memory, technology, and emotion are intertwined. This shows that digital mass communication has a phenomenological dimension: media is not only a technical means, but also a cultural actor that shapes the social experience and collective identity of fans.

Overall, the study confirms that the use of Metahuman AI in music concerts has a multidimensional impact, expanding the boundaries of mass communication, building the emotional presence of virtual artists, and sparking ethical and cultural debates. The Nike Ardilla Metahuman concert at Synchronize Fest 2024 is proof that digital mass communication is now moving towards an immersive experience space, where technology, popular culture, and nostalgia meet.

Based on the results of this study, there are several suggestions that can be proposed both theoretically and practically:

The theoretical suggestions of this study open up opportunities for the development of a more *experience-centered communication theory*).

In the future, similar studies can expand the phenomenological approach to include semiotic, netnography, or virtual ethnography analysis to understand the dynamics of human interaction and technology in more depth. Practical advice for entertainment and technology industry players, it is necessary to pay attention to the aspects of ethics, copyright, and the emotional sensitivity of the public when representing the figure of an artist who has died in digital form. Concert organizers and technology developers Metahuman can optimize the elements of interactivity and fan participation so that the digital experience is not only consumptive, but also collaborative. The government and cultural institutions are expected to develop regulations and ethical guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence in the representation of public figures and works of art to avoid abuse and maintain the integrity of national culture. Further

research is suggested to further investigate the psychological and social impacts of human-to-human interactions with digital representations such as Metahuman, as well as how these technologies can be used positively in the preservation of cultural heritage and media education. Thus, this research not only makes a conceptual contribution to the study of digital mass communication, but also provides a new direction for the development of communication ethics, policies, and practices in the era of artificial intelligence.

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