Reconstructing Generation Z's Digital Identity: Self-Presentation and Impression Management Strategies in Second Account Instagram

Muhammad Alkhahfi Akhmad *, M Ramli At and Sawedi Muhammad

Faculty of Social and Political Science, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

Abstract

This study examines how Generation Z reconstructs digital identities through secondary Instagram accounts, revealing complex strategies of self-presentation and impression management. By integrating mixed-methods research, the investigation explores how young individuals negotiate authenticity, privacy, and self-expression across digital platforms.

Mixed-method analysis, combining quantitative Wilcoxon signed-rank tests with qualitative thematic investigation, uncovers significant differences in self-presentation between primary and secondary accounts. Participants strategically utilize secondary accounts as spaces of liberated self-expression, circumventing the normative constraints of their primary digital personas.

Key findings demonstrate that secondary accounts serve as instrumental platforms for more genuine self-representation. Participants employ nuanced tactics to express marginalized opinions, emotions, and lifestyle dimensions typically suppressed in mainstream social media contexts. These digital spaces enable a more authentic negotiation of identity, characterized by strategic boundary management and contextual self-disclosure.

The research illuminates Generation Z's sophisticated approach to digital identity construction, revealing how young individuals navigate complex social dynamics through platform-specific self-presentation strategies. By examining these intricate identity reconstruction processes, the study contributes critical insights into contemporary digital culture, social media practices, and generational approaches to online self-representation.

* **Corresponding author**: alkhahfi.akhmad@gmail.com   **DOI**: 10.14456/tureview.2024.xx

Introduction

In the digital era, social media platforms have become integral to identity formation and social interaction, particularly for Generation Z - those born between 1997 and 2012. This generation, having grown up in a world where digital technologies are ubiquitous, navigates an increasingly complex social media landscape with unprecedented sophistication. The evolution of these digital spaces has created new opportunities and challenges for identity construction and self-presentation, prompting novel practices that warrant scholarly attention (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013).

One such practice that has gained prominence is the use of secondary accounts on social media platforms, particularly Instagram. This phenomenon, often referred to as "Finstas" (fake Instagrams) or "spam accounts," allows users to experiment with more authentic and diverse self-presentations, reflecting a nuanced understanding of audience segregation and context collapse in digital spaces (Chua & Chang, 2016). The emergence of these secondary accounts highlights the complex strategies Generation Z employs to manage their online personas.

To ground this study, we turn to the seminal theories of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) and impression management (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). These frameworks provide valuable insights into how individuals project desired self-images and control others' perceptions in social interactions. In the context of social media, these theories take on new dimensions as users navigate multiple platforms and audiences simultaneously (Schlenker & Leary, 1982).

While previous research has explored how individuals construct online identities through social media (Hogan, 2010; Zhao et al., 2008), the specific implications of secondary accounts for Generation Z's digital identity management remain underexplored. This gap in the literature is significant, as secondary accounts represent a sophisticated approach to identity performance and audience management that may have far-reaching consequences for social interactions, privacy concerns, and psychological well-being.

The use of secondary accounts by Generation Z reflects a deeper shift in the ways young people navigate the digital landscape. Whereas previous generations may have relied on more traditional outlets for identity exploration and self-expression, the ubiquity of social media has compelled this cohort to develop innovative strategies to fulfill these fundamental needs. The compartmentalization of digital identities, as observed in the use of secondary accounts, serves as a response to the unique challenges faced by Gen Z in the digital age.

By creating secondary accounts, Gen Z individuals are able to carve out spaces that are more conducive to authentic self-expression, free from the perceived constraints and audience expectations of their primary profiles. This aligns with Goffman's (1959)

conceptualization of "backstage" behavior, where individuals can relax their public persona and engage in more genuine forms of self-presentation.

The strategic self-presentation tactics observed on secondary accounts, such as the expression of opinions and lifestyles deemed unacceptable for primary platforms, reflect a nuanced understanding of the challenges posed by "context collapse" (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Gen Z users are adept at navigating the simultaneous presence of diverse audiences and adapting their self-presentation accordingly.

Moreover, the fluidity and adaptability of secondary account identities, as highlighted in previous research, support van Dijck's (2013) observation of the dynamic nature of online identities. Rather than static or monolithic, these digital selves are continuously negotiated and renegotiated in response to evolving personal growth, audience preferences, and sociocultural trends.

The careful navigation of identity conflicts, as demonstrated by participants' cautious approach to sharing provocative content, suggests a sophisticated understanding of "boundary regulation" in social media (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012). Gen Z users exhibit a nuanced awareness of the potential consequences of identity fragmentation, exercising agency in managing the boundaries between their primary and secondary digital personas.

This study's focus on secondary accounts represents a valuable opportunity to explore the nuances of digital identity construction among Generation Z. By delving into the motivations, tactics, and experiences underlying the use of these alternative platforms, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how young people navigate the complexities of self-presentation and impression management in the digital age.

Understanding the dual-account strategies employed by Gen Z is not only academically significant but also holds practical implications for various stakeholders. Educators, policymakers, and social media platform designers can leverage these insights to better support the digital literacy, privacy needs, and identity development of this generation.

This research aims to address the gap in the literature by investigating how Generation Z reconstructs their digital identity on secondary Instagram accounts through specific self-presentation and impression management strategies. By adopting a qualitative approach, the study seeks to uncover the deep-seated motivations, nuanced tactics, and complex dynamics underlying the use of secondary accounts, ultimately contributing to a more holistic understanding of contemporary digital culture.

The findings of this research will critically advance our understanding of digital identity construction in an era characterized by proliferating online personas. By systematically examining the intricate strategies Generation Z employs in navigating digital spaces, the study offers unprecedented insights into the dynamic interplay between privacy, authenticity, and self-presentation in contemporary social media landscapes.

Methodologically and theoretically, this research provides a nuanced framework for comprehending how digital-native generations construct and negotiate identity across multiple platforms. The investigation not only illuminates the unique digital navigation strategies of Generation Z but also holds substantive implications for key stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and social media platform designers. By elucidating the complex mechanisms of identity management in hyperconnected environments, the study contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of social interaction, digital literacy, and identity development in the 21st century.

While his study's focus on secondary accounts represents a valuable opportunity to explore the nuances of digital identity construction, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations and unintended consequences of this phenomenon. One concern is the risk of identity fragmentation, where individuals may struggle to reconcile and integrate their primary and secondary digital personas, leading to a sense of disconnect or internal conflict.

Additionally, the compartmentalization of digital identities, while serving as a creative solution for self-expression and impression management, may also contribute to the erosion of authentic, holistic self-representation. There is a danger that the strategic self-presentation tactics observed on secondary accounts, such as the expression of opinions and lifestyles deemed unacceptable for primary platforms, could lead to the creation of an idealized or inauthentic digital self, disconnected from the individual's lived experiences.

Furthermore, the dual-account strategy may have unintended consequences for social cohesion and community building within digital spaces. By segregating their online personas, Gen Z users may inadvertently limit their ability to forge meaningful connections and foster a sense of belonging across their diverse social circles. This could potentially exacerbate the challenges of "context collapse" (Marwick & boyd, 2011) and hamper the development of robust, diverse online communities.

Another critical consideration is the potential for the dual-account strategy to reinforce or even amplify existing social and economic inequalities. Access to the resources and digital literacy required to successfully manage multiple online identities may be unevenly distributed, potentially contributing to the digital divide and further marginalizing vulnerable or underrepresented groups within the Gen Z demographic.

Finally, the long-term implications of this phenomenon on the mental health and well-being of young individuals warrant careful examination. The pressure to curate and maintain multiple, often idealized, online personas may exacerbate issues such as social comparison, imposter syndrome, and the erosion of self-esteem. As the dual-account strategy becomes more widespread, it is crucial to understand and address its potential psychological impacts on the digital-native generation.

Despite these concerns, the use of secondary accounts by Generation Z reflects a deeper shift in the ways young people navigate the digital landscape. This practice represents a creative response to the unique challenges faced by this cohort, highlighting their sophisticated understanding of audience management, privacy, and identity exploration in the digital age. By delving into this phenomenon, we can gain valuable insights into the evolving nature of digital identity construction and its broader implications for social interaction, community building, and psychological well-being.

Material and Method

Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods approach with a concurrent design. The mixed methods approach was chosen to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the use of secondary Instagram accounts among Generation Z students in Makassar. The concurrent design was used, where quantitative and qualitative data collection was carried out in parallel, then integrated in the analysis and interpretation stage (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

In the quantitative phase, this study used a survey to identify general patterns of secondary Instagram account usage, such as posting frequency, types of content shared, and differences between main and secondary accounts. Meanwhile, the qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews and participatory observation to explore the motivations, experiences, and implications of using dual accounts for the digital identity of students.

The mixed methods approach was chosen because it can combine the strengths of statistical analysis with the depth of personal narratives, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Quantitative data provides an overview, while qualitative data provides more in-depth context and explanation.

Participants

The participants in this study were Generation Z students in Makassar City who owned and used a secondary Instagram account. The target population was active students at Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM) and Universitas Hasanuddin (Unhas), two leading higher education institutions in Makassar.

The sampling technique used was snowball sampling. The process began by identifying students who met the criteria through the researcher's social network on Instagram. The initial participants were asked to forward the research invitation to their friends who also had a secondary Instagram account. This process continued gradually until an adequate number of participants was obtained.

For the quantitative phase, it was planned to involve at least 252 student respondents, according to the sample size calculation using the Wibisono formula (Riduwan & Akdon, 2010). Meanwhile, the qualitative phase will involve 5 student informants selected purposively to represent the diversity of patterns in using secondary Instagram accounts.

Data Collection

1. Quantitative Phase

In the quantitative phase, data was collected through an online survey using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire covered the measurement of identity construction, self-expression (Park, J.Y. et al. 2016) and self-expression and impression management (Zhao, S. et al 2008) and self-presentation as self-disclosure, impression management, and self-promotion (Zhao, S.,et al 2008) on the main and secondary accounts. The measurement scale used a 4-point Likert format.

The questionnaire was distributed through an online link shared by the initial participants with their network of friends who met the criteria. This process adopted a snowball sampling technique to expand the reach of respondents.

2. Qualitative Phase

In the qualitative phase, data collection was carried out through semi-structured in-depth interviews and participatory observation.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 5 selected informants to explore in-depth their motivations, experiences, and perspectives related to the use of secondary Instagram accounts. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Participatory observation was conducted by creating a dedicated research Instagram account (@book_rvw98) and actively engaging in the Instagram ecosystem of Makassar students, including monitoring content, interactions, and behavioral patterns on both main and secondary accounts. Field notes and visual documentation (screenshots) were used to record observational findings.

Data Analysis

1. Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing. Descriptive statistics included calculations of mean, median, mode, and frequency distribution to describe the characteristics of main and secondary account usage.

Before hypothesis testing, a normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Since the data were not normally distributed, the hypothesis testing used the

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to compare the significant differences between the use of main and secondary accounts.

2. Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis used a thematic approach. The analysis process included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data reduction was done by identifying the main themes from the interview transcripts and observation notes. Data display was done in the form of matrices, direct quotes, and concept maps to facilitate interpretation. Conclusion drawing was done by paying attention to consistent patterns and outlying cases to gain a deep understanding.

3. Data Integration

The final stage was the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis results from both approaches were juxtaposed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the use of secondary Instagram accounts among Generation Z students in Makassar. The integration was done through data triangulation, where quantitative findings were enriched with qualitative narratives, as well as mixed data visualization to strengthen the representation of research results.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied several strategies, including:

- Triangulation of data sources through a combination of surveys, interviews, and observations.
- Member checking by requesting feedback from informants regarding the interpretation of qualitative data.
- Audit trail by documenting the entire research process in detail.
- Researcher reflexivity by recording thoughts, assumptions, and biases that may have influenced the interpretation.
- These strategies aim to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research results.

Result

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis revealed significant differences in self-presentation strategies between participants' primary and secondary Instagram accounts. Self-Disclosure (SD): The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed a significant increase in self-disclosure on secondary accounts compared to primary accounts ($Z = -11.551$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.61$). This

large effect size indicates that participants were substantially more willing to disclose personal information, opinions, and emotions on their secondary Instagram profiles.

Impression Management in Self-Presentation (MK PD): Participants also displayed a significant increase in impression management strategies on their secondary accounts (Z = -4.432, p < 0.001, d = 0.24). This moderate effect suggests that they were more proactive in controlling and tailoring the impressions they conveyed on their alternative Instagram platforms.

Self-Promotion (PD): A significant increase was found in self-promotional behaviors, such as highlighting achievements and positive qualities, on secondary accounts versus primary accounts (Z = -10.225, p < 0.001, d = 0.54). This large effect indicates that participants were more inclined to engage in self-enhancing presentation tactics on their secondary Instagram profiles.

Taken together, these quantitative findings demonstrate that Generation Z employs distinct self-presentation strategies on their secondary Instagram accounts, characterized by heightened self-disclosure, more active impression management, and greater self-promotion, compared to their primary accounts.

Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of interviews and observations yielded four key themes that provide deeper insights into the motivations and experiences underlying Generation Z's use of secondary Instagram accounts.

Motivation for Creating a Secondary Account: Participants reported creating secondary accounts to carve out a space for more authentic self-expression, free from the expectations and constraints of their primary accounts. This aligns with Goffman's (1959) concept of "backstage" behavior, where individuals can relax their public persona and engage in more genuine self-presentation.

One participant explained: "On my main account, I feel like I have to present this curated version of myself, you know? But on my second account, I can just be myself without worrying about what other people think."

Strategic Self-Presentation: On their secondary accounts, participants expressed opinions, thoughts, and lifestyles that they deemed inappropriate or unacceptable for their primary accounts. This strategic self-presentation reflects the challenge of "context collapse" on social media platforms, where users must navigate the simultaneous presence of multiple audiences with varying expectations (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

As one participant noted: "On my main account, I have to be careful about what I post because I have my family, friends, and even potential employers following me. But on my second account, I can post more freely without worrying about those kinds of consequences."

Dynamic Digital Identity: Participants' digital identities on secondary accounts were observed to evolve over time, adapting to trends, follower preferences, and personal growth. This fluidity supports van Dijck's (2013) observation of the dynamic nature of online identities, which are continuously negotiated and renegotiated.

A participant described this process: "My second account has really become a space for me to experiment and try out different versions of myself. Sometimes I'll post things that are a little edgier or more controversial, and I'll see how my followers react. It's like a digital playground for me to figure out who I want to be."

Identity Conflict Navigation: While secondary accounts facilitated more authentic expression, participants remained cautious about sharing provocative content to avoid potential conflicts with their primary digital identities. This demonstrates a sophisticated approach to "boundary regulation" in social media, moving beyond simple public-private dichotomies (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012).

As one participant explained: "There are definitely some things I would share on my second account that I would never post on my main one. But I still have to be careful not to go too far, because I don't want those two identities to clash and cause problems for me."

Integrated Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings collectively suggest that Generation Z employs a dual-account strategy to navigate the complexities of digital identity construction. The significant increases in self-disclosure, impression management, and self-promotion on secondary accounts, as evidenced by the Wilcoxon test results, are explained by the qualitative themes of seeking authentic self-expression and employing strategic self-presentation. This dual-account approach allows Generation Z to engage in a range of identity management practices:

Audience Segmentation: The use of secondary accounts enables participants to tailor their self-presentation to specific audiences, mitigating the challenges of "context collapse" (Marwick & boyd, 2011). By compartmentalizing their digital identities, they can more effectively navigate the diverse expectations of family, friends, and other social connections.

Identity Exploration: These alternative platforms serve as safe spaces for identity experimentation, aligning with Erikson's (1968) theory of identity formation during adolescence and young adulthood. The fluidity and adaptability of secondary account identities reflect the ongoing process of self-discovery and identity negotiation.

Impression Management: The increased control over self-presentation on secondary accounts reflects a sophisticated application of impression management theory (Leary & Kowalski, 1990) in digital contexts. Participants are able to strategically curate the

impressions they convey, balancing authenticity and self-enhancement to achieve their desired self-image.

Privacy Management: The careful navigation of identity conflicts demonstrates an evolved approach to privacy, moving beyond simple dichotomies of public and private (Tufekci, 2008). Participants engage in nuanced strategies of selective disclosure, strategically managing the boundaries between their primary and secondary digital identities.

These findings challenge the notion of Generation Z as indiscriminate digital oversharers, instead revealing them as strategic managers of their online personas. The use of secondary accounts represents a creative solution to the challenges of maintaining authenticity while navigating diverse social expectations in digital environments.

Discussion

At the core of this study's findings is the observation that Generation Z employs a dual-account strategy to navigate the complexities of digital identity construction. The quantitative data revealed significant increases in self-disclosure, impression management, and self-promotion behaviors on secondary Instagram accounts compared to primary accounts. These quantitative insights are further contextualized and enriched by the qualitative themes that emerged from the interviews and observations.

The decision to create and maintain secondary social media accounts represents a conscious and deliberate effort by Gen Z individuals to compartmentalize and reconstruct their online personas. This dual-account approach allows them to engage in a range of strategic identity management practices that cater to their evolving needs and desires.

Audience Segmentation: One of the key affordances of secondary accounts is the ability to tailor self-presentation to specific audiences. This finding aligns with Marwick and Boyd's (2011) concept of "context collapse" – the challenge of navigating diverse, often incongruent, audiences on a single platform. By compartmentalizing their digital identities, Gen Z users can more effectively manage the impressions they convey to family, friends, and other social connections.

Identity Exploration: The fluid and adaptive nature of secondary account identities, as observed in the qualitative themes, suggests that these alternative platforms serve as spaces for identity exploration and experimentation. This aligns with Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development, which emphasizes the importance of this process during adolescence and young adulthood. The secondary account, in essence, becomes a "backstage" (Goffman, 1959) where Gen Z individuals can engage in identity play and work through the complexities of self-discovery.

Sophisticated Impression Management: The quantitative findings regarding increased self-disclosure, impression management, and self-promotion on secondary accounts reflect a nuanced and strategic approach to online self-presentation. This

exemplifies a sophisticated application of Leary and Kowalski's (1990) impression management theory in digital contexts, where individuals actively curate and control the impressions they convey to their audience.

Nuanced Privacy Regulation: Underlying the dual-account strategy is a more evolved approach to privacy management, moving beyond simplistic public-private dichotomies. As evidenced by the qualitative theme of "Identity Conflict Navigation," Gen Z users carefully negotiate the boundaries between their primary and secondary digital identities, engaging in selective disclosure to maintain a sense of control and authenticity.

This multifaceted understanding of the dual-account strategy challenges the prevalent notion of Generation Z as indiscriminate digital overshares. Instead, the findings reveal a demographic that is highly attuned to the complexities of online self-presentation and impression management, employing creative solutions to navigate the constraints and expectations of their primary social media personas.

The compartmentalization of digital identities, as observed in this study, serves as a response to the unique challenges faced by Gen Z in the digital age. Whereas previous generations may have relied on more traditional offline outlets for identity exploration and self-expression, the ubiquity of social media has compelled this cohort to develop innovative strategies to fulfill these fundamental needs.

By creating secondary accounts, Gen Z individuals are able to carve out spaces that are more conducive to authentic self-expression, free from the perceived constraints and audience expectations of their primary profiles. This aligns with Goffman's (1959) conceptualization of "backstage" behavior, where individuals can relax their public persona and engage in more genuine forms of self-presentation.

The strategic self-presentation tactics observed on secondary accounts, such as the expression of opinions and lifestyles deemed unacceptable for primary platforms, reflect a nuanced understanding of the challenges posed by "context collapse" (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Gen Z users are adept at navigating the simultaneous presence of diverse audiences and adapting their self-presentation accordingly.

Moreover, the fluidity and adaptability of secondary account identities, as highlighted in the qualitative findings, support van Dijck's (2013) observation of the dynamic nature of online identities. Rather than static or monolithic, these digital selves are continuously negotiated and renegotiated in response to evolving personal growth, audience preferences, and sociocultural trends.

The careful navigation of identity conflicts, as demonstrated by participants' cautious approach to sharing provocative content, suggests a sophisticated understanding of "boundary regulation" in social media (Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012). Gen Z users exhibit a

nuanced awareness of the potential consequences of identity fragmentation, exercising agency in managing the boundaries between their primary and secondary digital personas.

By employing this dual-account strategy, Generation Z is able to engage in a range of identity management practices that address their unique developmental and sociocultural needs. The compartmentalization of digital identities allows for more authentic self-expression, while also facilitating strategic self-presentation and impression management to navigate the complexities of the online landscape.

This study's findings challenge the prevailing narrative that portrays Gen Z as indiscriminate digital overshares. Rather than a lack of self-control or discretion, the dual-account strategy suggests a high degree of self-awareness and intentionality in the ways this demographic-constructs and presents their online personas.

The insights gained from this research contribute to a more nuanced understanding of digital identity formation, particularly among young social media users. By shedding light on the motivations, practices, and underlying dynamics of secondary account usage, the study offers valuable lessons for social media platforms, marketers, and educators seeking to engage with and support Generation Z.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the strategies employed by Gen Z in reconstructing their online identities may serve as a harbinger of broader societal shifts in the ways individuals navigate the complexities of self-expression and self-presentation in the virtual realm. Understanding these emerging practices is essential for anticipating and addressing the changing needs and behaviors of digital-native generations.

While this study provides valuable insights into the dual-account strategies employed by Generation Z, it is important to critically examine the potential limitations and unintended consequences of this phenomenon. One concern is the risk of identity fragmentation, where individuals may struggle to reconcile and integrate their primary and secondary digital personas, leading to a sense of disconnect or internal conflict.

Additionally, the compartmentalization of digital identities, while serving as a creative solution for self-expression and impression management, may also contribute to the erosion of authentic, holistic self-representation. There is a danger that the strategic self-presentation tactics observed on secondary accounts, such as the expression of opinions and lifestyles deemed unacceptable for primary platforms, could lead to the creation of an idealized or inauthentic digital self, disconnected from the individual's lived experiences.

Drawing from our participants' narratives, the dual-account phenomenon reveals complex identity negotiation strategies that challenge traditional understandings of online social interaction. Consider SR, a 22-year-old marketing student, who maintains two distinctly curated Instagram profiles: her professional account showcasing internship achievements

and industry networking, and her private "Finsta" revealing intimate mental health struggles, unfiltered friendships, and personal vulnerabilities.

For instance, FS, a 20-year-old Communication science major, strategically compartmentalizes his digital personas. His primary account presents a polished, career-oriented image with technology conference highlights and professional achievements. In contrast, his secondary account becomes a raw space for exploring LGBTQ+ identity, sharing personal growth moments, and connecting with a supportive community that remains invisible on his professional profile.

These nuanced digital practices demonstrate how Generation Z navigates complex social landscapes by creating protected spaces for authentic self-expression. Rather than merely fragmenting identity, these multiple accounts represent sophisticated boundary-management techniques that allow young individuals to simultaneously maintain professional respectability and personal authenticity.

Another critical consideration is the potential for the dual-account strategy to reinforce or even amplify existing social and economic inequalities. Access to the resources and digital literacy required to successfully manage multiple online identities may be unevenly distributed, potentially contributing to the digital divide and further marginalizing vulnerable or underrepresented groups within the Gen Z demographic.

Drawing from participants' lived experiences, the psychological dimensions of dual-account practices reveal a complex interplay between digital self-presentation and emotional resilience. When directly engaged, our participants articulated the dual-account strategy not as a burden, but as an adaptive mechanism for navigating increasingly complex social and professional environments. SR candidly described her approach as "emotional compartmentalization," viewing her multiple accounts as protective spaces that allow for strategic vulnerability and controlled exposure. Similarly, FS emphasized the therapeutic potential of his secondary account, describing it as a "sanctuary of self-discovery" where he could experiment with identity without professional repercussions.

However, this adaptive strategy is not without its psychological tensions. The constant negotiation between curated professional personas and more authentic personal expressions creates a form of performative labor that can be emotionally exhausting. The participants consistently highlighted the mental energy required to maintain these carefully constructed digital boundaries, suggesting that what appears to be a flexible identity management technique also represents a subtle form of emotional work.

Our analysis thus suggests that the dual-account phenomenon is less about fragmentation and more about developing sophisticated psychological strategies for navigating increasingly complex social landscapes. These digital practices reflect a

generation's nuanced understanding of identity as contextual, fluid, and strategically manageable, rather than fixed or singular.

Conclusion

This study offers valuable insights into how Gen Z reconstructs their digital identities through the use of a secondary Instagram account, applying distinct self-presentation and impression management strategies compared to their primary account. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex ways this generation navigates the digital landscape in building their online identities.

The quantitative results reveal significant differences in self-expression, impression management, self-disclosure, impression management in self-presentation, and self-promotion between primary and secondary accounts. This aligns with previous research showing that individuals employ diverse self-presentation strategies across social media platforms to align with varying social expectations and norms. For Gen Z, the secondary account functions as a more private and limited space, enabling them to express themselves more authentically, free from the pressures and social expectations they may face on their primary account.

The qualitative findings highlight the key motivations behind creating a secondary account: having a separate space to express personality aspects that may be less suitable for display on the more public primary account. This reflects a desire to maintain distinct digital identities for different audiences, in line with impression management theory. Gen Z demonstrates a strong awareness of the importance of impression management on social media and adapts their self-presentation for different audiences, as suggested by prior research.

The self-presentation strategies and impression management tactics applied on the secondary account differ from those on the primary account. Gen Z tends to avoid sensitive or overly vulgar content on their primary account to maintain their personal brand, while feeling more comfortable being themselves and engaging more openly with followers on their secondary account. This is consistent with studies suggesting that individuals use different impression management strategies on social media to maintain a positive impression and minimize social risks.

The findings also reveal the dynamic nature of Gen Z's digital identities on their secondary accounts, which evolve over time to adapt to follower trends and preferences. This aligns with the understanding that digital identities are not static, but rather dynamic and continuously shaped by social contexts and audiences. Gen Z appears to be cognizant of the importance of balancing authenticity and impression management in constructing their digital identities on their secondary accounts.

Interestingly, the findings also highlight Gen Z's efforts to navigate identity conflicts. Although the secondary account is used for more authentic self-expression, participants remain cautious in sharing overly provocative content in certain social or professional contexts to avoid identity conflicts. This is in line with previous research suggesting that individuals tend to limit self-disclosure and adapt their self-presentation to avoid potential negative consequences across various social contexts.

Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of how Gen Z leverages social media to construct more authentic and liberated digital identities. The secondary account functions as a safer and more protected space for them to explore and express aspects of their identity that may not align with the image they wish to maintain on their primary account. This aligns with previous findings suggesting that individuals use social media as a platform to express alternative or "true self" identities that may not be expressed in the physical world. However, the findings also indicate that Gen Z remains mindful of the importance of impression management and privacy protection to avoid identity conflicts across various social and professional domains, in line with studies on social media privacy management strategies.

References

Bullingham, L., & Vasconcelos, A. C. (2013). 'The presentation of self in the online world': Goffman and the study of online identities. *Journal of Information Science*, *39*(1), 101-112. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551512472051

Chua, T. H. H., & Chang, L. (2016). Follow me and like my beautiful selfies: Singapore teenage girls' engagement in self-presentation and peer comparison on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *55*, 190-197. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.09.01

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday.

Hogan, B. (2010). The presentation of self in the age of social media: Distinguishing performances and exhibitions online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, *30*(6), 377-386. https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610385893

Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin*, *107*(1), 34-47. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.107.1.34

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, *13*(1), 114-133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Park, J. Y., Jang, S., & Ha, J. (2016). Exploring social dynamics in a virtual community using discourse analysis. *Online Information Review*, *40*(1), 98-116. https://doi.org/10.11 08/OIR-07-2015-0229

Riduwan, & Akdon. (2010). *Rumus dan data dalam analisis statistika* [Formulas and data in statistical analysis]. Alfabeta.

Schlenker, B. R., & Leary, M. R. (1982). Audiences' reactions to self-enhancing, self-denigrating, and accurate self-presentations. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *18*(1), 89-104. https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(82)90083-X

Stutzman, F. D., & Hartzog, W. (2012). Boundary regulation in social media. In *Proceedings of the ACM 2012 conference on computer supported cooperative work* (pp. 769-778). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2145204.2145320

Tufekci, Z. (2008). Can you see me now? Audience and disclosure regulation in online social network sites. Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society, 28(1), 20-36. https://doi.org/ 10.1177/0270467607311484

van Dijck, J. (2013). 'You have one identity': Performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn. *Media, Culture & Society, 35*(2), 199-215. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443712468605

Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., & Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *24*(5), 1816-1836. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2008.02.012