

Young Woman's Learning of Taste in Fashion Style Through Their Engagements With TikTok Influencer

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ABSTRACT

Over the last ten years, fashion shopping in Indonesia has become more popular and important for the country's economy. Especially among young women, social media like TikTok is a big part of how they learn about and choose their clothes. People follow influencers on TikTok who shows them what's cool and helps them decide what to wear. This study wants to understand how these influencers on TikTok affect what young women like and buy when it comes to fashion. By employing the Taste Regime Theory by Zeynep Arsel and Jonathan Bean and integrating the concept of consumer identity projects. This research utilizes the a qualitative research method that uses the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method. In this study, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with three young woman aged 17-25 who are active users of the TikTok application. This study seeks to uncover how people develop their fashion taste through TikTok influencers and the resulting impact on their personal style preferences. The findings also show that fashion choices are not solely based on trends but also reflect personal beliefs and societal perceptions. The study contributes to Zeynep Arsel and Jonathan Bean concept by emphasizing the impact of digital platforms and influencers on personal expression and societal norms. The research reveals fashion taste among young women and how fashion serves as a medium for personal expression and meaningful decision-making. Overall, the study suggests that developing fashion taste is a complex process influenced by personal expression, societal influence, social media impact and guidance form influential figures.

Keywords: *Fashion Taste, Social Media, Taste Regime Theory, Social Media Influencer, Fashion Consumption, Consumer Identity*

ABSTRAK

Dalam sepuluh tahun terakhir, fashion di Indonesia semakin populer dan penting bagi ekonomi negara. Terutama di kalangan wanita muda, media sosial seperti TikTok menjadi bagian besar dalam cara mereka mempelajari dan memilih pakaian. Mereka mengikuti para influencer di TikTok yang menunjukkan apa yang keren dan membantu mereka memutuskan pakaian apa yang akan dipakai. Penelitian ini ingin memahami bagaimana para influencer di TikTok memengaruhi apa yang disukai dan dibeli wanita muda dalam hal fashion. Dengan menggunakan Teori Rezim Selera oleh Zeynep Arsel dan Jonathan Bean serta mengintegrasikan konsep proyek identitas konsumen. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif yang menggunakan metode Analisis Fenomenologi Interpretatif (IPA). Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti melakukan wawancara mendalam dengan tiga wanita muda berusia 17-25 tahun yang aktif menggunakan aplikasi TikTok. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bagaimana seseorang mengembangkan selera fashion melalui para influencer di TikTok dan dampaknya terhadap preferensi gaya pribadi mereka. Temuan juga menunjukkan bahwa pilihan fashion tidak semata-mata berdasarkan tren tetapi juga mencerminkan keyakinan pribadi dan pandangan masyarakat. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada konsep Zeynep Arsel dan Jonathan Bean dengan menekankan dampak platform digital dan para influencer terhadap ekspresi pribadi dan norma sosial. Penelitian ini mengungkap selera fashion di kalangan wanita muda dan bagaimana fashion berperan sebagai media untuk ekspresi pribadi dan pengambilan keputusan yang bermakna. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menyarankan bahwa mengembangkan selera fashion adalah proses yang kompleks yang dipengaruhi oleh ekspresi pribadi, pengaruh sosial, dampak media sosial, dan panduan dari tokoh berpengaruh.

Kata kunci: Selera Fashion, Media Sosial, Taste Regime Theory, Pengaruh Media Sosial, Konsumsi Fashion, Identitas Konsumen

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of fashion consumption in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation, marked by a consistent uptrend in e-commerce transactions over the past decade (Statista, 2021; Katadata, 2019-2020; Kemp, 2022). This evolution hasn't just buoyed the retail sector; it has emerged as a critical driver of the country's creative economy, forecasted to spur an impressive 18.01% growth (CNBC Indonesia, 2019; Fiarani, 2021). Within this vibrant landscape, demographic insights

illuminate a diverse consumer spectrum, notably highlighting the substantial engagement of females aged 25-34 (Katadata, 2021). These consumers exhibit nuanced spending habits in the realm of fashion, indicating distinct preferences across gender lines (Katadata, 2021).

Fashion isn't solely about the acquisition of garments; it embodies a cultural language deeply woven into the fabric of social systems (Sproles, 1974; Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Vincent, 1999).

It serves as a significant conduit for identity expression, social differentiation, and a marker of status (Bourdieu, 1996; Mokha, 2017). More than mere attire, fashion reflects communication and the narrative of self-identity (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). However, societal expectations and norms, exemplified by the concept of "fashion faux pas," underscore the adherence to established fashion etiquettes (Elle; Marie Claire; Wallace, 2021).

The advent of social media, particularly platforms like TikTok, has revolutionized the landscape of fashion inspiration and education (Haenlein et al., 2020; *social media Is Gen Z and Millennials' Favorite Place to Get Style Inspo - YPulse*, 2022). TikTok's succinct yet compelling content has magnetized predominantly Generation Z and Millennials in Indonesia (Batoebara, 2020; Wiwoho, 2020). This platform serves as a creative hub, influencing individuals' fashion inclinations and significantly shaping their self-concept and stylistic preferences (Awalia Khasanah, 2022). Additionally, social media influencers, particularly those on TikTok, wield substantial influence in directing fashion trends and consumer preferences (Casaló et al., 2021). Influencers like @be__ce curate

informative content on fashion metonyms, actively engaging and resonating with a predominantly young female audience.

The interactions of young women with TikTok's rich tapestry of fashion content are pivotal in shaping their happiness, fostering self-expression, and honing their unique stylistic identities (Nash, 2019; Phillips et al., 2014). This study aims to delve deeper into the lived experiences of young women engaging with TikTok influencers. It seeks to explore the profound impact of these interactions on their fashion aspirations, the evolution of their self-identity, and the intricate ways in which they navigate fashion meanings and systems. By comprehensively investigating these dynamics, the study endeavors to uncover the multifaceted role that TikTok and its influencers play in shaping the fashion narratives and identities of these individuals within the Indonesian context.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study seeks to understand the process consumer learning of fashion taste based on their interactions with fashion influencers on TikTok among young women 17-25 years old, active TikTok users and

spend a minimum of Rp 250.000 monthly on fashion item.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Media Influencer

In today's digital era, people increasingly spend their time online, social media has become a trendsetter for society. Social media platforms are now the primary source of information for consumers and one of the most powerful marketing tools for fashion businesses. The fashion industry has benefited from using social media, posting pictures and videos, and writing about their fashion products and business practices to attract consumers and increase brand awareness. Social media provides an interactive channel of mass communication to amplify marketing strategy for fashion brands.

Given the rise of social media, social media influencers have become an essential part of marketing agencies' strategies. Advertisers seek to leverage influencers' large community of followers who place trust in influencers' recommendations. This trust makes the use of influencer marketing a powerful tool for advertisers. With increasing consumer interest social media influencers are being leveraged to shift consumer perspective and purchasing behavior.

Taste Regime Theory

Taste, a pivotal domain in consumer research, serves as a fundamental mechanism in perpetuating social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1996). It's commonly regarded as a system through which individuals not only judge and classify but also establish connections with items and consumption acts, revealing their values, status, and identities. Arsel and Bean (2013) introduced a theory explicating taste as a practice, exerting effects on material outcomes, prompting our investigation into how taste, within specific social strata, is practiced, reproduced, and sustained in daily life.

The concept of Taste Regime theory, as posited by Arsel & Bean (2013), delineates a discursive system that links taste aesthetics to consumer practice. This theory offers a framework to comprehend how taste orders consumer actions, endowing goods with meanings, and elucidates how consumers learn and adopt specific styles through mediated market experiences. Taste regimes operate as systems guiding consumer behaviors within the context of consumption practices, offering guidelines and imbuing products with significance. It's not just about the act of purchase but also about how

objects, actions, and meanings are organized into identifiable, recurrent patterns.

Central to the taste regime's function is the penetration of practical knowledge concerning the interaction with objects—manifested in doing, knowing, and relating. Three core mechanisms of consumer learning practices constitute the taste regime:

1. **Problematization.** This mechanism involves a continuous questioning of how objects are aligned. When considering a purchase, consumers engage in determining an object's appropriateness, shaping, and normalizing specific appearances and meanings.

2. **Ritualization.** It entails the formation of recurrent activities that redefine consumer practices and the significance of acquiring and consuming items. Ritualization embodies symbolic activities recurring in a regular sequence, influencing how individuals acquire and use objects to generate and maintain meanings. Repetition enhances awareness and fosters a sense of control, aiming for the transformation and acquisition of new behaviors and habits.

3. **Instrumentalization.** This process actualizes meaning by providing consumers with resources to connect material objects with their associated meanings. Instrumentalization closely intertwines with problematization, as consumers assign symbolic meanings to the goods they acquire.

The taste regime's mechanisms enable consumers to navigate from recognizing a problem to fulfilling their goals through practiced behaviors (Arsel & Bean, 2013). Consumer taste is often relatively static due to learned ritualized behaviors, though changes occur over time or due to significant shifts, demanding periods of adaptation."

Consumer Identity Projects

The pervasive link between consumer goods and identity formation stands as a fundamental pillar within modern consumer culture (Arnould & Thompson, 2018). The market serves as a key resource hub for identity projects, driving day-to-day self-presentation efforts (Schau, 2018). Identity, perceived as an ongoing narrative rooted in past, present, and anticipated future self-concepts, underpins the notion of identity as a project (Arnould & Thompson, 2018). This notion underscores the active involvement of

individuals in shaping, refining, and preserving their sense of self (Bardhi et al. 2012; Belk 1988).

Market dynamics play a pivotal role in these ongoing identity projects, not only by providing tangible and symbolic tools for self-construction but also as a stage for their enactment (Arnould & Thompson, 2018: 68). Fashion consumption emerges prominently in these consumer identity initiatives (Larsen & Patterson, 2018). Individuals often use fashion-related dialogues to forge personal identities by juxtaposing their perceived fashion inclinations towards those of their social peers. The formation of "who I am" is frequently fashioned and reshaped by highlighting differences in fashion sensibilities compared to others—a concept deeply embedded in self-identity construction.

The meaning attributed to fashion and perceptions of fashion-related actions significantly contributes to demarcating self-identity boundaries. Everyday fashion becomes entwined with a complex web of work commitments, familial responsibilities, societal norms, and anticipated lifestyle patterns. Fashion dialogues, in this context, serve as a mechanism for self-expression and

identity construction, emphasizing the contrast between one's perceived fashion orientation and that of their social circle. The idea of forging a unique identity through one's consumer choices has long served as a marketing concept in promoting mass-produced fashion items (Thompson & Haytko, 1997).

Fashionable attire and accessories stand as metaphors for our identity choices, showcasing contemporary shifts (Bovone, 2006). Furthermore, fashion trends, often used metonymically, symbolize broader societal identities, underscoring how clothing choices signify not just situational personalities in social contexts but also identifiers of personal identity.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research is done through qualitative research method (Hennink et al., 2020: 14). According to Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey (2020: 10), Qualitative research examines people's experiences in depth using a specialized set of research methodologies such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies. The research in this study is done through Interpretive Phenomenology

Analysis (IPA) that's committed to examining people's major life experience in detail as part of the qualitative research approach (Smith et al., 2009).

FINDINGS

FASHION LEARNING IN TASTE

REGIME

Social Media Fashion Discovery and Engagement

In the context of learning about fashion through social media, problematization involves the continuous questioning how certain styles or clothing align with the meaning or what's considered important. The concept of problematization extends beyond the physical objects itself as it delves into the organization and arrangement of these objects (i.e. in fashion communities it's not just about the individual clothing items but also about the overall look and style). Discussions about the messy or disorganization of styles or clothing choices can emerge when discussing about fashion-related things. In terms of fashion learning through social media like TikTok, it highlights the characteristics within problematization. It involves questioning the alignment of objects with their intended meanings, contemplating the purchase or adoption of specific fashion items,

determining their appropriateness within a certain context, actively comparing different tastes or styles,

Personal Style and Creative Exploration

This study delves into the synthesis of fashion identities, examining the consumer learning process shaped by interactions with TikTok fashion influencers. In the context of fashion learning through TikTok, ritualization becomes a method of embedding meaningful actions into the fabric of daily fashion choices, forming symbolic practices that hold expressive significance.

Ritualization delves into the symbolic aspects of clothing selection, prompting individuals to ponder the reasons behind outfit choices for specific events and how fashion communicates values, beliefs, and affiliations without words. These clothing rituals are evident in routines related to seasonal wardrobe organization or the traditions surrounding significant life events, offering insights into the integration of fashion symbols, traditions, and cultural identities. Ritualization in fashion becomes a lens to understand how clothing, traditions, symbols, and personal identity intertwine, shaping consumers' choices in the dynamic world of fashion.

Fashion Identity Construction and Validation

Investigating the consumer learning within the TikTok fashion landscape, Instrumentalization is when fashion is used on purpose to show specific meanings or achieve certain goals by connecting clothes and actions. TikTok influencers highlight specific clothes or styles, giving them deeper connotations or desired outcomes. This highlights Sörum & Gianneschi (2023) idea on the significance of material objects in constructing and actualizing personal meanings.

CONCLUSION

As this research tries to understand the process consumer learning of fashion taste based on their interactions with fashion influencers on TikTok. The findings of the research on understanding the process of how someone's fashion preferences are shaped based on their use of social media as a platform of inspiration have resulted in several research conclusions, as follows:

1. Social Media Fashion Discovery and Engagement, consumers go beyond superficial liking, critically questioning how clothing aligns with personal meaning and broader fashion narratives. They adopt a

contemplative stance, evaluating items for their fit within personal style and ongoing trends while prioritizing personal preferences over brand influence. Moreover, active engagement in comparing diverse fashion styles refines their identities, while sharing content fosters mutual fashion influence.

2. In Personal Style and Creative Exploration, repeated exposure to specific styles shapes preferences, with fashion serving as a tool for self-expression and differentiation. Family influences and societal trends significantly impact individual choices, and fashion becomes symbolic, reflecting personal understanding and societal perceptions.

3. Lastly, on Fashion Identity Construction and Validation, individuals consciously align their clothing choices with desired perceptions, influenced by social media exposure and seeking validation from society. This study underscores the dynamic, multifaceted nature of fashion learning through TikTok interactions, highlighting critical evaluation,

active engagement, and intentional construction of fashion identities.

These themes reveal a nuanced journey wherein consumers move beyond mere liking, critically assessing clothing alignment with personal meaning and broader fashion narratives. Moreover, the study highlights the role of contemplation, active engagement, and intentional construction of fashion identities influenced by social media exposure. It underscores the multifaceted nature of fashion learning and the significant impact of digital interactions on individual fashion choices and identity formation.

SUGGESTIONS

Future studies could further investigate the impact of validation on individual fashion choices. Moreover, exploring multiple social media platforms and their collective influence on fashion preferences could offer more understanding.

This evidence can be a resource of future research on related subject. Future research should explore the long-term effects of these influences on individuals' self-perception and their interaction within society. Investigating how these fashion tastes evolve over time could offer deeper insights into complicated relationship

between fashion, identity, and social behaviour in the digital age.

Additionally, understanding the role of TikTok in shaping fashion aspirations can be integrated into curricula, providing students with real-world insights into contemporary marketing practices. It can also inspire future marketers and researchers to explore the ever-evolving landscape of social media platforms and their impact on consumer behaviour.

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