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The Use of Second Accounts Among Communication Science Students at Surabaya State University

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Abstract

Digital transformation has shifted interpersonal communication patterns to the digital realm, raising concerns about social media's ability to replace intimate face-to-face communication. Active college students, now referred to as Gen Z, have become accustomed to making the internet a part of their daily lives. They have social media accounts and use them as a means of existence and expression. This study analyzed the effectiveness of social media platforms as a substitute for intimate communication using a quantitative approach through a questionnaire survey of 118 active users, namely Communication Studies students at Surabaya State University. The results revealed intensive usage patterns (averaging 1-4 hours/day), with Instagram and WhatsApp as the dominant platforms. The most dominant reasons respondents gave for creating a second account were privacy, followed by self-expression, and interacting with close friends. These results indicate that most users use their second account as a more private, personal space free from social surveillance. These findings suggest that the second account serves as a more private, personal space, allowing users to express themselves freely without the pressure of a public audience. The theory used is context collapse, where individuals face identity dilemmas in the face of a heterogeneous audience. Creating a second account becomes an adaptive strategy to separate social contexts, regulate privacy boundaries, and maintain a safer and more authentic space for expression. Theoretically, this study expands understanding of context collapse theory by highlighting the function of second accounts as a form of recontextualization in the digital communication landscape. Empirically, this study contributes to the development of digital interpersonal communication studies among Indonesia's younger generation.

Keywords: second account, gen z, context collapse, social media, privacy

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has shifted interpersonal communication patterns to digital spaces, with global social media penetration reaching 4.9 billion users in 2024. Social media functions as a multimodal communication ecosystem that integrates entertainment, information, and social interaction needs within unified

platforms. The phenomenon of disruption in intimate face-to-face communication has emerged alongside the increasing intensity of social media use as the primary channel for social interaction.

The term context collapse appears when various people from different backgrounds such as family, friends, coworkers, and communities

gather into one on the social media platform used. A person must speak safely for all these groups through a status or photo that is acceptable to everyone. This creates pressure to always be a safe version of oneself and sometimes leads to boredom or not being one's true self (Rajan, 2022).

Social context collapse (context collapse) has emerged as an important topic alongside the proliferation of social media, which often blurs the public and private spheres, the professional and personal realms, and the various selves and situations faced by individuals. Academic literature has begun to discuss how the integration of online social contexts has many consequences that are potentially both beneficial and problematic (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014).

Second accounts are owned by adolescents, especially Gen Z, to address and respond to the challenges of this context collapse. The main account is used to show a positive self, displaying achievements visible to everyone. Meanwhile, the second account is filled with selected people. Users are free to express anything, such as complaints, photos, stories that do not have to be consumed by everyone. They are not afraid of being judged for posting things not posted on the main account. The second account acts as an outlet or shows a different self. One creates a completely separate audience space for a different identity.

Gen Z feels pressure to always appear perfect on social media; Gen Z chooses to build an ideal image on the first account and the second account becomes a more honest medium for expression (Dina Salma, n.d.).

This phenomenon is also called multiple online identities, which is the tendency to display different sides depending on the social context or digital audience. The motivation for having a second account is for privacy and control, where a person wants to separate public and private life (Marwick & Boyd, 2018). The second account also provides space to experiment with social identity. The main account is for showing a digital persona, while the second account is more spontaneous and honest.

The main account is called "rinsta/real Instagram," aimed at showing the primary impression to the public. The second account or "finsta/fake Instagram" shows a more intimate and experimental self. This is done to effectively group and separate various social circles. Another goal is to maintain clear boundaries between various personas.

In impression management theory, also used by political actors, the main account is used for image-building. In the context of having a second account, it is used for exploration and self-discovery. In this safe and private space, individuals can try out opinions, gender identities, or emotional expressions that they may still doubt or that do not align with their primary social norms. This is a very dynamic and fluid aspect of self-presentation.

In the past, self-presentation was about creating a self in the middle of a crowd, whereas now it is about managing it deliberately for different

audiences. The second account serves as a safe zone for identity experimentation without significant social consequences.

This study uses students as respondents and employs context collapse theory. Context collapse theory was introduced by Boyd and later developed by Alice Marwick & Danah Boyd (2018) in the context of social media like Facebook and Instagram. Context collapse occurs when the boundaries between different audiences in real life (e.g., friends, family, lecturers, coworkers) collapse into a single audience on social media.

Consequently, individuals lose control over the social contexts that usually guide how they communicate or present themselves. Context collapse describes the tension between privacy and visibility, as well as user strategies in managing overlapping audiences.

Users separate audiences to control content visibility and adjust communication styles according to specific social contexts (Vitak & Kim, 2014). The main components of context collapse theory include four important aspects. First, social context, which is the situational background where a person interacts with a specific audience. Social media causes these contexts to lose their boundaries so that messages conveyed in one context can be accessed by other, different audiences (Marwick & Boyd, 2018). Second, overlapping audiences, which is the combination of various social groups that are usually separate in the real world. Users face diverse and even invisible audiences, often making it difficult to adjust

messages or maintain self-image (Marwick & Boyd, 2018).

Third, self and identity management, which is the individual's effort to manage their selfimage in front of a heterogeneous audience. In situations of context collapse, individuals often face identity dilemmas because they must present a self that is acceptable to all audiences simultaneously (Litt & Hargittai, 2016). Fourth, context management strategies, which are adaptive actions taken by users to restore the boundaries of social context in digital media. These strategies can include using privacy settings, close friends features, or creating a second account to separate audiences and maintain a safer space for expression (Duffy & Chan, 2018). Through these four components, context collapse theory provides a strong conceptual framework for understanding how individuals negotiate identity, privacy, and selfexpression in increasingly complex social media spaces.

The research aims to determine the motives for accessing social media and to identify the motivations of students for having second accounts on social media. Students are digital natives and the most intensive users of social media platforms. They typically have the technical ability to utilize platform features to the maximum (such as creating close friends lists or operating multiple accounts).

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive approach. This approach was

chosen to map and describe the context collapse phenomenon experienced by students in the digital space through numerical data. Data were collected at a specific point in time to describe the systematic and realistic conditions without analyzing relationships between variables, testing hypotheses, or seeking causal explanations (Cresswell, 2017).

The population in this study were all active students of the Communication Science Study Program, Surabaya State University, totaling 1023. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with the criteria of actively using at least one social media platform (such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter/X, etc.) for a minimum of 1 hour per day.

Based on these criteria using the Frank Lynch sample formula, a sample of 118 respondents was obtained. This sample size is considered adequate and representative to provide an initial overview of the phenomenon under study in the population.

The results of the analysis are presented in the form of frequency distribution tables and percentages, which are then interpreted to provide a general overview of the level of context collapse experienced by Communication Science students at UNESA.

RESULT

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire data, the following are the results of social media usage patterns. Respondents showed intensive social media usage patterns with an average duration of 1-4 hours per day. Instagram and WhatsApp were the most dominant platforms used, followed by TikTok and X (Twitter) as supporting platforms.

Table 1. Distribution of Daily Social Media
Usage Duration

Duration Frequency (n) Percentage (%)

Total	118	100,0
> 4 hour	20	16,9
3–4 hour	38	32,2
1–2 hour	42	35,6
< 1 hour	18	15,3

Based on the data in the table above, it can be seen that the majority of respondents use their social media for 1-2 hours per day with a frequency of 42 people (35.6%). This duration indicates that the use of the social media is quite intensive, although it does not dominate daily activities.

32.2% of respondents use their social media for 3-4 hours per day, indicating a group of users with higher engagement. Meanwhile, only 15.3% of respondents use their social media for less than 1 hour, and 16.9% use it for more than 4 hours.

Table 2. Most Frequently Used Social Media

Platform	As First Choice	As Second Choice	Total Appearances
Instagram	68	32	100

Platform	As First Choice	As Second Choice	Total Appearances
WhatsApp	25	45	70
TikTok	15	28	43
X (Twitter)	8	12	20
Lainnya	2	7	9
Total	118	124	242

Entertainment and communication are the main motives for using social media, followed by the need for information and the desire to monitor the social activities of friends or acquaintances. From the table above, it can be seen that Instagram is the most dominant platform used as the main account (68 respondents) and is also quite widely used as a second account (32 respondents). This shows that Instagram remains the primary platform for users in social media activities, both for public and private needs.

Meanwhile, WhatsApp occupies the second position with 45 respondents using it as a second account, indicating that this platform is widely used for more private or limited group communication.

TikTok and X (Twitter) have lower total appearances but still show a tendency for dual usage, especially TikTok which is more often used as a second account (28 respondents). The "Others" category (such as Telegram, X, or Facebook) has the smallest number, indicating

that its popularity as a second account is still relatively small.

Overall, this data indicates that Instagram and WhatsApp dominate user choices in having social media, reflecting the need to balance public identity and private space in digital communication activities.

Table 3. Distribution of Social Media Usage Motives

Usage Motive	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entertainment	89	75,4
Communication	76	64,4
Information	67	56,8
Viewing friend's activities	58	49,2
Content Inspiration	25	21,2
Personal Branding	18	15,3
Others	12	10,2
Total $(N = 118)$	_	

Based on Table 3, the main motives for social media use are dominated by the need for entertainment (75.4%), followed by communication (64.4%) and information search (56.8%). This shows that the majority of users use their second account not solely for professional purposes, but for interpersonal activities.

Furthermore, 49.2% of respondents use social media to view friends' activities, indicating a

social need to stay connected without always having to be active. Meanwhile, motives such as content inspiration (21.2%) and personal branding (15.3%) show that some users still utilize social media for creative exploration or image building, although these are not the primary goals.

Social media use triggers various emotional responses, with the majority of respondents reporting positive feelings, although there are variations in intensity.

Table 4. Emotional Responses to Social Media Use

Emotional Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Happy/Joyful	52	44,1
Entertained	48	40,7
Satisfied	35	29,7
Neutral	28	23,7
Informative	25	21,2
Addictive	10	8,5
Mixed Feelings	8	6,8
Total (N = 118)		_

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that the most dominant emotional response experienced by users when using social media is feeling happy or joyful (44.1%), followed by entertained (40.7%) and satisfied (29.7%). These findings indicate that social media use tends to provide

positive emotional experiences for the majority of users.

23.7% of respondents stated they felt neutral/indifferent, indicating a group of users who view social media activities as routine without deep emotional involvement. Meanwhile, 21.2% of respondents felt that using social media was informative, meaning they use it to obtain specific information or insights.

Interestingly, 8.5% of respondents admitted to experiencing addiction, and 6.8% stated they had mixed feelings (e.g., happy but also anxious or bored). This shows that social media use does not always provide positive emotional impacts but can also lead to excessive attachment.

Overall, this data depicts that social media functions as a relatively positive emotional space where individuals can express themselves, seek entertainment, and gain satisfaction without the high social pressure found on main accounts.

The majority of respondents actively manage their digital identity through the ownership of a second account for various specific purposes.

Table 5. Ownership and Use of Second Accounts

Variabel	Categor	Frequenc	Percentag
variabei	y y	y	e (%)
Second	Have	74	62,7
Account			

Variabel	Categor y	Frequenc y	Percentag e (%)
Ownershi			
p			
	Do Not	44	37,3
New			
Identity	Have	45	38,1
Formation	l		
	Do Not	73	61,9
Total (N =	=		

Based on Table 5, it can be seen that the majority of respondents (62.7%) stated they have a second account, while 37.3% do not have a second account on social media. This shows that the phenomenon of second account ownership is quite common and significant among social media users.

118)

Furthermore, regarding the formation of a new identity, 38.1% of respondents admitted to using their second account to display an identity different from their main account, while 61.9% stated they do not. This data indicates that although most users have a second account, not all use it to build a new persona or identity, many still use the account for other functions, such as entertainment, private communication, or personal exploration without significant changes in self-image.

Overall, these findings illustrate that the second account functions more as a space for expression and privacy, not solely for the formation of a new identity. However, for some users, the second account becomes a means to experiment with alternative identities that they may not be able to display on their main account due to social considerations or public image.

Table 6. Reasons for Second Account Ownership

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Privacy	28	37,8
Self expression	25	33,8
For close friend	18	24,3
Daily Activities	15	20,3
Archive	12	16,2
Others	8	10,8
Total $(N = 74)$	_	_

Based on Table 6, it can be seen that the most dominant reason for respondents to create a second account is privacy (37.8%), followed by self-expression (33.8%), and the reason for interacting with close friends (24.3%). These results show that the majority of users use the second account as a more closed personal space, free from social surveillance.

The privacy motive shows that users want to limit public access to their private activities, while the self-expression motive indicates a need to display a different or more authentic side of themselves compared to the main

account. The reason "for close friends" also reinforces the idea that second accounts are often used for more intimate and selective interaction.

Furthermore, some respondents use the second account to share daily activities (20.3%) and as a digital archive (16.2%), showing the practical functions of the account. Although only a small portion (10.8%) have other reasons, this confirms that second account ownership is not singular but multifunctional—combining social, emotional, and functional aspects.

These results illustrate that creating a second account is a digital communication strategy that allows users to manage privacy boundaries, express themselves freely, and build social relationships within a more limited circle.

Social media is considered effective as a substitute for intimate communication, with chat and DM features being the primary tools utilized.

Table 7. Perception of Social Media Effectiveness as a Substitute for Intimate Communication

Efektiven Level	ess	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very (score 9–1	effective 0)	65	55,1
Quite (score 7–8		42	35,6
Less (score 5–6	effective	8	6,8

Efektiveness Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not effective (score < 5)	3	2,5
Total $(N = 118)$	_	_

Based on Table 7, it can be seen that the majority of respondents (55.1%) rated the use of social media as very effective, while 35.6% rated it as quite effective. Only a small proportion of respondents (6.8%) felt it was less effective, and 2.5% rated it as not effective.

Overall, respondents showed a high level of satisfaction with the use of social media, with an average score of 8.3 on a scale of 10.

Table 8. Distribution of User Satisfaction Scores

Satisfication Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10	25	21,2
9	38	32,2
8	32	27,1
7	12	10,2
6	5	4,2
≤ 5	6	5,1
Total	118	100,0

Based on Table 8, the majority of respondents gave high satisfaction scores regarding their social media use. 32.2% of respondents gave a score of 9, and 21.2% gave a score of 10,

indicating that most users are very satisfied with the existence of social media.

Furthermore, 27.1% of respondents gave a score of 8, which is also considered a high level of satisfaction. Only a small number of respondents gave low scores—4.2% (score 6) and 5.1% (score \leq 5)—indicating that negative experiences or dissatisfaction with the social media used are relatively small.

Discussion

The majority of respondents access social media 1-2 hours per day. The most frequently used social media platform is Instagram, followed by WhatsApp, and then TikTok. The most common motives for using social media are entertainment, followed by communication, information seeking, viewing friends' activities, content inspiration, and personal branding.

They experience pleasure, entertainment, and satisfaction when accessing social media. Some report a sense of casualness, informational content, and even addiction, although these percentages are small.

Several uses & gratifications studies and research on user motivation (including studies in Asia/Indonesia) rank entertainment, interaction/socialization (communication), and information seeking as primary motivations (Norhabiba, 2018). Local studies on Gen Z and second-hand accounts also address motivations such as content inspiration and personal branding.

(Gao et al., 2023) and more recent uses & gratifications studies categorize primary

motives as: entertainment, information, and social interaction/personal utility.

Of all social media accounts, both first and second-hand accounts, the highest satisfaction scores are 9, representing very effective, and 8, representing fairly effective.

Research on Indonesian/Gen Z users and digital consumption studies shows that Instagram and WhatsApp are among the most frequently used platforms; TikTok's rapid growth has also been noted, often ranking among the top platforms depending on the sample and year. (Huwaida et al., 2024) discuss the relative position of platforms in Indonesia within the context of Gen Z and social commerce. WhatsApp and Instagram are the most frequently used platforms in a specific student sample.

Correlation between social media use and psychological well-being. They report that users report instant feelings of pleasure and entertainment when scrolling through their social media feeds, which is associated with dopamine release. However, excessive passive usage patterns are also associated with feelings of missing out (Fear of Missing Out/FoMO) and mild addiction symptoms in some subjects (Huang et al., 2023).

The main reasons for having a second account are primarily for privacy, self-expression, providing updates that only close friends can see, and archiving photos or videos. They want to exist but project a perfect/average self-image on their main account, and a different self-image on their second account.

Instagram is not just social media, but also a tool for building and maintaining social relationship in the digital era. The uses of second Instagram accounts among gen Z to express themselves, maintain privacy, and build more intimate social relationships (Nugraha et al., 2023).

Of all the social media accounts, both the first and second accounts they have, they gave the highest satisfaction scores of 9 or very effective and 8 or quite effective.

More social media use was associated with more time giving support and worse well-being, more social media use to contact family/friends was related to better social support quality and better well-being. Increased social media usage can lead to more perceived connections with others and greater social support, which in turn can increase one's well-being(Lin & Lachman, 2024).

Several recent studies (Barth et al., 2023; Beam et al., 2018; Litt & Hargittai, 2016; Yeshua-Katz & Hård af Segerstad, 2020) show that in situations of context collapse, social media users face an identity dilemma because they must present themselves uniformly to diverse audiences. Social media affordances such as visibility and persistence amplify this pressure, prompting users to develop context management strategies to maintain their self-image.

The dominance of the reasons privacy (37.8%) and self-expression (33.8%) directly represent two sides of the same coin: a response to the

pressure of context collapse. Context Collapse theory proposed by Marwick and Boyd (2018) explains how diverse audiences (family, coworkers, close friends) meet in a single digital space, triggering anxiety and limiting freedom of expression. Creating a second account, in this context, is not just a trend, but a proactive strategy for audience segmentation (Papacharissi, 2015).

The reason for interacting with close friends (24.3%) reinforces the function of the second account as a space to maintain strong ties. In the main account environment, characterized by weak ties such as acquaintances and colleagues, the second account allows individuals to return to more intimate and meaningful communication dynamics.

The high level of satisfaction indicates that users feel the second account successfully meets their personal and social needs, especially in terms of privacy management, control over the audience, and freedom of expression. This finding can be explained using Context Collapse theory proposed by (Marwick Boyd, 2018), which describes phenomenon when various audiences from different social backgrounds meet in the same digital communication space. In this context, users face difficulties in adjusting messages and behavior to diverse audiences, thus creating a need to create more controlled and separate communication spaces.

A second account on social media can be understood as a form of strategy to overcome context collapse. By having a second account,

individuals can separate public and private audiences, control the type of content shared with specific groups, maintain a balance between self-expression and social image, and avoid social pressure due to the presence of a heterogeneous audience on the main account (Vitak & Kim, 2014).

Thus, the second account functions as a new contextual space that allows users to negotiate their digital identity according to specific audience groups. As explained by (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014), context collapse encourages individuals to utilize identity fragmentation strategies to adjust their behavior to different social contexts in digital media. The success of users in managing these contextual differences results in a high level of comfort and satisfaction with the use of the second account.

Instagram, for example, provides a broad visual space to build social identity and display self-image to the public, supporting the practices of self-presentation and impression management (Goffman, 1959; (Marwick & Boyd, 2018). Conversely, WhatsApp is used for more personal and emotional communication, in line with its function as a private space. Meanwhile, TikTok offers greater freedom of expression without the strict pressure of social image-building (Omar & Dequan, 2020). This variation in platform functions shows that users adjust their communication strategies based on the social context faced in each digital space.

Second account ownership also reflects a form of adaptation to the social media condition experiencing context collapse, where the boundaries between professional, family, and friend audiences become blurred (Vitak & Kim, 2014). By creating a second account, users can restore the social boundaries lost due to this collapse of context, while also negotiating their identity more flexibly. This explains why 80.5% of respondents gave high satisfaction scores (8–10), as they feel they can better control the communication context and audience.

Furthermore, the research results are also in line with the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973 in (Norhabiba, 2018), which asserts that user satisfaction with media is determined by the extent to which the media fulfills their personal and social needs. The second account allows users to express themselves more freely, manage privacy, and interact in an environment perceived as safer and more comfortable (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Thus, the use of a second account is not merely a technical practice, but a complex social communication strategy to navigate the dynamics of context collapse in the digital era.

Currently, netizens tend to create and publish information they obtain through the internet or simply consume internet content. With the advancement of technology, netizens' freedom to access and acquire information has expanded, including information related to work, education, entertainment, and more(Pramana & Triantoro, 2025).

Overall, the high level of satisfaction with the second account confirms that users successfully use adaptive communication strategies to

overcome the collapse of social context that unites various audiences in one space. The second account becomes an important means to restore social boundaries, manage digital identity, and create a sense of security in increasingly open and connected online interactions.

CONCLUSION

Respondents showed intensive social media usage patterns with an average duration of 1-4 hours per day. Instagram and WhatsApp were the most dominant platforms used, followed by TikTok and X (Twitter) as supporting platforms.

Entertainment and communication were the main motives for social media use, followed by the need for information and the desire to monitor the social activities of friends or acquaintances. Social media use triggered various emotional responses, with the majority of respondents reporting positive feelings, although there were variations in intensity.

The majority of respondents actively managed their digital identity through the ownership of a second account for various specific purposes. Social media was considered effective as a substitute for intimate communication, with chat and DM features being the primary tools utilized.

Overall, respondents showed a high level of satisfaction with the use of social media, with an average score of 8.3 on a scale of 10.

By having multiple accounts, users actively reseparate their social contexts that had collapsed into one on digital platforms. They rebuild the social walls that were torn down by social media, in order to gain space to be a more authentic self.

The second account functions as a digital communication strategy that reflects self-management. Users consciously regulate audience boundaries and self-image by creating a second account to avoid the identity dilemmas arising from context collapse.

The second account functions as a means of boundary management, where individuals limit who can access their personal information.

The weakness of the research in the methodological aspect is that the sample is limited to a certain population so that generalization of the findings requires caution.

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