

BAB V

PENUTUP

5.1 Kesimpulan

Berdasarkan permasalahan yang telah dirumuskan, hasil analisis dan pengujian hipotesis yang telah dilakukan pada bab sebelumnya, maka dari penelitian yang dilakukan dapat diambil kesimpulan sebagai berikut:

1. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variabel *imitation of influencers* berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap *social comparison*.
2. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variabel *social comparison* berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap FOMO.
3. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variabel *imitation of influencers* berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap materialisme.
4. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variabel materialisme berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap niat beli atau *buying intention*.
5. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variabel materialisme berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap niat beli atau *buying intention*.
6. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variabel FOMO berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap *buying intention*.
7. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tidak adanya hubungan langsung antar variabel *imitation of influencers* dengan *buying intention*, variabel *imitation of influencers* tidak dapat memengaruhi variabel *buying intention* atau niat beli tanpa adanya variabel mediasi.

8. Variabel mediasi *social comparison* menuju materialisme menunjukkan pengaruh yang tidak signifikan terhadap variabel niat beli.

5.2 Implikasi Manajerial

Penelitian yang telah dilakukan selanjutnya peneliti akan menyusun implikasi manajerial yang dapat bermanfaat bagi perusahaan khususnya perusahaan pada industri *fashion*, Beberapa implikasi manajerial yang dapat dilakukan saat promosi menggunakan *fashion influencers* khususnya pada media sosial TikTok adalah sebagai berikut:

1. Pemilihan *influencers*

Perusahaan yang ingin menggunakan *influencers marketing* khususnya ketika menggunakan media sosial TikTok bisa memilih *influencers* yang mampu meningkatkan nilai seperti rasa takut ketinggalan (FOMO), perbandingan sosial atau *social comparison*, materialisme, dan perilaku imitasi terhadap diri mereka atau *imitation of influencers* guna meningkatkan niat beli konsumen terhadap produk mereka, pemasar bisa menggunakan *influencers* yang memiliki ukuran tidak terlalu besar seperti *nano-influencers* hingga *micro influencers* karena memiliki hubungan yang lebih erat dengan pengikut mereka.

2. Memanfaatkan perasaan takut ketinggalan (FOMO) sebagai *trigger*

Dengan memanfaatkan rasa takut ketinggalan pelanggan, pemasar bisa meningkatkan niat pembelian konsumen, perusahaan bisa membuat promosi yang menargetkan penjualan seolah terbatas, perusahaan bisa menggunakan metode marketing seperti *limited edition*, *grab it fast*, dan edisi eksklusif yang terbatas. FOMO telah terbukti memiliki pengaruh besar dalam mempengaruhi niat pembelian baik secara langsung maupun ketika menjadi mediator.

3. Konten yang menonjolkan gaya hidup

Perusahaan bisa menggunakan influencers yang memiliki keseharian konten di media sosial TikTok yang menunjukkan bagaimana ketika seseorang *influencers* menggunakan suatu produk *fashion* memiliki suatu gaya hidup yang ideal sehingga pengikut mereka akan melihat *influencers* ideal untuk ditiru dan akan memicu *social comparison* serta rasa takut ketinggalan yang memicu niat beli.

5.3 Keterbatasan penelitian

Penelitian yang telah dilakukan memiliki beberapa keterbatasan, seperti objek penelitian yang belum terperinci dimana menggunakan objek *fashion influencers* yang masih tergolong umum, kekurangan berikutnya adalah penelitian yang belum pada tahap keputusan pembelian sehingga pembelian belum tentu terjadi dan terakhir variabel dalam penelitian ini belum mewakili seluruh faktor yang memengaruhi niat pembelian.

5.4 Saran Penelitian

Berdasarkan kesimpulan dan kelemahan penelitian di atas, dapat dikemukakan beberapa saran yang diharapkan dapat bermanfaat bagi perusahaan maupun bagi peneliti selanjutnya. Adapun saran yang diberikan, antara lain:

1. Menggunakan objek yang spesifik dengan memilih tokoh *fashion influencers* tertentu sebagai objek penelitian sehingga hasil akan lebih spesifik
2. Melanjutkan penelitian kepada tahap yang lebih jauh yaitu pada tahap keputusan pembelian.
3. Menggunakan variabel lain yang belum disebutkan dalam penelitian ini, agar penelitian selanjutnya memiliki variabel yang lebih beragam.

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DAFTAR LAMPIRAN
Lampiran 1 Pertanyaan Kuesioner

No	Pertanyaan					
	1. Saya ingin mengikuti gaya berpakaian seperti influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	2. Saya ingin menjadi trendi seperti influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	3. Saya berkeinginan untuk mengikuti gaya hidup influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	1. Influencer mampu membeli pakaian yang lebih baik dan lebih banyak daripada saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	2. Influencer mampu bepergian lebih sering daripada saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	3. Influencer mampu membeli makanan dan minuman yang lebih baik daripada saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	4. Influencer mampu membeli <i>entertainment</i> yang lebih mahal daripada saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	5. Influencer mampu membeli transportasi yang lebih baik (mobil, bus, dll.) daripada saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	6. Influencer mampu membeli pakaian yang lebih baik dan lebih banyak daripada saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	7. Influencer mampu membeli perawatan medis yang lebih baik daripada saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	8. Influencer mampu membayar biaya sekolah lebih mudah daripada saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS

	1. Saya takut nanti saya akan merasa menyesal karena tidak membeli produk <i>fashion</i> yang di <i>endorse</i> oleh influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	2. Saya akan khawatir kehilangan produk <i>fashion</i> yang di <i>endorse</i> oleh influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	3. Saya khawatir orang lain mendapatkan hal yang lebih bermanfaat ketika menggunakan produk <i>fashion</i> yang di <i>endorse</i> oleh influencer dibanding saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	4. Saya merasa khawatir bahwa orang lain lebih bersenang-senang dengan produk <i>fashion</i> yang di <i>endorse</i> oleh influencer sementara saya tidak	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	5. Saya akan merasa tertinggal dari tren jika saya tidak memiliki produk <i>fashion</i> yang di <i>endorse</i> oleh influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	6. Saya akan merasa menyesal karena tidak mencoba produk <i>fashion</i> yang didukung oleh influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	7. Saya akan merasa cemas karena tidak menggunakan produk <i>fashion</i> yang didukung oleh influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	8. Saya akan merasa terganggu karena saya kehilangan kesempatan untuk menggunakan produk <i>fashion</i> yang didukung oleh influencer	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	1. Saya mengagumi orang-orang yang memiliki rumah, mobil, dan pakaian mahal.	STS	TS	N	S	SS

	2. Barang-barang yang saya miliki menunjukkan betapa baiknya hidup saya. Saya menyukai banyak kemewahan dalam hidup saya.	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	3. Saya menyukai kemewahan dalam hidup saya	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	4. Hidup saya akan lebih baik jika saya memiliki barang-barang tertentu yang tidak saya miliki.	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	5. Saya akan lebih bahagia jika saya mampu membeli lebih banyak barang.	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	1. Produk yang di-endorse oleh influencer memengaruhi keputusan pembelian saya.	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	2. Saya membeli suatu produk karena saya menyukai kepribadian influencer yang meng-endorse tersebut.	STS	TS	N	S	SS
	3. Saya merasa senang membeli produk yang di-endorse oleh influencer terkenal.	STS	TS	N	S	SS

Lampiran 2 Kuesioner *Google Form*

Usia *

☐ 18-20 tahun

☐ 21-23 tahun

☐ 24-25 tahun

☐ 25-27 tahun

Apakah anda memiliki aplikasi TikTok *

☐ Ya

☐ Tidak

Apakah anda pernah terpapar konten promosi produk fashion di media sosial TikTok? *

☐ Ya

☐ Tidak

Next Clear form

Imitation of influencers (Meniru influencers)

1= Sangat Tidak Setuju
2= Tidak Setuju
3= Netral
4= Setuju
5= Sangat Setuju

1. Saya ingin berpakaian seperti influencers TikTok *

1 2 3 4 5

Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

2. Saya ingin menjadi terkenal seperti influencers TikTok *

1 2 3 4 5

Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

3. Saya memiliki keinginan untuk mengikuti lifestyle influencers TikTok *

Social comparison (Perbandingan Sosial)

1= Sangat Tidak Setuju
2= Tidak Setuju
3= Netral
4= Setuju
5= Sangat Setuju

1. Influencer TikTok mampu membeli property (rumah, apartemen, dll) yang lebih baik daripada saya *

1 2 3 4 5

Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

2. Influencer TikTok mampu berlibur lebih sering daripada saya *

1 2 3 4 5

Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

3. Influencer TikTok mampu membeli makanan dan minuman yang lebih baik daripada saya *

3. Influencer TikTok mampu membeli makanan dan minuman yang lebih baik daripada saya *

1 2 3 4 5

Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

4. Influencer TikTok mampu mengakses kegiatan *entertainment* (konser, permainan, dll) yang lebih baik daripada saya *

1 2 3 4 5

Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

5. Influencer TikTok mampu membeli dan mengakses transportasi yang lebih baik (mobil, bus, pesawat dll.) daripada saya *

1 2 3 4 5

Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

6. Influencer TikTok mampu membeli pakaian yang lebih baik dan lebih banyak *

6. Influencer TikTok mampu membeli pakaian yang lebih baik dan lebih banyak daripada saya *

1 2 3 4 5
Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

7. Influencer TikTok mampu membeli perawatan medis yang lebih baik daripada saya *

1 2 3 4 5
Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

8. Influencer TikTok mampu membayar biaya sekolah lebih mudah daripada saya *

1 2 3 4 5
Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

Back

Next

Clear form

FOMO (Rasa takut ketinggalan)

1= Sangat Tidak Setuju
2= Tidak Setuju
3= Netral
4= Setuju
5= Sangat Setuju

1. Saya takut menyesal karena tidak membeli produk *fashion* yang di promosikan oleh influencer *

1 2 3 4 5
Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

2. Saya khawatir kehilangan produk *fashion* yang di promosikan oleh influencer *

1 2 3 4 5
Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

3. Saya takut orang lain mendapatkan hal yang bermanfaat ketika membeli produk *fashion* yang di promosikan influencer dibanding saya *

3. Saya takut orang lain mendapatkan hal yang bermanfaat ketika membeli produk fashion yang di promosikan influencer dibanding saya *

1

2

3

4

5

Sangat Tidak Setuju

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Sangat Setuju

4. Saya khawatir orang lain lebih bahagia setelah membeli produk fashion yang dipromosikan influencer sementara saya tidak. *

1

2

3

4

5

Sangat Tidak Setuju

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Sangat Setuju

5. Saya merasa tertinggal dari tren jika saya tidak memiliki produk *fashion* yang di promosikan oleh influencers *

1

2

3

4

5

Sangat Tidak Setuju

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Sangat Setuju

6. Saya merasa menyesal ketika tidak mencoba produk *fashion* yang di *

6. Saya merasa menyesal ketika tidak mencoba produk *fashion* yang di promosikan oleh influencers *

1

2

3

4

5

Sangat Tidak Setuju

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Sangat Setuju

7. Saya akan merasa cemas ketika tidak menggunakan produk fashion yang di promosikan oleh influencers *

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Sangat Tidak Setuju

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Sangat Setuju

8. Saya merasa terganggu jika melewatkan kesempatan menggunakan produk *fashion* yang di promosikan oleh influencers *

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Sangat Tidak Setuju

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Sangat Setuju

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Materialisme

1= Sangat Tidak Setuju
2= Tidak Setuju
3= Netral
4= Setuju
5= Sangat Setuju

1. Saya mengagumi influencers yang memiliki rumah, mobil, dan pakaian mahal *

12345
Sangat Tidak Setuju ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Sangat Setuju

2. Hal dan barang yang saya miliki menunjukkan betapa baiknya saya menjalani hidup *

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Sangat Tidak Setuju ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Sangat Setuju

3. Saya menyukai kemewahan dalam kehidupan saya *

3. Saya menyukai kemewahan dalam kehidupan saya *

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Sangat Tidak Setuju ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Sangat Setuju

4. Hidup saya akan terasa lebih baik ketika saya membeli barang tertentu yang tidak saya miliki sebelumnya *

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Sangat Tidak Setuju ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Sangat Setuju

5. Saya akan lebih bahagia jika saya mampu membeli lebih banyak barang *

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Purchase Intention (Keinginan membeli)

1= Sangat Tidak Setuju
2= Tidak Setuju
3= Netral
4= Setuju
5= Sangat Setuju

1. Produk yang di promosikan oleh influencers mempengaruhi keputusan pembelian saya *

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Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

2. Saya membeli suatu produk karena saya menyukai kepribadian influencers yang mempromosikan produk tersebut *

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Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

3. Saya merasa senang ketika membeli produk yang di promosikan oleh influencers *

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Sangat Tidak Setuju ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sangat Setuju

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Lampiran 3 Tabulasi Data

imitasi1	imitasi2	imitasi3	SC1	SC2	SC3	SC4	SC5	SC6	SC7	SC8	fomo1	fomo2	fomo3	fomo4	fomo5	fomo6	fomo7	fomo8	materialisme1	materialisme2	materialisme3	materialisme4	materialisme5	niat beli1	niat beli2	niat beli3
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Lampiran 4 Hasil Olah Data

Tabel Outer Loadings

Outer loadings - Matrix					
	fomo	imitasi	materialisme	niat beli	social comparison
fomo1	0.874				
fomo2	0.893				
fomo3	0.864				
fomo4	0.860				
fomo5	0.899				
fomo6	0.877				
fomo7	0.917				
fomo8	0.889				
imitasi1		0.855			
imitasi2		0.840			
imitasi3		0.886			
materialisme1			0.813		
materialisme2			0.784		
materialisme3			0.876		
materialisme4			0.848		
materialisme5			0.850		
niat beli1				0.783	
niat beli2				0.881	
niat beli3				0.913	
social comparison1					0.805
social comparison2					0.820
social comparison3					0.867
social comparison4					0.849
social comparison5					0.895
social comparison6					0.842
social comparison7					0.828
social comparison8					0.829

Tabel Construct Reliability

Construct reliability and validity - Overview					Copy to Excel/Word
	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	
fomo	0.960	0.962	0.966	0.782	
imitasi	0.825	0.827	0.895	0.741	
materialisme	0.891	0.894	0.920	0.697	
niat beli	0.827	0.863	0.895	0.740	
social comparison	0.941	0.943	0.951	0.710	

Tabel HTMT

Discriminant validity - Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix					
	fomo	imitasi	materialisme	niat beli	social comparison
fomo					
imitasi	0.676				
materialisme	0.487	0.677			
niat beli	0.661	0.521	0.472		
social comparison	0.573	0.658	0.487	0.435	

Tabel Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Discriminant validity - Fornell-Larcker criterion						
	fomo	imitasi	materialisme	niat beli	social comparison	
fomo	0.884					
imitasi	0.603	0.861				
materialisme	0.454	0.582	0.835			
niat beli	0.607	0.433	0.420	0.860		
social comparison	0.549	0.581	0.448	0.389	0.842	

Tabel Cross Loadings

Discriminant validity - Cross loadings					
	fomo	imitasi	materialisme	niat beli	social comparison
fomo1	0.874	0.575	0.443	0.597	0.557
fomo2	0.893	0.555	0.414	0.562	0.506
fomo3	0.864	0.501	0.364	0.505	0.463
fomo4	0.860	0.544	0.360	0.499	0.450
fomo5	0.899	0.566	0.422	0.564	0.491
fomo6	0.877	0.498	0.434	0.508	0.467
fomo7	0.917	0.523	0.387	0.557	0.502
fomo8	0.889	0.487	0.375	0.480	0.432
imitasi1	0.485	0.855	0.450	0.361	0.521
imitasi2	0.559	0.840	0.523	0.386	0.453
imitasi3	0.513	0.886	0.528	0.372	0.526
materialisme1	0.382	0.514	0.813	0.402	0.406
materialisme2	0.326	0.452	0.784	0.278	0.341
materialisme3	0.423	0.500	0.876	0.388	0.363
materialisme4	0.379	0.496	0.848	0.308	0.420
materialisme5	0.376	0.462	0.850	0.365	0.333
niat beli1	0.380	0.326	0.253	0.783	0.285
niat beli2	0.581	0.397	0.424	0.881	0.382
niat beli3	0.568	0.388	0.378	0.913	0.328
social comparison1	0.474	0.478	0.402	0.323	0.805
social comparison2	0.387	0.512	0.366	0.261	0.820
social comparison3	0.514	0.520	0.393	0.338	0.867
social comparison4	0.424	0.488	0.336	0.286	0.849
social comparison5	0.490	0.542	0.385	0.354	0.895
social comparison6	0.424	0.448	0.357	0.306	0.842
social comparison7	0.452	0.440	0.393	0.373	0.828
social comparison8	0.522	0.483	0.378	0.374	0.829

Tabel R-Square

R-square - Overview			
	R-square	R-square adjusted	
fomo	0.302	0.299	
materialisme	0.357	0.352	
niat beli	0.395	0.390	
social comparison	0.338	0.336	

Tabel Collinearity statistics (VIF)

Collinearity statistics (VIF) - Outer model - List		
	VIF	
fomo1	3.695	
fomo2	4.641	
fomo3	4.026	
fomo4	3.870	
fomo5	4.010	
fomo6	3.516	
fomo7	4.939	
fomo8	4.154	
imitasi1	1.883	
imitasi2	1.735	
imitasi3	2.070	
materialisme1	1.900	
materialisme2	1.882	
materialisme3	2.721	
materialisme4	2.371	
materialisme5	2.468	
niat beli1	1.725	
niat beli2	1.938	
niat beli3	2.438	
social comparison1	2.348	
social comparison2	2.534	
social comparison3	3.097	
social comparison4	2.902	
social comparison5	3.821	
social comparison6	2.774	
social comparison7	2.684	
social comparison8	2.573	

Tabel Path Coefficients

Path coefficients - Mean, STDEV, T values, p values						Copy to Excel/Word	Copy to R
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values		
fomo -> niat beli	0.524	0.523	0.061	8.548	0.000		
imitasi -> materialisme	0.486	0.488	0.078	6.223	0.000		
imitasi -> social comparison	0.581	0.583	0.058	10.008	0.000		
materialisme -> niat beli	0.183	0.186	0.065	2.802	0.005		
social comparison -> fomo	0.549	0.551	0.047	11.685	0.000		
social comparison -> materialisme	0.165	0.164	0.081	2.043	0.041		

Tabel Spesific Indirect Effects

Specific indirect effects - Mean, STDEV, T values, p values						Copy to Excel/Word	Copy to R
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values		
imitasi -> materialisme -> niat beli	0.089	0.091	0.037	2.401	0.016		
social comparison -> materialisme -> niat beli	0.030	0.030	0.019	1.603	0.109		
social comparison -> fomo -> niat beli	0.288	0.288	0.041	7.020	0.000		
imitasi -> social comparison -> fomo -> niat beli	0.167	0.168	0.032	5.244	0.000		
imitasi -> social comparison -> materialisme -> niat beli	0.018	0.018	0.011	1.617	0.106		
imitasi -> social comparison -> fomo	0.320	0.322	0.050	6.453	0.000		
imitasi -> social comparison -> materialisme	0.096	0.095	0.047	2.063	0.039		

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“I want to be as trendy as influencers” – how “fear of missing out” leads to buying intention for products endorsed by social media influencers

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Abstract

Purpose – As social media use rises, the impact of social media influencers on customer buying decisions increases, due to customers viewing influencers as ideal role models who they try to imitate. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is still under-researched. This study examined the impact of the imitation of influencers on customer buying intention toward endorsed products, which is mediated by social comparison, materialism and the fear of missing out (FOMO).

Design/methodology/approach – An online survey of 243 respondents was conducted via Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform. This study employed structural equation modeling to test for direct and indirect effects among the constructs.

Findings – The results revealed that imitation of influencers has a significant impact on social comparison, materialism and FOMO, which affect buying intention toward endorsed products. The analysis results highlight the critical role of FOMO in explaining buying intention toward endorsed products in the context of social media influencers.

Originality/value – This study proposes a new theoretical model and empirically tests the power of influencers to affect consumer buying intention for endorsed products. It also explains the influencers' effects through FOMO, which have hardly been examined in earlier research although it is an important factor in understanding customer behavior. The implications are discussed for the academic literature and for online marketing strategies in marketing and advertising management.

Keywords Social media influencer, Imitation of influencers, FOMO, Social comparison, Materialism, Buying intention

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

With the growth of social networking platforms, interactions and communication with customers have become increasingly important. Activities on social media platforms allow brands to grow directly through brand pages and advertisements or indirectly via communities where customers can participate and engage (Wang, 2021). Companies use celebrities to attract customers to their brand, but, nowadays, mass media celebrities are not alone in being able to gain worship from audiences. A new type of celebrity, called influencers, can affect an audience's attitude through social network service (SNS) platforms using blogs, vlogs and tweets (Freberg et al., 2011). Social media influencers share similarities with traditional celebrities. The main difference is that influencers are more accessible and appear more trustworthy (Abidin, 2016). Therefore, they can attract an audience with higher commitment, reach an audience with a high conversion rate, and build connections with followers and customers (Shen, 2021). In other words, social media influencers can help companies connect to their customers at a deeper level with personalized experiences and spread brand-related messages effectively. Thus, SNS influencers are of interest to marketers and researchers.



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The number of social media influencers has been increasing, which has been one of the strongest impacts on consumer behavior in recent decades. About 80% of marketers use social media influencers as an effective means of attracting customer attention and promoting their business (Ward, 2017). Influencers cultivate relationships with their audience via SNS platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, by presenting their opinions after testing products or brands and organizing events (giveaways, discounts) to promote or give advice about endorsed products. A total of sixty percent of YouTube subscribers reported that they would follow influencers' advice on what to buy (O'Neil and Blumenstein, 2016). Social media influencers are considered channels for achieving customer interaction. By buying influencer-endorsed products, followers feel they are up to date with the latest trends and capture "cheap moments" with famous people. They adore social media influencers, consider influencers to be their idealized self-images (La Ferle and Chan, 2008), and imitate them by following their recommendations. Despite the need to explore this phenomenon, few studies have focused on it.

Research related to influencers has examined consumption in various contexts in four major streams: the credibility of the source, source attractiveness (Kim et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2019; Berné and Marzo, 2020), the congruence or match-up model (Lim et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2019; Lou and Kim, 2019) and the meaning transfer model (Lim et al., 2017; Shan et al., 2020). Studies explore influencer power with various consequences, including changing customer attitudes (Hung, 2014), purchase intention (Lim et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2019; Shan et al., 2020), product engagement and brand content engagement (Gretzel, 2018; Berné and Marzo, 2020; Shan et al., 2020). Influencers are effective sources for building positive relationships with customers because they transfer brand messages to their followers. However, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have focused on customers' imitation of influencers, which is the main motivation of customers when purchasing endorsed products. To further understand the motivation of consumers to buy products under the influence of influencers, this study proposes a latent process from the imitation of influencers to customer buying intention mediated by social comparison, the fear of missing out (FOMO) and materialism.

FOMO is a well-established and important concept in consumer behavior, especially in the social media marketing context. In previous research, FOMO is described as a psychological concept related to the anxiety a person feels when using social media platforms (Przybylski et al., 2013). FOMO is also referred to as a fear that other people may have better experiences or rewards and encourages people to use social media as a way to satisfy needs (Przybylski et al., 2013). Although it stems from a concept related to the online context, in recent research, FOMO may explain both online behaviors (Beyens et al., 2016) and offline behaviors (Kang et al., 2019). FOMO is a powerful consumer motivation (Herman, 2011) that can explain consumer purchasing behavior (Hodkinson, 2016), especially in SNS contexts under the effects of influencer marketing. Despite the importance of FOMO in buying intention toward endorsed products, few studies in this research area have explained the effect of influencer imitation on FOMO. Hence, the mediation role of FOMO on customer behavior, especially in explaining the underlying process of customers' buying decisions in an online context, needs to be explored. To fill this gap, this study examines FOMO as a channel for individuals with the desire to imitate their favorite influencers to go through to make a buying decision.

Social comparison and materialism are intermediate steps between the imitation of social media influencers and the consumption of endorsed products. People innately judge themselves compared to others or analyze themselves in relation to others' information (Festinger, 1954). When interacting with others, people compare themselves to them, particularly to those who are better off, and SNS platforms provide a fertile ground for such activities. Gilbert's (2000) research showed that upward social comparison occurs when people compare themselves to others who are perceived as being better off, like social media

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influencers. Through the sharing of content, influencers create opportunities for a brand to enhance engagement with their consumers and for customers with a high imitation of influencers to compare themselves with idealized media images (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). The interaction between influencers and their followers stimulates customer desire for possessions and material values. Kasser *et al.* (2004) confirmed that individuals learn about materialistic values on TV through the effect of mass media influencers. They compare their possessions with others as an expression of self that arouses material value and compulsive buying behavior (Tsang *et al.*, 2014).

Previous research has suggested the effect of influencer endorsement on buying intention (Hermanda *et al.*, 2019; Lim *et al.*, 2017; Saima and Khan, 2021), but little research has focused on the imitation feeling created when social media users interact with social media influencers (Corrêa *et al.*, 2020). Due to the lack of knowledge regarding the effect of social media influencers on customer behavior, this study provides a new explanation for understanding the underlying decision process of customers purchasing endorsed products under the influence of social media influencers. It helps expand the literature on FOMO and social media influencers in marketing and provides suggestions for marketers and social media influencers to develop their campaigns effectively. Moreover, to further explore the power of imitation of influencers on customer buying decisions, this study tested the impacts of the imitation of influencers, social comparison, materialism and FOMO on customer buying intention. Although FOMO is considered an emerging consumer phenomenon (Good and Hyman, 2020b; Hodgkinson, 2016; Çelik *et al.*, 2019; Kang *et al.*, 2019), FOMO is still a new concept in the marketing context, and no quantitative research has yet examined the influencer effect through FOMO. Therefore, this study examined the effects of influencers on customer intention to purchase endorsed products, which is mediated by FOMO. We also examined the mediating role of materialism and social comparison, which may intensify the influence of SNS influencers on buying intention. Previous studies have mentioned the effects of mass media celebrities on social comparison and materialism (Lou and Kim, 2019; Islam *et al.*, 2018; La Ferle and Chan, 2008). In this study, social comparison and materialism are the results of social-media-influencer imitation and the mediators in the motivation process inside customer buying decisions.

Theoretical background and hypothesis

Influencer imitation phenomenon

Influencers are content creators who have a substantial number of followers and interact with their followers via social media platforms by offering insights into their everyday lives, their experiences with products and brands, and their opinions about life events or campaigns through SNS platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Such content allows customers to enjoy their content and change their attitudes and behaviors. Influencer marketing can be defined as a type of marketing strategy that focuses on using key opinion leaders (KOLs) to transfer a brand's messages to a larger audience (Byrne *et al.*, 2017). Al-Emadi and Ben Yahia (2020) suggested the characteristics of social media KOLs on social media visual platforms, who motivate customers to engage with them on social media platforms, include content quality and actual and idealized image congruence. Thus, in this research, we considered influencers as a communication tool that can provide product information for a vast network of followers to shape, endorse and spread trendy products (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017).

Although influencers have certain distinct differences from celebrities, they also share some of the attributes of celebrities. Social media influencers communicate with their followers by sharing their lifestyles, product experiences and new trends, thereby shaping followers' attitudes and spreading trends. Social media influencers can be KOLs, who are

innovative and extroverted and share and try new products or trends to spread their ideas to others and influence others' product adoption (Akdevelioglu and Kara, 2020). Influencer marketing is considered a highly effective means of attracting consumer interest, product attention, brand awareness and loyalty. A larger number of followers means greater power in shaping followers' attitudes and purchase intentions. Followers consider celebrities or influencers as idealized self-images. SNS influencers' followers want to improve their appearance to be similar to their favorite influencers, make changes by using products used by influencers, and experience whatever influencers did to get the same values and imitate influencers (Chan, 2008).

The imitation of an influencer is the desire of followers who want to improve or perfect personal traits to resemble their favorite influencers (La Ferle and Chan, 2008). In other words, followers desire to imitate their influencers in terms of physical appearance, attitude, or lifestyle by using or experiencing whatever influencers did or claimed to have done. An audience that shares bonds with their idols on social media is more likely to follow the influencers' choices to build identity and shape feelings of self-esteem (Boon and Lomore, 2001). Followers develop strong emotions about influencers, even when face-to-face interactions are lacking (La Ferle and Chan, 2008).

McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model proposes that a celebrity's cultural meaning transfers that meaning into endorsed products and brands that drive endorsement outcomes. Endorsers transfer the meaning of their images to the endorsed brands. The desired meaning moves from influencers to a product and then to customers by watching the content and consuming such endorsed products. Through the created and shared content, the images of social media influencers are transferred to endorsed products and brands (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Khan *et al.* (2019) also proved that the perceived credibility of a celebrity affects consumers' attitudes and behavior toward an endorsed product. Therefore, influencers who complement product features can be considered spokespersons of brands, as influencers can transfer positive attitudes from consumers to endorsed brands. When people have a favorable attitude toward a specific product, this can lead to an intention to buy that product (Chen, 2007). A better impression of endorsed products leads to higher buying intention. Influencer endorsements directly affect customer buying intention and buying behavior (Lim *et al.*, 2017).

Imitation of influencer, social comparison and materialism

According to Festinger's social comparison theory, social comparison involves considering others as sources for comparison to know who we are, how we perform, and to understand our abilities, social status and performance. It affects thinking, emotions and behaviors in a social context (Festinger, 1954). Social comparison can be defined as the sensitivity experienced when comparing others' behavior, the degree of uncertainty about oneself and interest in reducing self-uncertainty (Gibbons and Buunk, 1999). Social comparison can be divided into upward and downward comparisons. Individuals can compare themselves to targets who are better off or superior, which is called upward social comparison, or make downward comparisons to those who are worse-off or inferior (Festinger, 1954). This research focuses on upward comparison because influencers feature characteristics that their followers do not have but wish to have (Saul, 2016).

Social comparison in an online context is more conspicuous than it is offline (Appel *et al.*, 2016). Social media platforms are ideal grounds for people to compare themselves with others, and they motivate users to compare their lives to the images found on social media. Richins (2004) also noticed that social comparison repeatedly appears between audiences and advertising models. After being exposed to celebrities on SNS platforms, audiences are more likely to have an upward social comparison with that celebrity (Seo and Hyun, 2018). Influencers, who serve as role models, are the main objects of people's comparison when

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interacting with them via social media. Deep exposure to idealized and attractive images through a SNS can lead customers to experience upward social comparison. Engagement in social comparison with influencers resulting from frequent interaction with influencers can lead to a range of outcomes for customers. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- H1. The imitation of influencers is positively associated with social comparison to influencers.

The admiration of celebrities is a global phenomenon (Islam *et al.*, 2018). Consumers consider famous people to be trustworthy sources and follow their recommendations. They are also prone to celebrity endorsements. Therefore, to follow a celebrity endorsement, individuals usually compare themselves to others in terms of aspects of material possessions, especially in the online context, because, nowadays, people favor displaying their material possessions on the Internet. The imitation of celebrity models positively affects materialism, which has the same results as those in Kasser *et al.* (2004), in which customers exposed to materialistic models and values experience feelings of insecurity.

Materialism refers to the belief that a happy and successful life depends on acquiring and possessing materials (Richins and Dawson, 1992). In consumer behavior research, materialism is defined as the importance of worldly possessions. They assume that possessions are central to their lives, and material value is the source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Ger and Belk, 1996). Materialism consists of three components: acquisition centrality, the role of acquisition in happiness and the role of possessions in defining success (Richins and Dawson, 1992). According to Richins and Dawson (1992), acquisition centrality is the belief that possessions and acquisition play a central role in life. This dimension emphasizes that the things that they own are crucial to them and their life goals. Acquisition as the pursuit of happiness refers to the overestimation of the roles played by possessions and acquisition in satisfaction and well-being. People with a high level of materialism consider possessions to be the most significant source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Possession-defined success refers to the belief that people determine their own and others' success through the number and quality of possessions accumulated. Materialistic people prefer to value possessions for the money they cost rather than the satisfaction they yield.

Celebrities are symbolic of wealthy, successful and happy people (Hannell, 2019), so they are idealized images that others desire to follow (Chan and Zhang, 2007). Chan's (2008) research also proved that the more an individual imitates their favorite celebrities, the more important they will consider material possessions. Peers, family, celebrities and social media influencers are sources for individuals to learn about materialistic values (Vansteenkiste *et al.*, 2006). Using celebrities in advertising is a way to attract prospective consumers and increase materialism (McCracken, 1989). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H2. The imitation of influencers is positively associated with materialism.

Social comparison, FOMO and buying intention

Przybylski *et al.* (2013) defined FOMO as "a pervasive apprehension that others may be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent." Any definition of FOMO always consists of emotional anxiety, "a pervasive apprehension," or "a desire to stay continually connected with peers' activities." In social media marketing, FOMO relates to the private and/or social self, a feeling that individuals can experience when they fear missing out on experiences and being left behind (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). The anxiety associated with social media influencers and others is about experiencing better things or a desire to remain connected with others, which can be considered as a form of FOMO (Przybylski *et al.*, 2013).

To avoid falling behind on trends, people usually compare their materialistic objects to those of others and then consume products that can improve their status.

Previous studies explored FOMO in various contexts, including social media marketing, psychology, academia and management information systems. In the popular press, FOMO is usually applied to consumer experimental consumption trends and social media use behavior (Hedges, 2014). Consumers constantly check SNS platforms to avoid being left out of potential rewards or experiences. In academic areas, FOMO is considered as consumer motivation to buy or consume products, especially under the effect of scarcity (Herman, 2011). In psychology, FOMO consistently relates to feelings of loneliness and jealousy, self-concepts that motivate individuals to explore social media as a method of obtaining fulfillment. FOMO also mediates relationships between SNS use addiction, social comparison, depressive symptoms and self-concepts.

Social comparison is a mediator of the relationship between imitation of social media influencers and FOMO. The desire to retain influencers motivates followers to compare themselves with their ideal images, which leads to FOMO on the endorsed products that influencers use. People with a high social comparison orientation are more likely to develop FOMO in social media contexts (Reer *et al.*, 2019). High social comparison is especially common among people with low self-esteem, including those suffering depression, anxiety or stress (Gibbons and Buunk, 1999), which are dimensions of FOMO. When individuals compare themselves to others, they are likely to experience FOMO, which is depicted as the FOMO on experiences others are enjoying (Buglass *et al.*, 2017). As a result of the comparison with others (Reer *et al.*, 2019), FOMO motivates people to improve their social status by consuming the products favored by others (Taylor, 2019). In particular, frequent exposure to influencers on social media leads to a comparison with influencers and a feeling that others have better things and experiences. FOMO also develops when people fail to keep up to date with trends, so they are left out of their community and fall behind (Kang *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, when consumers repeatedly compare themselves with others in social media contexts, the FOMO on things that can give them social inclusion is strengthened (Buglass *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H3. Social comparison to an influencer is positively associated with FOMO on endorsed products.

Influencers are often the first to share new trends or products that attract followers. Through haul product videos on SNS platforms, influencers promote newly launched products from a brand and give their opinions that stimulate followers' buying intention. Social media influencers play a vital role in brand promotion. They attract their followers to the endorsed products in their shared content, which leads followers to become potential customers of the brand. In this process, FOMO plays a mediating role from engagement with influencers to buying endorsed products. FOMO has been seen as a situational motivator for individuals (Good and Hyman, 2020a). It motivates people to do things to stay up to date and not feel left out, as they might regret it. Çelik *et al.* (2019) reported that FOMO could increase impulsive purchasing, leading to post-purchase regret in retail stores. FOMO increases customer concerns, so it urges them to make purchases (Kang *et al.*, 2019). Another research also proved that advertising using FOMO appeal on hedonic services could increase the likelihood of customers purchasing that service (Good and Hyman, 2020a), and customers are more willing to pay for the products or experiences that they consider cannot be missed (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, in this study, the effects of social comparison to social media influencers on customer buying intention are mediated by FOMO, and the following hypothesis is established:

- H4. The FOMO on endorsed products is positively associated with endorsed product buying intention.

Social comparison, materialism with buying intention

As mentioned above, social media platforms are places where people display material possessions (Islam *et al.*, 2018). Social comparison theory indicates that individuals usually compare their material possessions and significant items with others to determine their social status (Saunders, 2001). As a result, customers purchase products not only for utilitarian purposes, but also as material symbols. The more they engage in social comparison with idealized media images, the more exaggerated and unrealistic their expectations of that model's life are. The gap between desirable and actual life provokes cravings for material possessions (Sirgy, 1998). Chan and Prendergast (2007) also found that materialistic values were the main outcome of celebrity imitation and social comparison with media celebrities. In other words, social comparison is a stepping-stone from the influencer's imitation of materialistic aspirations and trying to fulfill those desires through consumption. Consumers who make upward social comparisons proved to be more materialistic than those who made downward comparisons and those who did not (Zheng *et al.*, 2018). The comparison between individuals and celebrities has been proven to arouse materialism and increase compulsive buying among people (Tsang *et al.*, 2014). From these points, this study hypothesizes the following:

H5. Social comparison to an influencer is positively associated with materialism.

Materialism is the belief that improvement in quality of life is gained from the consumption of material goods. Materialism is a consistent predictor of buying intention. Recent research has claimed that, after comparison to social media celebrities, materialism is more likely to increase. Social comparison with social media influencers evokes materialistic desires, which, in turn, predicts consumer buying intention. Materialism has been proven to push customers to purchase products (Islam *et al.*, 2018) and purchase counterfeit products (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2017). With social media users, influencers positively predict users' buying intentions toward influencer-promoted products (Lou and Kim, 2019). Materialism acts as a mediator between the imitation of influencers, social comparison and buying endorsed products. In summary, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6. Materialism is positively associated with buying intention toward endorsed products.

Based on the previous empirical and theoretical background, the model used in this study is shown in Figure 1.

Research methodology*Sampling*

Our survey was conducted using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform, which uses human intelligence to complete surveys and experiments for researchers. The subjects of this study were people living in the USA. A filter question was used, "Do you have favorite beauty influencers?" This identified those who did not have a favorite beauty influencer, who were not questioned further. Thus, 5.8% (15 surveys) of the respondents were excluded from this study.

Respondents who had a favorite beauty influencer were asked to answer questions related to their thoughts on influencers, motivators and buying intention. A pretest with 50 participants was performed, and the pretest data showed that the questionnaire was suitable for further data collection. A total of 243 questionnaires were used for the analysis.

In this study, beauty influencers were selected as the research objects. Influencers are interested in several areas, including fashion and beauty, food, high-tech, health and fitness, and games, but in this study, we focused on beauty influencers who are the most prototypical

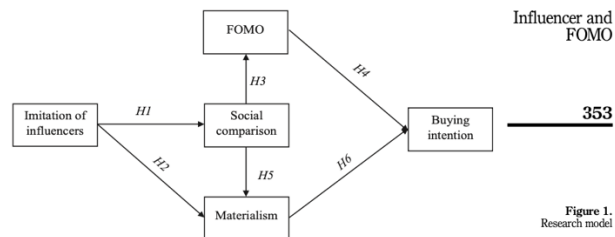


Figure 1.
Research model

examples of influencer marketing (Belanche *et al.*, 2020). Beauty influencers are the most popular influencers and usually share their tips to help their followers enhance their appearance. Approximately 43% of consumers follow beauty influencers (Trosch, 2020).

Participants were required write down the names of their beauty influencers to make them think about their favorite beauty influencers before beginning the questionnaire. Respondents listed various names of beauty influencers that they follow. The main SNS platforms where participants connected with their favorite influencers included YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, matching previous research results. Influencers usually show consumer products they have used, provide their opinions or simply promote them online through the use of SNS platforms.

The total sample used in this study was 243, comprising 130 female respondents (53.5%) and 113 male respondents (46.5%). Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 50, matching the leading social media user demographic in the USA (Chaffey, 2021), with respondents in their 30s accounting for the highest proportion (48.6%). Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Measurement

Each variable in this study was measured based on previous studies and refined to meet the purpose of the study. The study employed seven-point Likert scales to measure the level of statement agreement (from one, meaning "strongly disagree," to seven, meaning "strongly agree"). The total number of questions in this survey was 31, which included questions on exclusion, social media platforms, demographic questions and 27 questions designed for five

Item	Characteristics	Frequency	Ratio
Gender	Male	113	46.5
	Female	130	53.5
Age	Under 20	3	1.2
	20s	70	28.8
	30s	118	48.6
	40s	51	21.0
	50	1	0.4

Table 1.
Demographic
characteristics
(*n* = 243)

constructs: imitation of influencers, social comparison, FOMO, materialism and buying intention.

Imitation was measured using three statements from Kasser *et al.*'s (2004) research, which was applied to measure the imitation of media celebrities (La Ferle and Chan, 2008). In this study, we used this scale in the context of influencers, due to the similarities between media celebrities and social media influencers, as mentioned above. The inter-item reliability in previous studies was 0.77.

Upward social comparison with influencers was modified from Solberg *et al.* (2002). Participants answered questions about the upward social comparison they experienced while using SNSs in terms of lifestyle and material possessions. This measurement was used in other research with high reliability ($\alpha = 0.96$) (Seo and Hyun, 2018).

Although Przybylski *et al.*'s (2013) scale is the common measurement scale for FOMO, it is usually used for specific personal characteristics. In this study, eight items from the situational FOMO scale developed by Good and Hyman (2020a) were used to explore FOMO on endorsed products in the social media influencer context. This measurement was empirically tested with high reliability ($\alpha = 0.94$).

Materialism was measured using Richins and Dawson's (1992) conceptualization about the belief that material possessions are an indicator of a successful life. In this study, the shortened version of materialism redeveloped by Richins (2004) was used to measure their agreement with statements assessing materialistic value. In previous research, this scale reported a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.81.

Buying intention was developed by Liu and Brock (2011) and edited in Khan *et al.*'s (2019) research for celebrity-endorsed product purchase intentions. The Cronbach's alpha in previous research was 0.82. This study adopted the measurement in the influencer context, with three statements indicating the endorsed product buying intention.

The specific contents of measurement items are shown in Appendix.

Results

This study used analysis of moment structure (AMOS) 23.0 to test the measurement model and structural model. We first evaluated the measurement model through convergent validity, factor loading coefficient, reliability by composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity. Subsequently, we tested the proposed hypothesis with the structural model and explored the mediating roles of social comparison, FOMO and materialism in this research model.

Measurement model

The convergent validity, reliability and discriminant validity of the measurement were assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Results found that the chi-square test was significant (χ^2 (df = 314) = 572.9, $p < 0.05$). The model fit was assessed through three different indices: the root mean square error approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). The results show that this model presented an acceptable model fit with RMSEA = 0.058, CFI = 0.945 and TLI = 0.938. The factor loadings are presented in Table 2, and convergent validity was verified. Only when all factor loading values were greater than 0.60, was convergent validity accepted (Hair *et al.*, 2018). The lowest factor loading in our study was 0.711, indicating that convergent validity was met. The reliability of the constructs is accepted if CR values are greater than 0.70 and AVE values exceed 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All values of CR and AVE surpassed this threshold, which means that the reliability of this measurement was acceptable.

In terms of discriminant validity, the square roots of the AVE values exceeded the correlations between the constructs, indicating that discriminant validity was satisfied (Table 3).

Construct	Item	Mean	SD	Factor loading	CR	AVE	Influencer and FOMO
Imitation of influencer	IM1	5.88	1.05	0.782	0.807	0.582	
	IM2	5.81	1.09	0.724			
	IM3	5.77	1.13	0.781			
Social comparison	SC1	5.96	1.09	0.711	0.910	0.560	
	SC2	5.88	1.12	0.731			
	SC3	5.84	1.14	0.719			
	SC4	5.91	1.04	0.803			
	SC5	5.86	1.12	0.785			
	SC6	5.92	1.12	0.746			
	SC7	5.76	1.24	0.726			
FOMO	SC8	5.92	1.06	0.758	0.958	0.742	
	FO1	5.07	1.05	0.853			
	FO2	5.13	1.04	0.853			
	FO3	5.19	1.03	0.871			
	FO4	5.12	1.57	0.832			
	FO5	5.17	1.60	0.852			
	FO6	5.09	1.61	0.881			
	FO7	5.05	1.81	0.863			
Materialism	FO8	5.16	1.59	0.884	0.864	0.559	
	MA1	5.59	1.25	0.757			
	MA2	5.57	1.32	0.766			
	MA3	5.61	1.30	0.771			
	MA4	5.67	1.22	0.723			
Buying intention	MA5	5.69	1.19	0.721	0.862	0.582	
	BI1	5.63	1.16	0.797			
	BI2	5.49	1.24	0.826			
	BI3	5.67	1.15	0.840			

Note(s): SD, standard deviation; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; IM, imitation of social media influencers; SC, social comparison; FOMO, fear of missing out; MA, materialism; BI, buying intention

Table 2.
Scale reliabilities

	IM	SC	FOMO	MA	BI
Imitation of influencer	0.763				
Social comparison	0.588***	0.748			
FOMO	0.542***	0.221**	0.861		
Materialism	0.674***	0.559***	0.655***	0.748	
Buying intention	0.682***	0.460***	0.696***	0.709***	0.821

Note(s): *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; square of AVE are reflected in italic in the diagonal; IM, imitation of social media influencers; SC, social comparison; FOMO, fear of missing out; MA, materialism; BI, buying intention

Table 3.
Correlation matrix and discriminant assessment

Structural model and hypothesis testing

This study tests the fit of the research model before continuing to examine the causal relationships between variables. Figure 2 shows that the chi-square is significant, with χ^2 (df = 318) = 700.924 ($p < 0.05$). Root mean square error approximation = 0.071, CFI = 0.919 and TLI = 0.910, indicating an acceptable fit for our hypothesized model, which represents a positive sign of the model in analyzing our research hypotheses.

Consistent with our hypotheses, the imitation of influencers positively affects social comparison and materialism, supporting H1 and H2. This reveals that followers imitating influencers were more likely to compare themselves with influencers and were more likely to

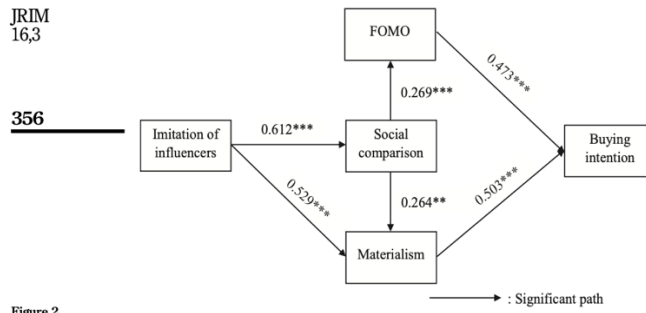


Figure 2.
Research results

Note(s): *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$; ***, $p < 0.001$

increase their level of materialism as a result. The relationship between social comparison and FOMO is also significant, with a standardized beta value of 0.42 (significant at 0.01), which supports H3. This indicates that individuals who make a social comparison are likely to experience the fear and anxiety of missing out on products endorsed by influencers. Social comparison was a positive predictor of materialistic value ($\beta = 0.264$, $p < 0.01$), which supports H5. Respondents who perceived a higher level of social comparison with influencers were more materialistic. Finally, there are also positive, significant relationships between FOMO, materialism, and buying intention, supporting H4 and H6. People with a high level of FOMO and materialism are likely to develop a strong tendency to buy products endorsed by influencers. The results of this study are presented in Figure 2 and Table 4.

Mediation effects

To shed light on whether social comparison, FOMO, and materialism mediate the relationship between imitation of social media influencers and customer buying intention, mediation analysis was run to test the indirect effects, with 2,000 bootstrapped samples to estimate the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs). Mediation relationships were

Table 4.
Hypotheses of the
proposed
theoretical model

Hypothesis	Estimate	t-test	p	Conclusion
H1. Imitation of influencers → social comparison	0.612	7.414	***	Supported
H2. Imitation of influencers → materialism	0.529	5.641	***	Supported
H3. Social comparison → FOMO	0.269	3.883	***	Supported
H4. FOMO → buying intention	0.473	7.522	***	Supported
H5. Social comparison → materialism	0.264	3.240	**	Supported
H6. Materialism → buying intention	0.503	7.046	***	Supported
Note(s): *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; H1 → H6, Hypothesis 1 → Hypothesis 6; FOMO, fear of missing out				

only accepted when the lower and upper bounds of the bootstrap CIs of the indirect effects between the predictor and the outcome did not include zero (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). The results in Table 5 show that all paths were significant. Social comparison mediated the relationship between imitation and materialism (95% CI: [0.028, 0.402]), imitation, and FOMO (95% CI: [0.089, 0.498]). The mediating role of FOMO was also proven. Social comparison → FOMO → buying intention was significant with a 95% CI: [0.072, 0.248]. There were indirect effects between imitation and buying intention and between social comparison and buying intention through materialism (95% CI: [0.105, 0.519]; 95% CI: [0.029, 0.348], respectively). The results confirmed that social comparison, materialism, and FOMO have mediation roles in the relationship between the imitation of influencers and customer buying intention.

Discussion

This research was conducted to examine the relationship between the imitation of influencers and buying intention through the effects of social comparison, FOMO, and materialism. This study provides a new lens through which to explain the power of influencer effects, especially the influencer imitation phenomenon, on the purchase intention toward products endorsed by influencers. The results are summarized as follows:

This study established that the imitation of influencers increases the level of materialism of followers because followers learn about materialism by interacting with influencers on social media platforms and by following the influencer's product recommendations. Therefore, materialism mediated the effects of imitation of social media influencers on followers' buying intentions of endorsed products. Depending on the idea that social media influencers would have happier and more successful lives, followers will try to use the endorsed products with the desire to be like influencers. Consistent with previous research results, imitation of social media influencers can be a positive predictor of material values.

Social comparison to social media influencers is a steppingstone from the imitation of social media influencers to FOMO and materialism. Influencers are idealized images that followers desire to reflect. Those who imitate social media influencers tend to make upward social comparisons in terms of knowledge, appearance, or lifestyle aspects. This finding supports the social comparison theory and previous research that found that the greater the desire of people to associate with social media influencers, the more they compare themselves to better off influencers (Festinger, 1954; Seo and Hyun, 2018) for self-appraisal. The interaction between influencers and their followers promoted upward social comparisons, which then motivated materialistic possession and the anxiety of missing out on trendy products.

Parameter	Estimate	Lower	Upper	p	Conclusion
IM → SC → FO	0.266	0.089	0.498	0.002	Indirect effect
IM → SC → FO → BI	0.076	0.029	0.159	0.001	Indirect effect
SC → FO → BI	0.140	0.072	0.248	0.001	Indirect effect
IM → SC → MA	0.156	0.028	0.402	0.048	Indirect effect
IM → SC → MA → BI	0.079	0.016	0.240	0.036	Indirect effect
IM → MA → BI	0.260	0.105	0.519	0.001	Indirect effect
SC → MA → BI	0.146	0.029	0.348	0.044	Indirect effect

Note(s): IM, imitation of social media influencers, SC, social comparison; FO, fear of missing out; MA, materialism; BI, buying intention

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Table 5.
Mediation effects

As hypothesized, social comparison with social influencers positively impacts materialism. Individuals usually make social comparisons between their possessions and those of social media influencers in the belief that materialistic possessions are an important indicator of a successful and happy life. In other words, individuals who treasure materialistic possessions are more likely to engage in social comparisons. Social media influencers congregate their followers and allow them to dream of the products they recommend via their shared content.

As a result of social comparison to social media influencers, the FOMO on trendy products motivated the buying intention of customers to purchase. Individuals can decide to compare themselves with others who are better off than themselves or with idealized media images, leading to the feeling of FOMO. When they compare themselves with influencers, with a desire to be similar to their favorite influencers, they usually fear missing out on endorsed products. FOMO is the result when people compare themselves to others. High social comparison orientation is prevalent among people with low self-esteem, so social comparisons can be seen as a means of reducing self-related uncertainty (Gibbons and Buunk, 1999). With the FOMO on endorsed products, people would buy them because influencers recommend such items and because they are trendy products as has been proven in previous research.

Furthermore, materialism plays a mediating role between the imitation of influencers and the intention to purchase an endorsed product. Those who make social comparisons with social media influencers think material values are a sign of happiness and success, and then purchase products promoted by influencers. The more consumers desire materialistic possessions, the more they will engage in consumption behaviors to satisfy that need. Therefore, materialism is a positive predictor of endorsed product intentions. The desire to imitate social media influencers is related to consumers' materialistic thinking, which then alters the intention to purchase endorsed products.

Theoretical contribution

Our research contributes to existing works on influencers, social comparison theory and FOMO. Although the imitation of famous people is a global phenomenon (Islam *et al.*, 2018) that is related to the deep engagement between followers and influencers, no research has yet focused on its effects on recommended products. This study provides a new theoretical model by empirically testing a new process, in which influencers' power can affect purchase intention toward products, and all hypotheses in the proposed model are accepted. Moreover, this study also supports theories of social comparison and the meaning transfer model (Festinger, 1954; McCracken, 1989) in the social media influencer context, while most previous studies focused on social norms contexts and traditional celebrity endorsement (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017; Seo and Hyun, 2018). Second, this study introduces a new perspective of FOMO as an important construct in the social media marketing and social media influencer contexts that have been proposed and empirically tested. This brings a new theoretical perspective to influencers, FOMO, and buying intention toward endorsed products. FOMO is an important construct in the online context (Beyens *et al.*, 2016), but there have been no studies on the influence of FOMO on purchase intention toward influencer-endorsed products. This study uses FOMO in the influencer research context and develops a premise for using FOMO to explain the role of influencers in customers' purchase intentions. Third, this study affirms the mediating roles of materialism and upward social comparison in the context of social media influencers. While previous studies mentioned upward social comparison to consumer communities or mass media celebrities (Chan, 2008; Seo and Hyun, 2018), this research applied social comparison theory to the context of social media influencers. Moreover, this study applied and expanded the effects of imitation of influencers on customers' purchase intention, whereas previous studies only dealt with the effect on materialism.

Practical implications

The proposed model has several practical implications for marketers and social media influencers in developing effective marketing plans. This study explains the underlying process of buying decisions under the influence of influencers, which is considered an effective marketing tool. Social media influencers can help change consumer-brand relationships in a positive way. The interaction between social media influencers and their followers through their content-sharing communities can transfer brand-related messages and persuade followers to purchase products and services (Wang, 2021). Therefore, this study suggests that marketing practitioners can consider choosing social media influencers for advertising campaigns for successful marketing communication. Marketers need to choose social media influencers who have a high number of followers and a considerable impact on their online communities to increase customers' desire to imitate them and consume endorsed products. Moreover, this study proved that FOMO plays an important role in customer buying intention, so that marketers, advertisers and even social media influencers should be able to induce FOMO to establish customer engagement. By catching new trends and satisfying customer needs, social media influencers and advertisers can encourage social comparisons to influencers in their posts, which, in turn, increases materialism and evokes FOMO in customers. Influencers and marketers who want to engage with customers on social media platforms should promote FOMO-related thoughts, such as events stressing the scarcity of products and the fun and excitement one can have when owning such endorsed products. FOMO appeal in posts can help increase customers' anxiety about falling behind and the belief that they can fulfill their needs by consuming endorsed products.

Limitations and future research

This study had several limitations. First, the survey considered beauty influencers as representatives of social media influencers. Various types of social media influencers can affect customers, such as gaming influencers. To overcome this limitation and broaden the results, future studies can explore other types of influencers to obtain more robust findings. Furthermore, the data were collected using the MTurk platform in the USA. Thus, the effects of social media influencers need to be tested by other respondents to determine the differences in other cultures. This study focused on people aged 18–50. Further studies should be more open to the under-18s, who are very active on social media. Finally, this study examined aspects of the effects of customer imitation of influencers on customer buying intention, but the actual behavior of consumers was beyond the scope of this research. Future studies should examine the proposed model on actual purchasing behavior. In this study, FOMO and materialism are used to explain endorsed product buying intention, which serves as a suggestion for future studies, so that other factors can be adopted to replace, combine or improve study models.

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