

EXAMINING PERCEIVED AUTHENTICITY OF FOODIE KOLS IN RELATION TO CULINARY PURCHASE INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of perceived authenticity of foodie Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) on followers' purchase intention toward culinary brands in Indonesia. The transformation of digital marketing through influencer marketing has altered consumer behavior; however, there remains a gap in understanding the specific mechanisms by which perceived authenticity shapes purchase intention within the culinary industry context. This research employed a quantitative design with a survey approach involving 384 respondents who are active followers of foodie KOLs with a minimum of 1000 followers on Instagram or TikTok. Purposive sampling was applied with criteria including respondents aged at least 17 years, following foodie KOLs for at least six months, and having considered purchasing culinary products based on KOL recommendations within the past three months. The research instrument used a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale that had been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression with IBM SPSS version 26. The results show that perceived authenticity has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, with a regression coefficient of 0.743 ($t = 15.672$; $p = 0.000$) and a coefficient of determination of 39.1%. The findings confirm that the authenticity of foodie KOLs is a determining factor in shaping followers' purchase intention, although 60.9% is influenced by other factors. The study recommends that culinary brands collaborate with KOLs who possess a high level of perceived authenticity and maintain a balance between organic and commercial content to sustain long-term credibility.

Key words: perceived authenticity; KOL foodies; purchase intention; influencer marketing; culinary brands

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian culinary industry has undergone a significant transformation in its digital marketing strategy, particularly through the use of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) or influencers on social media. The phenomenon of food influencers or foodie KOLs has become a dominant force in shaping consumer behavior, especially in purchasing decisions for culinary products. According to recent research, 67% of millennial and Gen Z consumers in Indonesia admit to being influenced by foodie KOL recommendations before visiting a restaurant or purchasing food products. (Manggala, 2022). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become the main arena for foodie KOLs to share their culinary content, creating a complex and dynamic digital marketing ecosystem. In the context of influencer marketing, the concept of perceived authenticity is a crucial factor that distinguishes the effectiveness of a KOL. Perceived authenticity refers to the extent to which followers consider KOLs to be honest, transparent, and sincere in recommending certain products or brands. (Kim & Kim, 2021). Unlike traditional advertisements, which are often perceived as having an explicit commercial agenda, content from KOLs that is perceived as authentic tends to generate higher trust and engagement from audiences. Research (Syafi, 2025) shows that authenticity in influencer communication includes the dimensions of content originality, consistency of personal values, and transparency in commercial relationships with brands.

However, the paradox of authenticity arises when foodie KOLs must balance maintaining personal credibility with the need to monetize content through sponsored posts or endorsements. The study (Syafi, 2025) identified that followers are increasingly skeptical of excessive promotional content, which can erode perceptions of authenticity and ultimately reduce their purchase intention toward the promoted brand. On the other hand, (Universitas & Petra, 2023) found that KOLs who successfully maintained high perceived authenticity were able to generate conversion rates up to 4,5 times higher than conventional digital advertising. Previous research on influencer marketing has explored various aspects such as influencer credibility, parasocial relationships, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). However, there is a significant research gap in understanding the specific mechanisms of how the perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs influences followers' purchase intentions toward culinary brands in the Indonesian context. (Purwaningsih, Ramdan, & Norisanti, 2023) states that the culinary industry has unique characteristics because it involves complex sensory, emotional, and cultural aspects, so the purchasing decision process differs from other product categories. Furthermore, research (Purwaningsih et al., 2023) indicates that in the food and beverage category, the factors of trust and authenticity of KOL experiences become more crucial because consumers rely on vicarious experiences before making actual purchases.

In Indonesia, where culinary culture is highly diverse and social media penetration reaches 68% of the total population, a deep understanding of these dynamics is essential for culinary brand marketing practitioners. This study seeks to fill this gap by comprehensively analyzing how the dimensions of perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs play a role in shaping followers' purchase intentions towards the culinary brands they promote. By understanding this mechanism, culinary brands can optimize their collaboration strategies with KOLs to achieve greater marketing effectiveness while maintaining consumer trust. Based on the background described above, this study focuses on answering the main question: how does the perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs influence followers' purchase intentions toward the promoted culinary brands? Specifically, this study will analyze the most influential dimensions of perceived authenticity, the psychological mechanisms that link perceptions of authenticity to purchase intention, and the potential moderation of demographic factors and followers' social media usage behavior.

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the influence of perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs on the purchase intention of followers toward culinary brands comprehensively. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) measure the level of perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs from the perspective of followers; (2) evaluate the strength of the influence of perceived authenticity on followers' purchase intention towards culinary brands; and (3) identify the specific dimensions of perceived authenticity that are most significant in driving purchase intention, thereby providing strategic recommendations for digital marketing practitioners in the culinary industry. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to enriching the literature on influencer marketing, particularly in the context of authenticity and digital consumer behavior in the culinary industry. In practical terms, the results of this study will provide valuable insights for culinary brands in designing more effective collaboration strategies with foodie KOLs, helping KOLs maintain credibility while monetizing content, and providing followers with an understanding of the factors that shape their purchasing decisions in the digital age, enabling them to make more informed and critical consumption choices.

Based on several literature sources, the dimensions of perceived authenticity in social media influencers include sincerity, truthful endorsement or transparency, expertise, uniqueness, mediated realness or visibility, spontaneity, and commitment to values. Meanwhile, according to (Syafi, 2025), the dimensions of purchase intention include interest in the product, brand preference over other alternatives, conviction to buy, and willingness to purchase.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative design with a survey approach to analyse the influence of perceived authenticity of foodie Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) on the purchase intention of followers of culinary brands. The quantitative method was chosen because of its ability to measure causal relationships between variables objectively and systematically, as well as allowing for the generalization of research results to a wider population. The population of this study consists of active followers of foodie KOLs in Indonesia who have at least 1,000 followers on the social media platforms Instagram or TikTok. The sampling technique used purposive sampling with the criteria that respondents must be at least 18 years old, have followed at least one foodie KOL for at least 6 months, and have considered or purchased culinary products based on the KOL's recommendations in the last 3 months. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows researchers to target respondents who have relevant experience with the phenomenon being studied, thereby providing richer and more meaningful data (Rafi & Daud, 2022).

The sample size was determined based on the Lemeshow formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, resulting in a minimum of 384 respondents to ensure statistical validity. The research instrument used a structured questionnaire adapted from a perceived authenticity scale with 15 statement items and a purchase intention scale with 8 statement items. Both scales use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Validity testing was conducted using Confirmatory Factor Analysis with a minimum factor loading of 0.5, while the reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with a minimum standard of 0.7.

Data analysis was performed using simple linear regression techniques with the help of IBM SPSS software version 26 to test the statistical hypotheses of the study: $H_0: \beta = 0$ (there is no significant effect of perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs on the purchase intention of followers) and $H_1: \beta \neq 0$ (there is a significant effect of perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs on the purchase intention of followers). Prior to regression analysis, classical assumption tests (normality, linearity, and heteroscedasticity) were conducted to ensure data validity (Rafi & Daud, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 384 respondents who were active followers of foodie KOLs in Indonesia. The distribution of respondent characteristics is presented in Table 1. The majority of respondents were aged 18-25 years (58.3%), followed by the 26-35 age group (31.5%), and the rest were over 35 years old (10.2%). Based on gender, female respondents dominated with a proportion of 68.5%, while males accounted for 31.5%.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Source: 2025	Age	18-25 years old	224	58,3	Primary data processed,
		26-35 years old	121	31,5	
		>35 years old	39	10,2	
Validity Results	Gender	Female	263	68,5	and Reliability Test
		Male	121	31,5	

The validity testing of the instrument using Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed that all statement items on the perceived authenticity and purchase intention variables had factor loading values above 0.5, ranging from 0.612 to 0.847. These results indicate that all items are able to measure the intended construct well. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient yielded a value of 0.891 for the perceived authenticity variable and 0.874 for the purchase intention variable, both of which exceed the minimum required threshold of 0.7. These findings indicate that the research instruments have high internal consistency and are reliable for measuring the research variables.

Table 2. Results of Instrument Validity and Reliability Testing

Variable	Number of Item	Range Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Perceived Authenticity	15	0,612 - 0,847	0,891	Valid dan Reliabel
Purchase Intention	8	0,635 - 0,821	0,874	Valid dan Reliabel

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis shows that the perceived authenticity variable of foodie KOLs has an average (mean) value of 3,78 with a standard deviation of 0,64, indicating that respondents rate the authenticity of foodie KOLs as high. The purchase intention variable has an average value of 3,65 with a standard deviation of 0,71, indicating a fairly high level of purchase intention for culinary brands recommended by KOLs. The minimum and maximum values for both variables range from 1 to 5, according to the measurement scale used.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Authenticity	384	1,00	5,00	3,78	0,64
Purchase Intention	384	1,00	5,00	3,65	0,71

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Results of Classical Assumption Tests

All classical assumption tests (normality, linearity, and heteroscedasticity) met the required criteria, indicating that the data are suitable for regression analysis (see Table 4).

Table 4. Results of Classical Assumption Test

Assumption Test	Method	Statistical Value	Significance	Conclusion
Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	1,241	0,072	Data are normally distributed
Linearity	F-test	245,678	0,000	Linear relationship confirmed
Heteroscedasticity	Glejser	1,524	0,128	No heteroscedasticity detected

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

The results of simple linear regression analysis show that the perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs has a positive and significant effect on followers' purchase intention for culinary brands. The regression equation obtained is $Y = 0,845 + 0,743X$, where Y is purchase intention and X is perceived authenticity. The regression coefficient (β) value is 0,743 indicates that every one-unit increase in perceived authenticity will increase purchase intention by 0,743 units. The calculated t-value of 15,672 with a significance of 0,000 ($p < 0,05$) indicates that the effect is statistically significant. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0,391 shows that 39,1% of the variation in purchase intention can be explained by perceived authenticity, while the remaining 60,9% is influenced by other factors outside the research model. Based on these results, hypothesis H_1 is accepted and H_0 is rejected, confirming that there is a significant effect of perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs on followers' purchase intention.

Table 5. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Regression Coefficient (β)	t value	Significance	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Constant	0,845	3,124	0,002	0,625	0,391	0,389
Perceived Authenticity	0,743	15,672	0,000			

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Interpretation of Hypothesis Testing Results

Statistical hypothesis testing shows that $H_0: \beta = 0$ is rejected and $H_1: \beta \neq 0$ is accepted at a significance level of 0,05. The calculated t-value (15,672) is greater than the t table (1,966) at $df = 382$, confirming the rejection of the null analysis. These results provide strong empirical evidence that the perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs has a significant and positive influence on followers' purchase intentions toward culinary brands. The moderate strength of influence ($R^2 = 0,391$) indicates that although perceived authenticity is an important predictor, there are still other variables that contribute to the formation of followers' purchase intentions, such as product quality, price, or other social factors that are not included in this research model.

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Perceived Authenticity on Purchase Intentions

The findings of this study confirm that the perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs has a positive and significant influence on followers' purchase intentions toward culinary brands, with a regression coefficient of 0,743 and a significance value 0,000. These results are in line with studies showing that the credibility and authenticity of digital communicators are determining factors in shaping consumer purchase intentions. This aligns with the source credibility theory, emphasizing that authentic communicators are more persuasive. In the context of foodie KOLs, when followers perceive the culinary content shared as honest and sincere experiences, rather than merely paid promotions, they are more likely to develop trust in these recommendations and subsequently be encouraged to make purchases. This finding is reinforced by studies proving that influencers' credibility, which stems from their expertise and experience, as well as their ability to provide honest product reviews, significantly influences consumers' purchase intentions in online transactions (Lumbantoruan & Marwansyah, 2023).

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0,391$) indicates that 39,1% of the variation in purchase intention can be explained by perceived authenticity, while the remaining 60,9% is influenced by other factors. This finding is consistent with several previous studies that found that although the authenticity and credibility of influencers are important factors, purchasing decisions are also influenced by other elements. Research on skincare products found that although product compatibility with influencers had a positive effect on attitude and credibility, there was no significant effect on purchase intent, indicating the need to consider other factors such as actual product quality, price, and personal preferences (Koyong et al., 2022). In a different context, research on Paragon brand paint products shows that brand authenticity has a significant effect on product quality and that brand image can positively moderate this relationship, demonstrating the complexity of factors that influence consumer decisions. (Farida, Purwitasari, & Taufik, 2022).

This study also revealed that the average perceived authenticity score ($M = 3,78$) is in the high category, indicating that the majority of followers consider the foodie KOLs they follow to be quite authentic. This phenomenon can be explained by the ability of foodie KOLs to maintain a balance between organic and commercial content. In different industries, research on automotive YouTube channels found that influencer credibility had a 14,9 impact on purchase interest with a low influence category, indicating that the level of influence can vary depending on the industry context and audience characteristics (Megawati Guntari Putri & Rofiuddin, 2023). The difference in magnitude of this influence indicates that the culinary industry may have different dynamics compared to other industries, where sensory and emotional aspects are more dominant in the decision-making process.

The characteristics of respondents, who were predominantly young people (89,8% berusia 18-35 tahun) provide an important context for interpreting the results. This demographic group values transparency, relatability, and genuine connection in their interactions with influencers. (Nadia Ramadhani Nugroho Putri & Handriana, 2024). Research on fashion product consumers shows that Generation Z has a tendency to make impulsive purchases based on Instagram content, confirming the sensitivity of young people to the influence of social media in their purchasing decisions. These findings are also in line with research showing that, in combination with other factors such as collaborative branding and price, influencer marketing can have a significant simultaneous effect on purchase intent, although its influence may be partially limited. In the context of halal products, the study found that influencer marketing can indirectly influence purchase intention through brand image mediation, demonstrating the complexity of the influence pathway in influencer marketing. (Alghifari, Rofianto, Wulandari, & Pracoyo, 2024).

From a practical perspective, these findings have strategic implications for culinary brands in designing influencer marketing campaigns. Brands need to prioritize collaborations with KOLs who have authentic

reputations and engaged follower base. Research in the banking services sector shows the importance of digital service quality in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty, a principle that can be analogized to the idea that the quality of authentic content from KOLs will shape the satisfaction and loyalty of followers, which ultimately increases the effectiveness of product recommendations (Asbi Amin & Kara, 2022). Studies in the food and beverage industry also confirm that quality commitment in brand authenticity has a positive effect on brand reliability and brand intention, demonstrating the importance of quality consistency in maintaining perceived authenticity (Setiawan & Asiyah, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study proves that the perceived authenticity of foodie KOLs contributes significantly to shaping followers' purchase intentions toward culinary brands, with a regression coefficient value of 0,743 and a significance of 0,000. These findings confirm that perceived authenticity is the foundation of consumer trust in Indonesia's culinary digital marketing ecosystem. Although perceived authenticity explains 39,1% of the variation in purchase intention, the rest is influenced by external factors such as product quality, price, and other social dynamics. The characteristics of respondents, who are predominantly young people, show that the transparency and honesty of KOLs are crucial elements in building emotional connections that drive purchasing decisions. Further research needs to explore additional mediating and moderating variables to understand the mechanisms of influence more comprehensively in the context of the Indonesian culinary industry.

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