



ENHANCING PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

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Tiktok Made Me Buy It: Generation Z's Consumer Behavior in the Social Media Era

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Abstract: The phenomenon of “TikTok Made Me Buy It” illustrates how social media shapes the consumption behavior of Generation Z through a combination of algorithmic design, emotional engagement, and emerging visual culture. Using a narrative descriptive approach, this article explores how TikTok’s interface, content flow, and social interactions influence young users’ tendencies toward spontaneous purchasing. The analysis reveals that consumption among Generation Z often arises from the need for social affirmation, identity expression, and the pressure to keep up with fast-moving digital trends. Personalized recommendations and influencer-driven storytelling create emotional resonance that makes users more susceptible to unreflective buying decisions. TikTok also constructs an aspirational lifestyle image that encourages imitation and frames consumption as a form of self-expression. This study highlights the importance of digital literacy and critical awareness to help young people navigate digital consumer culture more consciously and resist the persuasive mechanisms embedded within the platform.

Keywords: TikTok, Consumer Behavior, Generation Z, Social Media.

Introduction

Social media today is no longer just a place to chat with people, but also plays a significant role in shaping the shopping habits of young people living in this digital age (Amalliya et al., 2024). Through visual content, viral trends, and widespread recommendations, social media is now like an arena. A new social media platform that directly influences our likes, desires, and even purchasing decisions. In Indonesia, the most prominent platform is TikTok, which currently leads the pack in terms of daily active users and engagement rates compared to other social media platforms (Suharno, 2025).

TikTok is not just a tool for entertainment, but also a place to promote products, explore one's identity, and create a lifestyle that is more connected to the digital world. This is crucial because Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is a group that has grown up entirely in a digital environment. They are already accustomed to information

stimuli through images and interactions, and often react quickly without thinking too deeply (Dwidienawati et al., 2025).

One of the most prominent examples of how social media, particularly TikTok, can influence the purchasing decisions of younger generations is the phenomenon known as "TikTok Made Me Buy It." According to Ayu et al. (2022), consumers buy a product not because they have a basic need, but because viral content satisfies their desire to know, their emotions, or their desire to participate (Ayu et al., 2022). With its sophisticated algorithm, TikTok effectively displays content relevant to users' interests, creating a strong sense of personalization and making each individual feel as if they were "demanded" for the product in question. A study conducted in Indonesia found that Generation Z TikTok users were more likely to make impulse purchases after learning about digital marketing strategies such as affiliate marketing, flash sales, and direct shopping (Gozali & Pamungkas, 2024). This platform creates an ecosystem that not only connects users and sellers of communication tools but also serves as a source of identity, affection, and consumer culture for the younger generation. It also reinforces a consumer cycle driven by emotional and social aspects.

According to consumer psychology, Gen Z consumer behavior on TikTok is influenced by two main dimensions: internal and external. Internal factors include self-motivation, emotions, the need for social interaction, and self-identity. External factors, on the other hand, include TikTok's algorithm, creator content, and peer themes, which subconsciously influence consumer behavior (Valeza, 2024). Gen Z is not merely passive; they are also active participants in their interactions with influencers and content. They justify impulse purchases as a way to express themselves and their social identity (Zeta et al., 2025). Thus, consumer behavior is not only focused on economics but also reflects psychological and symbolic needs that enhance a sense of belonging within digital communities.

Although various studies have examined the factors influencing Generation Z's consumption behavior on social media, there are still few specific research findings that highlight TikTok's features, such as its video format, "For You" Page personalization algorithm, and bold integration features, as influencing the consumption behavior of Indonesian children. These elements work together to enhance consumer behavior through visual, social, and emotional aspects. However, research linking individual psychological factors with TikTok's technological design is still lacking. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of TikTok on Generation Z's consumption habits. It is hoped that this article will help readers understand that social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a source of identity, affection, and consumer culture for the younger generation.

Literature Review

The consumer behavior of the younger generation demonstrates a strong link between psychological needs and the construction of self-identity, where purchasing decisions are often used as a means to strengthen personal image (Amalliya et al., 2024). Young consumers not only purchase products based on function, but often interpret them as a form of self-reward that helps them cope with everyday emotional stress (Tryanti & Primasari, 2022). These decisions are reinforced by the perception that owning certain items can increase self-confidence and status social media, so that purchasing becomes part of the process of creating a more ideal version of oneself according to digital standards (Somantri et al., 2025). In this context, consumption is no longer merely an economic activity, but has become a psychological mechanism related to the need for affection and

social validation (Anjani & Mubarak, 2025). The pressure to appear consistent with a digital persona also makes young consumers feel the need to purchase products that represent a particular identity or aspiration (Anjani & Mubarak, 2025). In fact, their preferences are shaped by internal expectations to always appear relevant, especially when they feel their social identity influences acceptance from others (Meylovsky et al., 2025). This pattern shows that Generation Z's consumer behavior is closely tied to their emotions and self-perception, making consumption part of a strategy for building personal wholeness (Lazuardi & Usman, n.d.). Thus, purchasing is a response to psychological dynamics shaped by social pressures and existential needs in the digital age (Fadillah et al., 2022).

The digital social environment significantly contributes to shaping the consumer behavior of the younger generation, especially when they are highly responsive to peer opinions and validation (Wijaya et al., n.d.). Recommendations from content creators, friends, or specific communities can create implicit pressure to adhere to trendy consumption standards (Zeta et al., 2025). A product's popularity is often perceived as an indicator of quality, leading consumers to trust collective judgment without first evaluating their personal needs (Pratami & Estriana, 2025). This is reinforced by the need to avoid feeling left behind socially, which makes consumption a means of maintaining position within a group (Somantri et al., 2025). Furthermore, participation in certain consumption trends is often interpreted as evidence of group belonging, leading to the motivation to purchase to maintain social cohesion (Meylovsky et al., 2025). Digital communities also encourage users to share experiences consumption, creating a social cycle in which the purchase of certain products is perceived as contributing to group identity (Pratami & Estriana, 2025). Constant exposure to the lifestyles of online communities fosters the perception that consumption is a natural part of modern social life (Tryanti & Primasari, 2022). Conversely, those who don't follow trends can feel left out, further reinforcing social pressure to purchase decisions (Hilmansyach, 2024). Thus, younger generations' consumption is influenced by a social negotiation process that links possession of goods with interpersonal acceptance (Hilmansyach, 2024).

Research Methods

The article employs a literature review approach by examining a range of previous studies relevant to the topic, using keywords such as “TikTok Made Me Buy It’: Generation Z's Consumer Behavior in the Social Media Era”. A literature review involves identifying and gathering various written sources books, journal articles, archives, magazines, and other documents that have a direct connection to the subject under investigation. Data were collected by searching for references through Google Scholar, while Mendeley was utilized to organize citations and manage the reference list.

Result and Discussion

Digital media plays a significant role in driving consumption through visualizations designed to trigger emotional reactions in users (Fadillah et al., 2022). Fast and engaging content accelerates users' attention spans, making it easier for them to be exposed to products quickly (Septiana, n.d.). Brand strategies that combine storytelling and influencer endorsements create positive associations between products and certain lifestyles, encouraging users to imitate the narrative presented (Pradhana & Saputro, 2025). Visual influence also leads consumers to develop preferences subconsciously, as repeated exposure can form impressions without critical evaluation. Strong visualizations build an imagination

of an ideal lifestyle, which then encourages users to purchase to build a self-image that aligns with that digital representation (Pratiwi et al., 2024).

Personal content accelerates the transition from interest to consumption without a reflective process. Users are also more easily persuaded to purchase when visuals are designed with positive emotional elements such as color aesthetics, influencer expressions, or product ambiance (Hilmansyach, 2024). In many cases, visual content creates an illusion of urgency that reinforces the desire to buy impulsively. All of this demonstrates that digital media has significant power in shaping consumption patterns through visual design and attention mechanisms. (Tryanti & Primasari, 2022). In addition to social and emotional factors, consumption is also influenced by cognitive processes involving the perception, interpretation, and subjective evaluation of product information. Younger generations often rely on quick, heuristic-based judgments when evaluating products they see online (Fadillah et al., 2022).

This causes them to be more influenced by attractive packaging, short reviews, or automatically generated ratings (Alkatiri & Aprianty, 2024). This cognitive influence is even stronger when users face a high information load, leading them to prefer following popular recommendations rather than conducting in-depth evaluations (Anjani & Mubarak, 2025). Younger consumers also show a tendency to judge product quality based on social perceptions rather than direct evidence (Meylovsky et al., 2025). Persuasive narratives in digital content lead users to perceive products as solutions to personal needs, even if these claims are not always objective. In other cases, cognitive biases such as FOMO encourage them to purchase to avoid missing out (Dwidienawati et al., 2025). These cognitive mechanisms show that purchasing decisions often occur not because of rational needs, but because of quick interpretations influenced by digital design (Sahanaya, 2025).

This Generation Z consumption cannot be separated from mental processes influenced by psychological perceptions and biases. The consumer behavior of the younger generation is shaped by the interaction between psychological needs, social pressures, and the mutually reinforcing influence of digital media (Junita & Putra, 2024).

The desire to fulfill emotional needs such as self-validation is often triggered by lifestyle representations constructed through digital media (Evita et al., 2023). At the same time, online group norms make consumers feel the need to follow trends to remain part of the community (Meylovsky et al., 2025). This pressure is reinforced by brands' visual strategies, which lead users to associate products with their ideal self-image. Meanwhile, cognitive processes such as heuristics and social biases create Consumers judge products based on popularity, not objective evaluation (Anjani & Mubarak, 2025). This phenomenon is further clarified by the finding that perceptions of quality are often shaped by digital narratives, rather than direct experience (Junita & Putra, 2024). As a result, consumption becomes a spontaneous act born from the interaction between emotional urges and visual stimuli. Younger generations also demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to status symbols created through digital communities, making consumption a symbol of identity (Ayu et al., 2022). Ultimately, these findings confirm that Generation Z's consumer behavior is shaped by a complex configuration of technological, social, and psychological factors (Somantri et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The analysis shows that TikTok is one of the digital spaces most influential in influencing Generation Z's consumption patterns. The platform's visual character, fast-paced

content, and algorithm-based recommendation system create an environment that triggers emotional engagement and uncontrollable shopping impulses. Generation Z, who grew up in a digital culture, tends to respond spontaneously to stimuli, especially when content is packaged through influencers, product recommendations, or viral trends that emphasize a particular lifestyle. Purchases are not only driven by functional needs, but also by the search for identity, social validation, and the desire to follow the flow of digital communities. This situation demonstrates that consumer behavior does not exist in isolation but is shaped by the interaction between individual psychological factors and platform mechanisms that continuously promote consumption activities as part of the daily online experience. Overall, TikTok has become a medium that reinforces a culture of fast consumption, where purchasing decisions often occur before users have time to make rational evaluations.

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