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Navigating Digital Stage: Cyber PR in Adolescent Personal Branding on Social Media

Anindita*, Melly Ridaryanthi, Yuni Tresnawati, Muthia Rahayu

Universitas Mercu Buana
Jl. Meruya Selatan No. 1, Kembangan, Jakarta, Indonesia
*Correspondence Email: anindita@mercubuana.ac.id

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Abstract – This study examines how senior and vocational high school students in South Tangerang implement CPR practices in constructing their personal branding on social media. A qualitative single case study was conducted with five purposively selected students aged 16–18 years who actively use social media. Data were collected through in-depth interview and documentation of their social media content, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings shows that adolescents intuitively applied core CPR principles and key personal branding elements as theorized by (Rampersad, 2009), most consistently self-awareness, authenticity, and consistency, though personal vision and leadership and influence remain less evenly developed. A notable strategy is the management of a primary and a secondary account (the dual-account practice), which reflects a Goffmanian "front stage" and "backstage" dynamic in digital identity management, closely paralleling findings on secondary "Finsta" accounts among Western youth. Adolescents are not merely passive content consumers but active digital communicators capable of strategically managing their online reputations. These findings suggest a need to integrate CPR-based digital literacy into secondary education curricula.
Keywords: Cyber Public Relations; Personal Branding; Adolescents; Social Media; South Tangerang

Abstrak *- Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana siswa SMA dan SMK di Kota Tangerang Selatan menerapkan praktik CPR dalam membangun personal branding di media sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode single studi kasus terhadap lima siswa pengguna media sosial aktif berusia 16–18 tahun yang dipilih secara purposif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dokumentasi konten media sosial lalu dianalisis dengan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para remaja secara intuitif telah menerapkan prinsip-prinsip utama CPR serta elemen-elemen penting personal branding sebagaimana dikemukakan oleh (Rampersad, 2009), terutama kesadaran diri, autentisitas, dan konsistensi, sementara visi personal serta kepemimpinan dan pengaruh berkembang kurang merata. Salah satu strategi yang menonjol adalah pengelolaan akun utama dan akun sekunder* (dual-account), *yang mencerminkan dinamika "front stage" dan "backstage" dalam pengelolaan identitas digital sebagaimana dijelaskan oleh Goffman. Remaja tidak lagi sekadar menjadi konsumen pasif konten digital, melainkan berperan sebagai komunikator digital yang mampu mengelola reputasi daring mereka secara strategis. Temuan ini mengindikasikan perlunya integrasi literasi digital berbasis Cyber Public Relations ke dalam kurikulum pendidikan menengah.*
Kata Kunci*: Cyber Public Relations; Personal Branding; Remaja; Media Sosial; Tangerang Selatan.*

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technology has fundamentally transformed how adolescents construct and project their identities. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have evolved beyond entertainment to become strategic arenas for self-presentation, social networking, and personal brand development. In Indonesia, the scale of this phenomenon is substantial: 191.4 million social media user identities were recorded in January 2022 (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2022), although this figure counts users identities rather than unique individuals and does not report usage among people under 18. More recent national survey data

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show that internet users reached 221.5 million people, a penetration rate of 79.5% in 2024 and that Gen Z recorded an internet penetration rate of 87.02% (APJII, 2024).

In South Tangerang, a rapidly urbanizing city in Banten Province recognized for its relatively high digital literacy rates, over 85% of adolescents actively use social media on a daily basis (Dinas Komunikasi dan Informatika Kota Tangerang Selatan, 2023). Instagram and TikTok serve as the primary platforms, used not only for entertainment but increasingly for content creation, organizational promotion, and self-branding, consistent with evidence that social media marketing activities on Instagram can strengthen users' self–brand connection and engagement behavior (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024). Despite this widespread activity, many adolescents lack awareness of structured communication frameworks that could enhance the effectiveness and safety of their digital self-presentation.

Personal branding, the deliberate management of one's identity as perceived by others, has traditionally been associated with corporate executives, celebrities, and public figures. However, the democratization of social media has enabled ordinary individuals, including teenagers, to engage in active self-branding practices (Scheidt, 2021; Viţelar, 2019). The challenge lies in the fact that most adolescent branding efforts are conducted intuitively, without a theoretical grounding in strategic communication. This intuitive quality is itself analytically significant. Developmental theory (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966) describes adolescence as a period in which identity is actively explored and provisionally committed to. In this study, however, that perspective is used only as an interpretive context for informants' own accounts of experimenting with, revising, or withdrawing from public self-presentation. It is not treated as psychological explanation that can be inferred from social media behavior alone, because no psychological constructs such as identity status were measured.

Cyber Public Relations (CPR) offers a relevant and applicable framework in this context. Defined as the adaptation of public relations principles to the digital environment, CPR emphasizes two-way communication, transparent engagement, positive image construction, and sustained audience relationships via online platforms (Al Hadeed et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). When applied to personal identity management, CPR provides adolescents with a structured approach to navigating the complexities of public digital presence.

Three specific limitations in prior research define the gap addressed by this study. First, Indonesian CPR research has treated organizations as the unit of analysis, as in studies of how a state-owned railway company manages public information on Instagram (Susilo & Sari, 2020) and how digital PR builds the image of a commercial brand (Romadhan et al., 2024). Even when individuals are studied, their self-expression on Instagram is examined as a vehicle for an institution's brand awareness rather than for their own personal brand (Suparno, 2020). Second, personal branding research has concentrated on adults with professional motives, such as top managers (Scheidt, 2021) and professionals who build authentic brands through impression management (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018), whereas research on Gen Z documents that self-branding has become an ordinary competence for this generation (Viţelar, 2019), without analyzing it as a PR practice involving two-way communication and relationship management with audiences. Third, research on multiple-account practices has been conducted largely with Western young adults and emerging adults (Huang & Vitak, 2022; Tao & Ellison, 2023) and describes what content is shared on "Rinsta" (Real Instagram) and "Finsta" (Fake Instagram) accounts, but does not connect this division to the elements of a personal brand or management of audience relationships. The closest Indonesian study concerns tourism ambassadors who perform an official promotional role rather than ordinary adolescents (Nabila & Setyawan, 2026), while the international adolescent literature has concentrated on the psychological correlates of platform use, including well-being and mental health outcomes (Shankleman et al., 2021; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Consequently, limited study has examined how ordinary

Indonesian high school students build personal branding elements, distribute their self-presentation across primary and secondary accounts, and manage communication and relationships with their audiences.

Accordingly, this study adds to existing knowledge in three specific respects. First, it shifts the unit of analysis of CPR from organizations to ordinary adolescents, identifying which PR practices high school students enact without formal training. Second, it applies an integrated analytical framework in which each theory performs a distinct function: Rampersad's model identifies which personal branding elements are present, Goffman's dramaturgy interprets how self-presentation is distributed across primary and secondary accounts, and CPR explains how communication and relationships with audiences are managed. Third, by grounding this framework, the study provides non-Western evidence on whether personal branding elements develop evenly or unevenly among adolescents, and on whether primary and secondary accounts operate as separate identities or jointly constitute a single personal brand.

The main research question guiding this study is: How do senior and vocational high school students in South Tangerang implement Cyber Public Relations practices in constructing their personal branding on social media? This question is divided into three sub-questions, each with a corresponding objective. RQ1 asks how the students use social media in everyday life and which personal branding strategies they employ. The objective is to describe these usage patterns and strategies. RQ2 asks how the students manage their primary and secondary accounts; the objective is to interpret this dual-account practice through Goffman's dramaturgical distinction between front stage and backstage. RQ3 asks to what extent the students' practices reflect CPR principles and Rampersad's eight personal branding elements; the objective is to evaluate this alignment.

Based on these objectives, the study is expected to make three main contributions. First, it will provide an empirical account of how adolescents in South Tangerang use social media and construct their personal branding in everyday practice. Second, it will offer a conceptual understanding of the management of primary and secondary accounts (the dual-account practice) as a form of digital identity management. Third, it will assess the extent to which CPR principles and Rampersad's personal branding elements are reflected in adolescents' social media practices. Overall, this study is expected to extend CPR research, which has mostly focused on organizations and public figures, to the level of ordinary adolescents, and to provide practical input for digital literacy education in schools.

Personal branding refers to the process by which individuals define, communicate, and manage their public identities to shape how they are perceived by others. (Rampersad, 2009) proposed a comprehensive framework consisting of eight key elements of personal branding: (1) self-awareness, (2) personal vision, (3) credibility, (4) authenticity, (5) consistency, (6) emotional connection, (7) differentiation, and (8) leadership and influence. These elements collectively guide individuals in constructing a coherent, compelling, and authentic public image. In the social media context, personal branding is enacted through everyday digital activities: the content one posts, the audiences one engages with, and the narratives one sustains over time. For adolescents, social media represents the primary arena for identity exploration and self-presentation, making digital personal branding both a natural extension of developmental processes and a form of strategic communication. For adolescents, social media is an important arena for self-presentation; in this study, digital personal branding is analyzed as a form of strategic communication, while its possible links to identity development are treated as an interpretive context rather than an assumption. It is reinforced that Generation Z treats personal branding as an ordinary, almost unremarkable competence rather than a specialized professional skill (Viţelar, 2019).

Cyber Public Relations refers to the application of public relations theory and practice within digital environments. CPR enables organizations and individuals to build and maintain relationships with their audiences through social media, websites, and other online channels. Core principles include two-way communication, transparency, credibility maintenance, and audience engagement (Al Hadeed et al., 2023). (Liu et al., 2021) demonstrate that brand-oriented social media strategies are particularly effective in shaping digital customer engagement and brand image through interactive content and response strategies, a dynamic closely paralleling how CPR functions through features such as live streaming, challenges, and story formats. (Kietzmann et al., 2011) further argue that successful CPR in personal branding depends on the consistent and authentic management of one's online reputation across digital platforms.

(Grunig & Hunt, 1984) two-way symmetrical communication model, cited in (Girsang & Kartikawangi, 2021), underpins much of modern public relations theory. This model emphasizes mutual dialogue between communicators and their audiences, aimed at achieving mutual understanding and benefit. In the social media context, this translates to active engagement with followers, responsiveness to feedback, and adaptation of messaging based on audience reactions, behaviors increasingly observable among digitally active adolescents. Meanwhile, (Goffman, 1959) dramaturgical theory offers a powerful conceptual lens for analyzing digital self-presentation. Goffman distinguished between the "front stage", where individuals perform for a public audience according to social norms, and the "backstage", where individuals are more authentic, relaxed, and less guarded. This framework is particularly relevant to the dual-account practice observed among contemporary adolescent social media users, wherein a public account (front stage) coexists with a more private, intimate secondary account (backstage). This pattern closely resembles what Western studies have described as the Rinsta/Finsta split (Huang & Vitak, 2022; Tao & Ellison, 2023), suggesting that this dramaturgical adaptation to networked publics may be a cross-culturally recurring response rather than a locally idiosyncratic one.

The three frameworks are not used interchangeably but perform distinct analytical functions in this study. Rampersad's eight elements (Rampersad, 2009) serve to identify personal branding elements, that is, to determine which elements are present in each informant's interview account and documented content. Goffman's dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959) serves to interpret the management of primary and secondary accounts, namely how informants decide which content is performed for which audience and in which account. CPR principles, including the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), serve to analyze communication practices and the management of relationships with audiences, such as event promotion, information sharing, responses to comments and direct messages, and reputation maintenance. Adolescent identity-development theory (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966) is not one of these analytical frameworks; it is used only as an interpretive context when informants themselves describe experimenting with, revising, or withdrawing from a public self-presentation, and no conclusions about psychological development are drawn from social media behavior alone.

Methodology

Research Design and Case Boundaries

This study employed a qualitative approach because it enables an in-depth, holistic understanding of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life (Mulyana, 2021; Yin, 2018). A single, holistic case study design was adopted. The case is defined as the personal branding practices of SMA and SMK students in South Tangerang on Instagram and TikTok, examined through the lens of CPR; the unit of analysis is each student's communication practice across his or her primary account and, where one exists, secondary account. The case is bounded in

three ways. Contextually, it is limited to students aged 16–18 enrolled in senior or vocational high schools in South Tangerang, Banten Province, an urban area adjacent to Jakarta where all informants lived and attended school. Substantively, it is limited to self-presentation on Instagram and TikTok, the two platforms through which the informants presented themselves publicly. Interviews were conducted in June 2025.

Participants and Recruitment

Informants were selected through purposive sampling to capture a reasonably diverse range of personal branding practices rather than a single homogeneous pattern. Three eligibility criteria were applied: (a) active use of at least one social media platform for a minimum of one year; (b) a pattern of regular content posting on Instagram or TikTok; and (c) willingness and availability to participate in in-depth interviews. Five informants were included. This number was not intended to achieve statistical representativeness; consistent with the logic of case study research, the aim was analytical generalization to the theoretical frameworks, supported by variation in school type (SMA and SMK), age (16–18 years), gender, and primary branding focus (visual aesthetics, skill-based identity, and organizational affiliation). Table 1 presents the informants' relevant characteristics. Informants are identified throughout the article by pseudonymous codes (J, A1, A2, B, and M) that are not linked to their real names or account handles.

Table 1. Informant Characteristics

Code	Gender	Age	School type	Platforms used	Accounts maintained
J	Female	16	Senior High School	Instagram, TikTok	Primary and secondary
A1	Female	18	Vocational School	Instagram	Primary and secondary
A2	Male	16	Senior High School	Instagram, TikTok	Primary and secondary
B	Male	17	Senior High School	Instagram	Primary and secondary
M	Female	17	Vocational School	Instagram, TikTok	Primary and secondary

Data Collection

Data collection combined two complementary methods: 1) In-depth, semi-structured interviews. Each informant took part in semi-structured interviews conducted via Google Meet, chosen to accommodate participants' school schedules. All sessions were recorded and transcribed. The interview guide was developed following the systematic protocol-design procedure recommended by (Kallio et al., 2016), comprising four steps: (a) identifying the prerequisites for using a semi-structured interview, (b) retrieving and using prior theoretical and empirical knowledge (CPR principles, Rampersad's elements, Goffman's dramaturgy) to inform the interview domains, (c) formulating an initial guide organized around four thematic domains, namely social media usage patterns, personal branding awareness, dual-account practices, and audience-interaction behaviours, and (d) refining question wording for clarity and neutrality prior to fieldwork. 2) Documentation. Screenshots of posts on informants' public primary accounts were collected with the informants' consent and used to check interview claims about branding strategies. Before analysis, all screenshots were anonymized by cropping out or blurring account names, profile photos, captions, dates, and any faces.

Data were analysed using the interactive qualitative model of (Miles & Huberman, 2013) operationalised in four concrete steps. First, in the data condensation stage, all interview

transcripts and documentary materials were compiled into a single coding matrix and read repeatedly to achieve familiarity; initial open codes were then assigned to segments describing branding behaviour, motivations, and account-management practices. Second, codes were grouped inductively into broader and cross-referenced deductively against the a priori theoretical categories drawn from Rampersad's eight personal branding elements and Goffman's front stage/backstage distinction, producing a hybrid inductive-deductive codebook. Third, in the data display stage, coded excerpts were organised into matrices and narrative summaries per participant and per theme. Fourth, in the conclusion-drawing and verification stage, provisional interpretations were checked against the raw data through constant comparison, cross-validated across the data sources (interviews and documentation), and discussed among the research team to reduce individual interpretive bias.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Trustworthiness was addressed using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation between interviews and documentation and through peer debriefing, in which provisional codes and interpretations were discussed among the research team to reduce individual interpretive bias. Dependability and confirmability were supported by an audit trail consisting of the interview guide, verbatim transcripts, the coding matrix, and analytic memos. Transferability is supported by the description of the case boundaries and informant characteristics above. Because four of the five informants were under 18 years old at the time of data collection, informed consent was obtained from each informant. Informants were told that participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time without consequence, and that recordings and screenshots would be used only for research purposes. Confidentiality was protected by using pseudonymous codes and by removing identifying details from all documentation.

Results and Discussions

Social Media Usage Patterns

All five informants reported that social media constitutes an integral part of their daily lives, with usage duration ranging from 2 to 6 hours per day. Instagram emerged as the most frequently used platform, valued for its multifunctionality: beyond entertainment, it serves as a channel for information seeking, peer communication, and organisational promotion. TikTok was primarily used for entertainment and trend discovery. This pattern is broadly consistent with national data showing YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok among the platforms with the largest advertising audiences in Indonesia (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2022), although those figures cover users aged 13 or 18 and above rather than adolescents specifically; the comparison therefore indicates consistency with the national platform landscape rather than a representative trend among adolescents.

A notable pattern was the differentiation of social media use based on temporal context: on school days, usage was more restricted due to academic activities, while weekends were associated with longer, more recreational browsing. This pattern points to an emergent self-regulation of digital consumption, suggesting a degree of awareness regarding the impact of screen time on daily routines. Such self-regulation is analytically important in light of international evidence that the relationship between social media use and adolescent well-being is highly contingent on how, rather than simply how much, platforms are used (Valkenburg et al., 2022). The informants' spontaneous weekday/weekend differentiation may therefore be read as an informal form of self-regulation that is relevant to concerns raised in the broader

adolescent mental-health literature (Shankleman et al., 2021), even though none of the participants framed their behaviour in those explicit terms.

Personal Branding Construction

Participants generally understood personal branding as the deliberate projection of their identity on social media. They recognised that social media could be used to communicate "who they are," what they value, and how they wish to be known publicly. Personal branding strategies observed included the use of signature visual elements (e.g., a characteristic colour palette or accessory), consistent content themes, and the selective sharing of achievements.

J, for instance, systematically incorporated the colour purple and distinctive hair accessories as recurring visual elements across her posts on her primary account. A1 used her account to showcase public speaking skills and emcee performances. A2 highlighted karate activities as a central component of his identity, while B and a fifth participant, M, promoted school organisational activities as part of their personal narrative. These examples demonstrate that, even without formal training, adolescents employ differentiation strategies aligned with Rampersad's differentiation element, and they echo (Viţelar, 2019) argument that for Generation Z, distinctive self-curation on social platforms functions as an almost default mode of self-presentation rather than a deliberately learned marketing technique.

J explained this choice in her interview:

"I post a lot of things in purple because it is my favourite colour, and also accessories." (J, 16, SMA) [original: "*Saya banyak posting yang berwarna ungu karena itu warna favorit saya dan juga aksesoris*."]

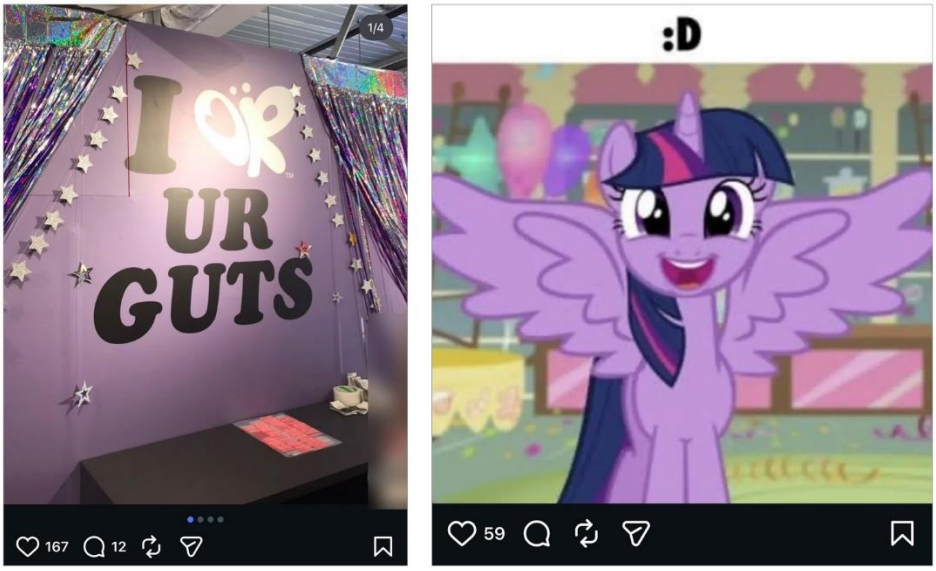


Figure 1. Anonymized Documentation of J's Primary Account

Note: J is not shown in either post; the account name, profile photo, caption, and date were cropped out, and a bystander at the edge of (a) was blurred.

This statement belongs to the category of differentiation and consistency. In Rampersad's terms, it shows that J's distinctiveness is intentional rather than accidental; in Goffman's terms, her primary account is a front stage on which this signature is performed for a wide audience. Comparing the interview with the documentation shows that the claim is only partly supported. Purple dominates both posts, published fifteen months apart (Figure 1), which corroborates the claim about colour and shows consistency over time. Accessories, however, are not visible in either post, so this part of J's account rests on the interview alone. The posts also refer to popular-culture fandoms, a theme J did not mention in her interview; her visual

signature in the documented posts is therefore carried by colour and fandom references, both of which contribute to her differentiation.

Not all participants, however, maintained consistent branding strategies. Some admitted to using social media primarily for entertainment or as an informal digital scrapbook, rather than as a deliberate self-branding tool. This variability highlights the spectrum of digital communication intentionality among adolescents, and it cautions against over-generalising CPR readiness across the entire adolescent population: as Table 2 (presented below) shows, the degree of alignment with Rampersad's elements varied considerably from one participant's branding focus to another, even within this small and purposively diverse sample.

Table 2 summarises the aggregate profile of the five informants and the primary content focus through which each expressed their personal brand.

Table 2. Overview of Participant Profiles and Primary Personal Branding Focus

Code	Age	School Type	Primary Platform(s)	Primary Branding Focus
J	16	Senior High School	Instagram, TikTok	Visual signature (colour, accessories)
A1	18	Vocational School	Instagram	Public speaking / MC-ing
A2	16	Senior High School	Instagram, TikTok	Karate / sport identity
B	17	Senior High School	Instagram	School organisational activity
M	17	Vocational School	Instagram, TikTok	School organisational activity

Based on Table 2 above, it can be explained that although all five informants fall within the same age band and regional setting (South Tangerang), their branding focus are heterogeneous, ranging from aesthetic self-presentation (J) to skill-based identity (A1, A2) to institutional-affiliation identity (B and M). This heterogeneity supports the interpretation that adolescent personal branding on social media is not a single uniform behaviour but a repertoire of strategies loosely organised around each individual's existing interests and social roles, a pattern consistent with (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018) that authentic personal branding, even among adults, typically emerges from impression-management behaviours anchored in pre-existing identity commitments rather than being manufactured from scratch.

The Dual-Account Practice: Managing Primary and Secondary Accounts as Digital Dramaturgy

One of the most analytically significant findings was the widespread adoption of a dual-account practice. The majority of informants maintained two separate social media accounts: a primary (first) account oriented toward public audiences, and a secondary (second) account with restricted privacy settings for closer, more intimate circles.

The primary account functioned as a "front stage" (Goffman, 1959), presenting a curated, polished, and publicly accessible image suitable for viewing by teachers, parents, and wider acquaintances. The secondary account operated as a "backstage," a more authentic, candid, and emotionally expressive space shared only with trusted peers. This spontaneous adoption of dramaturgical identity management reflects sophisticated, if intuitive, audience awareness and self-segmentation practices. This pattern parallels recent Indonesian findings among young tourism ambassadors, whose self-presentation likewise distinguishes between an

official, front-stage presence and a more private, backstage one, and for whom this differentiation has similarly been identified as a deliberate identity-management strategy rather than an incidental behaviour (Nabila & Setyawan, 2026).

The finding also resonates strongly with the international literature on secondary "Finsta" accounts, even though that literature has so far concentrated almost exclusively on Western, English-speaking samples. (Huang & Vitak, 2022) similarly found that users' "Rinsta" accounts are more public, curated, and carefully edited, while "Finsta" accounts host more off-the-cuff, emotionally candid, and occasionally inappropriate content shared with a smaller, trusted audience, a division that maps closely onto the front-stage/backstage split observed among the South Tangerang informants. (Tao & Ellison, 2023) extend this picture by showing that the specific content shared on secondary accounts evolves as users mature, reflecting a developmental trajectory in self-presentational needs; this raises the possibility, worth pursuing in future longitudinal research, that the dual-account practice documented here may likewise shift in character as the participants move from adolescence into early adulthood. (Hollenbaugh, 2021) review further situates such account-splitting behavior within a broader repertoire of online self-presentation tactics, including selective self-disclosure and strategic image curation, that are not unique to any one platform or cultural context, reinforcing the interpretation that the South Tangerang informants' dual-account practice is a locally inflected instance of a more general dramaturgical adaptation to networked publics rather than an isolated phenomenon.

Figure 1 below presents a conceptual model synthesizing these findings, mapping the dual-account structure onto Goffman's dramaturgical categories and onto the outcome of Rampersad's personal branding elements.

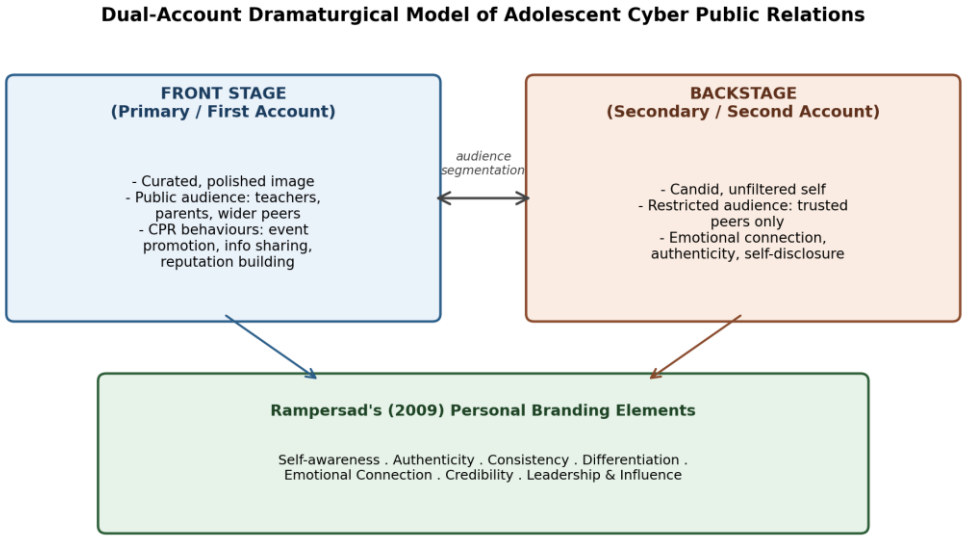


Figure 2. Dual-Account Dramaturgical Model of Adolescent Cyber Public Relations

As shown in Figure 1 above, it can be explained that the front stage (primary account) and backstage (secondary account) are not isolated from one another but are connected through an ongoing process of audience segmentation, whereby adolescents continuously decide which content belongs in which space. Both stages ultimately feed into the same underlying personal branding elements, indicating that even the more guarded, curated front-stage content and the more candid backstage content jointly, rather than separately, constitute the adolescent's overall personal brand. This synthesis addresses the theoretical gap noted by (Hollenbaugh, 2021)

namely that self-presentation research has more often described what people do across multiple accounts than how those accounts jointly compose a coherent identity project.

Cyber PR Practices: Intuitive Application

Although none of the participants were familiar with the formal concept of Cyber Public Relations, all demonstrated its core principles in practice. Their social media activities exhibited the following CPR behaviours:

a. Event promotion. Participants actively promoted school events, inter-school competitions, and organisational activities through their accounts, functioning as informal digital communicators for their institutions.
b. Social information sharing. Several participants shared content related to social issues, natural disasters, and humanitarian causes, demonstrating an awareness of their potential influence as information disseminators.
c. Two-way audience interaction. Participants regularly responded to comments, replied to direct messages, and adjusted their content based on follower feedback, enacting the two-way symmetrical communication model (Girsang & Kartikawangi, 2021)
d. Reputation building. Consistent, credibility-conscious content posting, including the deliberate vetting of information before sharing, reflects an awareness of the long-term reputational stakes of digital communication.

These findings align with (Scheidt, 2021) assertion that effective personal branding through CPR requires planned communication and strategic use of social media to shape public perception. They also resonate with (Kietzmann et al., 2011) emphasis on consistent and authentic online reputation management as the cornerstone of successful CPR. Taken together, behaviours (a) through (d) map fairly directly onto the two-way symmetrical model's emphasis on dialogue and mutual adjustment (Girsang & Kartikawangi, 2021), which suggests that adolescents are not merely imitating adult communication norms but are independently rediscovering, through trial and error, communication principles that public relations theory has long formalised. This independent "rediscovery" is itself a noteworthy finding, because it implies that structured CPR training for adolescents would not need to introduce entirely unfamiliar concepts, but could instead build on, refine, and make explicit practices that many students are already performing intuitively.

Application of Rampersad's Eight Personal Branding Elements

Analysis of participant behavior against Rampersad's (2009) eight-element framework is summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Mapping of Rampersad's Personal Branding Elements to Participant Practices and CPR Alignment

Element	Evidence from Participants	CPR Alignment
Self-Awareness	J's visual identity: A1's recognition of her public speaking potential	Foundational for targeted CPR messaging
Personal Vision	B's career-oriented branding goals	Aligns CPR strategy with long-term objectives
Credibility	Vetting Information before sharing; consistency in posting	Core to maintaining digital reputation
Authenticity	Rejection of false personas; emphasis on genuine self-expression	Essential for trust-based CPR engagement
Consistency	Stable posting patterns; dual-account audience segmentation	Sustains coherent brand image over time
Emotional Connection	Deeper engagement in secondary accounts;	Builds loyal audience relationships

	personal interactions	
Differentiation	Unique content themes (karate, MC, visual aesthetics)	Creates distinct brand identity in digital space
Leadership & Influence	Inspiring peers; coordinating event promotions	Demonstrates emergent digital influence

Based on Table 3 above, it can be explained that the eight elements are not equally developed among the informants. Self-awareness, authenticity, and consistency appear most strongly and most consistently across all five informants, suggesting that these three elements form an intuitive "core" of adolescent personal branding that emerges even in the complete absence of formal CPR training. By contrast, personal vision and leadership and influence are demonstrated clearly by only a subset of participants (principally B and, to a lesser extent, A1), indicating that these two elements are more dependent on individual circumstances, such as involvement in organizational leadership roles, rather than being generic by-products of routine social media use. This uneven distribution across the eight elements is analytically important because it refines the claim, made in earlier CPR scholarship on adult and organizational contexts (Al Hadeed et al., 2023; Kietzmann et al., 2011) that personal branding elements operate as a unified bundle; the present findings instead suggest a layered structure in which certain elements function as a baseline and others as conditional, context-dependent additions.

Authenticity, Tension, and Emotional Dimensions

All participants emphasized the importance of authenticity as the cornerstone of credible personal branding. They collectively rejected the notion of constructing a false persona for social approval. However, several acknowledged the psychological difficulty of maintaining authenticity under the weight of social expectations and peer pressure.

B's trajectory is particularly illustrative: having been highly active in posting organizational activities, he deliberately adopted a more low-profile approach upon recognizing the emotional burden of public visibility. This trajectory indicates that personal branding on social media is not a purely strategic exercise; in B's account, it also carries emotional costs that shape how public and private selves are negotiated. Using the developmental perspective of (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966) as an interpretive context, and because B himself described recognizing this burden and deliberately changing his approach, his withdrawal from high-visibility posting can tentatively be read not as a failure of personal branding but as consistent with identity exploration, in which an adolescent tests a public-facing role, evaluates its emotional cost, and revises his commitment accordingly. Because no psychological measure was used, this reading remains an interpretation of B's own account rather than evidence of a developmental process. This reading is consistent with international findings that the relationship between social media visibility and adolescent well-being is bidirectional and highly individual rather than uniformly positive or negative (Shankleman et al., 2021; Valkenburg et al., 2022) and it suggests that a rigid, one-size-fits-all CPR curriculum would risk overlooking the legitimate developmental function of occasionally stepping back from public self-presentation.

Taken as a whole, the results reported in this section indicate that CPR principles and Rampersad's personal branding elements are already present, in embryonic and unevenly distributed form, in the everyday social media practices of South Tangerang adolescents, and that the dual-account, front stage/backstage strategy functions as the primary structural mechanism through which these adolescents manage the tension between public accountability and private authenticity.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that adolescents in South Tangerang have organically adopted core personal branding and Cyber Public Relations practices in their everyday social media activities, despite lacking formal knowledge of these frameworks. Through Instagram and TikTok, participants exhibited self-awareness, consistency, authenticity, and differentiation, the hallmarks of strategic personal branding, while personal vision and leadership and influence remained more unevenly developed across the sample. Their intuitive implementation of two-way communication, information curation, and event promotion aligns closely with established CPR principles.

The dual-account strategy, interpreted through Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical lens and corroborated by parallel international findings on secondary "Finsta"-type accounts, reveals a sophisticated, if unconscious, understanding of audience segmentation and identity management in digital spaces. This finding challenges the assumption that structured digital communication is the exclusive domain of professionals and organisations, suggesting instead that adolescents are already functioning as capable, if underprepared, digital communicators.

These findings carry important implications for educational policy and practice. There is a compelling need to expand digital literacy curricula in secondary schools to include CPR-based frameworks for ethical and strategic self-presentation (Audrin & Audrin, 2022). Because this study's results indicate that self-awareness, authenticity, and consistency already function as an intuitive baseline, curriculum designers could reasonably focus scarce instructional time on the less-developed elements, namely personal vision and leadership and influence, rather than reintroducing concepts students have already internalised. Training in digital image management, online reputation building, and responsible information sharing should be incorporated as core competencies for Generation Z learners, alongside explicit guidance on managing the emotional costs of public visibility identified in the discussion of authenticity and emotional dimensions above.

This study is limited by its small, purposively selected sample of five informants from a single Indonesian city, which constrains the statistical generalisability, though not the analytical transferability, of its findings. Future research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of adolescent personal branding on career readiness, the psychological effects of digital self-presentation pressures over time through longitudinal designs, and the broader social and cross-cultural implications of CPR practice at the individual level, including systematic comparison with the Western Finsta/Rinsta literature reviewed above.

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