



## **Integrated Marketing Communication in the Social Media Era: Performativity, Identity, and User-Generated Content in Indonesia's Digital Consumer Culture**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Indonesian brands increasingly rely on story-driven Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), yet the role of User-Generated Content (UGC) in shaping consumer identity on social media remains underexplored.

**Objective:** This study examines the intersection of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) practices and consumer identity construction on social media, focusing on User-Generated Content (UGC), such as unboxing videos, haul videos, and brand challenges, within Indonesia's digital culture.

**Methods:** This study used an integrative literature review of studies published from 2005 to 2026, analyzed through Judith Butler's performativity framework and Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). Of the 187 records initially identified, 38 articles met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed.

**Results:** This study identifies three main findings. First, engineered authenticity has become the dominant IMC strategy, in which marketing effectiveness depends on brands acting as story catalysts rather than narrative centers. Second, UGC practices represent active identity performativity; Indonesian consumers perform their identities by citing social norms related to class, gender, and success, with local characteristics such as identity dualism among nonconventional groups and the negotiation of women's independence with religious values. Third, consumer content is ambivalent, as it reproduces consumerist ideologies while opening limited spaces for resistance, including parody, criticism, and alternative gender expression, although such resistance tends to be recuperated by platform logic.

**Conclusion:** This study contributes to the integration of IMC as a discursive practice and offers implications for practitioners, particularly regarding transparency in engineered authenticity, and for regulators, especially in developing guidelines for sponsored content labeling.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of marketing communication, including in Indonesia. In the traditional communication model, firms largely controlled the production, timing, and distribution of promotional messages through mass media such as television, radio, and print. Consumers were primarily positioned as message recipients rather than active participants in communication processes (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). The growth of internet-based platforms and social media has altered this configuration. Platforms

such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have enabled consumers not only to receive brand messages but also to create, circulate, reinterpret, and contest them in public digital spaces (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kumar et al., 2010). As a result, brand communication increasingly takes place in environments where meaning is negotiated among brands, creators, consumers, and platform infrastructures rather than being fully managed by firms.

One important consequence of this transformation is the growing centrality of user-generated content (UGC) in contemporary marketing communication. Product reviews, unboxing videos, haul content, tutorials, livestream comments, and brand-challenge participation have become routine features of platform-based consumption. These practices matter not only because they influence purchase decisions but also because they shape how products, lifestyles, and identities are publicly narrated. In social media environments, consumers are no longer located at the end of the communication chain; they are part of the communicative process through which brands gain visibility, legitimacy, and cultural relevance. UGC, therefore, occupies an increasingly strategic position within integrated marketing communication (IMC), especially in digital ecosystems where participation, circulation, and interaction are central to campaign success.

This issue is particularly significant in Indonesia. Indonesia is one of the world's largest social media markets, with high levels of platform engagement and a rapidly expanding social commerce ecosystem. TikTok Shop, Shopee Live, and Instagram Shopping have blurred the boundaries between entertainment, interaction, and consumption, making social media a key arena for everyday purchasing decisions and symbolic self-presentation. At the same time, Indonesian digital culture is shaped by a sociocultural context that differs from the Western settings in which much IMC and consumer research has been developed. Religious values, collectivist orientations, family expectations, gender norms, and social hierarchy remain important in shaping what kinds of self-presentation are considered legitimate, desirable, or problematic in public digital spaces. Consequently, social media consumption practices in Indonesia cannot be understood solely as market behavior; they are also embedded in broader negotiations over identity, morality, aspiration, and cultural belonging.

Within this environment, a striking phenomenon has emerged: content that appears personal, spontaneous, and authentic is often intertwined with strategic brand communication. Brand collaborations are increasingly packaged through influencer storytelling, everyday consumption narratives, and creator personas that blur the line between ordinary self-expression and promotional communication. In other words, what circulates as "authentic" user expression may simultaneously function as part of a brand's communication strategy. This condition is especially relevant for understanding contemporary digital IMC because it complicates the distinction between top-down marketing messages and bottom-up consumer participation. Rather than operating as separate spheres, brand strategy and consumer expression increasingly intersect within the same communicative practices.

Despite the relevance of this phenomenon, existing scholarship remains fragmented. A first stream of research, rooted in managerial IMC and digital marketing, primarily examines communication effectiveness, campaign integration, engagement, and brand-related outcomes. Studies in this tradition typically analyze how firms coordinate communication channels, optimize digital campaigns, or measure the effectiveness of social media activity in terms of reach, engagement, purchase intention, or brand equity (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Schoenmueller, 2012; Valos et al., 2016). Although valuable, this literature tends to approach UGC mainly as a communication asset, a source of engagement, or an extension of promotional strategy. Consumers are often treated as audiences to be activated, persuaded, or mobilized, while the cultural and identity dimensions of their participation remain underexplored.

A second stream of research, rooted in consumer culture, media, and cultural studies, takes the opposite direction. This literature emphasizes identity construction, meaning-making, performativity, symbolic consumption, and resistance in digital culture. Here, social media practices such as posting, reviewing, styling, and sharing are understood as forms of self-presentation and cultural negotiation rather than merely as responses to marketing stimuli (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Belk, 1988; Kozinets, 2015). Research in this tradition is especially

useful for showing how consumers use brands and consumption practices to perform gender, class aspiration, religiosity, and belonging. However, these studies often give limited attention to how such practices are shaped by organized marketing systems, brand campaigns, and platformized commercial strategies. As a result, consumer expression may appear to unfold independently of corporate communication interventions.

The problem, therefore, is not simply that IMC studies and cultural studies examine different topics, but that they often conceptualize the same digital practices from separate and non-integrated vantage points. Managerial IMC studies typically ask whether digital participation improves communication performance, whereas cultural studies ask how digital participation produces meanings and identities. What remains insufficiently examined is how these two dimensions are co-constituted in the same communicative process: how strategically orchestrated brand communication adopts the language of authenticity and participation, and how consumers, in turn, use those same branded communication spaces to perform, negotiate, reproduce, or resist identity-related meanings. This gap becomes particularly important in Indonesia, where digital consumption is deeply entangled with local moral norms, gender expectations, family obligations, and social hierarchies. Yet, to date, limited research has systematically integrated IMC, UGC, and identity performativity within the Indonesian social media context.

Based on this gap, the present study investigates user-generated content (UGC) not only as a component of digital integrated marketing communication (IMC) but also as a cultural arena in which identity is performed, negotiated, and contested. More specifically, the study examines how UGC operates within social media-based IMC practices in the Indonesian context, how the sharing of consumption experiences on social media contributes to consumer identity formation and performativity, and how brand marketing strategies interact dialectically with consumer identity performances in Indonesian digital culture, particularly in relation to the reproduction of and resistance to dominant cultural narratives.

To address these questions, this study focuses on social media practices on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, with particular attention to forms of UGC such as unboxing videos, haul content, and participatory brand challenges. The analysis concentrates on Indonesian digital culture because it offers a productive site for examining how platformized marketing communication intersects with locally specific structures of meaning. In this setting, digital consumption practices do not simply reflect market preferences; they also become a medium through which users negotiate visibility, authenticity, piety, gendered respectability, aspiration, and belonging.

Conceptually, this study positions UGC at the intersection of strategic communication and cultural performance. It departs from the assumption that contemporary digital IMC can no longer be understood solely as the coordination of firm-controlled messages. Instead, IMC increasingly operates through distributed communication networks in which consumer participation, creator labor, and platform affordances are integral to the circulation of brand meanings. To capture this complexity, the study draws on IMC as a framework for understanding strategic communication systems while using Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and Judith Butler's (2025) concept of performativity to explain how consumption-related content functions as identity work in digitally mediated environments. Through this integration, the study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how brand communication, user participation, and identity construction intersect in Indonesian social media culture.

## METHOD

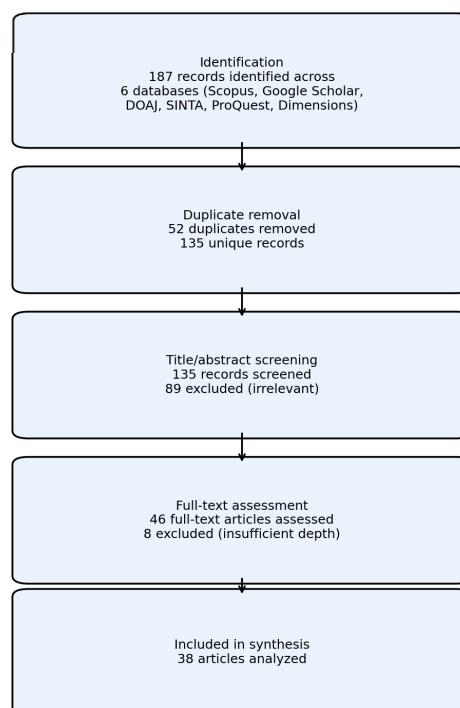
This study employed an integrative literature review approach to synthesize theoretical and empirical discussions on the intersection of integrated marketing communication (IMC), user-generated content (UGC), and identity performativity within Indonesia's digital consumer culture. An integrative literature review was selected over a systematic literature review for three methodological reasons: (1) the research questions involved multiple disciplinary traditions, including marketing, communication studies, cultural studies, and gender studies, with different methodological orientations; (2) the study aimed to develop a conceptual framework rather than aggregate effect sizes or test specific hypotheses; and (3) the phenomenon of "engineered authenticity" in the Indonesian context was relatively emergent, requiring interpretive synthesis

across heterogeneous study designs.

A systematic search was conducted in April 2026 across six academic databases: Scopus, Google Scholar, DOAJ, SINTA (Science and Technology Index), ProQuest, and Dimensions. The search employed Boolean combinations of keywords across four clusters: (1) the IMC cluster: “integrated marketing communication” OR “IMC”; (2) the social media cluster: “social media” OR “user-generated content” OR “UGC” OR “influencer marketing”; (3) the performativity cluster: “performativity” OR “Judith Butler” OR “consumer identity” OR “extended self”; and (4) the geographic filter: “Indonesia” OR “Southeast Asia.” The search was limited to publications between 2005 and April 2026, with the lower bound corresponding to the emergence of Web 2.0 platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Publications were included if they met the following criteria: (1) they were peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus or SINTA, with the exception of three undergraduate theses included as exploratory illustrative cases for niche local phenomena, namely cross-dress dance cover communities, that had not yet been documented in indexed journals; (2) they were written in English or Indonesian; (3) they addressed at least one of the core themes: digital IMC, UGC practices, consumer identity formation, or performativity; and (4) they were relevant to Indonesia or provided transferable conceptual frameworks. Publications were excluded if they addressed IMC purely as a managerial technical tool without engaging with cultural or discursive dimensions, or if they lacked clear theoretical grounding.

The selection process followed four stages. First, in the identification stage, 187 records were retrieved across the six databases. Second, during duplicate removal, 52 duplicates were removed, leaving 135 unique records. Third, during title and abstract screening, 135 records were screened for relevance to the research questions, and 89 were excluded as irrelevant, including technical IMC ROI studies and studies on non-Indonesian contexts without transferable insights. Fourth, during full-text assessment, 46 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, and 8 were excluded because of insufficient theoretical depth or methodological opacity. This process resulted in a final set of 38 articles included in the synthesis.



**Figure 1.** Literature selection flowchart (187 records to 38 included articles)

Three undergraduate theses from Apsari (2017), Firdaus (2025), and Pranoto (2025) were included with explicit methodological justification: they provided rare empirical access to

niche communities, namely cross-dressing K-pop dance cover groups, which have not yet been the subject of peer-reviewed publications. In this review, these sources were treated as preliminary illustrative evidence rather than primary empirical foundations. Their findings were interpreted cautiously and triangulated, where possible, with peer-reviewed sources discussing similar phenomena (Paramita et al., 2025; Suhertina et al., 2025).

The analysis followed the thematic synthesis approach developed for integrative reviews Whitemore (2005), consisting of three stages. First, during data reduction, each publication was coded for concepts relevant to the research questions. Open coding produced 47 initial codes, such as “engineered authenticity,” “identity dualism,” “brand–creator power asymmetry,” “halal consumption,” and “pious femininity.” Second, during data display, the codes were organized into conceptual matrices comparing how each theme was discussed across publication types, methodological orientations namely quantitative and qualitative, and national contexts namely Indonesian and Western contexts. Third, during conclusion drawing and verification, the codes were grouped into five thematic clusters that formed the structure of the Findings section: (a) transformation of marketing communication ecosystems; (b) UGC as an IMC strategic asset; (c) consumption as identity performativity; (d) engineered authenticity as a dominant strategy; and (e) reproduction and resistance. Contradictions among studies were not treated as methodological flaws but as indicators of the ambivalent nature of digital consumer practices, particularly in contexts where marketing strategies intersected with cultural expressions.

To strengthen quality appraisal and trustworthiness, each included article was rated against four criteria adapted from Petticrew (2006): clarity of methods, relevance of theoretical grounding, transparency of data sources, and credibility of conclusions. Articles scoring low on two or more criteria were excluded or, in the case of the three undergraduate theses, retained only as illustrative rather than evidentiary sources. Coding was performed iteratively by the author, with codes and clusters rechecked against the original texts in a second pass to manage interpretive bias. Disconfirming cases were deliberately retained rather than discarded to preserve the ambivalence documented in the Findings.

This integrative review had four limitations. First, the predominance of Indonesian studies limited generalizability to other Southeast Asian contexts, although comparison with Western literature was maintained throughout. Second, the inclusion of undergraduate theses, while justified for exploratory purposes, required cautious interpretation. Third, the rapid evolution of social media platforms, particularly TikTok’s algorithm changes in 2024–2025, meant that some findings may have limited temporal generalizability. Fourth, publication bias may have existed, as studies reporting successful engineered authenticity campaigns were more likely to be published than those documenting failures.

The synthesis was guided by an integrative analytical framework combining three conceptual lenses: (1) integrated marketing communication (IMC) as a strategic managerial practice coordinating brand communication across multiple channels; (2) user-generated content (UGC) as a discursive arena in which meanings about brands, lifestyles, and consumption practices are negotiated within digital communities; and (3) identity performativity and Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) as critical perspectives explaining how consumption practices on social media function as identity performances shaped by cultural norms, social expectations, and platform dynamics. This framework allowed the study to move beyond a purely managerial perspective on digital marketing and instead conceptualized IMC practices as part of broader cultural processes in which brands, consumers, and digital platforms co-produced meanings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Transformation of the Marketing Communication Ecosystem

A synthesis of the reviewed literature shows that marketing communication in the digital era has evolved from linear, one-way models into multidirectional, participatory communication ecosystems. Valos (2016) and Dwivedi (2021) documented this expansion of integrated marketing communication (IMC) beyond cross-media message coordination. In this new ecosystem, companies are no longer the sole sources of brand messages. Consumers, influencers, and online communities play central roles in shaping brand narratives through various forms of user-generated content (UGC) (De Veirman et al., 2017; Leung & Palmatier, 2022). This pattern is

observable in major Indonesian brand campaigns, such as McDonald's active use of TikTok challenges and local key opinion leader (KOL) collaborations (Casaló et al., 2020; Prasetio & Ariani, 2025). Several studies describe these emerging configurations as hybrid models that combine top-down and bottom-up communication flows.

### **The Role of User-Generated Content in IMC Strategy**

From a managerial perspective, UGC is viewed as a high-value strategic asset. Several quantitative studies consistently report the significant influence of UGC on purchase decisions (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Hudson et al., 2016; Jin et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Schivinski & Dąbrowski, 2016). Pranoto (2025) reported that TikTok Shop UGC significantly influenced Generation Z purchase decisions in Malang, with information search serving as a mediating variable.

The success of the No Drop campaign by Flux Creative Network provides a notable illustration: 9 of 15 TikTok videos achieved 18 million organic views without paid advertising. The campaign's success lay in its design, which gave audiences space to "play" by imitating challenges, creating parodies, or commenting humorously. Another notable case is Happy Wanda, a persona developed for Diabetasol, a widow who lost her husband to diabetes and navigates a middle-aged romance while consistently integrating products into daily stories (Muhlisian, 2026).

The literature also documents cases of asymmetric relationships between brands and UGC creators. The Laundry Majapahit case, which turned out to be a covert Rinso campaign, is reported as an instance in which audiences and participants did not know they were being drawn into an engineered marketing strategy.

### **Consumption as Identity Practice and Performativity on Social Media**

The third theme emerging from the literature is that practices of sharing consumption experiences on social media are reported as complex forms of identity performativity rather than mere "showing off" or "shopping documentation." Activities such as unboxing videos, haul videos, and product reviews are identified as structured communicative practices. Analyses of viral Indonesian TikTok content show that successful haul videos follow specific narrative structures: setup, which builds anticipation; climax, which reveals products; and resolution, which provides subjective evaluation. Across the analyzed TikTok content, opening gestures, surprise reactions, and evaluative statements recur as formal elements of the unboxing genre.

Belk (2013) conceptualizes this as the extended self, the self-extended into material possessions and digital traces. The literature positions unboxing videos as public rituals in which new consumer identities are claimed and validated by audiences.

In Indonesia, the literature documents how this performativity intersects with complex local values. Padang & Kamalia (2025) research on independent women's identity on social media shows Indonesian women negotiating between aspirations for financial freedom, Islamic values, and social expectations regarding domestic roles. Word cloud analysis reveals nodes such as strong-independent-woman-love and man-family-relationship, indicating tension between different identity poles. Haul content about beauty or fashion products is identified as a space in which women display purchasing ability while also adhering to beauty and femininity norms.

### **Engineered Authenticity as Dominant Strategy**

The most prominent finding across the reviewed literature is engineered authenticity, namely brands' and content creators' conscious efforts to design content that appears "authentic" and "spontaneous" despite being carefully calculated. Multiple studies report that this has become the dominant IMC strategy in Indonesia. The strategy has evolved from one-time influencer collaborations into long-term persona building. Flux Creative Network developed the Happy Wanda persona for Diabetasol, in which a widow begins a new life with a middle-aged romance while consistently integrating products into daily stories. The persona reportedly created an emotional connection because she seemed real and relatable, although the entire narrative was systematically designed as marketing communication (Muhlisian, 2026).

Studies also report that Indonesian audiences are relatively savvy at detecting content

that feels forced as an advertisement. They more readily accept transparent advertisements when they are presented as engaging stories. People accept it if it's an ad because we show a story. When people scroll and suddenly see 'Ah, that's so obviously an ad,' they get annoyed.

### **Reproduction and Resistance Toward Dominant Cultural Narratives**

The reviewed literature presents evidence of two concurrent tendencies regarding whether consumer content on social media reproduces or challenges dominant cultural narratives. First, studies document recurring themes of consumerist ideology, including the proposition that identity can be "bought" and performed through possessions. Second, emerging evidence, primarily from undergraduate theses, indicates that social media also accommodates practices that deviate from dominant gender norms, such as cross-dressing dance cover communities. However, the volume of peer-reviewed evidence on resistance remains smaller than that on reproduction.

Preliminary studies on cross-dressing dance cover communities, including Davinci and XCROWN, documented in undergraduate theses of Apsari (2017) and Firdaus (2025), show that social media can become an arena in which dominant gender norms are challenged, at least temporarily and in limited spaces (Widjaja & Subandi, 2025). Male dancers used dedicated social media accounts to display femininity that could not be expressed in daily life because of strong heteronormative norms. However, because of these studies' status, claims of "resistance" should be considered preliminary findings that require further verification.

Paramita (2025), in their study of "waria" characters in the Catatan Si Boy films, also reported representational ambivalence. Exaggerated femininity as a source of humor reproduces demeaning stereotypes; however, the presence of "waria" characters in the 1980s and 1990s, when such representation was nearly absent, opened space for minority identity recognition.

### **Discussion**

Having presented five thematic findings: (1) transformation of the marketing communication ecosystem, (2) UGC as an IMC strategic asset, (3) consumption as identity performativity, (4) engineered authenticity as a dominant strategy, and (5) reproduction and resistance, this section interprets their interconnections and develops theoretical arguments. The central argument developed here is that IMC in Indonesia's social media era operates as a participatory communication system in which engineered authenticity mediates between brand strategy and consumer performativity. Rather than simply restating the findings, this discussion advances three conceptual contributions: metric-driven performativity, ambivalent agency, and tension-based performativity as a non-Western model of digital identity formation. These three contributions are interpretive syntheses developed from the reviewed literature rather than claims directly tested against new data; each is therefore stated below together with the specific evidentiary basis on which it rests and the scope conditions under which it should be read, so that conceptual ambition is not mistaken for empirical confirmation.

### **From Ecosystem Transformation to Co-created Communication**

The results show that marketing communication has shifted from linear to multidirectional models. Interpreting this pattern, the boundary between top-down and bottom-up communication has become blurred, creating hybrid models that can be termed co-created communication. This confirms and extends Valos (2016) and Dwivedi (2021) observations regarding IMC expansion, suggesting that the ecosystem transformation documented in the results is not merely channel proliferation but a fundamental restructuring of communicative authority.

### **Power Asymmetry and the Critical Limits of UGC as Strategic Asset**

Although the results demonstrate UGC's effectiveness as a strategic asset, a critical perspective reveals that the relationship between brands and UGC creators is never symmetrical. UGC creators, especially micro-influencers or non-influencers, often lack full awareness that their content is being used as a marketing tool. The Laundry Majapahit case illustrates this power asymmetry: what appeared to be organic viral content was a covert Rinso campaign. This raises important questions about consent and transparency in participatory marketing ecosystems.

### **Engineered Authenticity as Discursive Achievement**

Through engineered authenticity strategies, brands attempt to borrow authority from cultural norms by creating ecosystems in which consumers are encouraged to produce content that unconsciously serves marketing interests. However, consumers are not passive victims; they can detect engineering, refuse participation, or ironically challenge brand campaigns.

The results show that engineered authenticity is effective because it borrows familiar narrative forms. However, a deeper discursive mechanism is at work: engineered authenticity operates as a form of legitimate peripheral participation in brand communities. When consumers encounter Happy Wanda or a TikTok challenge, they are not merely passive viewers but are positioned as apprentice members of a brand's imagined community. By imitating, parodying, or commenting on UGC, they perform loyalty before fully internalizing it. This explains why overt engineering with narrative framing works better than covert engineering: consumers willingly suspend disbelief when they recognize the genre, for example, "this is a branded story, not a hidden ad." Authenticity, therefore, is not a property of content but a discursive achievement negotiated through shared genre awareness. This interpretation is illustrated primarily through the Happy Wanda case and should accordingly be read as a plausible reading of one well-documented campaign rather than as a pattern established across the full set of 38 reviewed articles; corroborating it would require applying the same coding lens to additional engineered-authenticity campaigns in the corpus.

The results also indicate that authenticity is not about the absence of engineering but about whether engineering successfully "borrows" familiar narrative forms that audiences already like. This insight suggests that Indonesian audiences evaluate content through genre recognition rather than through a binary authentic/inauthentic judgment.

### **Metric-Driven Performativity**

Butler's performativity framework emphasizes the citation of norms, but the Indonesian case reveals an additional dimension: performativity is increasingly mediated by platform metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. When a young Indonesian woman posts a haul video, she is not only citing norms of consumer success or femininity but also anticipating algorithmic recognition. The desire to "go viral" shapes which norms are cited and how. This introduces a new concept: metric-driven performativity, identity performances optimized for platform visibility rather than solely for social approval.

This extends Butler's framework by showing that today's audience includes nonhuman algorithmic systems that reward specific performative styles, such as high energy, fast cuts, and emotional peaks. In Indonesia, where social media usage time is among the world's highest, metric-driven performativity may accelerate the homogenization of UGC formats, potentially reducing the very diversity that platforms claim to celebrate. This proposed extension applies Butler's (2002) citational logic to a nonhuman audience that her original formulation did not theorize, and the claim is offered as an interpretive inference from the reviewed studies' descriptions of platform-optimized content, which those studies directly measured. It would require dedicated empirical testing, for instance, comparing engagement metrics across content with and without explicit algorithmic optimization, before metric-driven performativity could be considered an empirically grounded extension rather than a theoretical proposition.

### **Consumption as Identity Formation: A CCT Interpretation**

Within the CCT framework, the results on consumption practices can be interpreted more deeply: consumption performed on social media is itself a form of identity formation. Someone does not merely "own" an iPhone; they become an iPhone user with its associated privileges, status, and cultural affiliations. The unboxing video becomes a public ritual through which audiences claim and validate this new identity.

Critically, haul content about beauty or fashion products becomes an arena in which women perform their independence by showing purchasing ability while simultaneously submitting to potentially problematic beauty and femininity norms. This dual dynamic, empowerment through consumption and subjection to consumerist beauty standards, is a key

interpretive insight that the results themselves, as descriptive findings, do not articulate but that emerges when they are read through a CCT lens.

### **Reproduction, Resistance, and Ambivalent Agency**

The results reveal evidence of both reproduction and resistance in consumer content, but this discussion argues that these tendencies are not simply oppositional. Even the most disruptive content, if viral, may eventually be recuperated into platform logic: it generates engagement for platforms, profits for brands, and “content” for other creators to imitate. Digital capitalism has an extraordinary capacity to absorb criticism and resistance, turning them into commodifiable products.

Drawing on Banet's (2018) analysis of popular feminism, this study suggests that market-mediated absorption often operates through consumers' willing participation. A male dancer who gains thousands of followers and subsequently accepts brand deals knowingly converts gender-nonconforming expression into commercial value. Resistance and complicity, therefore, are not mutually exclusive but co-occur.

This study conceptualizes this phenomenon as ambivalent agency: the capacity of consumers to simultaneously challenge social norms by performing nontraditional gender expressions, and reproduce consumerist systems by monetizing those performances within platform economies. As with the discussion above, this concept is grounded mainly in the single illustrative case of a male dancer monetizing gender-nonconforming content. The preliminary undergraduate-thesis evidence on cross-dressing communities discussed in the Results is consistent with this pattern but does not, on its own, establish how widespread such monetized resistance is among Indonesian UGC creators (Apsari, 2017). Therefore, ambivalent agency is presented here as a conceptual proposal that warrants confirmation through broader sampling rather than as a generalized empirical result.

### **Tension-Based Performativity as a Non-Western Model**

Ambivalent agency operates at the individual level of consumer practice. However, the Indonesian context reveals an additional systemic dimension not adequately captured by Western CCT frameworks, which typically assume relatively autonomous consumers with weak institutional ties to religion or community. Indonesian digital performativity exhibits a distinct pattern, which this study terms tension-based performativity. In this model, individuals construct identities around value systems that remain in productive contradiction rather than seeking resolution. Empirically observed tensions include religious piety versus consumer freedom, family expectations versus personal autonomy, and traditional gender roles versus flexible gender expression.

Unlike Western patterns, in which such contradictions are often managed through ironic detachment, or subcultural distancing, and subcultural retreat, or enclave formation, Indonesian consumers often sustain both poles simultaneously without resolution. The word cloud finding from Padang & Kamalia (2025), in which strong-independent-woman-love and man-family-relationship appear together, exemplifies this logic. Two qualifications are warranted here. First, the contrast with “Western patterns” is necessarily a broad generalization rather than a claim about all Western consumers or all Indonesian consumers; it summarizes a tendency reported across the Western CCT and subcultural literature reviewed, for example, on ironic distancing and enclave subcultures, against a tendency observed in the Indonesian sources analyzed here, while individual variation within both contexts is expected. Second, tension-based performativity is positioned as a complement to, rather than a wholesale departure from, existing accounts of identity contradiction. It shares the premise that individuals manage competing identity demands, but differs by proposing that Indonesian UGC practices sustain rather than resolve or compartmentalize these demands, a distinction that future comparative work could test against related theoretical frameworks.

### **The Distinctiveness of Indonesian Digital Performativity**

What distinguishes the Indonesian context is the influence of local values, including religion, family, gender, and social hierarchy, which give specific coloring to identity performativity on social media. Indonesian women negotiate independence with religious values

(Suhertina et al., 2025); cross-dressing dancers negotiate gender expression with strong heteronormative norms; and consumers from various socioeconomic backgrounds negotiate class aspirations through consumption choices performed publicly (Sumakud & Septyana, 2020).

These two concepts operate at different analytical levels. Ambivalent agency describes individual consumers' capacity for simultaneous resistance and complicity. Tension-based performativity describes a systemic cultural logic prevalent in non-Western, high-context, religiously diverse societies, where identity formation prioritizes sustaining productive contradictions over achieving coherence. Together, they suggest an extension of Butler's performativity framework: in contexts such as Indonesia, performativity is not primarily about subverting or affirming norms but about maintaining viable tensions across multiple, partially incommensurable normative systems.

### **Re-theorizing IMC: From Integration to Orchestration**

The findings question the traditional IMC principle that brands should speak with "one voice and one look." In Indonesia, when brands use engineered authenticity campaigns, successful IMC does not necessarily create a single, consistent brand message. Instead, it creates a mix of many different voices. Different content creators express the brand in intentionally varied ways, for example, by placing humorous parodies alongside honest, serious reviews. This shifts IMC from a focus on integration, or full control and consistency, to a focus on orchestration, or managing many different voices simultaneously. In practical terms, this means brands must accept, and even encourage, some loss of control over their message. Doing so can help them generate greater audience engagement.

In theoretical terms, this suggests that IMC should no longer be seen only as a centralized planning process in which one team controls everything. Instead, it should be seen as a distributed authorship system in which many different actors help create the brand's story. This re-theorization is positioned here as an extension of, rather than a break from, existing IMC scholarship. It builds directly on Valos's (2016) and Dwivedi's (2021) observations that digital IMC increasingly depends on consumer co-creation and pushes that managerial literature toward a more explicitly cultural-discursive vocabulary, "orchestration" and "distributed authorship" rather than "integration", that has not, to this study's knowledge, been systematically proposed within IMC theory itself, which is where its contribution is intended to be read.

### **Synthesis and Theoretical Grounding**

The findings above empirically ground the theoretical framework proposed in the introduction. Three theoretical advancements introduced earlier (IMC as participatory communication, engineered authenticity as communicative logic, and the integration of performativity with CCT) are evidenced here through Indonesian case studies and synthesized themes.

These findings align with and extend prior international research. Abidin (2016) and Marwick (2015) documented similar engineered authenticity practices among Western influencers, but the Indonesian context reveals unique characteristics: greater tolerance for overt engineering when framed as narrative and stronger negotiation with religious and familial values. Unlike Western contexts, where individualism dominates identity performance, Indonesian digital performativity remains deeply embedded in collectivist structures. The identity dualism observed among cross-dressing groups, displaying femininity on stage but masculinity in daily life, reflects what Octaviani (2025) describes as resistance to heteropatriarchy within limited discursive spaces, a phenomenon shaped by Indonesia's specific legal and social constraints on gender expression.

Taken together, metric-driven performativity, ambivalent agency, and tension-based performativity suggest that Butler's performativity framework, developed to explain how norms are cited and naturalized through repetition, needs further specification when applied to algorithmically mediated, religiously inflected, collectivist settings. In such contexts, the audience citing norms is partly nonhuman, the agency enacted is simultaneously complicit and resistant rather than one or the other, and the norms cited are sustained in productive tension rather than

resolved. This study's central theoretical claim is therefore that digital identity performativity in contexts such as Indonesia is best understood not as a variant of Western performativity but as a structurally distinct configuration in which platform metrics, market co-optation, and unresolved normative pluralism jointly condition how identity is performed. This review proposes that configuration as a starting point for comparative theorizing across other high-context, religiously diverse digital cultures.

### CONCLUSION

Synthesizing the literature reviewed, this study indicates that engineered authenticity has emerged as an increasingly common, though not universally dominant, pattern within contemporary Indonesian IMC practice, in which marketing effectiveness appears to be linked to brands acting as story catalysts rather than narrative centers. Read through Butler's performativity lens, UGC practices such as unboxing and haul videos function as repeated, audience-evaluated identity performances that cite available norms of class, gender, and success. Consumer Culture Theory's identity-project and marketplace-ideology streams help explain why these performances simultaneously reproduce consumerist norms and open limited space for resistance. Theoretically, this study repositions IMC as a discursive, co-produced practice rather than a purely managerial coordination function, bridging the managerial IMC and cultural identity research traditions identified earlier in this review.

Practically, the findings suggest that overt, narratively framed brand involvement may sustain consumer trust more reliably than covert engineering, although this pattern warrants further empirical testing before firm recommendations are issued. Relatedly, clearer sponsored-content disclosure norms, rather than rigid mandated formats, could support audience trust without unduly constraining creative practice. Future research building directly on these findings should examine, through ethnographic and reception-based methods, how specific Indonesian audience segments interpret engineered authenticity across platforms and whether the reproduction-resistance ambivalence identified here holds across other Southeast Asian digital cultures. As Indonesian digital consumer culture continues to evolve, understanding marketing communication as an identity-performative practice, rather than a one-way persuasion channel, offers a more theoretically grounded basis for both scholarship and responsible industry practice.

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### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

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