Negotiating Fashion and Visibility: A Case Study of a Javanese Influencer's Instagram Self-Presentation

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100900329

Received: 23 September 2026; Accepted: 28 September 2026; Published: 10 October 2026

ABSTRACT

This article examines how a young Javanese influencer negotiates fashion, visibility, and audience interpretation through Instagram self-presentation. It reanalyses an existing qualitative corpus comprising an in-depth interview and three selected Instagram posts from a 20-year-old woman living in Surakarta, Indonesia. The analysis uses Erving Goffman's dramaturgical concepts of frontstage and backstage together with Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotics. Rather than treating body-conscious clothing or posed photographs as direct evidence of self-sexualization, the article investigates the gap between visual cues that may invite sexualized readings and the participant's own descriptions of her posts as "cute," fashionable, and oriented toward outfit sharing. The findings show that her online identity is collaboratively shaped through peer feedback, commercial opportunities, female followers' interest in outfit coordination, and perceived approval from her parents. Her case also complicates a rigid distinction between frontstage and backstage: although Instagram content is selected and publicly displayed, she reported wearing similar styles in everyday life and sharing the images with her mother. The article argues that fashion-oriented Instagram posts should be analysed as polysemic signs whose meanings are negotiated among creators, peers, family members, followers, commercial partners, and local cultural expectations. The case contributes to research on influencer culture by showing that visible bodily presentation cannot be reduced to a single explanation such as sexualization, rebellion, or commercial strategy.

Keywords: Instagram; self-presentation; influencer culture; fashion; visibility; peer validation; dramaturgy; semiotics

INTRODUCTION

Instagram is an important setting for the visual construction of identity. Through photographs, short videos, captions, stories, hashtags, tagged accounts, and interactions with followers, users make selected aspects of themselves visible to diverse audiences. These practices are especially consequential for influencers, whose online profiles may operate simultaneously as personal archives, social spaces, fashion displays, professional portfolios, and sites of commercial collaboration. On a visual platform, clothing, pose, facial expression, camera angle, location, caption, and image editing can all contribute to an account's recognisable identity.

The meanings attached to such images are not always stable. A photograph of a fitted outfit may be understood as an expression of fashion, confidence, glamour, attractiveness, lifestyle aspiration, commercial branding, or sexualized display. Different viewers can interpret the same post differently because they bring distinct experiences, values, gendered expectations, and cultural assumptions to it. The person who uploads the image may intend to display an outfit, while an audience member may focus on bodily exposure or pose. Therefore, an analysis of Instagram self-presentation needs to distinguish between the visible features of a post, the creator's stated intention, and the possible interpretations developed by audiences.

This distinction is particularly important in research on women's visual self-presentation. Studies have examined sexualization, self-objectification, body surveillance, and self-sexualization in social-media environments. Objectification theory explains how women may internalise an observer's perspective on their bodies and evaluate themselves in relation to appearance and perceived sexual attractiveness (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Research also suggests that appearance-focused social-media use can be associated with body

comparison and self-objectification (Fardouly et al., 2018; Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020). Other studies have considered how social-media images may be used to seek attention, gain followers, or develop commercial opportunities (Ramsey & Horan, 2018; Drenten et al., 2020).

These perspectives provide important critical tools. However, a visual feature such as a crop top, fitted dress, exposed skin, or body-oriented pose should not be treated as conclusive proof of a poster's intention. Fashion practices can have multiple purposes and meanings. A creator may seek to look fashionable, aesthetically appealing, playful, confident, or commercially attractive. She may also seek attention; these motives are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, people who view the post may read it differently from the creator. A careful analysis must therefore avoid collapsing appearance, intention, and interpretation into one category.

The present article explores these issues through a qualitative case study of a 20-year-old Javanese influencer living in Surakarta, Indonesia. The participant's Instagram posts include fashion-oriented and body-conscious clothing, posed photographs, captions, and work-related posting. Such posts may invite sexualized interpretations. Nevertheless, the participant described her photographs primarily as "cute," visually pleasing, and connected to an interest in sharing outfits. She also reported consulting friends before uploading posts, receiving questions from female followers about outfit coordination, using Instagram for work and networking, and receiving permission from her parents to maintain her preferred online style.

These statements make the case analytically useful. They reveal a difference between external interpretations of visual presentation and the participant's own account of what she is doing. Rather than asking whether the participant is inherently "sexualized," this article asks how the meanings of fashion visibility are negotiated through interpersonal relationships, audience expectations, commercial activity, and cultural context.

The article addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the participant describe the intended purpose and meaning of her Instagram self-presentation?

2. How do peer feedback, audience engagement, commercial activity, and parental approval shape her online identity?

3. How does the relationship between her Instagram presence and everyday clothing practices complicate a strict distinction between frontstage and backstage?

The article makes three contributions. First, it treats Instagram posts as polysemic signs rather than as straightforward evidence of a fixed identity. Second, it foregrounds peer validation and family approval as social processes that shape online self-presentation. Third, it uses the case to question an overly rigid opposition between an artificial online frontstage and an authentic offline backstage. In doing so, the article offers a culturally situated account of fashion, visibility, and self-presentation in an Indonesian context.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Instagram, influencers, and visual identity

Instagram encourages the communication of identity through visual and textual resources. Lee et al. (2015) identify motivations for Instagram use that include social interaction, documentation, self-promotion, escapism, and surveillance. For many users, a profile functions as an evolving collection of moments, preferences, relationships, and aesthetic choices. For influencers, that collection may also become a recognisable public identity through which followers, brands, and peers identify particular expertise, lifestyles, or visual styles.

Rettberg (2017) distinguishes among visual, written, and quantitative self-representation. Visual self-representation includes selfies, photographs, profile images, and design choices; written self-representation includes captions, posts, and comments; and quantitative self-representation includes follower counts, likes, and other numerical indicators. Instagram brings these modes together. A fashion photograph may be accompanied by a caption, location, brand tag, hashtag, follower comments, and like counts. The post is

therefore not merely an image; it is a multimodal event that positions the account holder within networks of visibility and evaluation.

Influencer culture intensifies this process. Influencers may translate personal style, expertise, or everyday routines into content that attracts and sustains an audience. Influencer marketing research shows that brands value influencers because they can create relationships, familiarity, and audience engagement (Chopra et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2021). Vrontis et al. (2021) describe influencer marketing as an expanding field in which personal credibility, content, and audience relationships become commercially significant. Yet the commercial dimension does not eliminate personal expression. An influencer's post may be simultaneously a record of personal preference, a message to friends, a response to follower interest, and an attempt to remain visible to prospective collaborators.

The relationship between authenticity and curation is therefore complex. Instagram content can appear spontaneous while involving selection, styling, posing, editing, and strategic timing. Curation should not automatically be equated with dishonesty. It may be better understood as selective self-presentation: users decide which aspects of themselves, their clothing, their work, and their relationships should be made visible to particular audiences.

Sexualized visibility and interpretive caution

Research on women's social-media presentation has frequently addressed sexualization. Images that feature revealing garments, underwear or bikini-like clothing, exposed skin, close framing of particular body parts, or poses that direct attention to the body may be perceived as sexualized (Bussy-Socrate & Sokolova, 2023). Self-sexualization is generally defined as a voluntary presentation of oneself that emphasises sexual attractiveness (Choi & DeLong, 2019). Scholarship has related self-sexualization to body surveillance, exposure to sexualized media, attention seeking, popularity, and internalisation of sexualizing norms (Johnson & Yu, 2023; Ward et al., 2016).

However, the category requires interpretive caution. Visual characteristics alone cannot disclose motivation. The same image may be read as fashionable by one person, attractive by another, commercially strategic by a brand, and sexualized by a critic. Further, a person's decision to wear fitted or revealing fashion does not by itself establish that she understands her self-worth solely through sexual attractiveness. This is especially important when research considers women's bodies, because a categorical labelling of women's images can reproduce the external gaze that critical scholarship seeks to examine.

The present article does not deny that visual posts can produce sexualized readings. Instead, it distinguishes three related but separate issues: first, the visual features that make a sexualized reading possible; second, the participant's intended meaning; and third, the interpretive work performed by audiences. This distinction allows the analysis to acknowledge gendered and commercial conditions of visibility without assuming that all body-conscious fashion is self-sexualization.

Drenten et al. (2020) show how sexualized labour can contribute to the monetisation of attention in digital culture. Their work is valuable for understanding how bodies, aesthetics, and audience engagement can acquire economic value. Yet commercial value may coexist with other motivations. The participant in this study used Instagram for work, communication, networking, and outfit sharing. The analysis therefore approaches commercial activity as one context of meaning, not as a complete explanation for every post.

Goffman: performance, audience, and porous boundaries

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach conceptualises social interaction as performance. Individuals present themselves before audiences through appearance, manner, setting, language, and other expressive resources. The frontstage is where a performance is offered to an audience; the backstage is where a performer can prepare, relax, and manage aspects of a performance away from the audience.

Instagram can be understood as a frontstage environment. Photographs, captions, clothing, poses, and interactions provide resources through which users manage impressions. At the same time, the platform

complicates the idea that audiences are clearly separate. Friends, family members, followers, strangers, employers, brands, relatives, and local acquaintances may all view the same post. This condition is often described as audience collapse: content created with one imagined audience in mind may reach several audiences with different expectations.

The frontstage/backstage distinction should therefore be used as an analytical question rather than a fixed assumption. An Instagram photograph may be highly curated, but it may also reflect an offline preference. A public post can disclose a private relationship, and family members can become part of an online performance. The present study asks whether the participant's online style is wholly separate from or continuous with her reported everyday clothing practices.

Peirce: signs and multiple interpretants

Peirce's triadic semiotic framework provides a way to analyse how meaning arises from signs. A sign involves a representamen, an object, and an interpretant (Peirce, 1931; Chandler, 2007). The representamen is the form taken by the sign; in this study, it may be a photograph, pose, outfit, caption, or brand-related post. The object is what the sign refers to, such as a fashion identity, a social relationship, or a work activity. The interpretant is the meaning produced in relation to the sign.

The interpretant is central to the present analysis because Instagram images do not have only one meaning. A fitted dress may be a representamen. It may refer to the participant's preferred outfit or fashion identity. But it can be interpreted as attractive, cute, stylish, sensual, confident, commercially strategic, or inappropriate. The creator's preferred reading is important, but it does not erase other possible interpretations. Using Peirce in this way enables the article to analyse contested meaning rather than treating the researcher's first reading as definitive.

METHOD

Research design and data status

This article is a qualitative secondary analysis of a previously reported case. The corpus consists of an in-depth interview and three selected Instagram posts from a 20-year-old Javanese female influencer living in Surakarta, Indonesia. The earlier analysis focused on sexualized self-representation and the contrast between frontstage and backstage presentation. The present study re-reads the same corpus through a different set of research questions concerning fashion-oriented self-definition, peer validation, family approval, commercial context, and contested audience interpretation.

A secondary qualitative analysis is appropriate when existing material can answer a different question or illuminate an aspect that was not central to the earlier interpretation. The present article does not present the corpus as new data. Its contribution lies in the changed unit of interpretation: instead of treating the participant's posts primarily as evidence of sexualization or rebellion, it examines how social meanings are negotiated across creator intention, peer feedback, family relationships, follower engagement, commercial activity, and cultural expectations.

Participant and corpus

The participant was selected in the original study through purposive sampling. She was an Indonesian-speaking, 20-year-old female influencer living in Surakarta who actively posted photographs and videos on Instagram. Her account contained 38 posts in July 2023. Three posts were selected in the original corpus because they represented recurring visual patterns relevant to the study: body-conscious fashion, posed photographs, captions, and work-related content.

The corpus also includes interview excerpts addressing the participant's motivations for posting, views about whether an image was "cute" or "sexy," interactions with friends and followers, work and endorsement activity, parental responses, and offline clothing practices. In the present article, the participant remains anonymous. Her account name and directly identifying information are omitted. The objective is not to judge

her clothing or moral character; it is to examine how online images acquire multiple meanings in social contexts.

Analytical procedure

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the interview excerpts and descriptions of the three posts were revisited to identify statements relevant to intended meaning, fashion, peer feedback, commercial activity, family approval, and online–offline continuity. Second, the posts were read semiotically by identifying their representamens, possible objects, and multiple interpretants. Third, the same evidence was considered through Goffman's frontstage/backstage framework, with attention to how friends and family influence the public performance. Fourth, the findings were compared with the earlier sexualization-centred interpretation in order to identify what becomes visible when the case is approached through negotiated meaning.

The analysis is interpretive and does not claim to establish the participant's inner motives with certainty. It recognises that the participant's own account is one important source of meaning, while viewers may still interpret posts differently. The analysis also avoids generalising from one case to all Javanese women, Indonesian influencers, or fashion-oriented Instagram users.

Ethical considerations

Because the case concerns a young woman's appearance and social-media content, ethical care is necessary. The participant is anonymised, and the article does not reproduce account identifiers. The analysis avoids unnecessary detail about her body and does not treat bodily visibility as morally problematic in itself. Any reuse of visual materials in a future submission should comply with the participant's consent, the original ethical protocol, copyright rules, and the target journal's policies. If a journal requires it, the authors should provide an explicit statement of permission for reuse of interview excerpts and anonymised image material.

FINDINGS

Fashion as a preferred self-definition

The first finding is that the participant explicitly frames her posts through fashion, attractiveness, and "cuteness," rather than through a self-description of sexualization. One analysed photograph shows her wearing a fitted crop top that exposes some skin and follows the contours of her body. These visible elements may enable a viewer to interpret the image as sensual. However, when asked whether the photo represented sexuality, she responded:

> "Kalau menurut saya tidak. Karena saya melihat foto itu lucu. Sebelum posting sesuatu saya sering tanya ke teman saya apakah fotonya lucu dan teman juga bilang lucu-lucu jadi saya mikirnya lucu. Tapi mungkin karena bentuk tubuh saya, orang berpikir kalau sexy banget."

Her response is significant because it differentiates her intended reading from a possible external reading. She described the photo as "cute," while recognising that other people might see it as sexy because of her body shape. This statement does not prove that one reading is objectively correct. Instead, it shows that visual meaning is negotiated. The participant has a preferred interpretant, but she is aware that viewers may construct another.

The semiotic structure of the post can be described as follows. The representamen includes the crop top, body-conscious silhouette, pose, and photographic framing. The object is not necessarily sexuality; it may be her interest in fashion, her preferred personal style, or a visual identity based on contemporary outfit culture. The interpretant varies across audiences. Friends may read the image as cute; female followers may see it as outfit inspiration; other viewers may read it as fashionable, confident, sensual, or provocative. The interpretive plurality is the central finding.

The participant's additional statements reinforce a fashion-oriented self-definition. She explained:

> "Sebenarnya tidak ada motivasi apa apa karena memang Instagram tempat untuk posting foto, jadi menurut saya foto saya itu bagus, entah itu outfit saya. Saya juga suka pamer outfit saya."

She sees Instagram as a place for sharing photographs that she considers visually good, including her outfits. The phrase "pamer outfit" indicates that outfit display is an intentional and enjoyable part of her online identity. She also stated:

> "Saya mau nantinya konten saya tentang outfit mix and match. Lebih ke baju-baju dan outfit-outfit lucu karena cewe-cewe di akun saya sering bertanya tentang outfit saya."

This statement shows a developing content direction: she planned to create mix-and-match outfit content because female followers asked about her clothing. Her account can therefore be understood as a fashion-oriented space in which her appearance becomes a resource for communication with an interested audience.

Peer validation and collaborative self-presentation

A second finding is that the participant's online identity is not created entirely by herself. Before posting photographs, she asks friends whether they look "cute." Her friends' responses help her decide whether an image is suitable for uploading. This apparently small practice is theoretically important because it demonstrates that Instagram self-presentation is collaborative.

In Goffman's terms, friends may be understood as part of the backstage preparation of the frontstage performance. They do not necessarily appear in the post, but their approval influences which image is eventually made public. They participate in the evaluation of the photograph before it reaches a wider audience. Their role is not merely technical; it shapes the aesthetic category through which the participant understands the image. An image becomes "cute" partly because friends confirm that it is cute.

This process complicates an individualistic view of self-presentation. The participant does not simply display a fully formed identity and wait for public reactions. Instead, she develops the post through an anticipated conversation with peers. Peer validation provides reassurance, but it also establishes a shared aesthetic standard. In this case, that standard is not described as explicitly sexual. It is framed through cuteness, attractiveness, and fashionable outfits.

The finding also reveals a difference between peer interpretation and broader audience interpretation. Friends who know the participant may interpret a photo through shared knowledge of her style and personality. Strangers may rely more heavily on visible elements such as clothing exposure, pose, or body shape. Consequently, the same post may be read differently across social distance. This variation is central to understanding why an influencer cannot fully control the meanings attached to her images.

Commercial activity and layered motivations

The participant also described Instagram as a work-related environment. She stated:

> "Untuk sekarang, saya sering posting untuk kerjaan, posting foto foto saya, chat dengan teman saya, dan untuk menambah relasi."

This quotation indicates that Instagram has several functions for her: work, personal posting, friendship, direct communication, and relationship building. These functions should not be collapsed into a single motive. A post may help maintain visibility for endorsement opportunities while also satisfying an interest in fashion and enabling interaction with followers.

One analysed post presents the participant in a black dress, with a pose and photographic composition that may direct attention to her body. The post is associated with promotional or endorsement activity. A sexualization-centred interpretation might describe the image primarily as an attempt to use sensuality for monetisation. However, the evidence supports a more layered reading. The representamen includes the outfit, pose, photo, and promotional context. The object includes both the participant's personal public identity and a work-related

activity. The interpretant may include commercial attractiveness, fashionable styling, sensuality, personal confidence, or brand-associated visibility.

The important point is not that commercial meaning is absent. Influencer work often depends on remaining visible, recognisable, and engaging. Research on digital labour shows that aesthetic self-presentation can generate attention that has economic value (Drenten et al., 2020). Yet commercial intent should not be assumed to be the only or primary explanation for every visual choice. The participant's interview makes clear that work exists alongside other goals: posting photographs she likes, sharing outfits, talking with friends, and expanding social relations.

This finding suggests that influencer self-presentation is best understood as layered labour. It includes the labour of styling and image selection, the labour of responding to followers, the labour of sustaining an identifiable account, and the labour of being available for collaboration. It can also include pleasure, friendship, and personal expression. A more accurate analysis recognises these overlapping motivations rather than treating them as mutually exclusive.

Family approval and the porous backstage

The third selected post includes the caption "pics I sent my mom this week." The caption is important because it brings a family relationship into a public social-media space. It reveals that the participant shares some of the images she posts with her mother. In Peircean terms, the representamen is the caption combined with the image. The object is the participant's interaction with her mother and the relationship between private family communication and public posting. The interpretant may be that the participant's online presentation is not hidden from family members and is not experienced by her as completely separate from home life.

The participant explained that parental approval shaped how she responded to anticipated public criticism:

> "Enggak, sih. Saya bukan tipikal orang yang peduli dengan orang lain. Kalau mama papa saya membolehkan, berarti saya boleh."

This statement should not be overgeneralised as proof that she is indifferent to every other person's view. More precisely, it shows that she gives special weight to her parents' acceptance. In her account, parental approval creates a basis for continuing her preferred style despite potential judgement from neighbours, relatives, or other audiences.

This finding matters because the family is often treated as belonging to Goffman's backstage: a more private setting in which performers may be relieved of public expectations. In this case, however, the mother is connected to the participant's public posts. The Instagram caption makes a private relationship visible, while parental approval supports the participant's public-facing choices. The backstage does not remain hidden behind the frontstage; it becomes part of the resources that sustain the frontstage performance.

The participant also reported continuity between her online and offline appearance: "Kalau tata cara berpakaian, saya memang berpakaian seperti itu." This statement suggests that she dresses in a similar way outside Instagram. The finding does not mean that Instagram provides an unfiltered record of everyday life. Her posts remain selected, framed, and aesthetically curated. However, it challenges the assumption that curated online content must be wholly artificial or disconnected from offline identity.

The participant's case therefore supports a more porous understanding of frontstage and backstage. Her online identity is performed for an audience, but it is connected to an everyday fashion preference and is supported by a family relationship that she does not fully conceal. Rather than seeing frontstage and backstage as opposites, the case shows that they may overlap through selective disclosure, continuity of dress, and familial recognition.

Cultural negotiation without predetermined rebellion

The participant lives in Surakarta, a city where Javanese cultural values are meaningful in many social

contexts. Expectations concerning propriety, family reputation, feminine appearance, and modesty may inform how some viewers assess her posts. Clothing that exposes skin or emphasises the body can therefore generate critical responses or be interpreted as inconsistent with particular norms.

However, the present analysis does not conclude that the participant necessarily intends rebellion against Javanese culture. The participant's own explanations emphasise fashion, cuteness, work, and parental permission rather than a deliberate challenge to tradition. Her case is more accurately described as a negotiation of cultural expectations. She makes choices that may be viewed differently by different people, but she does so through a personal interpretive framework shaped by friends, followers, family support, and platform practices.

It is also important not to represent Javanese culture as homogeneous. Expectations concerning modest clothing and female visibility may differ among families, age groups, religious communities, educational backgrounds, urban settings, and peer networks. The participant's parents, according to her account, accept her choices. This family response illustrates that a local cultural setting does not lead to one inevitable interpretation of women's fashion practices.

The case consequently shifts attention from a binary of conformity versus rebellion to a process of cultural negotiation. The participant's visible style can be understood as a fashion preference, an online identity resource, a basis for social interaction, a commercially useful aesthetic, and a possible object of social judgement. These meanings coexist. The participant's autonomy is not purely individual because it is supported and shaped by peers, followers, parents, and the platform environment.

DISCUSSION

This reanalysis shows that the participant's Instagram self-presentation is best understood as a process of negotiated visibility. The visible characteristics of her posts make sexualized readings possible, particularly where clothing, pose, and framing emphasise the body. It would be inaccurate to deny this possibility. Yet the participant herself provides a different account: she frames her images as cute, visually appealing, and connected to fashion sharing. The key analytical issue is therefore not whether one interpretation can completely displace the other, but how different interpretations are generated and sustained.

The distinction between visible form, participant intention, and audience interpretation is crucial. In Peirce's terms, the same representamen can support several interpretants. The post is not empty of meaning, but it is not limited to one meaning either. A body-conscious outfit can become a sign of style, confidence, fashion knowledge, attractiveness, commercial potential, sensuality, or norm transgression, depending on the relational context in which it is read. The participant's acknowledgement that others might perceive her as sexy because of her body shape demonstrates awareness of this ambiguity.

This approach offers a more precise way to discuss self-sexualization. The concept remains relevant when a person intentionally foregrounds sexual attractiveness. However, the current data do not justify treating the participant's appearance as conclusive evidence of a stable self-sexualizing intention. Her own emphasis on outfit sharing and cuteness matters analytically. A research approach that labels all revealing or fitted fashion as self-sexualization may obscure the difference between a researcher's reading and a participant's own meaning-making. It may also overlook how women use fashion to express taste, confidence, social belonging, or professional aspiration.

The findings also demonstrate that self-presentation is socially produced. The participant consults friends before uploading photos and responds to questions from female followers about outfit mix-and-match. These interactions show that the account is not merely a broadcast channel. It is a social space in which images are evaluated, affirmed, and requested. Peer validation functions as a form of backstage labour: friends help define the aesthetic acceptability of an image before it becomes frontstage content. Follower interest then helps stabilise the account's identity as a fashion-oriented space.

Commercial activity adds another layer. The participant uses Instagram for work and endorsements, but also for friendship and networking. This mixed purpose is common in influencer culture, where the boundaries

between private life, social connection, personal identity, and professional visibility are blurred. The case does not support a simplistic conclusion that her posts are either authentic personal expression or calculated advertising. They can be both personal and strategic. An outfit post may convey her taste while also improving her visibility to followers and potential business partners.

Goffman's dramaturgy helps explain this overlap. Instagram is a frontstage setting because the participant selects photographs and presents them to an audience. But the evidence does not support a complete separation between this frontstage and an authentic backstage. She reports dressing similarly in everyday life, and her mother is aware of the photos. Her backstage relationships—especially peer consultation and parental acceptance—contribute to the public performance. The case thus suggests that online self-presentation may be curated without being fictitious. Curation refers to selection and framing; it does not necessarily mean fabrication.

The role of family is particularly significant. By reporting parental permission, the participant identifies a form of moral and emotional support that outweighs anticipated criticism from wider audiences. This does not prove that her parents endorse every post in identical ways, nor can it establish a general pattern among Javanese families. Nevertheless, it shows that family acceptance may reshape how a young woman weighs public norms and private choice. The family becomes neither merely a restrictive force nor a wholly private backstage realm; it participates in the conditions through which public self-presentation is made possible.

The local cultural context requires the same nuance. The participant's posts may be read against expectations of modesty that are meaningful to some Javanese audiences. Yet her case should not be framed as a simple clash between a fixed tradition and a modern, liberated Instagram identity. She does not explicitly describe herself as rebelling. Her account instead demonstrates how cultural norms are lived through family decisions, friendships, fashion practices, commercial opportunities, and platform-specific aesthetics. This is a process of negotiation rather than a single act of resistance.

The study has limitations. It relies on one participant, three selected posts, and an interview transcript. It cannot represent the views of her followers, parents, friends, commercial partners, neighbours, or critics. It also cannot determine how viewers actually interpreted each post without audience interviews or comment analysis. The study therefore offers an interpretive account of one case, not a general explanation of Indonesian women's Instagram behaviour. Future research could include interviews with followers and family members, compare several influencers from different Indonesian regions, examine comment sections and brand collaborations, or analyse how religious, class, age, and platform factors shape fashion visibility.

A further limitation concerns data reuse. Because this article reanalyses a previously reported corpus, its contribution depends on transparent disclosure and a clearly distinct research question. It should be submitted only to a venue that permits transparent secondary analysis and does not consider the manuscript redundant publication. The authors should provide the earlier article to the editor and explain the difference in purpose, argument, and structure.

CONCLUSION

This study examined a young Javanese influencer's Instagram self-presentation as a process of negotiating fashion and visibility. Using Goffman's dramaturgy and Peirce's semiotics, it showed that body-conscious clothing and posed photographs can invite sexualized readings without establishing a single or definitive meaning. The participant's own explanations foregrounded cuteness, fashion, outfit sharing, work, and personal preference. Her account also revealed the importance of peer validation, female followers' fashion-related interest, commercial activity, parental approval, and continuity between online and offline dress.

The central contribution is the argument that Instagram self-presentation is polysemic and relational. Meanings are produced not only by what is visible in a photograph but also by the creator's stated intention, friends' evaluations, family relationships, followers' expectations, commercial contexts, and local norms. The participant's case therefore cannot be reduced to sexualization, rebellion, or monetisation alone. It is better understood as a layered practice of fashion communication, public visibility, identity work, and social

negotiation.

The case also complicates a rigid frontstage/backstage distinction. Instagram posts are curated for public viewing, but they may still be connected to everyday clothing preferences and supported by private relationships. The participant's mother is not excluded from the public performance; her awareness and approval become part of the conditions that enable it. This illustrates how social media can make boundaries between private and public identity porous rather than eliminating them entirely.

Future research should continue to examine women's visual self-presentation critically while avoiding automatic conclusions based on clothing or pose alone. Studies that incorporate creators' explanations, peer networks, family contexts, followers' interpretations, and platform economies can provide a fuller account of how fashion and visibility are negotiated in diverse cultural settings.

DECLARATION ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI

Generative artificial intelligence was employed solely as a supporting resource for English translation, language polishing, and editorial revision of this manuscript. The study's research design, primary data and source selection, analytical process, interpretation of results, and main conclusions originate from the authors' original research and remain entirely under their responsibility.

Disclosure Statement

This article is a substantially reconceptualised secondary analysis of interview and Instagram data previously reported in Kurniawan et al. (2024). The earlier article examined sexualized self-representation, frontstage/backstage presentation, and perceived tensions with modesty norms. The present article has a different research purpose and argument: it focuses on contested meaning, fashion-oriented self-definition, peer validation, family approval, commercial context, and the continuity between online and offline self-presentation.

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