

THE MEANING OF ONLINE SHOPPING BEHAVIOR IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF JEAN BAUDRILLARD'S SOCIAL LOGIC OF CONSUMPTION (Case Study in Surabaya City)

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Article	Abstract
<p>Keywords: Online Shopping Behavior, Social Logic of Consumption, Jean Baudrillard</p> <p>Article History: Received: Aug 31, 2024; Reviewed: Jan 20, 2025; Accepted: Mar 6, 2025; Published: Mar 27, 2025;</p>	<p><i>This study investigates the social meanings and implications of online shopping behavior in Surabaya, Indonesia, a rapidly urbanizing city with high internet penetration and a growing e-commerce sector. It examines how online shopping is experienced and understood by consumers, moving beyond a purely transactional view to explore its role in shaping social relationships, identities, and cultural practices. Using a qualitative approach, the research draws on in-depth interviews with eighteen regular online shoppers in Surabaya, selected through purposive sampling with the assistance of a key informant who owns an online store. The semi-structured interviews explored participants' motivations, purchasing habits, perceptions of online shopping, and the social context of their online consumption. Thematic analysis was employed, involving iterative coding and interpretation of the interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns and key themes. The findings reveal that online shopping in Surabaya is driven by a complex interplay of factors beyond mere convenience. While the ease and efficiency of online platforms are significant motivators, the study highlights the powerful influence of discounts, promotions, and the visual allure of online marketplaces. These factors often lead to impulse purchases and the acquisition of items driven by "want" rather than "need." Furthermore, the research uncovers the significant role of social comparison and the desire for "newness" in shaping online consumption. Participants expressed a desire to keep up with trends, appear fashionable, and gain social validation through their online purchases. This suggests that online shopping is not simply an individual activity but is deeply embedded in social dynamics and the pursuit of status. The study concludes that online shopping in Surabaya is a multifaceted social practice, reflecting broader trends in consumer culture and the increasing influence of digital platforms on everyday life. It highlights the need for further research into the long-term social, cultural, and psychological consequences of this increasingly prevalent form of consumption.</i></p>



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Introduction

Products should be acquired solely for their use and not for any other purpose. However, this way of thinking is not consistent with the views of producers of products and services. They surely don't want consumers to buy items only for their utility; this would limit their ability to make purchases. As a result, consumers must be persuaded to buy for a variety of reasons. That is why manufacturers need to build a consumer lifestyle that encourages individuals to keep making purchases (Tamara et al., 2023). Consumerism is a way of thinking and acting where people buy things not because they need them, but because the act of buying brings them satisfaction (Kurniawan, 2017).

Modern society is a consumer society, which means that it consumes incessantly. However, consuming is no longer only a way to meet fundamental and functional human requirements (Umanailo et al., 2018). Humans need more than simply "garments, meals, and shelter" to live. Although biologically sufficient to meet dietary and clothing demands, in the social order of interacting with other people, contemporary humans must consume more than that (Lestari et al., 2019)

Rene Descartes remarked, "Cogito, ergo sum" – I think, therefore I am – implying that a person's existence is heavily influenced by their thoughts and ideas. Several decades ago, this phrase was quite popular and even became the essence of the age. However, as a consumer lifestyle has evolved, this aphorism, like the swiftly expanding social reality, has lost its significance. The statement "I shop, therefore I am" more accurately represents our culture today. Human existence is obtained by devouring existing signs (Holbrook, 2001). It has been argued that excessive and pointless consumption is what allows

individuals to believe that they exist and are truly alive (Bakti et al., 2019).

A consumerist lifestyle is characterized as one in which luxury items are viewed as a measure of happiness, pleasure, and self-satisfaction. When happiness is measured in terms of material commodities, the human need for luxury goods is never satiated. A consumerist lifestyle generates a desire that will never be met, since capitalists will constantly produce newer luxury products; this is why a consumerist lifestyle is considered uneconomical. Currently, many people at all levels of society are unable to distinguish between necessities and preferences (Saumantri, 2022).

One of the phenomena that occurs in the everyday lives of modern society is the happiness associated with the excitement of consumption activities in online buying behavior. This shopping behavior refers to the process and actions of looking for, selecting, purchasing, utilizing, and reviewing items and services using internet media to suit needs and preferences (Sari, 2020). Online shopping behavior is a new buying medium that influences customers' purchase decisions. People no longer have to walk to find the items they need; instead, they may purchase from a gadget that is online (Utamanyu & Darmastuti, 2022).

Technological advancements have had a tremendous influence on modern society in a variety of ways, including the convenience of shopping. This boosts the flow of consumption, since people can shop online safely, conveniently, and at any time; also, discounts are frequently advertised to entice people to acquire things offered online (Istanti, 2017).

Shopping online might make it easier to select desired items, but it can also lead to a more consumerist lifestyle; in today's culture, individuals consume everything, not only goods and services. In the end, what is consumed is

consumption itself. For example, people read or watch advertisements and, without thinking twice, immediately buy the advertised products, meaning that individuals buy goods based on what they see in advertisements, which is the same as consuming what is portrayed as a need by advertisements. This is a form of waste (Sazali & Rozi, 2020).

The purpose of this study was to investigate online buying behavior in connection to the discourse of consumption, to determine if online shopping activity has a link with consumerism, particularly through online shopping behavior, or whether it is just the researchers' prejudice.

This study investigates the pervasive phenomenon of online shopping, focusing on the socially situated experiences of consumers in Surabaya, Indonesia. As the nation's second-largest city, Surabaya is undergoing rapid social and economic transformations, driven in part by high rates of internet usage, widespread smartphone adoption, and a vibrant e-commerce environment. These factors make Surabaya a compelling and relevant context for exploring how consumption is shaped by social forces, particularly the interplay of symbolic meanings, status, and social differentiation. The ease of access, personalized recommendations, and constant exposure to marketing messages characteristic of online platforms create a unique environment for consumption. Therefore, this research focuses on understanding how online shopping practices are intertwined with broader social changes in a major Indonesian urban center, offering insights into the evolving nature of consumer culture in the digital age.

Methods

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach, drawing on the principles of interpretive sociological inquiry to understand the meaning of online shopping behavior among residents of Surabaya, Indonesia. This approach recognizes that understanding social phenomena requires interpreting the meanings individuals ascribe to their actions and the social context in which those actions occur. The research focuses on exploring the socially situated experiences of online shopping – how individuals perceive, understand, and interact with online shopping platforms, and how this shapes their consumption practices (Bungin, 2001).

Research Location and Informant Selection

Surabaya was selected as the research location for this study due to its unique characteristics as a major Indonesian city with a high level of internet penetration and a vibrant online shopping culture. As the second-largest city in Indonesia after Jakarta, Surabaya has a substantial population, with 2.9 million residents according to the city's civil registration and population agency. A significant portion of this population, approximately 30% or 876,455 individuals, are high school graduates or equivalent, representing a demographic often associated with active internet usage and online engagement (Nugraheni & Yuni, 2017).

Data from Nugraheni and Yuni (2017) indicate that Surabaya residents, particularly young people, are highly engaged with the internet and social media. Over half (53.2%) of young people

in Surabaya own one smartphone, and a further 36% own two. This widespread smartphone ownership, coupled with an average daily internet usage exceeding five hours, creates a fertile ground for online activities, including online shopping. Furthermore, the data reveals that a large majority of Surabaya residents use social media for various purposes, including viewing news (81.8%), uploading photos/videos (76.6%), commenting (68%), and updating statuses (66.2%). This high level of social media engagement suggests a strong potential for social influence on consumption patterns, including online shopping decisions.

More broadly, Surabaya's location on the island of Java places it within a region that significantly contributes to Indonesia's overall internet growth. In 2020, Java accounted for 56.4% of the increase in internet users nationwide. During the pandemic, online shopping, along with social media, messaging, and online gaming, became a dominant online activity. Popular online shopping platforms in Indonesia include Shopee, Lazada, Tokopedia, and Bukalapak, with fashion/beauty products, household goods, and electronics being the most frequently purchased items. This national trend is reflected in Surabaya, which, with over 3 million internet users in 2018, represents a significant market for e-commerce. The city's substantial population and high internet usage make it an ideal location to observe the impacts

and meanings of online shopping behavior in a concentrated and readily accessible setting. The sheer scale of internet use in Surabaya makes the social effects of online shopping more visible and pronounced than in areas with lower internet penetration (Tim APJII, 2020).

To gain in-depth insights into the socially situated experiences of online shoppers in Surabaya, this study employed purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2007). This qualitative research approach prioritizes the selection of participants who can provide rich, detailed accounts relevant to the research question (Bungin, 2008). Eighteen (18) participants, all residents of Surabaya and regular customers of online stores located in the city, were selected.

A key informant, Riandini Aprilia Utomo, owner of the online store "Onlishop," played a crucial role in identifying and connecting the researcher with potential participants. Ms. Utomo, as an online store owner for two years, possessed extensive knowledge of the local online shopping landscape and had a network of regular customers and resellers (Bungin, 2001). This key informant approach facilitated access to a diverse group of online shoppers who could offer varied perspectives on their experiences. The informants' details, including their age, education, occupation, and address, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The Informant Table

No	Name	Age	Occupation	Address
1	Riandini Aprilia Utomo	28	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Akhmad 6 no 9 Rt 3 Rw 10 Pepelegi, Waru Sidoarjo.
2	Mifthakul Ajeng	22	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Kendung 3d no4v Sememi, Surabaya.
3	Nia Enes	25	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Kesatrian 41 Blok X no 12. Sawunggaling, Wonokromo. Surabaya.
4	Siti Mufadilah	25	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Banjar Melati gg tembusan no 10 jeruk Lakarsantri. Surabaya.
5	Nita Dwi Lestari	28	Pekerja Kantor	Taman Pondok Legi IV Blok N.05 Pepelegi, Sidoarjo.
6	Ika Lestari	30	Pekerja Kantor	Taman Pondok Legi IV Blok N.05 Pepelegi, Sidoarjo.
7	Zara Angrina Anggawisata	25	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Basuki Rahmat No 67 Surabaya
8	Arsita	22	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Alas malang Rt 4 Rw 3 Bringin Sambikerep, Surabaya
9	Shinta Purnama Sari	30	Pekerja Kantor	DK Bungkal Rt 9 Rw 3 Sambikerep Surabaya
10	Wempy Widya Tristiyanti	28	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Hayam Wuruk no 18 Sawotratratap Sidoarjo
11	Feni Aprilia	28	Pekerja Kantor	Dukuh Kupang Timur No 56. Surabaya
12	Ninik Sulistyowati	27	Pekerja Kantor	Jalan Semolowaru Selatan gang 1 no 21. Surabaya
13	Rosa Lia Lestari	25	Pekerja Kantor	Taman Pondok Legi IV Blok N.11 Pepelegi Sidoarjo
14	Ahmad Baehaqi	26	Pekerja Kantor	Jalan Jatisari besar No.35. Kediri
15	Krisna Murti	41	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Dukuh Pakis No 61 Surabaya
16	Mutia Zahara	30	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Kawi No. 31 Pepelegi Sidoarjo
17	Nuansa Larasati	20	Pekerja Kantor	Jl. Kedinding Tengah Baru XX no 31 Kenjeran, Surabaya.
18	Safitri Aisah	28	Pekerja Kantor	JL. Sidodadi no 52 Rt 02 Rw 14 kelurahan Wage kec. Taman Sidoarjo

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach. An interview guide was developed, containing open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed descriptions of the participants'

online shopping experiences, motivations, and perceptions. The guide served as a flexible framework, allowing for follow-up questions and exploration of emergent themes (Sugiyono, 2007). The interviews focused on topics such as:

- Frequency and types of online purchases
- Motivations for shopping online
- The role of discounts, promotions, and advertising
- Perceptions of products purchased online
- The social context of online shopping (e.g., influence of friends, social media)
- Feelings and emotions associated with online shopping

Interviews were conducted in Indonesian, audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was undertaken through an iterative and interpretive process, recognizing that sociological understanding emerges not from passive observation, but from active engagement with the data. This engagement was informed by the researcher's sociological pre-understanding, developed through prior research and theoretical engagement (Lindgren, 2020), as well as the specific social and cultural context of Surabaya.

The initial phase of analysis involved a deep immersion in the interview transcripts. These were read and re-read multiple times to achieve a holistic grasp of the participants' diverse experiences and perspectives regarding online shopping. From this immersive reading, significant statements, phrases, and anecdotes – termed "meaning units" – were identified. These meaning units represented key aspects of the participants' lived realities and provided the foundational material for subsequent interpretive steps (Lindgren, 2020).

The identified meaning units were then systematically organized into preliminary descriptive themes. This process involved grouping and categorizing the meaning units based on recurring patterns and commonalities across the participants' accounts (Lindgren, 2020). Examples of these initial, emergent themes included "convenience and efficiency," reflecting the perceived ease of online shopping; "the allure of discounts," highlighting the role of price incentives; "social comparison and influence," indicating the impact of social networks and peer behavior; and "the desire for newness," capturing the pursuit of novelty and trendiness through online purchases.

These descriptive themes served as a springboard for a deeper, interpretive analysis. This stage involved a multi-faceted approach to uncovering the underlying meanings and significance of the participants' experiences. First, contextualization was crucial: each participant's statements were considered within the broader context of their individual lives, social backgrounds (such as age, education, and occupation), and the specific circumstances of online shopping in Surabaya. Second, the analysis explicitly acknowledged the role of the researcher's pre-understanding. This involved a reflexive process of examining how pre-existing sociological knowledge and theoretical frameworks influenced the interpretation, while simultaneously remaining open to new insights and potential challenges to those pre-conceptions. This constant interplay between the data, relevant sociological literature, and the researcher's evolving understanding is characteristic of the hermeneutic circle, a cyclical process of interpretation and refinement. Finally, the analysis sought to identify underlying social structures and meanings shaping

online shopping behavior. This involved moving beyond surface-level descriptions to explore the deeper motivations, values, and social dynamics – such as status competition, identity construction, and the influence of digital marketing – that were at play (Lindgren, 2020). Throughout the analytical process, the initial themes were continuously refined, combined, and reorganized. This iterative and reflexive approach, moving back and forth between the data, the emerging themes, and the researcher's evolving understanding, ultimately led to a more nuanced and comprehensive sociological interpretation of the meaning of online shopping behavior in the context of Surabaya.

Results

This section presents the key findings of the research, drawing directly on the interview data to illustrate the experiences and perspectives of online shoppers in Surabaya. The analysis revealed several interconnected themes related to the motivations, practices, and social context of online shopping.

One prominent theme emerging from the interviews was the perceived convenience and efficiency of online shopping compared to traditional brick-and-mortar stores. Participants consistently highlighted the time-saving aspects and the ease of accessing a wide variety of products without the need to travel or navigate crowded physical spaces. Mrs. Mufadillah's experience exemplifies this perspective:

"I like shopping online because it is efficient and eliminates the need to waste time on transportation and travel, as opposed to offline shopping in malls and stores. To pick clothes, you must first have free time. From my experience as a

housewife and private employee who seldom has time to buy outside the house, online shopping is effective and efficient."

However, Mrs. Mufadillah also acknowledged that this convenience sometimes leads to purchasing items that are not strictly necessities:

"Are the things you purchase online truly necessities? No, I purchase a lot of things that I do not truly need because of want rather than need."

A second major theme identified in the data was the allure of discounts and promotions. The availability of special offers, "buy one, get one free" deals, and reduced prices was a significant motivator for online shopping, even when participants did not have a pre-existing need for the items. This suggests that online shopping is not always driven by practical needs, but also by the perceived value and excitement associated with these marketing tactics. During a conversation with Mrs. Mufadillah, she confirmed this tendency:

"If (asked if I buy products based on impulse when browsing online), Yes." And "If so, what motivates you to make impulsive purchases online? Because there are several options and visuals to entice your purchasing hunger."

Mrs. Nita Dwi Lestari similarly acknowledged the powerful influence of discounts and promotional offers:

"When you explore online store sites, do you suddenly buy products that you feel you want to have? Yes." "If so, what motivates you to make impulsive purchases online? Because you are enticed by low

rates, buy one get one free promotions, and nice products at affordable costs, and sometimes I want to appear better than my friends. Every time I hang out, I wear something different. But if I do not have any money, I check in my wallet first and only buy what I need."

Finally, the interview data revealed the significant influence of social comparison and the desire for "newness" as drivers of online shopping behavior. Participants expressed a desire to appear fashionable, possess the latest products, and avoid being perceived as "out of date." This indicates that online shopping is not solely an individual activity but is also shaped by social pressures and the desire for social acceptance and status. Mrs. Ninik's comments are particularly illustrative of this theme:

"Do you keep up with current fashion and trends? Will you buy new products even if your old ones are still wearable? Yes, because the majority of the products offered are updated and modern, resulting in a sense of pride that is not discouraging"; "Do you have a consumerist style, which means you buy items excessively and in a planned manner. For example, to constantly be up to date. Yes, it is consumptive, because I enjoy collecting and changing bags. Influenced by the fashion environment."

Discussion

This section interprets the findings presented in the "Results" section through the theoretical lenses of Ritzer's concept of "non-objects" and, particularly, Baudrillard's analysis of the social logic of

consumption. The empirical evidence strongly suggests that online shopping in Surabaya is not simply a matter of fulfilling pre-existing needs, but is also a complex social practice shaped by the dynamics of consumer culture, status competition, and the affordances of digital platforms. It is within this context that the seemingly simple act of purchasing an item online becomes imbued with layers of social and symbolic meaning.

Online Shopping and the "Non-Object"

Ritzer (Ritzer, 2003, 2006) introduces the concept of "non-objects" to describe items that are acquired not primarily for their inherent utility, but rather due to manufactured desires, marketing strategies, and the ease of acquisition, particularly in online contexts. "Non-objects" are designed for rapid and effortless consumption, often lacking a deep connection between the consumer and the item itself. They are characterized by their interchangeability, their disposability, and their lack of genuine uniqueness. A mass-produced phone case, for instance, might be considered a "non-object" if it's purchased primarily for its aesthetic appeal, rather than its protective function, and is quickly discarded when a newer, trendier case becomes available. The findings presented earlier, particularly the participants' admissions of purchasing items they did not truly *need* due to convenience, discounts, and visual enticements, align strongly with Ritzer's concept. The ease of browsing and purchasing online, coupled with the constant stream of promotions and advertisements, encourages impulse buys and the accumulation of "non-objects" (Anam, 2021). This is further reinforced by the structure of online marketplaces,

which often prioritize visual presentation and promotional offers over detailed information about the product's materials, craftsmanship, or long-term durability (Prasiasa et al., 2023). The user interface itself is designed to facilitate rapid consumption, with features like "one-click purchasing" and "recommended items" further minimizing the cognitive effort required for a transaction (Sazali & Rozi, 2020). The interviewees' statements about buying things out of "want rather than need" directly reflect this dynamic. Mrs. Mufadillah's admission that she often purchases items she doesn't need highlights the disconnect between utility and acquisition that characterizes "non-object" consumption. This behavior is not irrational; rather, it's a rational response to an environment that actively encourages such behavior (Soares, 2017).

Furthermore, the ephemeral nature of online trends contributes to the "non-object" phenomenon. Products are often marketed as "must-haves" for a limited time, creating a sense of urgency and encouraging consumers to purchase items before they become "outdated" (Wijaya et al., 2020). This constant cycle of novelty and obsolescence further detaches consumption from genuine need, reinforcing the acquisition of "non-objects" as a primary activity. The rapid turnover of products on online platforms, fueled by fast fashion, technological advancements, and ever-changing trends, contributes to a culture of disposability, where items are quickly replaced rather than cherished for their long-term value (Liu, 2023).

The Social Logic of Consumption and Status Display

While Ritzer's concept illuminates the *process* of acquiring "non-objects," Baudrillard's (Baudrillard, 2017) work on

the social logic of consumption provides a deeper understanding of the *motivations* behind these purchases. Baudrillard argues that consumption in contemporary society is fundamentally about the manipulation of signs and the pursuit of social distinction. Goods are not simply used; they are *displayed* as markers of identity, status, and belonging. They become part of a complex system of signification, where their value lies not in their practical function, but in their ability to communicate social messages (Baudrillard, 2017). A particular brand of handbag, for example, might signify wealth, taste, or membership in a specific social group. The interview data from Surabaya provide compelling evidence of this social logic at work. The desire to "appear better than my friends" (Mrs. Nita, personal communication), to keep up with current fashion trends, and to experience the "pride" of owning the latest products (Mrs. Ninik, personal communication) clearly demonstrate that online shopping is not solely an individual act, but a *social* one, deeply embedded in the dynamics of status competition and social comparison within a specific cultural context. These statements reveal a conscious awareness of the symbolic value of goods and a deliberate attempt to use consumption as a means of social positioning (Fadhilah, 2011). The "buy one, get one free" promotions, and the seemingly endless stream of new products advertised online, fuel this cycle of consumption, encouraging individuals to constantly acquire new items in an effort to maintain or enhance their social standing. These marketing tactics exploit the inherent human desire for social validation and belonging, transforming it into a driver of consumer behavior (Lestari et al., 2019). The constant availability of new and discounted items creates a sense of perpetual inadequacy, prompting individuals to continually

update their possessions to remain "current" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1992).

The social logic of consumption, as Baudrillard (2017) elucidates, operates through a process of classification and differentiation. It's not simply about fulfilling needs, but about establishing a hierarchy of value (Fadhilah, 2011). People consume not the object itself, but the *sign* of the object – the social meaning it conveys within a particular social group (Djalal et al., 2022; Wijaya et al., 2020). A luxury brand watch, for instance, is not consumed primarily for its timekeeping function, but for the prestige and status it signifies. This symbolic value is not inherent in the object itself, but is conferred upon it by the social system (Baudrillard, 2019). The prevalence of online shopping advertisements on social media platforms, as noted in the description of the research context, creates a sense of urgency and a fear of being "left behind" if one doesn't participate in the latest consumption trends. This "fear of missing out" (FOMO) is a powerful psychological driver that is actively exploited by online marketers (De Battista, 2024). The constant exposure to images of others enjoying new products and experiences creates a sense of relative deprivation, further fueling the desire to consume (Ger & Belk, 1996). This reinforces the idea that online shopping is not just a transaction, but a form of social communication, a way of signaling one's position within a perceived social hierarchy. This pursuit of social meaning through purchasing is further evident when the act of acquiring goods is driven by a desire for a false sense of utility—where the practical function of an item is secondary to the image it projects (Permana, 2015). The object becomes a prop in the construction of a desired self-image, rather than a tool for fulfilling a practical need (Baudrillard, 2020).

Consumption as Differentiation and the Consumer Society

The emphasis on fashion, trends, and the constant acquisition of new items, as exemplified by Mrs. Ninik's desire to "collect and change bags," further highlights the role of online shopping in *social differentiation*. Consumption acts as a "system of differentiation" (Ulfa, 2012), creating distinctions in status and prestige within what can be understood as a "consumer society." This is not simply about individual preferences, but about participating in a larger system of social classification, where goods and brands become markers of social group membership (Rojas, 2023). The objects purchased online, and often displayed through social media, become markers of identity and social belonging. This constant striving for differentiation through consumption is a defining characteristic of contemporary consumer culture. This system relies on a constant circulation of signs, where objects are imbued with social meaning and used to communicate status and identity (Wijaya et al., 2020). Consumption, in this context, becomes a form of social language, a way of expressing oneself and relating to others, shaping and being shaped by social norms and expectations (Fadhilah, 2011; Umanailo et al., 2018). The act of posting a picture of a newly purchased item on social media, for example, is not simply about sharing information; it's about performing one's identity and seeking validation from others (X. Wang et al., 2012). This performance is often carefully curated, with individuals selecting specific products and presenting them in ways that are designed to elicit a desired response (Bhaskar, 2016).

Baudrillard's concept of consumption extends to the notion of "safety," where the seemingly superficial

aspects of social life are, in reality, imitations of a deeper desire for security and belonging (Fadhilah, 2011). The pursuit of status, manifested through the consumption of goods, becomes a way to achieve a sense of social acceptance and a defined place within the social order. The act of consuming objects that signify one's social class (or aspired-to social class) becomes a means of gaining recognition and social position (Misnawati, 2016; Purwanti, 2022). In this context, differences in access to resources and consumption opportunities, influenced by factors such as education, employment, and social status, contribute to a hierarchical structure of power and perceived social value (Kushendrawati, 2006). This hierarchy is not static, but is constantly being negotiated and reconfigured through the ongoing process of consumption and display (Dion & Borraz, 2017). The online environment, with its emphasis on visual presentation and social comparison, amplifies these dynamics, creating a heightened awareness of social differences and a stronger pressure to conform to perceived norms of consumption.

The Hyperreality of Online Shopping

Furthermore, Baudrillard's concept of *hyperreality* is particularly relevant to understanding the experience of online shopping. Hyperreality refers to a condition in which simulations and representations become more real than real, blurring the distinction between the actual and the simulated. The online environment, with its curated product images, filtered photos, glowing reviews, and influencer endorsements, creates a hyperreal space where the representation of the product often overshadows its tangible reality. Consumers are not simply buying a product; they are buying into the

image of the product and the lifestyle it represents (Jahshan, 2025).

This hyperreality is amplified by the sophisticated algorithms used by online platforms. These algorithms personalize the shopping experience, presenting users with products and advertisements that are tailored to their perceived preferences and desires (Purwanti & Mas'ud, 2019). This creates a "filter bubble" where consumers are primarily exposed to information and products that reinforce their existing tastes and biases, further detaching them from a broader, more objective reality (Кодиров & Шермухамедова, 2021). The reliance on online reviews and ratings, while seemingly providing objective information about product quality, can also contribute to the hyperreal. These reviews can be manipulated, incentivized, or simply reflect the subjective experiences of a limited sample of consumers (Mumuni et al., 2019). The "five-star" rating system, for instance, becomes a signifier of quality, even if it doesn't accurately reflect the product's actual performance or durability.

The integration of social media and online shopping further intensifies these dynamics of hyperreality and social comparison. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become powerful engines of consumerism, where influencers and brands collaborate to promote products and lifestyles (Awalia, 2017). The constant exposure to curated images of consumption – perfect outfits, luxurious vacations, impeccably decorated homes – creates a sense of aspiration and desire. Individuals are encouraged to purchase items not just for their own enjoyment, but to emulate the lifestyles they see online and to project a desired image to their own social networks (J. Wang et al., 2024). This creates a feedback loop, where online shopping fuels social media content

(through "haul" videos, product reviews, and "unboxing" posts), and social media content, in turn, fuels online shopping. The boundaries between advertising and personal expression become increasingly blurred, as individuals become both consumers and promoters of the consumerist lifestyle. This phenomenon, often termed "consumer-generated content," plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of brands and products, further demonstrating the intertwined nature of social media and online commerce (Habib, 2018)).

The Indonesian Context: Modernity, Tradition, and Online Consumption

It is also crucial to consider the specific socio-cultural context of Indonesia, and particularly Surabaya, in understanding the meaning of online shopping. Indonesia has experienced rapid economic growth and urbanization in recent decades, leading to significant social changes, including the rise of a new middle class with increased purchasing power and access to digital technologies (Diah I. P & Wardhani, 2023). This has created a fertile ground for the expansion of e-commerce and online consumption. At the same time, traditional values and social norms continue to exert a strong influence on Indonesian society (Dewi & Lusikooy, 2024). This creates a complex interplay between modernity and tradition, where global consumer culture interacts with local customs and beliefs. This tension is often played out in the realm of online shopping, where individuals navigate between global trends (promoted through social media and online advertising) and their own cultural values and social expectations. For example, the desire to appear modern and fashionable might be balanced by concerns about modesty or religious appropriateness (Featherstone, 1990).

This negotiation between global and local influences shapes the specific ways in which online shopping is practiced and understood in Surabaya.

Further research could also explore the gendered dimensions of online shopping in Surabaya, building upon the initial observations from the interview data. The data suggests that women, particularly those working in office settings, are heavily involved in online shopping. This may reflect broader societal trends, where women are often assigned the primary responsibility for household consumption and are also more likely to be influenced by fashion and beauty trends, often heavily promoted through online channels (Rahadiarto, 2020). A gendered analysis could reveal how online shopping reinforces or challenges traditional gender roles and expectations within Indonesian society (Talita et al., 2024). For instance, online shopping might provide women with greater autonomy and control over their purchasing decisions, but it could also reinforce traditional expectations related to appearance and domesticity (Sari, 2020). Exploring these nuances would provide a richer understanding of the social and cultural implications of online shopping.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that online shopping in Surabaya is far more than a straightforward means of acquiring goods. It is a complex social practice, deeply intertwined with the dynamics of consumer culture, status competition, and the ongoing negotiation of social identity. The convenience and accessibility of online platforms, combined with pervasive marketing strategies and the allure of discounts, fuel a pattern of consumption driven as much by social

aspirations and the desire for "newness" as by practical needs. This research highlights the significant, and often overlooked, role of online shopping in shaping social relationships and individual identities within a rapidly changing society. The findings underscore the broader trend of the online environment becoming a central arena for the expression and construction of self in contemporary consumer culture. Further research is needed to explore the long-term consequences of this shift, including its impact on social disparities, environmental sustainability, and individual well-being, as well as the evolving relationship between our lived experiences and the increasingly mediated world of online interaction.

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