

Using the Instagram Reels Feature @aryusaraah as a Medium for Self-Presentation

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Abstract

Instagram Reels, which are used as a medium for sharing daily life, have led to the emergence of mom influencers who use social media as a space for self-image formation. This study aims to analyze the self-presentation strategies of the Instagram account @aryusaraah through Reels by examining the management of the front stage and backstage, as well as understanding the motivation for using Reels as a means of self-image formation. This study uses Erving Goffman's dramaturgy theory to understand role management and the boundaries between private and public spaces. The method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques in the form of interviews with account owners and active followers, as well as observation of Reels content. The results show that @aryusaraah consistently manages her personal front stage through adjustments to content themes, expressions, settings, appearances, and interaction patterns. The front stage presents the image of a young mother who is active in her activities while still taking care of her children, while the back stage is evident in the curation process and the restriction of personal aspects that are not in line with the image being built. The motivation to produce Reels is driven by the desire to share experiences, express oneself, and receive responses from followers. Through her Reels posts, Aryu Sarah successfully presents herself in line with the image she has built, without straying far from her real life.

INTRODUCTION

Rapidly developing digital technology has changed the way humans not only express the messages they want to convey, but also use it to present themselves to the public on social media. In everyday life, social media has become a space for individuals to shape their self-image. As part of popular social media, Instagram is used as a platform to present oneself using images, recordings, through Instagram Stories, Reels, and Live features. Based on data from We Are Social Media 2025 in (Amalia et al., 2025), The number of active users on Instagram as of February 2025 reached 103 million people.

In the midst of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, interaction patterns in society are shifting because communication is largely conducted on internet-based media and social networks, causing individuals to change the way they convey messages and build relationships (Andriany, 2022). This change in communication patterns shows that self-image formation is increasingly evident in the way individuals present themselves in digital spaces. With the growth of social media, Instagram is used to shape one's image by creating visual content and continuous digital interactions (Putri et al., 2023). In this process, Instagram becomes a medium

for selectively presenting oneself by uploading photos, videos, and interacting with other Instagram users.

Currently, various activities are widely shared, such as the phenomenon of mom influencers on Instagram who present themselves through video posts containing their daily routines as mothers. On Instagram, mothers actively present themselves by sharing videos about family activities, parenting tips, and lifestyle. The production of videos and their sharing on social media shows that Instagram is not just a place to share moments, but also a space for mothers to strengthen their social role in modern society. The image of mom influencers is formed through consistent and valuable social media posts, reflecting the new role of mothers in the digital era (Arindita, 2019).

Instagram's Reels feature can be used as a space to creatively showcase routines through short videos (Meifilina, 2021). Reels is used as an effective medium for mom influencers to share their experiences, provide inspiration, and set examples that have value for family life. The Instagram account @aryusaraah is a mom influencer from Cirebon who has 100,000 followers. As the account owner, Aryu Nazhara Sani produces Reels by sharing content about household life and parenting activities through creativity expressed in videos.

Several previous studies have discussed the behavior of Instagram users in presenting themselves on social media. The study conducted (Meifilina, 2021) found that Reels is used by students as a means of self-disclosure, namely a medium for open self-expression through the uploading of short videos. Such openness can have a positive impact in the form of motivational encouragement, but it also carries risks, namely discomfort caused by excessive disclosure. Meanwhile, research (Tanika & Muhibbin, 2023) found that teenagers use the Instagram Story feature to search for information, interact socially, and present a positive image as good citizens.

Previous studies have shown that social media platforms can be used to shape one's image in the digital space. However, studies on Reels as a means of self-presentation among mom influencers are still limited. This feature can shape users' self-image through a combination of visual elements. This study is needed to fill this gap, as it focuses on the self-presentation strategies used by @aryusaraah in shaping her self-image through Instagram Reels. Erving Goffman's dramaturgy theory is used to understand this phenomenon. Goffman states that social life is like a theater stage where each individual has their own role to play in order to make an impression on the audience (Raho, 2021).

The importance of this research lies in its ability to enrich our understanding of communication development in the digital age, particularly self-presentation strategies in shaping one's image through visual content. The theoretical contribution of this research is the development of digital communication studies using Goffman's dramaturgical approach. From a practical perspective, this research is expected to provide insights for social media users, especially Instagram users, so that they can utilize the Reels feature to present themselves positively without straying too far from the reality of their actual lives. Based on the above description, the purpose of this research is to analyze the strategy of using the Reels feature on the Instagram account @aryusaraah as a means of shaping one's image in the digital space.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena from the subject's perspective, with the main instrument being the researcher in the data collection process, without being limited by statistical measurements (Sugiyono, 2023). The subject of this study is Aryu Nazhara Sani, owner of the Instagram account @aryusaraah, who consistently produces Reels. The object of this research is the presentation activities in Reels content, which includes visual elements, narration, and interaction with followers on Instagram. Observations were made on uploaded Reels, including expressions, filters, and follower responses. This research was conducted on Instagram @aryusaraah to review uploaded Reels content and interactions between the account owner and six active followers residing in the city of Cirebon.

Research data was obtained from two sources, namely primary data collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews with owners and active followers. Secondary data was obtained from books, journals, and articles relevant to the research. Data collection techniques included (1) observation of uploaded Reels, (2) interviews with Aryu Nazhara Sani as a key informant and followers as supporting informants, and (3) documentation in the form of screenshots and digital archives. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which is the selection of informants based on specific considerations in line with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2023). Informants were selected because they had a direct understanding of and involvement with the phenomenon being studied, thus providing relevant insights into how individuals present themselves through Reels content. Informants were selected because they had a direct understanding of and involvement with the phenomenon being studied, thus providing relevant insights into how individuals present themselves through Reels content.

Data analysis using Miles and Huberman's interactive model in (Sugiyono, 2023) which includes three main stages. First, data reduction by simplifying the results of interviews and observations to obtain relevant information. Second, the data is then presented in the form of a narrative description to show the relationships between elements. Then, in the third stage, conclusions are drawn continuously along with a verification process to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation. Data validity is tested using data triangulation, which involves comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, the findings are confirmed with informants to prevent misinterpretation. The results of this study are expected to enrich our understanding of how individuals shape their self-image in the new media era, which emphasizes self-presentation in digital spaces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results were collected through in-depth interviews with Aryu Sarah, owner of the Instagram account @aryusaraah, along with six active followers residing in the city of Cirebon. Research data was also obtained through systematic observation of uploaded Reels content. The findings show that @aryusaraah's use of the Instagram Reels feature is a deliberate attempt to build her image as a mom influencer who is close to the daily experiences of her followers.

Strategies for Using Reels as a Means of Self-Presentation

The results of the study show that Aryu Sarah presents herself through Instagram Reels with visual appearances and expressions to convey messages. The use of the Reels feature is

not merely as a medium for sharing short videos, but as a structured self-presentation strategy in building her image as a Cirebon mom influencer. Based on the interview results, each Reels post does not display uniform expressions. Content with entertaining themes is presented with more cheerful expressions, while content with serious themes is conveyed with calmer expressions. These findings indicate the existence of impression management that is tailored to the message and target audience.



(Source: Instagram @aryusaraah)

Figure 1. Aryu Sarah Appears with Her Child in Reels

The Reels narrative in Figure 1 shows Aryu Sarah and her child in a car wearing matching outfits. The car is used as a backdrop to represent the mobility and dynamics of a modern young family. The clothes worn serve as costumes that depict the harmonious relationship between mother and child. Field findings show that this choice of clothing is not just a matter of taste, but a way for Aryu Sarah to build her image as an active mom influencer on social media through content about motherhood and parenting tips for her Instagram followers, who are young mothers with whom she has a close social and cultural connection.

Aryu Sarah manages her expressions by adjusting her emotions to the message she wants to convey to her audience. Based on the interview results, in emotional content, sad expressions and even tears can be displayed openly, while in casual content, the expressions that appear are more flexible. Her follower, G, as an informant, explained that Aryu Sarah's body movements, way of speaking, and facial expressions appear relaxed and in harmony with the content being presented. When discussing children's daily activities, her expressions are more relaxed, while in certain review content, her expressions are more neat and structured.

Front Stage and Back Stage in Instagram Reels @aryusaraah

The findings show that Aryu Sarah's front stage consists of selecting content that is in line with her role as a mom influencer to be displayed to the public. Based on the interview results, each Reels uploaded shows activities related to child care, the daily life of a mother,

and parenting experiences that are close to the lives of her followers. Through this content, followers can easily recognize the character built by Aryu Sarah as an active mother who takes care of her children, in line with the research objective to identify the form of front stage in her self-presentation.



(Source: Instagram @aryusaraah)

Figure 2. Role played by Aryu Sarah in Reels

The formation of Aryu Sarah's self-image through Instagram Reels is clearly seen from the roles she consistently portrays. As shown in Figure 2, in the Reels screenshot, Aryu Sarah shows her side as a mother who teaches her child how to deal with strangers through a simple role-playing game. Field findings indicate that Aryu Sarah wants to be perceived as a mother who not only loves her child, but also equips her with critical thinking skills from an early age. This consistency is not only evident in Aryu Sarah's statements, but also confirmed by the views of her followers, who see that the image Aryu Sarah presents is relatively stable over time, thereby strengthening her image as a mom influencer with clear positioning among young mothers in Cirebon.

Behind the scenes, there is a systematic preparation process behind the seemingly spontaneous content. Based on the interview results, Aryu Sarah's Instagram Reels content management is carried out in a planned manner, starting from the brainstorming process and considering the timing of content uploads. The choice of morning as the upload time is based on personal experience and experimentation in uploading content at different times, every morning, afternoon, and evening.

The setting of privacy boundaries in Instagram Reels content can be seen in the way Aryu Sarah distinguishes between aspects of her life that are shown to the public and parts of her personal life that she chooses not to share. Based on the interview results, the content shared by Aryu Sarah is only that which is considered relevant to her image as a mother, while other activities that are not related to that role are kept private. Aryu Sarah made this decision in

order to feel comfortable and maintain a consistent image, thereby establishing a boundary between her life on social media and her real life.

Motivation for Using Reels in Self-Presentation

The results of the study show that Aryu Sarah uses Instagram Reels because of internal motivation and professional goals. Based on the interview results, internal motivation arises from Aryu Sarah's desire to share her experiences as a mother, especially as a young mother experiencing family dynamics in Cirebon, as well as building a community with her followers. Meanwhile, external motivations such as interaction patterns and endorsement opportunities show professional awareness in managing social media as a career platform.

Active engagement and emotional responses consistent with the content displayed show a pattern of interaction between Aryu Sarah and her followers. Based on field findings, interaction occurs not only through Reels posts, but also through question and answer sessions held periodically. In this process, Aryu Sarah maintains her authentic personality, while adjusting her emotional responses to the theme of the content displayed.

This pattern of interaction is felt directly by her followers. Sy, as an informant, said that Aryu Sarah is known to actively reply to comments and respond in a way that shows she cares about her followers. Her friendly attitude is evident in her daily conversations on social media, but she remains focused on topics that her followers are familiar with.

Discussion

Aryu Sarah's use of Instagram Reels shows that social media has become a performative stage, where actors can manage their impressions according to audience expectations. Instagram social media functions as a front stage where individuals consciously and deliberately construct their self-image in front of the public (Dewi et al., 2025). In this study, the concepts of front stage, back stage, and personal front in Goffman's dramaturgical theory are used to understand how Aryu Sarah manages her self-presentation on Instagram Reels.

The front stage is an individual's space for displaying behavior that conforms to the social roles expected by the audience, while the back stage is a private space where individuals can behave more freely and authentically without being bound by the demands of specific social roles (Lina, 2020). On stage, Aryu Sarah presents herself as an active, stylish mother who cares about her child's growth and development. The content she uploads focuses on parenting, lifestyle, practical tips, product reviews for children, outfit selection, and leisure activities at coffee shops and sports venues in Cirebon, which also presents her image as a mom influencer who remains connected to her social environment.

The dramaturgical framework described by Goffman, the personal front as part of the front stage, serves to help the audience identify the social roles being played. In the personal front, there are four elements, namely performance, setting, appearance, and manner, each of which must be consistent with the role being played. Performance is evident in how Aryu Sarah adjusts her expressions, voice intonation, and manner of delivering messages so that the everyday moments she portrays remain authentic while also meeting the audience's expectations (Humbertus et al., 2022). These adjustments are made deliberately so that the content is well-received and appreciated by the audience, which also demonstrates how the actors strive to ensure the performance meets the audience's expectations (Raho, 2021).

Aryu Sarah's management of her expressions and appearance reflects an authenticity that is maintained within the boundaries of professionalism as a mom influencer. Aryu Sarah's personality does not change drastically, but adapts to the theme of the content being presented. Her distinctive way of speaking with a lisp, yet still natural, creates an authentic impression that makes followers feel close to her, in line with image management that emphasizes consistency in the actor's image and personal character (Tiara, 2021).

After the performance, the setting in Reels @aryusaraah appears through the selection of aesthetic locations such as coffee shops, sports venues, or public spaces that support the image of modern and active mothers (Raho, 2021). The selection of these locations not only serves as a visual backdrop that supports the image of modern and active mothers, but also forms part of the content production strategy. The locations chosen are generally new or long-established places in Cirebon, with cozy, aesthetic, and of course kid-friendly characteristics, making them relevant to the audience segment of young mothers.

The visits were conducted both as part of an official invitation for the grand opening as part of an endorsement collaboration, and on a personal initiative to share experiences. In both situations, the production of Reels content indirectly served as a form of promotion for the places visited, while encouraging followers to come and have a similar experience, as collaboration with local influencers has been proven to increase brand visibility, customer engagement, and have a positive impact on increasing visitors and product sales (Supriyadi, 2025).

As part of the personal front, appearance is an important element in the front stage that actors use to build impressions and emphasize the identity they want to present to the audience (Ulfah et al., 2016). In her appearances, Aryu Sarah wears clothes that match the theme of the content and accessories that match her child's. In addition, Aryu Sarah also demonstrates her ability to manage her manner or style of interaction with the audience by actively replying to comments and direct messages (DMs), opening Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions on Instagram Stories, creating a broadcast channel to share regular information, and holding giveaways to build high engagement.

The content preparation process that takes place backstage shows that content that appears spontaneous and natural actually goes through structured stages (Amelia & Amin, 2022). Content planning is carried out by Aryu Sarah through brainstorming sessions with assistants to determine content ideas, find the right moments for video shooting, shoot while paying attention to camera angles and lighting, and edit the content neatly before posting. The consistent visual style, with the use of bright white tones, filters, and the same font, is the result of careful planning to create a recognizable visual identity. From a dramaturgical perspective, this shows that actors often only show the final result and hide the long process behind it (Raho, 2021).

When posting on Reels, Aryu Sarah uploads content in the morning when follower engagement peaks, and takes advantage of moments such as holidays or viral trends to create interesting content. Additionally, behind the scenes, there is also an evaluation process for the content that has been produced. Aryu Sarah conducts this evaluation by reviewing the shooting results, the appropriateness of expressions to the theme, visual quality, and audience response to previous posts as considerations for content continuity. This reflection process is part of the effort to maintain the consistency that has been built on stage (Raho, 2021), so that all content

displayed remains consistent with the image of an active and modern mom influencer in Cirebon.

Restricting personal content that is not shared shows Aryu Sarah's awareness of maintaining boundaries between public and private life. In dramaturgy studies, actors consciously manage impressions by controlling the information they reveal and hiding certain aspects of their personal lives so that their public image remains consistent with their social roles (Mokos, 2025). When selecting content for her Reels uploads, Aryu Sarah avoids sharing anything too personal or aspects of her life that don't fit with the image she wants to project.

The decision was made based on content requirements and suitability with the image being portrayed. Self-presentation on social media involves a conscious process of selecting and curating content to build a virtual identity that matches audience expectations and self-image goals (Salsabila & Nur, 2025). Therefore, if an activity or moment does not help build her image as an active and modern mother, Aryu Sarah chooses to keep it private. This strategy of restriction creates a balance between openness and privacy, allowing Aryu Sarah to fulfill her role as a mom influencer without sacrificing her family's privacy.

The difference between the public persona displayed on the front stage and the real character behind the scenes shows that there is an effort to manage impressions. However, Aryu Sarah does not drastically change her personality and still tries to present herself as she is within the limits of professionalism. Authenticity and professionalism are two aspects that mom influencers need to maintain so that the image they present remains credible without violating personal and family ethics (Ratnasari et al., 2024). This reflects a balance between authenticity and the need to maintain a positive image on social media.

The Instagram Reels feature used by @aryusaraah shows a combination of personal desire to express herself and strategic goals to build her character as a mom influencer. Social media provides a new space for mothers to share personal narratives while building a digital identity that supports self-development and social relationships with similar audiences (Besariani et al., 2025). Aryu Sarah's internal motivations include expressing herself as an active young mother, a desire to build a community of fellow mothers, and sharing useful experiences and knowledge about parenting. Meanwhile, her external motivations include positive responses from her audience, which encourage her to continue producing content, as her image on Instagram opens up commercial opportunities and strengthens her position as a professional figure in the digital realm (Rosanti & Nur, 2025).

Based on a comparison between the findings of this study and previous studies, the findings of this study show differences in the focus of analysis and the characteristics of the media used. This study positions Instagram Reels as a more performative, structured, and short-duration visual-audio-based space for self-presentation, so that impression management strategies appear to be more conceptualized through setting arrangements, personal fronts, upload timing, and commercial collaborations. In addition, this study specifically examines the management of the front stage and back stage in the phenomenon of local mom influencers in Cirebon, including the application of privacy boundaries and the negotiation between authenticity and professionalism, which shows consistency with Erving Goffman's dramaturgy framework. Thus, this study expands the examination of self-presentation on social media by highlighting dramaturgy in the short, fast-paced, and visual Reels content format, which has not been the primary focus of previous studies.

CONCLUSION

The use of Instagram Reels on the @aryusaraah account is utilized as a performative space for a mom influencer from Cirebon in managing impressions through the selection of content themes, expressions, settings, visual styles, upload times, and patterns of interaction with followers. From Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, the front stage of @aryusaraah consistently portrays the role of an active, stylish, educational, and caring mother who supports her child's development through elements of performance, setting, appearance, and manner that align with the image being constructed. Meanwhile, the backstage can be seen from the systematic content planning process, teamwork in brainstorming and editing, content performance evaluation, and the establishment of privacy boundaries for aspects of personal life that are not relevant to the image as a mom influencer. The motivation for using the Instagram Reels feature by the owner of the @aryusaraah account in presenting herself is based on a combination of internal and external motivations. Internal motivations include the desire to express herself as an active young mother and share experiences with fellow mothers. Meanwhile, external motivations are related to positive audience responses, increased engagement, and professional opportunities through brand collaborations and endorsements. The limitations of this study lie in its focus on a single account with a limited number of informants and a specific location context. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the subjects, locations, and informant variations to provide a more comprehensive picture of self-presentation strategies on Instagram Reels.

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