

Analysis of the Use of Second Instagram Accounts for Self Presentation among Female Students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

Aghisna Ayu Kustifah^{1*}, Rina Sari Kusuma²

^{1,2)} Faculty of Education sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: l100190231@student.ums.ac.id

Abstract

Purpose: This study explores the use of second Instagram accounts as a medium for self-presentation among female students at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. It examines how female students utilize second accounts to manage their online identities and social interactions.

Methodology: This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews with female students aged 20–25 years who actively use second Instagram accounts for self-presentation. The study is grounded in Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory, which conceptualizes social life as a performance involving front-stage and back-stage behaviors.

Findings: The findings reveal that female students use second Instagram accounts as both front-stage and back-stage spaces. As a front stage, second accounts are carefully managed to present a favorable image to a specific audience. As a back stage, these accounts provide greater freedom for self-expression. The study also identifies several motivations for creating second accounts, including avoiding social judgment, expressing themselves more freely, monitoring others' activities, and filtering friendships.

Applications/Originality/Value: This study highlights the significant role of second Instagram accounts in providing a safer and more private space for female students to express their identities and share aspects of their lives that may not be considered appropriate for public display on their primary accounts. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of digital selfpresentation practices among young adults in the context of social media.

Keywords: *Dramaturgy, Second Instagram account, Self-presentation.*

Introduction

Technological development plays a significant role in contemporary society. In today's digital era, communication has become increasingly accessible due to rapid technological advancements. Social media technology, in particular, has evolved into an interactive medium that enables direct communication among individuals in virtual environments. The growth of social media has also transformed patterns of human interaction. Individuals use social media platforms to exchange information, establish their identities, and interact with others within online social networks. Social media can be defined as an online platform where users present themselves, engage in social interactions, and communicate with other users (Nasrullah, 2017)

Social media influences individuals' communication behaviors by creating new forms of interaction that differ from traditional communication practices. Instagram, for instance, serves as a social networking platform that enables users to share information about themselves. Often, users unintentionally disclose personal information to a broad audience in pursuit of social recognition within online spaces. According to Goffman (as cited in Chen et al., 2022), self-presentation is a strategic activity involving efforts to "package the self" and "edit the self" in order to create favorable impressions on others.

The current generation is closely connected to the use of social media, particularly Instagram. According to Goodstats, as of April 2025, Instagram had approximately 108.5 million users in Indonesia across various age groups and genders, making Indonesia the fourth-largest Instagram user base in the world (Yonatan, 2025).

Instagram functions as a communication tool that strengthens social interaction through features such as post comments, Instagram Stories, and direct messages. The widespread use of Instagram has shaped contemporary lifestyles by serving as a medium for social development and interpersonal interaction. Furthermore, Instagram has evolved into a platform where users showcase various aspects of their lives to introduce themselves, construct their identities, and enhance their self-image.

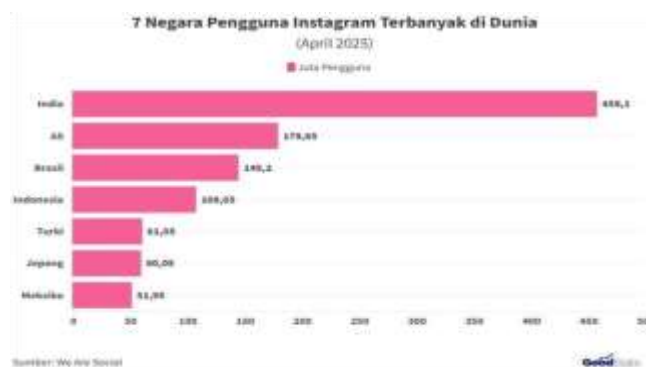


Figure1InstagramasaCommunicationTool.

Source: Goodstats (2025).

According to Statista (2025), the largest proportion of Instagram users falls within the 25–34 age group. This demographic commonly uses Instagram as a platform for self-introduction and identity construction. Social media has increasingly become a space where individuals seek attention and express their personal identities, making it an essential medium for communication and social interaction.

Self-presentation on social media can have both positive and negative implications, particularly for female students who use second Instagram accounts as a means of expressing themselves. From the perspective of Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory, second accounts provide users with a space to present a more authentic and unrestricted version of themselves. However, excessive self-presentation on social media may also create risks, including identity conflict and vulnerability to social judgment, particularly when the content shared on second accounts is inconsistent with the self-image users intend to project.

The use of second Instagram accounts has become increasingly prominent since Instagram introduced the multipleaccount feature in 2016. This feature enables users to create and manage several accounts, allowing them to interact and express different aspects of their identities beyond their primary accounts. Instagram users often choose to share posts and personal information only with selected individuals whom they trust. Consequently, second accounts provide greater privacy and freedom to express opinions, share experiences, and reveal personal identities without exposure to a broader audience. Among women, the use of second accounts has become increasingly common as a means of self-expression while concealing their real identities and constructing self-images according to their personal preferences.

On second accounts, users have complete control over who is allowed to follow them. In many cases, account owners intentionally conceal their identities from other Instagram users. This separation enables them to distinguish between aspects of their lives that are appropriate for public audiences and personal matters shared only with close friends or trusted individuals. As a result, users often feel more comfortable discussing personal issues through their second accounts than on their primary accounts. This phenomenon aligns with Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory, which proposes that individuals perform different roles in everyday social interactions. According to the theory, social life consists of two complementary regions: the **front stage**, where individuals manage impressions for public audiences, and the **back stage**, where they can behave more naturally without the expectations associated with public performance.

Self-presentation on social media has been widely examined in previous studies. Existing literature suggests that the ways individuals present themselves online are influenced by both internal and external factors. For example, Dewi and Janitra (2018) found that Instagram functions as a platform for establishing users' social presence and visibility. Participants in their study acknowledged that their Instagram profiles shaped how others perceived them. Consequently, they carefully edited their content, applied filters, and selected specific photographs or videos to create favorable impressions.

The expectation of receiving particular social evaluations also motivates users to create second Instagram accounts. Previous respondents reported several reasons for maintaining second accounts, including using them as personal diaries, avoiding negative judgment, following online shopping accounts, celebrities, and gossip accounts, as well as conducting

business activities. In contrast, many users regarded their primary accounts primarily as tools for personal branding and impression management.

Furthermore, Winduwati and Irena (2024) investigated self-presentation across multiple Instagram accounts among Generation Z. Their findings demonstrated that primary accounts function as front stages, where users present aesthetically appealing, professional, and socially acceptable identities. Conversely, second accounts serve as back stages, allowing more relaxed and authentic self-expression. Participants also maintained multiple accounts to separate their personal lives, professional identities, and hobbies while tailoring content to different audiences.

Hernández-Serrano, Jones, Renés-Arellano, and Ortuño (2022), in their study entitled *Analysis of Digital SelfPresentation Practices and Profiles of Spanish Adolescents on Instagram and TikTok*, examined digital self-presentation among Spanish adolescents across Instagram and TikTok. Their findings revealed that adolescents actively constructed their digital identities through content selection, visual presentation, and interaction patterns on social media platforms. The study concluded that users consciously managed their online presence to create desired impressions among their audiences. This research is relevant to the present study because both examine self-presentation in digital environments. However, whereas Hernández-Serrano et al. focused on Spanish adolescents and compared Instagram with TikTok, the present study specifically investigates the use of second Instagram accounts among female university students in Indonesia through the lens of Dramaturgical Theory.

Similarly, Budiyanto and Aisyah (2022), in their study *Analysis of Self-Disclosure on Primary and Second Instagram Accounts Among University Students*, explored differences in self-disclosure between primary and second Instagram accounts. Their findings indicated that users tended to disclose more personal information and express themselves more openly on second accounts because these accounts offered greater privacy and stronger control over audiences. In contrast, primary accounts were generally used to maintain a favorable public image. This study is closely related to the present research because both focus on second Instagram accounts and their role in identity management. Nevertheless, the present study differs by specifically examining female students at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta and interpreting their behaviors through Goffman's concepts of the front stage and back stage.

In addition, Akhmad, At, and Muhammad (2024), in their study *Reconstructing Generation Z's Digital Identity: SelfPresentation Strategies and Impression Management on Second Instagram Accounts*, investigated how Generation Z reconstructs digital identities through self-presentation and impression management strategies. Their findings demonstrated that second accounts function as spaces where users negotiate between authenticity and social expectations. Users employed various impression management strategies to balance personal expression with maintaining desirable social images. Although this study shares a similar focus on second accounts as spaces for digital identity construction, the present research specifically concentrates on female university students and examines how second Instagram accounts simultaneously function as both front-stage and back-stage environments within Goffman's Dramaturgical framework.

Taken together, previous studies indicate that second Instagram accounts have become important spaces for selfexpression, identity management, and impression management within digital environments. Although existing research has examined second accounts among university students and Generation Z more broadly, the present study contributes to the literature by focusing specifically on female students at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta and analyzing their selfpresentation practices through Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory.

Despite facilitating identity management, several participants in this study reported experiencing conflicts between maintaining their desired online image and preserving authenticity on their second accounts. These findings highlight how identity management in the digital era reflects Generation Z's efforts to navigate diverse social expectations by separating public and private spaces to balance impression management with freedom of self-expression.

Previous research provides an important foundation for the present study. Similar to earlier studies, this research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach and examines second Instagram accounts as a medium for self-presentation. However, unlike previous studies, which generally conceptualized second accounts as back-stage spaces while identifying primary

accounts as front stages, this study specifically investigates female university students to explore more deeply how second Instagram accounts can simultaneously function as both front-stage and back-stage environments. The increasing popularity of second accounts as spaces for sharing information more freely and without the constant feeling of being monitored provides the primary motivation for this research. It is expected that the findings will encourage second Instagram account users to engage with social media more responsibly and thoughtfully. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how second Instagram accounts are utilized for self-presentation among female students at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

Theoretical Framework

Instagram as a Social Media Platform

The rapid development of social media has significantly influenced the lives of today's generation. The emergence of social media has transformed the way individuals interact with one another. Whereas social interactions were once predominantly conducted face-to-face, communication can now take place through virtual platforms. The widespread adoption of social media has introduced new patterns of interpersonal interaction and communication. According to Van Dijk (2013), social media are digital platforms that emphasize users' presence by providing facilities for publishing their activities. Social media strengthens relationships among users and facilitates the formation of social ties similar to those established in offline environments. Through these platforms, users can participate in discussions on various topics, share stories about their daily activities, and shape perceptions within digital communities (Ma'aruf & Putra, 2019).

This accessibility has contributed to the emergence of various communication platforms frequently used by Generation Z, one of the most prominent being Instagram. Instagram has become one of the dominant social media platforms in the contemporary digital era, as reflected by its continuously growing user base. Through Instagram, sharing personal information and everyday activities in public spaces is no longer considered unusual. The platform is widely used to strengthen social relationships through communication and interaction. To maintain its relevance among users, Instagram continuously introduces new features, including Instagram Stories, hashtags and captions for photo and video posts, location-sharing services, and the ability to manage multiple accounts or second accounts. Instagram is a social networking service that enables users to share photographs, videos, and other forms of content while facilitating social interaction among users and their online networks (Meifilina, 2021).

Dramaturgy in Social Media

This study is grounded in Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory, which was first introduced in his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). In this theory, Goffman conceptualizes social life as consisting of two distinct regions: the front stage and the back stage. The front stage refers to the behaviors, performances, and images that individuals deliberately present when interacting with others or participating in social settings in order to project a desired social identity. In contrast, the back stage represents a private space where individuals can withdraw from public expectations and express aspects of themselves that remain hidden during public interactions (Dewi & Janitra, 2018).

Goffman's theory provides a valuable framework for understanding self-presentation on social media, particularly among female university students. Within a dramaturgical perspective, Instagram functions as a digital stage on which users perform and negotiate their identities. Through both primary and second Instagram accounts, female students strategically manage and control the impressions they convey to different audiences while adapting their self-presentation to prevailing social norms, contextual expectations, and interpersonal relationships (Fuat et al., 2024).

Self-Presentation on the Internet

Self-presentation, often referred to as impression management, is the process through which individuals intentionally present themselves to create desired impressions in the minds of others. This process may be undertaken by individuals,

groups, teams, or organizations (Boyer, 2006). In the context of Instagram, impression management is often shaped by users' reluctance to disclose personal information on their primary accounts. Such limitations have encouraged the growing use of second Instagram accounts, which provide users with greater freedom to share daily activities, upload photographs, tell personal stories, and disclose private experiences without concern about being observed by a wider audience (Yoanita et al., 2022).

Instagram offers a variety of features that facilitate self-expression and self-actualization, reflecting users' desire to communicate their identities and share personal experiences within digital social environments (Ardhiani et al., 2023). As social media technologies continue to evolve, the ways in which individuals construct and perform their identities have also become increasingly sophisticated. As Palfrey and Gasser observed, "The Internet era, in which the Digital Generation has grown up, has triggered another major shift in the meaning of constructing and managing one's identity" (Palfrey & Gasser, 2010, as cited in Dewi & Janitra, 2018). The Internet has fundamentally transformed how individuals construct, negotiate, and manage their identities, enabling them to selectively present different versions of themselves across various digital platforms and audiences.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore and describe the phenomenon of self-presentation among female university students who use second Instagram accounts. Specifically, the research adopted a descriptive qualitative design. According to Mulyana (2008), qualitative research applies a scientific approach to understanding social phenomena by generating rich, in-depth descriptions based on empirical data and participants' lived experiences. In this study, data were collected through in-depth interviews and non-participant observation involving selected informants.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby individuals were recruited based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The participants were female students enrolled at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta who were able to articulate their experiences and perspectives regarding the use of second Instagram accounts. The inclusion criteria required participants to be 20–25 years of age, own a second Instagram account, actively use the account for self-presentation, and have specific motivations for creating and maintaining the account. In addition to conducting interviews, the researcher observed participants' activities related to their use of second Instagram accounts to gain a deeper understanding of their self-presentation practices.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Initial	Usia	Kriteria
SL	21 Years	Female student, Faculty of Economics and Business, UMS
AS	21 Years	Female student, Faculty of Communication and Informatics, UMS
AL	21 Years	Female student, Faculty of Law, UMS
HN	21 Years	Female student, Faculty of Communication and Informatics, UMS

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they enabled the researcher to prepare guiding questions related to the research topic while maintaining the flexibility to ask follow-up questions in order to obtain richer and more comprehensive responses from the participants. The interviews were conducted online via telephone with informants who met the predetermined selection criteria. Each interview was audio-recorded using a mobile phone and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

In addition to interviews, data were gathered through participant observation. This method was employed to gain a deeper understanding of the behaviors of second Instagram account users. The researcher actively observed participants' online

activities through the researcher's own Instagram account to document how they utilized their second accounts for self-presentation and social interaction

To enhance the credibility of the findings, this study employed data triangulation by collecting information from multiple relevant sources to validate and compare the data obtained. Following data collection, the analysis was conducted using the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of four interconnected stages: data collection, data condensation (reduction), data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data reduction stage, interview transcripts were carefully reviewed to identify information relevant to the research objectives. The data were then categorized according to participants' self-presentation practices in the front stage and back stage of their second Instagram accounts. Finally, the findings were presented in a narrative form and interpreted using Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory to explain how female students construct and manage their identities through second Instagram accounts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In today's rapidly evolving digital era, social media has become one of the primary platforms through which individuals express themselves and construct their identities in the presence of others. People's behaviors in online environments often differ substantially from those displayed in offline interactions. Since introducing the multiple-account feature in 2016, Instagram has enabled users to create and manage more than one account, leading to the widespread use of second Instagram accounts. These second accounts provide users with opportunities to construct identities that align with their personal preferences and intended audiences. Consequently, second Instagram accounts were selected as the focus of this study because they function as platforms through which participants perform self-presentation. These accounts frequently contain personal information and experiences that participants deliberately choose not to share on their primary accounts.

Social media provides individuals with greater opportunities to present themselves in ways they perceive as more authentic and unrestricted. Based on in-depth interviews and observations involving four female students at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, the findings indicate that participants seek safe and private spaces where they can express themselves freely without fear of criticism, social judgment, or negative evaluation from others. The participants used their second Instagram accounts to share various aspects of their daily lives, romantic relationships, family experiences, memorable life events, and personal interests. Some participants also reported using their second accounts to observe or "stalk" other users' profiles. All participants selected for this study were active users of second Instagram accounts and satisfied the predetermined inclusion criteria established for the research.

Table 2. Second account of the informants:

No	Informant Initials	Account Name
1.	SL	@whoodiz10
2.	AN	@josjispokok.e
3.	AL	@fffi_yah
4.	HN	@hnp9

Front Stage Analysis

According to Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory, the front stage refers to the space where individuals construct the identity they wish to present to an audience. The purpose of performing on the front stage is to construct and manage a self-image in accordance with how the individual wishes to be perceived by others. In the context of social media, a second Instagram account also functions as a front stage.

Goffman divides the front stage into two components: the setting and the personal stage (Mulyana, 2007: 114). The setting refers to the physical or situational context in which the performance takes place, while the personal stage encompasses expressive resources such as appearance and verbal communication. In the context of Instagram, the setting includes features such as photo and video uploads, editing tools, filters, and captions. Meanwhile, the personal stage is represented through the selected images and accompanying captions.

Findings indicate that although the second account is considered more personal and casual, users still carefully curate the content they share. Informants consciously select photos and captions that align with the identity they wish to project. For example, informant SL stated that he frequently uploads photos of his taekwondo activities, choosing images in which he appears attractive. Similarly, informant AN reported sharing photos from organizational and campus events to preserve memories and reinforce her image as an active student among close friends.

Respondent HN frequently posted nature-related content, including hiking and outdoor activities, thus presenting herself as someone who values the natural environment. Similarly, respondent AL used her second account to seek skincare recommendations and share selected photos, emphasizing that she still filtered the content even though the account was limited to close friends. These findings suggest that second accounts continue to function as a front stage where users maintain a desired self-image, albeit within a smaller and more selective audience.

Overall, all four informants maintained a front stage appearance on their second accounts. They shared activities that reflected physical fitness, appreciation for nature, social engagement, and aesthetically pleasing images. Thus, although second accounts provided a more relaxed environment, users remained conscious of their audience and continued to strategically manage their impressions.

Backstage Analysis

"Backstage" refers to a space where individuals can express themselves freely without prioritizing self-image or external perception. In the context of social media, this study found that Instagram secondary accounts also function as "backstage" spaces.

Self-disclosure on secondary accounts is heavily influenced by personal interests and motivations. Some individuals use secondary accounts to express emotions and feelings, believing that sharing experiences helps them feel liberated. Because secondary accounts are generally private and accessible only to trusted individuals, users feel more comfortable expressing themselves authentically. These spaces increase confidence in managing self-expression and identity online (Hasibuan et al., as cited in Dewi & Janitra, 2018).

One strategy used by informants to maintain privacy is by setting their accounts to private. Informant HN explained that she initially left her account open to the public, but later changed it to private to be able to observe other people's profiles anonymously. This strategy allows her to engage in various activities without revealing her true identity. Similarly, other informants also maintain private accounts.

Another behind-the-scenes strategy involves using a unique pseudonym that is difficult for others to recognize. This pseudonym helps maintain boundaries and allows users to express themselves freely without fear of negative comments from outsiders.

Informant AL stated that she prefers uploading content to her second account because it only includes close friends, giving her greater freedom to share various aspects of her life. Similarly, informant SL explained that the people on her second account are trusted individuals who are already familiar with her family issues, romantic experiences, and feelings. This finding suggests that the friendship network on the second account is highly filtered, with access restricted to only select individuals.

Interestingly, informant AN further restricts access by using Instagram's "Close Friends" feature even within her second account, which is already private. Through this feature, she shares emotional content and personal feelings with only one to four trusted friends. This suggests that users create multiple layers of privacy within the social media environment.

Second accounts often serve as spaces where users explore their identities more deeply. These accounts allow individuals to express interests, hobbies, and personal aspects that may not be visible on their primary account. Users can also share more personal or controversial content without worrying about how it might impact the image they maintain on their primary account (Maulidya et al., 2024). Informants SL and AN, for example, frequently share their daily activities without fear of being judged as attention-seeking or immature. Informant SL also uses her secondary account to express emotions through quotes and mood-related posts.

Overall, secondary accounts provide users with the opportunity to express their authentic selves without having to maintain the idealized self-image they have constructed on their primary account. Through strategies such as private accounts, selective friending, pseudonyms, and the Close Friends feature, users create a safe space that allows for freer and more genuine self-expression while minimizing concerns about external judgment.

Conclusion

The use of second Instagram accounts among female students at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta plays a significant role in their daily lives. The forms of self-presentation demonstrated by the participants align with Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory, particularly the concept of the front stage and back stage. The research findings indicate that front stage performance persists even within the limited and filtered environment of second accounts, as users continue to maintain their established self-image. On the front stage, participants use their second accounts to create a favorable impression with their audience. As a result, they become more selective and careful when deciding what content to share.

Meanwhile, the back stage is manifested through strategies such as creating private accounts and using unique pseudonyms to conceal their identities from unwanted audiences. These practices allow users to express themselves more freely without fear of social judgment. This study also identified several motives for creating second Instagram accounts, including fear of negative judgment, a desire to freely share trivial or less meaningful activities, filtering friendships, monitoring other users' accounts, and expressing their current emotions and feelings.

These findings highlight the effectiveness of second accounts in understanding how individuals construct and manage their identities online. A second account on Instagram serves as an important space where users balance maintaining a social image and expressing their true selves in the digital environment.

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The author hopes that this research will serve as a useful reference for future researchers and open up opportunities for further research by developing broader aspects, such as exploring the dynamics of self-presentation on other social media accounts, as well as expanding the research subjects and locations. Future research is also expected to integrate other theoretical approaches to gain more diverse perspectives related to the formation of self-identity and self-presentation on social media. The author realizes that this research still has several limitations; therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are highly expected to improve and develop future research.

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