

Research Article

The Phenomenon of Fast Fashion in Generation Z and The Impacts on Environment

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Abstract: Environmental pollution has now become a global issue affecting all countries. The fashion industry is one of the largest polluters on Earth. Rapid production processes and a disregard for environmental sustainability have led to environmental damage due to waste generated from the production process, such as liquid waste, air pollution, unsold products, and even global warming. Research purposes :This study aims to analyze the behavior of generation Z towards fast fashion products and the level of knowledge and awareness of generation Z regarding its impact on the environment. research methods :This research uses a literature review (SLR) method, which systematically analyzes various literature reviews sourced from previous studies on the topic. The SLR method is a systematic and structured research method for collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing all relevant information and research evidence regarding a topic or research question. summary of results: The research results show that many factors influence consumer behavior in making purchasing decisions. These factors can be both internal and external. For Generation Z, these decisions can be influenced or derived from digital media in the form of green product campaigns, as Generation Z is at the forefront of efforts to raise awareness of the environmental impacts of the fast fashion industry. However, educational and collaborative support and intervention are needed from all parties, including the government, higher education, and the fashion industry, to build environmental awareness and encourage sustainable consumption practices among Generation Z.

Keywords: Earth; Environment Impact; Fast Fashion; Generation Z; SLR.

1. Introduction

The fashion industry has undergone a major revolution in the past two decades with the emergence of the fast fashion phenomenon. This business model is characterized by fast production speed, affordable prices, constantly changing designs, and very short product cycles. Consumers can find new collections in a matter of weeks, impacting consumer behavior, leading to repeated fashion purchases and overconsumption. Behind this rapid fashion phenomenon, the fast fashion industry has serious environmental consequences. Massive use of raw materials, difficult-to-decompose textile waste, water pollution from synthetic dyes, and the high carbon footprint of the global supply chain (Bick et al., 2018; Nünimäki et al., 2020) have made the fast fashion industry a global environmental focus in various countries.

Globally, the fashion industry is estimated to contribute around 10% of the world's total carbon emissions and is one of the largest contributors to industrial wastewater pollution. Data from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) shows that every second a truckload of textiles is thrown away or incinerated, and only around 1% of the total clothing produced is recycled into new clothing. This mounting textile waste creates a serious problem in landfills, as most synthetic fibers take decades to hundreds of years to decompose. Furthermore, over-production practices in the fast fashion system lead to a buildup of goods because the number of items produced exceeds the actual consumer needs.

The fast fashion phenomenon, when viewed from the perspective of operational management theory, is closely related to the application of supply chain management in the industry, which represents a production system that prioritizes speed, time-to-market,

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flexibility, and responsiveness to consumer trends. This seeks to address and fill the gap between fashion design and market demand by drastically reducing production and distribution cycle times. In principle, when companies implement Lean Production principles, which focus on production efficiency, this is very contradictory because the production process is carried out without paying attention to process standardization because companies need production speed to meet market and consumer trends, so supply chain activities are carried out quickly from upstream to downstream. This presents serious problems, especially from the aspect of environmental and social sustainability. High production speeds lead to increased use of synthetic materials, textile waste, and the ecological burden of the global supply chain.

Fast fashion industry practices also appear to be inconsistent with several applicable regulations. Law No. 20 of 2014 concerning Standardization and Conformity Assessment and Government Regulation No. 102 of 2020 concerning National Standardization, which regulate national standards (SNI), include textile products. Studies indicate that oversight of imported textile/clothing products is still suboptimal.

Gen Z is known as digital natives who are highly connected to social media and have high exposure to global trends. While they are concerned about sustainability and environmental issues, they are also heavily influenced by consumer trends, the fear of missing out (FOMO), and social pressure from online communities. Gen Z plays a crucial role in driving environmental transformation or change through their consumption habits. As primary consumers of fast fashion, Gen Z's perceptions and behaviors can be drivers of industry change. If Gen Z demonstrates a strong preference for green products and supply chain transparency, fast fashion companies will be encouraged to transform their business practices toward environmentally friendly and sustainable ones. Conversely, if their awareness is low and consumption behavior remains dominated by low prices and fast trends, the industry will struggle to transition toward sustainability. Therefore, this research is considered crucial.

Based on the background above, the identification of problems in this research is as follows:

- a. How does Generation Z perceive the environmental impact of fast fashion trends?
- b. What factors drive Generation Z's consumer behavior towards fast fashion even though Generation Z has environmental awareness?
- c. How much support and participation does Generation Z have in maintaining environmental awareness, such as purchasing environmentally friendly products?

The benefits of this research are to contribute to the literature on young consumer behavior (generation z) and its impact on the environment. For fast fashion industry players, it can provide input on environmentally friendly and sustainable industrial practices so that companies can implement more environmentally friendly production strategies to meet the needs of market trends or consumers at the young age level in this case generation z. While the benefits for the government are that it can be a basis for formulating policies in terms of textile waste management, compiling environmental regulations, supervising textile industry operational practices, supervising industrial waste disposal procedures and campaigns or education on green product consumption.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Literature review is a systematic and critical process of examining theories and previous research findings to build a conceptual framework, identify research gaps, and strengthen the scientific basis of a study.

Product

Theoretically, a product is anything offered to a market as a value proposition to satisfy consumer needs and wants through an exchange mechanism. Products are not limited to physical goods, but include services, ideas, and experiences designed to attract attention, create interest, and encourage purchasing and consumption decisions. Therefore, products are a strategic instrument for organizations in creating value, building differentiation, and achieving competitive advantage in the marketplace

Brand

A brand is a strategic identity manifested through a name, symbol, sign, design, or combination of visual and non-visual attributes that function as a differentiator for a product or service in the market. From a marketing perspective, a brand is not merely an identification element, but rather a value creation instrument that enables consumers to differentiate, recognize, and build perceptions of a business entity. A brand is an attribute that provides identification and differentiation from competing products; brand strength is not only determined by the presence of a symbol or name, but by the construction of brand equity.

A strong brand that is widely recognized, has strong associations, positive perceptions, and high loyalty indicates that the brand has achieved a strategic position in the minds of consumers (effective brand positioning). In this context, a brand functions as an intangible asset that can increase competitive advantage and business sustainability. A brand also acts as a quality signal that reduces purchasing risk.

Consumers tend to choose reputable brands because they provide a guarantee of consistency and trust. Therefore, brands become a psychological mechanism that influences consumer purchasing decisions, preferences, and long-term commitment. Strong brands can create economic value through increased price premiums, stable market share, and sustained customer loyalty. Thus, a brand is not just a visual identity, but a representation of values, reputation, and the long-term relationship between a company and its consumers.

Theory Leisure Class

Generation Z is a social group characterized by relatively greater free time than other social groups, so their consumption patterns tend to be oriented toward recreational and symbolic activities. Activities such as culinary, spa, photography, travel, and attending concerts reflect experiential consumption patterns, which aim to achieve pleasure, relaxation, and self-expression.

Veblen proposed the concept of conspicuous consumption, which refers to consumption not solely to satisfy functional needs but also to demonstrate social status and gain symbolic recognition. Although students are not always in the upper economic class, they can participate in symbolic consumption through access to certain brands as a form of representation of identity and status.

The use of branded fashion among Gen Z can be understood as part of the construction of social identity. Brands not only have utilitarian value (clothing function) but also symbolic value that represents lifestyle, taste, and group affiliation. In this context, branded fashion consumption becomes a means of self-expression and a tool of social differentiation.

Generation Z, as the younger generation, is in the identity formation stage. Therefore, consuming branded fashion can be a means of gaining social legitimacy within their social circles. Pleasure-oriented leisure activities reinforce the tendency for symbolic consumption, as leisure is not only interpreted as free time but also as a space to build self-image within the peer group.

Generation Z's use of branded fashion is not simply a simple consumption behavior, but rather part of a social practice related to status symbols, image, and the need for social recognition. However, in the contemporary context, the concept of leisure class needs to be understood more flexibly, as symbolic consumption is no longer limited to the elite but has been democratized through access to credit, discounts, and digital platforms.

3. Materials and Method

This study employed a qualitative research method with a literature review approach. The data sources used in this study were secondary data obtained from various national and international scientific articles from various reputable sources relevant to the research topic. These data sources were used to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the results of previous studies in order to answer the identified problems and research questions. In this study, the sources and types of data used were as follows:

- a. National and international scientific articles
- b. Textbook
- c. Government policies, regulations and official documents from the Institution
- d. Data source selection criteria:
 - 1) The literature used must have relevant topics
 - 2) Credible and reputable journal sources

- 3) The articles used as references are from the last 5-10 years
- 4) Literature in English and Indonesian

The analysis method used triangulation data analysis techniques. In qualitative research using a literature review approach, triangulation techniques are used to confirm and validate the results of the literature synthesis. The following are the stages used:

- a. Data reduction
At this stage, a selection process is carried out and the main theme is determined based on the research focus and research problem formulation.
- b. Data presentation
At this stage, the researcher systematically organizes the information in narrative form to make it easier for the researcher to discuss the research results.
- c. Drawing conclusions
At this stage, the researcher ensures that the conclusions drawn are truly valid and consistent.

4. Results and Discussion

The following are the research findings that will be presented in the sub-discussions. These findings represent the findings of the researchers, which are then presented clearly and systematically in the discussion, as presented in the following points:

How does Generation Z perceive the environmental impact of fast fashion trends?

In discussion 1, it is used to answer the identification and formulation of research problems, namely : How does Generation Z perceive the environmental impact of fast fashion trends?

Research findings show that Generation Z is a generation that grew up in the digital era where access to information, social media, and e-commerce influences how they view and consume products, particularly fashion. According to Kim et al. (2022), Generation Z has a higher level of awareness of sustainability issues than previous generations, primarily because they grew up amidst increasing global discourse on climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation. Generation Z is more aware of the environmental impacts of textile production processes. The textile industry produces more waste, uses more energy, and its production processes also use hazardous chemicals such as textile dyes that can harm the environment. The fashion industry currently also uses synthetic materials with plastic fibers to make threads that will be produced into clothing, which can cause water and soil pollution and also increase global warming (Niinimäki et al., 2020). On the other hand, the existence of low prices and easy accessibility makes Generation Z continue to buy fast fashion products.

Research conducted by McNeill and Moore (2015) shows that consumers in generation z (the younger generation) are very aware of the negative impacts of the fast fashion phenomenon on the environment, but there is a gap between behavior and actual facts. Generation z has a better understanding of environmental pollution, but generation z also has a need to stay fashionable following fashion trends that are heavily influenced by environmental factors, digital culture that is so embedded in the real life of generation z. In addition, the influence of influencers on social media also increases the desire of generation z to consume fashion.

Generation Z also shows great potential as a catalyst for change towards sustainable fashion behavior. In research conducted by Park and Lin (2020), Generation Z, with high levels of environmental literacy, showed a preference for local brands, secondhand products, or thrift shop platforms that offer ethical and sustainable values. Practices such as upcycling and clothing swaps have become new forms of expression within Generation Z culture, which rejects excessive consumption. This demonstrates a shift in perception from simply following trends to seeking a balance between self-expression and environmental responsibility.

What factors drive Generation Z's consumer behavior towards fast fashion even though Generation Z has environmental awareness?

The results of the study show that Generation Z's consumer behavior towards fast fashion is influenced by a combination of factors, namely psychological factors, social factors, economic factors, and technological factors.

Factors that Drive Generation Z's Consumptive Behavior towards Fast Fashion Despite Having Environmental Awareness are as follows:

a. Psychological Factors

Generation Z's consumer behavior is driven and influenced by hedonistic tendencies and a tendency to shop impulsively. Shopping is not only seen as a functional necessity, but also as a means of recreation, stress relief, and self-expression. According to the theory of hedonistic consumer behavior, purchasing decisions are often driven by positive emotions generated by the shopping experience, rather than by real needs. Fast fashion facilitates this by offering instant gratification through rapid product updates and personalized recommendation systems based on user behavior data. Hedonistic and impulsive behavior is also influenced by promotions and discounts, which increase the desire to purchase a product.

b. Social Factors

Social factors such as peer influence are also significant. Within Generation Z, clothing style often serves as a symbol of identity, group affiliation, and a form of nonverbal communication. Social pressure to keep up with trends leads individuals to imitate the consumption behavior of their peers, even when this conflicts with personal sustainability principles. The social identity formed through fashion becomes more important than commitment to a specific lifestyle.environment.

c. Economic Factors

Economic factors also play a significant role. Fast fashion products offer relatively low prices and designs that mimic well-known brands, with fast distribution speeds. This is particularly appealing to Generation Z, who are generally in the early stages of their careers or education and have limited purchasing power. Brands like Shein, H&M, and Zara utilize cost leadership strategies and just-in-time production models to quickly deliver product variety at affordable prices. As a result, environmental awareness often gives way to economic rationalizations, where buying multiple, low-cost products is perceived as more profitable than a single, sustainable product at a higher price.

d. Technology Factors

One of the most dominant factors is the influence of social media, particularly platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Generation Z grew up in a digital era where social identity and self-aesthetics are heavily influenced by visual representation. Social media algorithms encourage users to follow the latest trends, creating social pressure to always appear "up to date" with the latest fashions. Trends like haul videos, outfit of the day (OOTD), and micro-influencers have made clothing consumption a normalized part of their lifestyle. Although Generation Z understands the concept of sustainable fashion, the drive for social acceptance and digital validation often outweighs environmental ethical considerations

How much support and participation does Generation Z have in maintaining environmental awareness, such as purchasing environmentally friendly products?

The research results show that Generation Z's support and participation in environmental conservation can be seen through several forms of action. Activities involving Generation Z in environmentally conscious practices include digital campaigns, online petitions, and social movements by creating hashtags that will go viral on social media such as #NoPlastic, #ThriftChallenge, or #SustainableLiving, which are popular on social media. In addition, Generation Z also supports brands that are committed to sustainability by purchasing products labeled eco-friendly, cruelty-free, or carbon-neutral. Some Generation Z also adopt a minimalist lifestyle, thrifting, upcycling, and product reuse as a form of concern for waste that will cause environmental pollution.

5. Comparison

To increase real participation, such as purchasing environmentally friendly products, an approach is needed that can overcome the obstacles that prevent Generation Z from purchasing environmentally friendly fashion products, such as price factors, accessibility, and behavioral gaps. Cooperation and collaboration between the government, business actors, educational institutions, and environmental influencers are crucial to creating an ecosystem that makes it easier for Generation Z to actively participate in consuming sustainable

products. Thus, Generation Z's support for the environment does not stop at awareness, but is also manifested through concrete behaviors that have a positive impact on the sustainability of the earth.

6. Conclusion

From the results and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn as below:

- a. Generation Z's perception of the environmental impacts of the fast fashion phenomenon is complex and dynamic. Generation Z is aware of the ecological dangers caused by the fast fashion industry and the fashion industry. Although Generation Z has an awareness of environmentally conscious consumption behavior, it is still often controlled by materialistic values and social pressures. Changing perceptions towards higher awareness requires an active role from various parties such as higher education institutions that provide understanding and instill sustainability values in the courses provided. In addition to higher education, government policies that regulate environmentally friendly production are also needed, as well as the transformation of the fashion industry towards a circular business model that is not only economically profitable, but also responsible for the earth and future generations.
- b. Factors that Drive Generation Z's Consumptive Behavior towards Fast Fashion despite having environmental awareness are social, economic, psychological, and cultural factors that shape consumption patterns in generation z. The influence of social media, low prices, emotional drives, and cognitive dissonance make fast fashion consumption a complex social phenomenon.
- c. Generation Z has great potential as a change-maker in the sustainability movement because Generation Z has high environmental awareness, is technologically literate, and easily connected to global issues.

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Data Availability Statement: The data supporting the findings of this study are publicly available at [Name of Repository] and can be accessed via the following link: [URL/DOI]. The dataset includes the raw and processed data analyzed during the study.

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