ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

Influencer Authenticity: The Key to Triggering Impulsive Online Purchases

Dimas Rahadian[1)], Yolanda Masnita[2)], Kurniawati[3)], Lintang Anggi Puspita[4)]

[1), 2),3),4)] Master of Management Program, Universitas Trisakti, Jakarta
Email: 122012401038@std.trisakti.ac.id[1)], yolandamasnita@trisakti.ac.id[2)], kurniawati@trisakti.ac.id[3)], apita_lintg@yahoo.co.id[4)]

ABSTRACT

This study explored the influence of influencer marketing on online impulse buying intentions, focusing on the role of perceived authenticity as a mediating factor. With the rapid growth of social media and influencer marketing, the study aimed to understand how the congruence between consumers, influencers, and products can influence impulsive purchasing behaviors. Data were collected from 257 active Instagram users in the Jabodetabek region, using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for data analysis. The findings showed that consumer-product congruence positively influenced online impulse buying intentions, with perceived authenticity significantly mediating this relationship. However, the congruence between consumers and influencers did not show a significant impact on impulse buying intentions. The study suggests that perceived authenticity is a key factor for companies to consider when choosing influencers, as it enhances consumer trust and impulsive purchasing behavior. Limitations of the study include the limited geographic focus on Jabodetabek and the single social media platform, Instagram. Future research should expand to other social media platforms and broader cultural contexts to further explore the role of authenticity in influencer marketing and its effects on impulsive buying.

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing, Perceived Authenticity, Online Impulse Buying Intentions*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh pemasaran influencer terhadap niat pembelian impulsif online, dengan fokus pada peran keaslian yang dirasakan sebagai faktor mediasi. Dengan pertumbuhan pesat media sosial dan pemasaran influencer, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana kesesuaian antara konsumen, influencer, dan produk dapat memengaruhi perilaku pembelian impulsif. Data dikumpulkan dari 257 pengguna Instagram aktif di wilayah Jabodetabek, menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) untuk analisis data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kesesuaian antara konsumen dan produk secara positif mempengaruhi niat pembelian impulsif online, dengan keaslian yang dirasakan secara signifikan memediasi hubungan ini. Namun, kesesuaian antara konsumen dan influencer tidak menunjukkan dampak signifikan terhadap niat pembelian impulsif. Studi ini menyarankan bahwa keaslian yang dirasakan merupakan faktor kunci yang perlu dipertimbangkan oleh perusahaan saat memilih influencer, karena hal ini meningkatkan kepercayaan konsumen dan meningkatkan perilaku pembelian impulsif. Batasan studi ini meliputi fokus geografis yang terbatas pada Jabodetabek dan platform media sosial tunggal, Instagram. Penelitian masa depan sebaiknya memperluas cakupan ke platform media sosial lain dan konteks budaya yang lebih luas untuk lebih mengeksplorasi peran keaslian dalam pemasaran influencer dan dampaknya terhadap pembelian impulsif.

Kata Kunci: *Pemasaran Influencer, Persepsi Keaslian, Niat Pembelian Impulsif*

1. Introduction

The development of technology and social media has changed the marketing paradigm in the digital era, giving rise to new marketing strategies that utilize influencer marketing (Emeralda & Kurniawati, 2022). Influencers with millions of followers have become opinion leaders in various fields, ranging from beauty and fashion to technology. Indonesia, as one of the largest digital markets in the world, has experienced significant growth in the influencer marketing industry, with Indonesian brands' investments increasing dramatically from $26.97 million in 2017 to $223.79 million in 2024, achieving a growth of 729% in less than a decade and projected to reach $257.Instagram is the most popular social media platform for influencer marketing, used by 69.9% of brands in Indonesia (INSG, 2025). Data shows that 76% of Indonesians follow at least one influencer, with 68% of them having purchased products recommended by influencers (INSG, 2025). This presents a huge opportunity for companies and brands to leverage influencers to influence consumer purchasing decisions.

However, behind the huge potential of influencer marketing, there are a number of issues that need to be considered. One of them is the issue of influencer authenticity, which is often questioned. In some cases, influencers who appear authentic are actually just promoting products for financial gain without considering the relevance of the product to their audience. The phenomenon of fake influencers and followers, as well as product reviews based on dishonest feedback, is

ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

becoming increasingly prevalent, adding to the challenges for advertisers and brands in maintaining consumer trust (Hypeabis, 2024; Lemon, 2021). Another issue is how influencer can influence consumers' impulse buying decisions. Often, consumers purchase products promoted by influencers without prior planning, especially if the products are perceived to align with their self-image or the lifestyle of the influencers they admire (Agnihotri et al., 2023; Koay & Lim, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that influence this impulsive buying behavior, including the congruence between consumers, influencers, and the promoted products.

In this study, there are relevant theories used to explain the phenomenon of influencer marketing and impulsive buying. Self-Congruency Theory states that consumers tend to choose products or brands that match their self-image (Sirgy, 1982). Perceived Authenticity suggests that the authenticity of influencers plays an important role in building emotional connections with audiences, which can increase impulsive buying intentions (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Wishful Identification refers to consumers' tendency to imitate the behavior of influencers they admire (Bandura, 1986). Online Impulse Buying Intentions refer to consumers' tendency to buy something suddenly and without prior planning, which is often influenced by external factors such as promotions or recommendations (Cao, 2024). These theories and factors complement each other to explain the dynamics that influence impulsive purchasing decisions in influencer marketing.

Previous research has found that the fit between influencers and products does not affect impulsive purchase intentions even when reinforced by wishful identification (Koay & Lim, 2024), but the role of perceived authenticity has not been explored in this study. In another study, the importance of authenticity for influencers in increasing their followers' purchase intention has been proven (Agnihotri et al., 2023). These results support the understanding that influencers who are considered authentic are more capable of influencing their followers to make impulsive purchases.

Although previous studies have explored the role of Consumer-Influencer Congruence in the context of influencer marketing, most studies have focused on planned purchases and found a significant positive influence on brand engagement and purchase intention (Shan et al., 2020). However, recent research findings show inconsistencies, particularly in the context of online impulsive purchases. (Koay & Lim, 2024) found that Consumer-Influencer Congruence did not significantly influence impulsive purchase intention, suggesting that the mechanism of consumer-influencer congruence influence may operate differently in the context of spontaneous decisions compared to planned decisions.

This gap indicates the need to reexamine the assumption that Consumer-Influencer Congruence has a universal effect in all purchasing contexts. In spontaneous and emotional impulse purchases, other factors such as influencer authenticity (perceived authenticity) and consumers' aspirational desire to emulate influencers (wishful identification) may play a more crucial role. Therefore, this study specifically reexamines the role of Consumer-Influencer Congruence in the context of online impulse buying, by exploring the moderating and mediating conditions that can explain when and how this congruence becomes relevant.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of consumer, product, influencer congruences and wishful identification as well as perceived authenticity in influencing online impulse buying intentions. The updates in this study are: (1) the use of perceived authenticity to mediate the relationship between influencer-product congruence and online impulse buying intention; (2) testing the moderating effect of wishful identification in strengthening the relationship between various types of congruence and impulsive buying intentions; and (3) re-examining the role of Consumer-Influencer Congruence in the context of impulsive buying, which is different from planned buying.

2. Theoretical Framework

Self Congruency Theory

Influencer marketing is based on self-congruency theory, which explains that consumers prefer products or brands that reflect their self-image (Sirgy, 1982). This indicates that purchasing decisions are influenced by the congruency between consumers' self-image and the product or brand (Sirgy, 1982). Self-congruency consists of two dimensions, namely actual and ideal (Zogaj et al., 2021). When a person compares the self-concept of others with their current state, this is called actual self-congruency. On the other hand, if the comparison involves the self-concept of others and the individual's desired self-image, it is called ideal self-congruence (Zogaj et al., 2021). Previous research supports the idea that consumers tend to form positive views of brands, products, or services that match their self-concept (Chauhan et al., 2021; E. J. Lee, 2020; Wallace et al., 2020). This self-congruence encourages cognitive engagement with individual identity, which in turn strengthens the appeal of an engaging shopping experience and triggers a tendency to make impulsive online purchases. In the context of influencer marketing, congruence has three important dimensions, namely: Consumer–influencer, Consumer–product & influencer–product Congruences (Belanche et al., 2021).

Perceived authenticity

Perceived authenticity relates to the extent to which consumers feel that the influencer is genuine and not merely promoting products for personal gain (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Influencers who are perceived as authentic are able to create stronger trust relationships with their followers, which can then increase the likelihood of impulse buying (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Thus, it can be assumed that perceived authenticity plays an important role in mediating the relationship between influencer-product congruence and online impulse buying intentions, providing further evidence of the importance

ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

of psychological factors in influencer marketing (Koay & Lim, 2024). Previous researchers have explored influencer authenticity attributes such as sincerity, truthful endorsement, visibility, expertise, and uniqueness (J. A. Lee & Eastin, 2020).

Wishful identification

Wishful identification is a psychological concept that explains consumers' drive to imitate characteristics and identify with admired influencers (Bandura, 1986). In the context of influencer marketing, consumers tend to want to imitate the lifestyle and behavior of influencers, which can influence purchasing decisions, including impulsive purchases (Bandura, 1986). When consumers feel connected to influencers through strong identification, they are more likely to imitate the actions of influencers, including purchasing promoted products (Liu & Zheng, 2024).

Online Impulse Buying Intentions

Online Impulse Buying Intentions refer to consumers' tendency to suddenly and unplanned purchase products or services through online platforms, which are often influenced by external factors such as product promotions or recommendations from influencers (Cao, 2024). Factors such as consumer engagement with the product, the suitability of the product to their self-image, and perceptions of the authenticity of the influencer can drive online impulse buying intentions (Agnihotri et al., 2023). When consumers feel emotionally connected to an influencer they perceive as authentic, they are more likely to make impulse purchases without prior planning.

Interrelationships Among Variables

In this study, these theoretical concepts will be integrated to examine the relationship between Consumer–Influencer Congruence, Consumer–Product Congruence, Influencer-Product Congruence, Perceived Authenticity, Wishful Identification, and Online Impulse Buying Intentions.

Consumer–Influencer Congruence and Impulse Buying Intentions

Consumer–Influencer Congruence relates to the extent to which social media influencers align with consumers (Belanche et al., 2021). In the context of influencer marketing, Consumer–Influencer Congruence can increase consumer engagement with promoted products, which ultimately influences Online Impulse Buying Intentions (Koay et al., 2023). Consumers are more likely to accept recommendations from social media influencers and imitate them when they feel a significant similarity with the influencer (Xiao et al., 2021). Therefore, it is said that a high level of congruence between consumers and influencers leads to online impulse buying.

H1: Consumer–Influencer Congruence has a positive effect on Online Impulse Buying Intentions

Consumer–Product Congruence and Online Impulse Buying Intentions

Consumer–Product Congruence refers to the extent to which the product promoted by the influencer matches the consumer's personal values or preferences. When the promoted product aligns with the consumer's desires or self-image, they are more likely to make an impulse purchase of that product (Shamim et al., 2024). The congruence between celebrities and brands influences perceptions of celebrities and the products they endorse, which in turn affects purchase intentions (Min et al., 2019). Thus, it can be assumed that a high level of congruence between influencers and products can trigger online impulse buying intentions.

H2: Consumer–Product Congruence has a positive effect on Online Impulse Buying Intentions

Influencer–Product Congruence and Online Impulse Buying Intentions are mediated by Perceived Authenticity

Perceived authenticity plays a crucial role in enhancing the influence of Influencer–Product Congruence on Impulse Buying Intentions. Followers who feel that their influencers are authentic and not solely focused on personal gain are more likely to make impulse purchases of promoted products (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Thus, it can be assumed that influencers who are considered authentic increase trust and build strong emotional bonds with their followers, which can accelerate impulse buying decisions.

H3: Influencer–Product Congruence has a positive effect on Online Impulse Buying Intentions mediated by Perceived Authenticity

Consumer–Influencer Congruence and Online Impulse Buying Intentions Moderated by Wishful Identification

Which is the desire to imitate influencers who are considered admired role models (Bandura, 1986). When consumers feel connected to influencers through strong , they are more likely to imitate the actions of influencers, including purchasing promoted products (Liu & Zheng, 2024). In this case, it can be assumed that if consumers feel emotionally connected to influencers, the desire to imitate the influencer's lifestyle or purchasing decisions will strengthen the relationship between Consumer–Influencer Congruence and impulsive purchasing decisions.

H4: Consumer–Influencer Congruence has a positive effect on Online Impulse Buying Intentions moderated by Wishful identification

Consumer–Product Congruence, Online Impulse Buying Intentions moderated by Wishful Identification

When consumers see products that match their personal preferences, and admired influencers also promote these products, the desire to imitate influencers strengthens consumers' decisions to buy products impulsively.

ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

H5: Consumer–Product Congruence positively influences Online Impulse Buying Intentions, moderated by Wishful Identification

Influencer–Product Congruence and Online Impulse Buying Intentions are mediated by Perceived Authenticity, moderated by Wishful Identification

Wishful identification supported by perceived authenticity has the potential to strengthen the relationship between Influencer–Product Congruence and Impulse Buying Intentions. Previous studies have stated that followers who feel connected to their idolized influencers, while also perceiving them as authentic, are more likely to make impulse purchases of promoted products (Agnihotri et al., 2023).

H6: Influencer–Product Congruence positively influences Online Impulse Buying Intentions mediated by Perceived authenticity and moderated by Wishful identification

Conceptual Framework

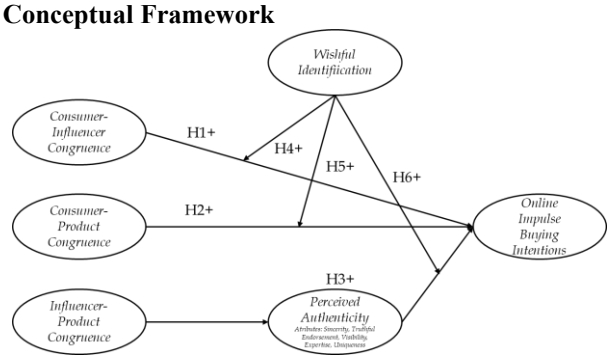


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: data adapted from journal (Koay & Lim, 2024) and researcher's design (2025)

3. Method

This study uses a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between variables in the conceptual model that has been developed. This method was chosen to obtain an objective and measurable understanding of the influence of influencer authenticity on online impulse purchase intention.

3. Data

This study is a quantitative study that aims to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between existing variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This study aims to analyze the influence of product, consumer, and influencer congruences through wishful identification and perceived authenticity in shaping online impulse buying intentions. The research was conducted from June to July 2025. The research respondents came from the Greater Jakarta area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi), which is an area that actively uses the Instagram application (The Jakarta Post, 2017a, 2017b). In this study, the data used was primary data selected through purposive sampling, with the criteria for respondents being active Instagram users who follow influencers.

3.2 Analysis Method

This study used 257 respondents based on the recommended sample size for SEM research (J. Hair et al., 2014). Previous studies have used SEM to analyze the relationship between influencer authenticity and follower purchasing behavior in their research (Agnihotri et al., 2023; Koay & Lim, 2024). Data collection was conducted through an online survey by filling out a questionnaire using Google Forms, which was distributed via WhatsApp. Respondents were given 36 questions to answer. Each question had 5 answers using a Likert scale. The analysis technique used was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was used to analyze the data from the collected survey and to test the structural model and the relationships between variables in the study (J. F. Hair et al., 2019).

Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity test aims to verify whether the indicators used can measure the variables as intended. To test validity, this study used the following criteria:

1. Convergent Validity is conducted by ensuring that each statement on the latent variable can be understood by respondents in accordance with the objectives of the study. The criterion applied is outer loading, where if the outer loading value is between 0.5 and 0.6, then the statements on the latent variable are considered valid (Ghozali, 2008; J. Hair et al., 2014).
2. Discriminant validity is conducted by measuring the correlation between one construct and another in the research model. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used as a testing criterion, where indicators are valid if they have an AVE value > 0.5 (J. Hair et al., 2014).

Reliability testing is conducted to assess whether the indicators or items in the research instrument provide consistent measurement results when the treatment is repeated. In reliability testing, the e criterion is used, whereby the reliability of a variable is considered to meet the requirements if the e value is ≥ 0.7. The results of the validity and reliability tests can be seen in Table 2, which can be found in the appendix.

Based on Table 2, the results of the validity test for all variables consisting of thirty-six indicators concluded that all indicators were valid because they produced outer loadings > 0.5. The thirty-six indicators were also related in forming all variables because they produced AVE values > 0.5. The reliability test produced a value > 0.7, which means that all measurement indicators are reliable (consistent). Thus, all indicators are valid and reliable.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of data analysis obtained from respondents and a discussion linking empirical findings with relevant theory. The analysis was conducted using the PLS-SEM approach to test the relationship between variables in the research model. The

ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

bootstrapping method was used to determine the significance of the mediation of the perceived authenticity variable.

4.1 Research

Before conducting the validity and reliability tests, the researcher collected respondents to complete a questionnaire related to the study, yielding the following results:

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
a. Male	84	32.7
b. Female	173	67.3
Age		
a. <18 years old	7	2.7
b. 18-25 years old	48	18.7
c. 26-35 years old	117	45.5
d. 36-45 years old	79	30.7
e. >45 years old	6	2.3
Education		
a. High School/Vocational School	59	23.0
b. Diploma	14	5.4
c. Bachelor's Degree	165	64.2
d. Master's degree	15	5.8
e. Doctorate	4	1.6
Devices Most Often Used to Access the Internet		
a. Desktop Computers	19	7.4
b. Laptop	33	12.8
c. Smartphone	190	73.9
d. Tablet	15	5.8
Names of Influencers Followed on Instagram		
a. Fill in the Influencer's Name	255	99.2
b. None	2	0.8

Source: Data processed by researcher (2025)

Based on the data, the majority of respondents were female (67.3%), aged between 26-35 years (45.5%), had a bachelor's degree (64.2%), and the device most often used to access the internet was a smartphone (73.9%). They also had influencers they followed on Instagram (99.2%).

Validity and Reliability Test

The validity test aims to verify whether the indicators used can measure the variables as intended. To test validity, this study uses the following criteria:

1. Convergent Validity was conducted by ensuring that each statement on the latent variable could be understood by respondents in accordance with the objectives of the study. The criterion applied was outer loading, whereby if the outer loading value was between 0.5 and 0.6, the statement on the latent variable was considered valid (Ghozali, 2008; J. Hair et al., 2014).
2. Discriminant Validity was conducted by measuring the correlation between one construct and another in the research model. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used as a testing criterion, where indicators were considered valid if they had an AVE value > 0.5 (J. Hair et al., 2014).

Reliability testing is conducted to assess whether the indicators or items in the research instrument provide consistent measurement results when the treatment is repeated. In reliability testing, the e criterion is used, whereby the reliability of a variable is considered to meet the requirements if the e value is ≥ 0.7. The results of the validity and reliability tests can be seen in Table 2 in the appendix.

Based on Table 2, the results of the validity test for all variables consisting of thirty-six indicators concluded that all indicators were valid because they produced outer loadings > 0.5. The thirty-six indicators were also related in forming all variables because they produced AVE values > 0.5. The reliability test produced a value > 0.7, which means that all measurement indicators are reliable (consistent). Thus, all indicators are valid and reliable.

Interpretation of the PLS SEM Model

The SEM-PLS model applied in this study is shown in the following figure:

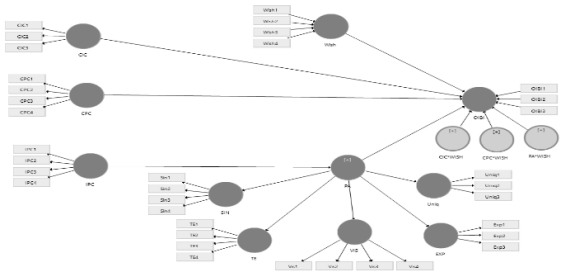


Figure 2. SEM-PLS Research Model (2025)

Model Accuracy Testing

- **Multicollinearity Testing**

  Multicollinearity testing was conducted to ensure that the independent variables in the research model were not correlated with each other. The results of the multicollinearity test can be seen in Table 3, which states that:

  - In the Perceived Authenticity regression model with the independent variable Influencer–Product Congruence, the VIF value is < 10, indicating that there is no multicollinearity between these variables.
  - In the Online Impulse Buying Intentions regression model with 7 independent variables, namely Consumer – Influencer Congruence, Consumer–Product Congruence, Perceived Authenticity, Wishful Identification, and Consumer–Influencer Congruence moderated by

ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

Wishful Identification, Consumer–Product Congruence moderated by Wishful Identification, and Perceived Authenticity moderated by Wishful Identification, obtained a VIF value < 10, indicating that there was no multicollinearity among these variables.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test

Variable	PA	OIBI
CIC		2.045
CPC		2,078
IPC	1,000	
PA		1,834
Wish		1,933
CIC*WISH		2,623
CPC*WISH		3,106
PA*WISH		2,656

Source: Data processed using PLS (2025)

- **Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)**
  Model fit testing for the SEM-PLS model is indicated by the coefficient of determination value, where the processing results are shown in Table 4. From this table, it can be explained as follows:

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
PA	0.370	0.367
OIBI	0.466	0.451

Source: Data processed using PLS (2025)

- In the Perceived Authenticity model, the adjusted R-squared value is 0.367, which means that the variation or behavior of the independent variable, Influencer–Product Congruence, can explain 36.7% of the variation in the dependent variable, Perceived Authenticity, while the remaining 63.3% is the variation of other independent variables that influence Perceived Authenticity but are not included in the model. These results indicate that the Perceived Authenticity model has good model fit.
- In the Online Impulse Buying Intentions model, an adjusted R square value of 0.451 was obtained, indicating that the variation or behavior of the independent variables, namely Consumer–Influencer Congruence, Consumer–Product Congruence, Perceived Authenticity, Wishful Identification, and Consumer–Influencer Congruence, is moderated by Wishful Identification and Consumer–Product Congruence is moderated by Wishful identification, and Perceived authenticity is moderated by Wishful identification, can explain the variation of the dependent variable, namely Online Impulse Buying Intentions, which contributes 45.1% of the value, while the remaining 54.9% is the variation of other independent variables that affect Online Impulse Buying Intentions but are not included in the model. These results indicate that the Online Impulse Buying Intentions model has a good model fit.

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the analysis for the research hypothesis test can be seen in Table 5 in the appendix.

4.2 Discussion

Consumer–Influencer Congruence has a positive impact on Online Impulse Buying Intentions

The results of this hypothesis test show that Consumer–Influencer Congruence does not have a positive impact on Online Impulse Buying Intentions (p-value = 0.123, t-statistic = 1.158). With an estimation coefficient of 0.094, these results indicate that although a positive influence is expected, the relationship between the two is not significant. Several previous studies have shown that the relationship between consumer and influencer congruence can indeed increase brand engagement and impulse buying intentions (Freberg et al., 2011). However, other studies also state that consumer and influencer congruence may not always directly influence purchasing decisions (Xiao et al., 2021). The results of this hypothesis are also consistent with previous research findings (Koay & Lim, 2024).

Consumer–Product Congruence has a positive impact on Online Impulse Buying Intentions .

This hypothesis is supported by the research results (p-value = 0.002, t-statistic = 2.855), which show that Consumer-Product Congruence has a positive impact on Online Impulse Buying Intentions. This result is in line with previous studies confirming that the congruence between products and consumers is very important in influencing impulsive purchasing decisions (Shamim et al., 2024). This study also reveals that products that match consumers' personal values and preferences are more likely to be purchased impulsively, because consumers feel that these products reflect their personal identity. This hypothesis is also supported by previous research (Koay & Lim, 2024).

The finding that Consumer-Product Congruence has an effect, while Consumer-Influencer Congruence is not significant, reveals important dynamics in the behavior of Indonesian digital consumers that require in-depth discussion. These results indicate a significant shift in the behavior of Indonesian consumers, who now tend to be more critical and selective in responding to influencer marketing content. Given the high saturation of sponsored content on Instagram—a platform used by 69.9% of Indonesian brands for influencer marketing (INSG, 2025)—consumers are beginning to question the real motives behind influencer endorsements (Bastrygina et al., 2024). The prevalence of fake influencers, fake followers, and dishonest product reviews (Hypeabis, 2024; Lemon, 2021) further strengthens consumers' doubts about the authenticity of the personas presented by

ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

influencers. In this situation, consumers prefer to evaluate products based on their intrinsic value—such as suitability to their needs, preferences, and personal identity—rather than simply relying on their similarity to influencers when making purchasing decisions. The unique characteristics of impulsive buying on digital platforms explain the dominance of consumer-product congruence. Impulsive buying is spontaneous and driven by an immediate emotional response to visual product stimuli. In that moment, consumers face a pragmatic question: "Is this product right for me?" rather than "Am I similar to this influencer?" The cognitive process of evaluating similarity with influencers requires time and reflection that are not available in the context of impulsive purchasing. Instead, the suitability of the product to the consumer's self-image can be assessed instantly through the visuals, descriptions, and benefits of the product presented in the content, making it more effective in triggering spontaneous purchases. These findings may also reflect the contextual characteristics of Indonesian consumers who emphasize value-based purchasing.

Indonesian consumers are known to be price-conscious and prioritize value for money in their purchasing decisions. In the context of impulsive buying, even though decisions are made spontaneously, a quick evaluation of the product's value—"is this product worth it for me?"—remains a crucial consideration. The suitability of the product to personal needs and preferences provides psychological justification for impulsive purchases, while similarity to influencers does not provide the same strong justification of value. The Instagram platform in Indonesia may function more as a "visual product catalog" than a medium for building deep identification with influencers. Data shows that 76% of Indonesians follow at least one influencer (INSG, 2025), but following does not mean identifying with the influencer. Consumers may follow influencers as a source of product information and shopping inspiration, but purchasing decisions are still based on product fit evaluation rather than influencer similarity. This behavior is consistent with findings (Koay & Lim, 2024) that also found consumer-influencer congruence to be insignificant in the context of impulsive purchasing. These results indicate that in a mature digital era, product authenticity and relevance become more crucial than persona congruence. Indonesian consumers have moved beyond the "following influencers" phase and entered the "selective adoption" phase, where they only purchase products that are truly relevant to their lives, regardless of who promotes them. This is a positive development that reflects the maturity of Indonesia's digital market.

Influencer–Product Congruence has a positive impact on Online Impulse Buying Intentions mediated by Perceived Authenticity

The test results show a p-value of 0.060, which is close to significance (p-value = 0.060, t-statistic = 1.552). Therefore, this hypothesis is supported, indicating that perceived authenticity has a positive impact between influencer-product congruence and online impulse buying intention. These results are in line with research by Agnihotri et al. (2023), " " which found that influencer authenticity plays an important role in increasing followers' trust in the products they promote, which in turn can encourage impulsive buying intentions. Influencers who are considered authentic create stronger emotional connections with their audience, increasing the likelihood of followers purchasing the promoted products.

Consumer–Influencer Congruence has a positive impact on Online Impulse Buying Intentions, moderated by Wishful identification

This hypothesis is not supported (p-value = 0.111, t-statistic = 1.218), indicating that wishful identification is not significant in strengthening the relationship between Consumer-Influencer Congruence and Online Impulse Buying Intentions. These results contradict previous studies which state that wishful identification with influencers can strengthen impulsive purchasing decisions because consumers feel connected to the influencer's lifestyle and want to imitate their actions (Koay & Lim, 2024; Liu & Zheng, 2024). However, in this study, it appears that wishful identification is not strong enough to strengthen this relationship.

Consumer–Product Congruence has a positive impact on Online Impulse Buying Intentions, moderated by Wishful Identification.

The results of the study indicate that this hypothesis is not supported (p-value = 0.207, t-statistic = 0.814), suggesting that wishful identification does not strengthen the influence of consumer–product congruence on online impulse buying intentions. These results are also in line with the findings of previous researchers who stated that wishful identification is basically a psychological process that occurs when consumers want to imitate influencers they admire (Bandura, 1986). However, in the context of impulsive buying, factors such as product suitability with consumers' personal preferences are more dominant than the desire to imitate the lifestyle of influencers. The results of this study are also in line with previous research stating that wishful identification does not strengthen the influence of Consumer–Product Congruence on Online Impulse Buying Intentions (Koay & Lim, 2024).

Influencer–Product Congruence has a positive impact on Online Impulse Buying Intentions mediated by Perceived Authenticity and moderated by Wishful Identification.

The results of this hypothesis test are not supported (p-value = 0.2854, t-statistic = 0.7753), indicating that perceived authenticity and wishful identification do not have a positive impact on influencer–product congruence and online impulse buying intentions. The results of this study provide a deeper understanding of the interaction between perceived authenticity and wishful identification, namely that although perceived authenticity and wishful identification have a proven impact on follower behavior, neither is strong enough to mediate and moderate the

ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

influence of influencer-product congruence on impulse buying in the context of this study.

5. Conclusion

This study provides significant insights into the influence of perceived authenticity of influencers in digital marketing and online impulse buying intentions. Based on the results, perceived authenticity of influencers is proven to play an important role in building strong emotional relationships with followers, which in turn increases impulse buying intentions. In addition, the congruence between the products promoted by influencers and consumers' self-image also contributes to impulsive purchasing decisions.

The findings of this study provide important practical implications for marketing managers and industry practitioners in designing effective influencer marketing strategies. First, given that Consumer-Product Congruence has been proven to have a significant influence on online impulse buying intentions, companies need to ensure that the products promoted through influencers are truly in line with the characteristics, needs, and preferences of the target consumers. This can be done through in-depth market research to understand the psychographic and demographic profiles of the target audience, as well as selecting the right products to promote to specific consumer segments.

Strategies that can be applied include: (1) conducting more granular audience segmentation based on interests, values, and lifestyles; (2) tailoring the selection of products to be promoted to the dominant characteristics of influencer followers; (3) using analytical data from social media platforms to understand consumer preferences and behavior; and (4) testing various combinations of products and audience segments to identify the most effective pairings for driving impulse purchases.

Second, the importance of perceived authenticity as a mediator indicates that companies should prioritize authenticity and credibility in influencer selection rather than focusing solely on follower count or engagement rate. In an era where consumers are increasingly skeptical of promotional content and fake influencers are rampant (Hypeabis, 2024; Lemon, 2021), building trust through authenticity is key to the success of influencer marketing campaigns. Companies need to develop comprehensive influencer selection criteria that consider not only quantitative metrics but also qualitative aspects such as reputation, content consistency, transparency in endorsements, and the quality of interactions with followers.

Practical strategies that can be implemented include: (1) conducting an in-depth audit of influencer profiles before collaboration, including checking follower quality, engagement patterns, and previous endorsement history; (2) selecting influencers who have real expertise or experience with the product category being promoted; (3) giving influencers creative freedom to express their experiences with the product authentically, rather than just following a rigid script; (4) encouraging influencers to reveal their use of the product in the context of their daily lives, not just in formal promotional content; and (5) building long-term relationships with trusted influencers, so that their endorsements are seen as genuine recommendations rather than mere commercial transactions.

Third, given that Consumer-Influencer Congruence does not show a significant influence on impulse purchases, companies need to shift their focus from finding influencers who are "similar" to their target consumers to finding influencers who can effectively communicate the value and benefits of the product. In the context of impulse buying, consumers are more responsive to content that shows the direct relevance of the product to their needs, rather than the similarity of personal characteristics between them and the influencer. Therefore, companies should prioritize influencers' abilities in storytelling, product demonstration, and clear articulation of the value proposition.

Fourth, the insignificant effect of wishful identification moderation shows that companies do not need to rely too much on strategies that encourage consumers to "be like" influencers. Instead, the focus should be on how products can meet consumers' specific needs and add value to their lives. Marketing messages that overly emphasize the glamorous lifestyle of influencers may be less effective in driving impulse purchases than messages that highlight the features, benefits, and suitability of the product to consumers' real-life situations.

Fifth, companies need to develop comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems to measure the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns. Evaluation metrics should not be limited to the number of likes, comments, and shares, but should also include quality indicators such as sentiment analysis of followers' comments, changes in brand perception, and most importantly, actual conversions into purchases. Investing in analytical tools that can track the customer journey from exposure to influencer content to purchase transactions will provide valuable insights for optimizing future strategies.

Sixth, given the context in Indonesia where the phenomenon of fake followers and dishonest reviews is becoming increasingly prominent, companies must implement strict due diligence in the influencer selection process. This can be done by: (1) using fake follower detection tools to verify the quality of the influencer's audience; (2) checking the consistency of the engagement rate with the number of followers; (3) conducting background checks on any history of controversy or scandals that could damage the brand's reputation; and (4) establishing clear collaboration contracts with clauses regarding expectations of authenticity and transparency in endorsements.

Due to this influence, followers are expected to spontaneously purchase products advertised by influencers, even if these products do not suit their primary needs. This, in turn, is expected to contribute to increasing the company's product sales.

ISSN PRINT : 2089-6018
ISSN ONLINE: 2502-2024

This study has several limitations, namely that the sample used in this study is limited to Instagram users in the Greater Jakarta area, which may not reflect consumer behavior patterns in Indonesia, and it focuses only on one social media platform, namely Instagram, while the use of other social media platforms such as TikTok or Facebook may yield different results in terms of influencer influence.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several directions for future research can be recommended to deepen the understanding of the dynamics of influencer marketing and online impulse buying. First, replication studies in various regions of Indonesia outside Jabodetabek are needed to test the generalizability of the findings. Indonesia is a very diverse country in terms of culture, economic level, and digital literacy. Consumer behavior patterns in urban areas such as Jabodetabek may be very different from those in semi-urban or rural areas. Comparative research involving multiple regions can reveal how contextual factors influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

Second, future research needs to explore the dynamics of influencer marketing on other social media platforms that are rapidly growing in Indonesia, particularly TikTok and YouTube. Each platform has unique characteristics in terms of content format (short videos vs. long videos, photo content vs. video), content distribution algorithms, and user demographics. These differences can influence how consumers process information from influencers and make purchasing decisions. Cross-platform studies comparing the effectiveness of influencer marketing across various platforms can provide valuable insights into how to optimally allocate marketing resources.

Third, longitudinal research is needed to understand how the relationships between the variables studied evolve over time. Impulsive buying behavior and perceptions of influencer authenticity are not static phenomena; they can change with trends, consumer experiences, and the evolution of influencer marketing practices themselves. Longitudinal studies can reveal temporal patterns that cannot be captured by cross-sectional studies, such as how repeated exposure to influencer content affects the threshold for impulsive buying, or how scandals or controversies involving influencers can change perceptions of their authenticity.

Fourth, future research could explore other moderator or mediator variables that may influence the relationship between congruence and impulsive purchasing. For example, the role of cultural factors such as individualism vs. collectivism, or consumer personal characteristics such as impulsiveness trait, need for uniqueness, or susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Exploring these variables can provide a more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which congruence becomes more or less influential on impulsive buying.

Fifth, experimental research can be conducted to test stronger causal relationships between the variables under study. Experimental designs that manipulate the level of influencer authenticity, product conformity, or marketing message content can provide more robust causal evidence than correlational studies. Such experiments can also explore more specific psychological mechanisms, such as how perceived authenticity influences processing fluency or emotional connection, which then drives impulsive buying.

Sixth, in-depth qualitative research through in-depth interviews or focus group discussions can provide richer insights into consumers' subjective experiences in interacting with influencer content and making impulsive purchasing decisions. Qualitative approaches can reveal psychological and emotional nuances that are difficult to capture using quantitative methods, such as how consumers evaluate the authenticity of influencers, what makes them trust or distrust influencer endorsements, and how they rationalize their impulsive purchasing decisions after the transaction has taken place.

Seventh, future research can explore differences in the effectiveness of influencer marketing based on product category. Hedonic vs. utilitarian products, high-involvement vs. low-involvement products, or products with different price points may respond differently to influencer marketing strategies. Understanding how product categories interact with influencer and consumer characteristics in influencing impulsive purchases can provide more specific guidance for practitioners in designing marketing campaigns.

Eighth, with the growing development of artificial intelligence and virtual influencers, future research could explore how consumers respond to non-human influencers and how the dynamics of authenticity, appropriateness, and identification operate in this context. Can virtual influencers be considered "authentic" by consumers? How is the fit between consumers and virtual influencers constructed? These questions open up new frontiers in influencer marketing research that need to be explored as technology advances.

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