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Research Article

Digital Technology and Hedonistic Lifestyles in the Construction of Communication Identity among Female iPhone-Using Students at Two Junior High Schools in South Jakarta

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Abstract

This study explores how urban female adolescents in South Jakarta construct and negotiate their communication identities through digital media, hedonistic consumption, and technology-related status symbols. In contemporary digital culture, smartphones, particularly iPhones, extend beyond their functional purpose as communication devices to become markers of social status, self-expression, and group belonging. Guided by Michael L. Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), this qualitative case study examines the interaction among four dimensions of identity: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten female junior high school students from SMPN 12 and SMPN 13 Jakarta, supplemented by interviews with parents and a sociology expert, digital observations, and thematic analysis using NVivo 12 Pro. The findings reveal that iPhone ownership shapes adolescents' self-perceptions and feelings of pride at the personal level. At the enacted level, these meanings are expressed through mirror selfies, curated social media content, and conformity to peer behaviors. At the relational level, digital self-presentation facilitates social acceptance and validation, while at the communal level, shared consumption standards and fear of missing out (FoMO) reinforce expectations of belonging within urban peer groups. Nevertheless, the pursuit of socially desirable identities can generate discrepancies between personal experiences and publicly performed identities, alongside emotional distress and financial pressures. These findings highlight how technology-mediated consumption shapes adolescent communication identity while exposing the psychosocial tensions associated with digital self-presentation and urban consumer culture.

Keywords: Communication Theory of Identity; iPhone Ownership; Hedonistic Lifestyle; Urban Adolescents; Digital Identity

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, digital devices have increasingly acquired meanings that extend beyond their functional purposes, becoming symbolic resources through which individuals communicate personal values, social status, and group affiliations (Hossain et al., 2026; Udo & Bagchi, 2025). This transformation is particularly visible among urban adolescents, whose engagement with digital technologies and social media provides opportunities to construct, communicate, and negotiate their identities in public spaces (Agustin & Angeliqa, 2023; Alexander et al., 2026). These practices are closely associated with hedonic consumption, in which the emotional gratification and symbolic meanings attached to products influence consumption preferences and lifestyle choices (Fard et al., 2025; Munandar & Octoveria, 2025). Consequently, technology consumption among adolescents cannot be understood solely in terms of utility, as digital devices may also function as representations of social aspirations and desired identities.

The symbolic significance of digital technology is particularly evident in the ownership and display of iPhones among urban adolescent girls. Rather than functioning exclusively as communication devices, premium smartphones may serve as symbolic capital through which adolescents express social distinction and establish connections with their peer groups (Hariyanti et al., 2025). The desire to participate in prevailing trends and reproduce socially desirable appearances can intensify the pressure to possess particular technological products and maintain an appealing digital image (Haluzík, 2025). Such expectations may have psychosocial consequences, including emotional distress, increased stress, and disruptions to everyday routines (Adegoke et al., 2025; Barbo & Jeeroburkhan, 2025), Furthermore, when consumption becomes closely associated with social recognition, adolescents may prioritize the acquisition of status-oriented products beyond their actual needs or financial capabilities (Iqbal et al., 2025). These dynamics demonstrate how digital consumption intersects with the development of adolescent identity and the pursuit of social acceptance.

Within Indonesian digital culture, the expression “orang have” has emerged as a socially meaningful term used to describe individuals perceived as financially affluent (Artanti, 2026). Beyond its colloquial meaning, the expression may reflect how adolescents recognize and reproduce distinctions associated with economic resources, consumption practices, and perceived social class (Oktiani, 2026). In peer environments where material possessions contribute to social recognition, the category of “orang have” can become a reference point against which adolescents evaluate themselves and others. For female junior high school students in South Jakarta, the ownership and public display of fashionable technological devices may therefore become part of an effort to communicate a desirable social identity. This phenomenon illustrates how everyday language, material objects, and peer expectations interact in the construction of symbolic boundaries and the negotiation of social belonging.

Digital media further intensifies these processes by transforming lifestyle consumption into a form of public self-presentation. Through Instagram, TikTok, and other social media platforms, adolescents can select and share representations of their everyday experiences to communicate particular impressions of themselves (Klaten et al., 2024; Prasetya, 2020). Such practices involve decisions about which images, possessions, and experiences are presented to others, allowing digital content curation to become a means of negotiating personal and socially communicated identities (Beta, 2024). Activities such as visiting aesthetically designed cafés, producing luxury-product unboxing videos, and attending prestigious events may function as expressions of lifestyle and social

position when they are deliberately displayed to an audience (Bulante et al., 2025). However, smartphone ownership, including iPhone use, should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of hedonistic consumption or status-seeking. In this study, observable indicators of hedonic consumption are explicitly operationalized through pleasure-oriented purchasing, frequent aesthetic café visits, impulsive lifestyle spending, and the pursuit of status-driven visual experiences. Conversely, empirical data from field interviews revealed that alternative motives also strongly emerged, including superior camera quality for assignment documentation, seamless peer interoperability via AirDrop, family gifts from parents, and long-term practical reliability. Accordingly, this study analytically distinguishes the mere possession of technology from the distinct motivations and social meanings attached to its use, display, and consumption practices.

Nevertheless, digital environments offer possibilities that extend beyond the performance of status and material success. When accompanied by appropriate digital literacy, social media can support collaboration, interpersonal communication, and the exploration of emerging identities (Dalelio, 2020; Herawati et al., 2021). However, these opportunities coexist with social pressures that may encourage comparison, competition, and conformity to idealized representations of lifestyle (Hanoli et al., 2026). Interactions on Instagram and TikTok can reinforce the perceived importance of external status symbols, particularly when users encounter content that associates material possessions with desirability and social recognition (Xiong et al., 2024). The practice of flexing, understood as the conspicuous display of possessions or perceived wealth, further illustrates how consumption can become a deliberate form of social communication associated with impulsive behavior and hedonic gratification (Wenzel et al., 2026). These contrasting possibilities highlight the importance of examining how adolescents interpret digital representations and incorporate them into their own identity negotiations.

Urban adolescent girls constitute an important population for examining these dynamics because adolescence is a developmental period characterized by identity exploration and changing relationships with peers and social environments (Beta, 2024). Jakarta provides a relevant setting because of its significance as a major urban center shaped by urbanization, economic activity, and diverse consumption practices (Ramli et al., 2023). South Jakarta is particularly relevant to this investigation because of its association with contemporary lifestyle culture and urban consumerism (Rahadian, 2025). Furthermore, focusing on junior high school students allows the study to examine identity-related practices during early adolescence, when peer-group relationships, social comparison, and the desire for acceptance can become particularly influential (Asyia & others, 2023). These contextual characteristics provide a basis for investigating how technological possessions and digital lifestyle representations acquire meaning within adolescents' everyday communication practices.

Although research on hedonistic consumption, digital media, and adolescent identity continues to develop, further investigation is needed into how these dimensions interact within specific social and cultural contexts (Shin, 2023; Zhong et al., 2026). This study applies Michael L. Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) to examine not only the four interconnected identity layers personal, enacted, relational, and communal but also potential identity gaps between them. Specifically, it explores how adolescents' self-perceptions may differ from their online self-presentation (personal enacted gap) and how their desired identities may align with or conflict with peer expectations and shared social norms (relational communal gap). These gaps provide a framework for examining how adolescents negotiate identity in relation to digital self-presentation

and consumption practices. While CTI informs the analysis of identity layers and their relationships, consumer psychology and Science and Technology Studies (STS) provide complementary perspectives for interpreting the meanings attached to consumption and technological possessions (Boczkowski et al., 2016; Shang et al., 2026). This integrated approach aims to clarify how communication identity is negotiated within the social and cultural context of urban adolescence.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore how urban female adolescents in South Jakarta construct and negotiate their communication identities through digital media, hedonistic consumption, and the symbolic meanings attached to technological possessions, particularly iPhones. By examining these practices across the four identity layers proposed by CTI, the study seeks to explain how material consumption and digital self-presentation shape adolescents' perceptions of themselves, their relationships with peers, and their sense of belonging to broader social groups. The study contributes to a more integrated understanding of adolescent communication identity by situating technology-mediated consumption within the sociocultural dynamics of urban youth life.

METHODS

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Xia et al., 2025)to explore how digital media use and hedonistic consumption shape the construction and negotiation of communication identity among urban female adolescents. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' subjective experiences, social interpretations, and emotional motivations underlying their engagement with technological possessions and digital self-presentation (Hossain et al., 2026). Rather than examining consumption solely as an observable purchasing behavior, this approach enabled the researchers to explore the meanings adolescents attached to smartphone ownership, lifestyle representations, peer recognition, and social belonging within their everyday environments.

The case study method was employed to examine these phenomena within their specific sociocultural context, allowing for an in-depth investigation of the relationships between individual experiences and broader urban consumer culture. The research was conducted in Kebayoran Baru, South Jakarta, with participants recruited from SMP Negeri 12 Jakarta and SMP Negeri 13 Jakarta. These locations were selected because they are situated within an urban environment characterized by diverse social interactions, lifestyle influences, and proximity to commercial and recreational areas, including Blok M and Melawai. This setting provided a relevant context for examining how urban lifestyles and digital representations of consumption may influence adolescents' identity-related practices. The analysis was guided by Michael L. Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), which conceptualizes identity through four interconnected layers: personal, enacted, relational, and communal.

Participants and Sampling Technique

This study employed purposive sampling to select participants whose experiences were relevant to the research objectives. The primary informants consisted of ten female junior high school students aged 12–15 from SMP Negeri 12 Jakarta and SMP Negeri 13 Jakarta. Participants were selected based on three criteria: (1) female adolescents aged 12–15, (2) current iPhone users,

and (3) active creators or publishers of lifestyle-related content on Instagram or TikTok. These criteria were established to explore how smartphone use and digital self-presentation intersect with identity formation during adolescence.

In addition to the primary informants, two parents or legal guardians were included to provide perspectives on family contexts, parental observations, and financial support for adolescents' consumption practices. Professor Achmad Hufad, M.Ed., an educational sociology expert from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), was also involved as an expert informant. The inclusion of student, parent, and expert perspectives supported source triangulation.

Data collection took place during August to October 2026, and participants were recruited through purposive sampling via direct school coordination targeting active female student circles in Kebayoran Baru who met the specified inclusion criteria. The participants' distribution across the two schools and their respective grades was composed of ten female adolescents aged 13–14 years, consisting of five students from SMPN 12 Jakarta (all in Class 9) and five students from SMPN 13 Jakarta (comprising four students in Class 9 and one student in Class 8). Relevant socioeconomic differences were considered through information about family backgrounds and parental occupations, where available.

The focus on current iPhone users who actively publish lifestyle content enabled an in-depth examination of technology-related identity representation. However, this criterion may favor participants who visibly express their identities online and exclude adolescents who use other devices or rarely publish content. Therefore, the findings are interpreted within the boundaries of this specific group rather than generalized to all urban adolescents. The study also considered participants' experiences and interpretations without assuming that iPhone use necessarily indicates status-seeking or conspicuous consumption.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, digital observation, and document analysis, following a process that involved defining the scope of the study and examining relevant documents, visual materials, and literature (Zhang & Wang, 2026). The use of multiple data sources was intended to develop a contextualized understanding of participants' experiences and strengthen the interpretation of their identity-related practices.

First, in-depth interviews were conducted with the ten student informants to explore their experiences with iPhone ownership, motivations for using digital platforms, perceptions of lifestyle trends, and interpretations of social acceptance within peer groups. The interviews also examined how participants understood the relationship between material possessions, self-image, social recognition, and expectations within their social environments. Interviews with parents or legal guardians provided additional information concerning family perspectives and financial considerations, while the expert interview contributed a broader sociological interpretation of the phenomenon.

Second, digital observation focused on Instagram and TikTok content relevant to participants' lifestyle-related self-presentation. The observation period was August 10, 2026 – September 30, 2026, covering approximately 45 public posts and stories from 10 participant accounts. Content was selected based on its relevance to the study, particularly posts depicting lifestyle practices, smartphone use, visual aesthetics, and expressions of identity. Observations

focused on images, captions, and other publicly accessible or appropriately authorized content. The observed materials were documented through (observational field notes and digital screenshots of publicly accessible media content) and examined in relation to participants' interview accounts. To protect participants' privacy, identifying information was anonymized using structural coding labels (IU-01 to IU-10) and visually blurred to remove personal identifiers, and the materials were used solely for research purposes.

Third, documentary analysis complemented the interview and observation data. Interview transcripts, field notes, and relevant observational records were organized and examined in relation to the study's central themes, including the symbolic meanings of iPhone ownership, hedonistic consumption, digital self-presentation, peer validation, and communal expectations. By integrating these sources, the researchers developed a more comprehensive interpretation of how communication identity was expressed and negotiated across different social contexts.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Matthew B. Miles (1994), which comprises data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. NVivo 12 Pro was used to support the coding, categorization, and visualization of qualitative data throughout the analytical process. The software facilitated the systematic organization of the data and enhanced the transparency and consistency of the analysis, while the interpretation of findings remained grounded in the researchers' analytical judgment.

The analytical process involved several stages. First, interview transcripts, field notes, and digital observation records were organized and reviewed to establish familiarity with the data. Second, relevant statements and observational excerpts were assigned initial codes based on their meanings and relevance to the research questions. These codes included self-perception, pride associated with smartphone ownership, visual self-presentation, peer acceptance, lifestyle conformity, and perceived social expectations.

To illustrate the coding process, an anonymized interview statement such *as "Because I feel different and I feel that having an iPhone is really cool"* (Informant A-01) was initially coded as pride associated with smartphone ownership.

Table
1. Coding CTI

Data excerpt	Initial code	Subcategory	CTI layer	Interpretation
"Because I feel different and I feel like an iPhone is just so cool, it makes me feel like I am a trendy person."	Pride in iPhone ownership	Self-perception shift	Personal identity	Personal meaning attached to technological ownership fostering enhanced self-worth and a trendy self-image.
"I always post my aesthetic	Social media curation	Lifestyle representation	Enacted identity	Expressing identity through

photos and cafe visits on Instagram Stories using my iPhone so my friends can see my lifestyle."				deliberate digital content creation and visual self-presentation practices
"When everyone in my hangout group uses an iPhone, I feel like I have to use one too so I don't feel left out."	Peer conformity pressure	Group belonging & validation	Relational identity	Identity negotiated through interpersonal relationships and the desire for peer group acceptance.
"In South Jakarta adolescent social circles, having an iPhone and hanging out at trendy cafes is seen as the standard."	Cultural consumption norm	Hedonistic social expectation	Communal identity	Identity shaped by broader societal norms and shared lifestyle expectations within urban youth culture.

Source: Author (2026)

This code was then grouped under the broader category of self-perception and interpreted through the personal layer of Communication Theory of Identity (CTI). The interpretation considered how participants attached personal meanings and values to their technological possessions. This coding process connected participants' accounts to broader theoretical concepts while retaining the original context of their experiences.

Third, related codes were grouped into broader thematic categories and examined in relation to the four CTI layers. The personal layer addressed self-perceptions and meanings attached to technological ownership; the enacted layer examined identity performances through social media content and lifestyle practices; the relational layer explored peer interactions, validation, and social acceptance; and the communal layer considered shared norms, cultural expectations, and collective pressures surrounding material possessions and digital participation. A data excerpt could receive more than one code when its meaning was relevant to multiple themes or identity layers.

Fourth, similarities, differences, and contradictory accounts across the data sources were examined rather than excluded. For example, students' accounts of smartphone-related social expectations were compared with parents' perspectives on family practices, financial support, and consumption. Where accounts differed, these differences were retained and interpreted in their respective social contexts. Triangulation was therefore used to identify both converging and divergent perspectives rather than to assume that all informants shared the same experiences.

Finally, word frequency queries and word cloud visualizations in NVivo were used as supplementary exploratory tools to identify recurring terminology. These outputs were interpreted

alongside interview narratives and contextual evidence, not as independent indicators of thematic significance. The resulting themes were synthesized into an interpretive account of how digital media and hedonistic consumption contributed to the construction and negotiation of communication identity among the participants.

Research Credibility and Ethical Considerations

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study incorporated multiple sources of information, including student interviews, parent interviews, expert input, digital observations, and documentary records. Source triangulation enabled the researchers to compare perspectives and contextual evidence rather than relying exclusively on individual interview accounts (Arif, 2024). The interpretation of emerging themes was also situated within the CTI framework to maintain conceptual consistency between the research objectives, analytical categories, and reported findings.

Given that the primary participants were minors aged 12–15 years, ethical safeguards were considered throughout the research process. Before data collection, parental or legal guardian consent was obtained from 10 participants' parents or guardians, while informed assent was obtained from the adolescent participants themselves. Permission to conduct the research at SMP Negeri 12 Jakarta and SMP Negeri 13 Jakarta was obtained through official research permits issued by the school administration of SMPN 12 Jakarta and SMPN 13 Jakarta

Regarding digital observation, the study examined Instagram and TikTok materials that were both publicly accessible and individually authorized by participants and their guardians. Public visibility was not treated as automatic permission to disclose personal information in the research report. Therefore, identifying details, including account names and other potentially recognizable information, were anonymized using structural coding labels (IU-01 to IU-10) and visually blurred to remove personal identifiers. Any individually authorized content was accessed and used within the scope of the permission granted.

Participants and their guardians were informed that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study verbally or in writing at any stage prior to final manuscript publication without any penalty. Regarding institutional ethical review, the study was reviewed and ethically approved by the academic thesis committee of the Master of Communication Science Program, School of Communication and Social Sciences, Telkom University. These procedures were intended to protect participants' privacy, autonomy, and well-being throughout the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the construction of urban adolescent girls' communication identity in South Jakarta through Michael L. Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), incorporating the concepts of hedonism, urban lifestyles, technological symbols, and identity construction. The findings were derived from thematic analysis of interview data involving ten primary informants (female students from SMP Negeri 12 Jakarta and SMP Negeri 13 Jakarta), two supporting informants (parents or guardians), and one expert informant with a background in sociology. Using NVivo 12 Pro to organize and support the coding process, the identified themes and coding references were mapped onto the four identity layers proposed by CTI, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2.

NVivo Coding Results

No	CTI Identity Layer	Number of Subcategories / Indicators	Number of Coding References	Percentage (%)
1	Personal Identity	3 sub - Category	138	28,9%
2	Enacted Identity	3 sub - Category	129	27,0%
3	Relational Identity	3 sub - Category	120	25,2%
4	Communal Identity	3 sub - Category	90	18,9%
Total		12 sub - Category	477	100%

Source: Author (2026)

Personal Identity layer

The personal layer represents the internal dimension of identity, where individuals define their self-image, self-esteem, and personal emotional satisfaction. The NVivo 12 Pro coding results for the personal layer are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Personal Identity Layer Coding Results

No	Subcategories / Indicators	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Verbatim Contrasting Accounts	Interpretive Transition to Status & Belonging
1	Self Perception Shift	45	45,0%	Pride (Informant A1, 14 yo): "When I hold an iPhone while hanging out at a cafe, my confidence instantly boosts. It feels different—it makes me feel more high-class and on par with the 'hits' kids."	Technological symbols are internalized as psychological shields, transforming self-perception from an ordinary individual into a member of a social class equal to the dominant group.

2	Subjective Pride	32	32,0%	Discomfort (informant A4, 15 yo): "Honestly, I feel uncomfortable and insecure when my iPhone series lags behind my friends. When they're taking a mirror selfie together, l choose to pretend I'm busy looking for something in my bag so my camera doesn't show that it's a different generation."	Psychological discomfort arises from the perceived decline in the device's symbolic value, where an outdated device is interpreted as a drop in self-worth within the peer hierarchy.
3	Internal Adaptive	23	23,0%		
	Total	100	100%		

Source: Author (2026)

iPhone ownership triggers a significant self-perception shift among urban adolescents. The device is no longer perceived merely as a technical communication tool but as an instrument of self-enhancement that fosters a sense of confidence and subjective pride.

Enacted Identity layer

The enacted identity layer represents the tangible expression of identity through verbal and nonverbal communication, appearance, and the performance of messages on public and digital stages. The detailed coding results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Enacted Identity Layer Coding Results

No	Subcategories / Indicators	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Verbatim Contrasting Accounts	Interpretive Transition to Status & Belonging
1	Symbolic Display	38	38,0%	Seamless Display (Informant A3, 14 yo):	Visual performance through camera orientation

				"Every time we hang out, the cafe mirror is a must for a mirror selfie. I deliberately position the phone so that the triple 'boba' camera is clearly visible when uploaded to Instastory. It's basically a mandatory standard.*	(triple boba) serves as social currency to project status and claim membership legitimacy in urban subculture.
2	Visual Self Prsentation	36	36,0%	Behavioral Strain (Informant A7, 15 yo): To keep posting photos with that distinct iPhone color tone, l often borrow my friend's phone to take pictures together and send the files via AirDrop. It's exhausting to constantly manage my lifestyle just to appear fit-in on social media."	Borrowing devices highlights performative presentation as a structural demand, where meeting visual standards is forced to prevent status alienation on social media.
3	Behavioral Comformity	26	26,0%		
	Total	100	100%		

Source: Author (2026)

The Enacted Identity analysis identified three categories: symbolic display (49 coding references; 38.0%), visual self-presentation (46; 35.7%), and behavioral conformity (34; 26.4%). These findings reflect patterns within the analyzed dataset, not the prevalence of these behaviors among South Jakarta adolescents.

Given the purposive sample of ten female iPhone users aged 12–15, the findings cannot establish broader patterns of premium-device ownership or collective FoMO. Experiences of

adolescents using other devices may differ. Therefore, interpretations of status, belonging, and exclusion are limited to evidence from participants' accounts and relevant observations.

Relational Identity layer

The relational identity layer explains how identity is constructed and validated through social interactions, interpersonal roles, and feedback from peer groups, reflecting the concept of the looking-glass self. The detailed findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Relational Identity Layer Coding Results

No	Subcategories / Indicators	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Verbatim Contrasting Accounts	Interpretive Transition to Status & Belonging
1	Social Acceptance	45	45,0%	Acceptance (informant A2, 14 yo): "Right after I upgraded to the latest series, the reaction from my circle changed immediately. They started inviting me out more often and asked me to take their photos. I could really feel being accepted into the inner circle."	Adopting current technology triggers direct social status elevation, opening access and full recognition within the peer group's inner circle.
2	Relational Validation	42	42,0%	Subtle Exclusion (Informant A6, 14 yo): "When we gather and the others talk about AirDrop features or games that only	Technical limitations of a device translate into relational boundaries, creating subtle marginalization and feelings of alienation in group interactions.

				run smoothly on iOS, I can only stay quiet. There's a subtle feeling of being alienated, like we're just not connected to their conversation.*	
3	Peer Reliance	13	13,0%		
	Total	100	100%		

Source: Author (2026)

The Social Acceptance subcategory dominates this layer, demonstrating that premium device ownership serves as an instrument of social legitimization. Informants experience relational validation when their aesthetic social media posts receive praise or when their devices are borrowed by classmates to capture photos and videos, reflecting peer reliance.

Communal Identity layer

The communal identity layer connects individual identity with broader social structures, urban cultural norms, and collective group affiliations. The detailed coding results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6.

Communal Identity Layer Coding Results

No	Subcategories / Indicators	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Verbatim Contrasting Accounts	Interpretive Transition to Status & Belonging
1	Urban Standards	53	53,0%	Urban Norms (Informant A5, 15 yo): "Kids hanging out in South Jakarta have an unwritten rule. If you don't use the same level of gadgets or lifestyle, it's really hard to mingle. It has	Urban group norms establish unwritten rules where technology symbol ownership becomes an absolute requirement for communal membership.

				become our communal identity."	
2	Collective FoMo	29	29,0%	Familial Tension (Informant A8, 14 yo): "My parents initially objected and said I didn't need an expensive phone yet. / had to argue and promise higher school grades before they bought it for me. I felt guilty, but i was also afraid of being seen as the odd one out at school."	Identity construction creates household friction; communal pressure to fit in forces adolescents into intense negotiations with family resources to avoid social exclusion.
3	Family Communication Tech Culture	18	18,0%		
	Total	100	100%		

Source: Author (2026)

The Urban Standards indicator accounted for 53% of the coded references within this category, suggesting that urban social environments may shape participants' perceptions of lifestyle expectations. Locations such as Blok M, Senopati, and Pondok Indah Mall (PIM) provide context for understanding these experiences. However, this finding reflects the accounts of the ten purposively selected iPhone users and does not establish collective FoMO or shared social norms among all South Jakarta adolescents. The experiences of classmates who use other devices or do not follow similar lifestyle trends may differ and cannot be determined from this sample.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the construction of communication identity among urban female adolescents in South Jakarta is shaped by the interplay of digital media, hedonistic consumption, and the symbolic meanings associated with technological possessions. Drawing on Michael L. Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), the findings illustrate how identity develops across four

interconnected layers: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. At the personal layer, iPhone ownership contributes to adolescents' perceptions of self-worth and desirable social identities. At the enacted layer, these perceptions are communicated through visual self-presentation, mirror selfies, and curated social media content. At the relational layer, technological possessions become resources for seeking peer recognition and social acceptance. At the communal layer, shared consumption expectations and fear of missing out (FoMO) reinforce the association between material possessions, social status, and group belonging.

The findings further indicate that communication identity is negotiated through continuous interactions between individual self-perceptions and the social environments in which adolescents participate. Digital platforms provide spaces for expressing preferred identities, while peer relationships and urban consumer culture influence which forms of self-presentation are considered socially desirable. When recognition becomes strongly associated with material ownership and external validation, discrepancies may arise between adolescents' personal experiences, publicly performed identities, and perceived social expectations. These discrepancies may be accompanied by emotional distress, pressure to maintain idealized appearances, and financial strain when consumption exceeds available resources. Thus, hedonistic consumption represents not only a lifestyle preference but also a communicative practice through which adolescents negotiate status, acceptance, and self-worth.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the application of Michael L. Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) within the context of digital consumer culture. Rather than conceptualizing the four identity layers as static or parallel descriptions, the findings illuminate a continuous, inter-layer process through which identity is actively negotiated. For instance, an adolescent's internal insecurity and personal desire for social distinction (personal layer) directly trigger the purchase of a premium smartphone and the deliberate posting of curated mirror selfies (enacted layer). This digital performance is subsequently validated when peers actively borrow the device for documentation or demand AirDrop file transfers during school interactions (relational layer). Ultimately, these relational feedback loops reinforce unwritten urban lifestyle norms and strict social benchmarks regarding appropriate teenage consumption (communal layer). Through this sequential chain, technological artifacts function not merely as tools, but as active catalysts that connect internal aspirations to broader sociocultural structures.

However, this inter-layer alignment across the CTI framework is not uniform and exhibits notable counterexamples within the empirical data. Certain adolescents demonstrate conscious behavioral resistance by choosing to maintain a low-profile online presence or by utilizing second-hand, damaged devices without actively seeking digital validation. In these cases, the reliance on functional utility overrides the drive for symbolic display, thereby disrupting the typical transmission from personal desire to communal conformity. Furthermore, some informants deliberately separate their authentic family values from their public digital personas to prevent emotional exhaustion. These counterexamples prove that adolescents are not passive subjects of consumer culture, but active agents who strategically negotiate their identity boundaries. Consequently, identity construction must be evaluated as a flexible process capable of non-linear adaptations rather than a rigid, mandatory progression.

Critical identity gaps emerge precisely at the friction points where these four layers fail to align harmoniously. A pronounced personal-enacted gap occurs when an adolescent's real socioeconomic background at home collides with her highly curated, affluent digital persona on social media. Similarly, a relational-communal gap manifests when peer expectations for expensive hangout activities conflict

with parental financial boundaries and moral guidance. The pressure to continuously bridge these identity gaps frequently generates severe emotional distress, anxiety over potential social exclusion, and financial disfunction. By mapping these specific discrepancies, the revised analytical synthesis offers a more nuanced understanding of adolescent communication identity. Ultimately, this framework underscores that digital self-presentation in urban settings is an ongoing, high-stakes negotiation between internal values and external societal demands.

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