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Digital Affordances and Necessity: Gen Z's Hybrid Consumption Ecology



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Abstract:

This study examines the consumer behavior of Generation Z in Makassar within the context of economic uncertainty. The research specifically aims to identify the key factors influencing consumption patterns and decision-making among young consumers facing fluctuating economic conditions. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing an online questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to measure perceptions, preferences, and behavioral tendencies. The survey was distributed to 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance and representativeness of the target population. Data were analyzed using validity and reliability tests to ensure measurement accuracy, followed by T-tests and F-tests with SPSS software for hypothesis testing. The analysis revealed that modern lifestyle orientation, perceptions of economic uncertainty, and the prioritization of essential needs significantly shape Generation Z's consumer behavior. These findings suggest that this demographic group tends to balance aspirational consumption with financial prudence during periods of economic instability. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of youth consumer psychology in emerging urban contexts and provides practical insights for marketers and policymakers seeking adaptive strategies to engage Generation Z effectively in uncertain economic environments.

Keywords: Consumptive Behavior, Economic Uncertainty, Modern Lifestyle, Essential Needs.

INTRODUCTION

The dominant social media culture greatly influences the consumer lifestyle of Gen Z. They are more likely to spend money on things that can increase their public trust. (Khrishananto & Adriansyah, 2021) Teenagers generally look to influencers for inspiration and seek to emulate their lifestyles, including the products they use and promote. This can lead teens to make purchases based on trends or recommendations that may not necessarily align with their needs, but rather on a desire to follow what the influencer deems cool or popular. (Maharani & Hendrastomo, 2023) This creates an interesting dynamic between the desire to maintain a modern lifestyle influenced by global trends and the demands of meeting their basic needs.



Consumer behavior is the process and activity when someone is involved in searching, selecting, purchasing, using and evaluating products and services to fulfill their needs and desires. (Irwansyah, 2021). In the context of modern society, consumption is understood not only as an activity that covers basic needs, but also as an expression of lifestyle, identity, and social status. Consumptive behavior is also shaped by various factors, including internal factors such as modern lifestyle, personality, and knowledge, as well as external factors such as social status, family, culture, and situation. (Hayati et al., 2020) Aspects of consumer behavior include impulsive buying, which is done emotionally without consideration, and wastefulness, which involves wasting money without considering needs. Furthermore, this behavior also includes seeking pleasure through purchasing trendy items for physical comfort. (Lestarina et al., 2017) (Anggraini & Santhoso, 2019).

However, the current economic uncertainty in Indonesia is increasingly challenging this generation. Economic instability, resulting in general and persistent increases in the prices of goods and services, is reflected in rising inflation and economic fluctuations, impacting the ability of many, including Generation Z, to spend. Many Generation Z are struggling to meet basic needs such as food, education, and healthcare amidst economic uncertainty. This is because they spend more money on items or experiences that can enhance their social media status. Uncertainty in the job market, the rising cost of living, and economic pressures following the pandemic create a situation that requires adaptability in managing finances. In this situation, there is a conflict between the desire to maintain a contemporary way of life—which often leads to consumptive behavior—and the need to be more prudent and efficient in spending. Previous research has shown that amid economic uncertainty, younger consumers may experience a shift in spending priorities, from a focus on pleasure to a focus on benefits. (Michael R. Solomon, 2018).

Their consumer behavior is not just about basic needs, but also closely linked to their lifestyle and social identity. Generation Z plays a significant role in the world of e-commerce due to their consumerist tendencies and constant adherence to the latest trends. To fulfill their lifestyle, they are willing to spend a lot of time on their electronic devices exploring the various products offered by online shopping sites. (Putri & Komalasari, 2023). According to Fitriani, (2021) Lifestyle shows how each individual spends their money, allocates their time, and how they live. Listiyani et al., (2021) He explains that lifestyle is also known as a self-image of each individual who experiences behavioral changes, such as following emerging trends and becoming a primary need. However, lifestyle also has negative effects. This is caused by increased expenditure due to an excessive lifestyle, which can lead to a decline in one's financial well-being, making it difficult to allocate and manage finances. (Listiyani et al., 2021). However, Kusnandar & Kurniawan, (2020) explains that lifestyle has a positive impact on financial behavior, due to a person's ability to control their time and finances to buy what is needed and put aside their desires. As a result, an excessive lifestyle must be changed and... Technological advancements have changed the way they interact with the market, where purchasing decisions are often

influenced by emerging trends on social media. The phenomenon of consumer behavior among Generation Z is already widespread, and they tend to shop based on desires and trends, rather than needs, and are easily influenced by peers and influencers. Factors such as hedonism, conformity, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), and low self-control are the main drivers of their consumer behavior. (Sa et al., 2025) Despite the increasing economic uncertainty and the lack of awareness of the importance of managing their finances wisely, they still find it difficult to control their consumer desires.

Many of them feel pressured to follow certain lifestyle trends that require large expenses, while on the other hand, they also have to meet basic needs that are increasingly difficult to fulfill. (Riyanto, 2021) shows that nearly 40% of young households in Indonesia face challenges in managing their expenses, mainly due to the rising cost of living and spending on consumer goods.

The relationship between modern lifestyles and the fulfillment of basic needs indicates that, although Generation Z tends to prioritize consumption to project their social image, they are beginning to experience pressure to fulfill their basic needs more wisely. This study will examine the relationship between these two variables and their impact on Generation Z's consumption behavior in Indonesia, particularly in the context of current economic uncertainty.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey method via questionnaire, which means that quantitative approach is used for proof/confirmation using numbers in statistical analysis to solve research problems (Sihotang Hotmaulina, 2023). The location of this research is in Makassar City, South Sulawesi, while the respondents in this research were specifically determined by the researcher, namely those aged 18-25 years. The determination of the research sample used the Slovin method with the following formula formulation:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \cdot e^2}$$

Note:

n = Number of research samples

N = Number of generation Z population

e = Margin of Error (0.1 or 10%)

Based on the formula above, the number of research samples can be determined as follows:

$$n = \frac{129,981}{1 + 129,918 \times (0,1)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{129,981}{1 + 129,981 \times 0,01}$$

$$n = \frac{129,981}{1.300,18} \quad n = 99.9 \text{ or } 100 \text{ respondents}$$

The sampling method used is *Purposive sampling* which is a non-random sampling method where researchers ensure the citation of illustrations through a method of determining special identities that match the research objectives so that it is hoped that they can respond to research cases. (Lenaini, 2021). Data were collected through the distribution of an online questionnaire designed using a 1-5 Likert scale to assess variables such as modern lifestyle, fulfillment of essential needs, economic uncertainty and tendencies towards consumer behavior.

Before use, the measuring instrument was tested for reliability using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to ensure consistency. Data analysis was conducted using validity and reliability tests to determine the validity and reliability of the data, followed by a T-test to compare the respondents' consumer behavior. Furthermore, the analysis used an F-test to determine the extent to which these variables influence consumer behavior. All stages of the analysis were conducted using statistical software (SPSS) to obtain objective and measurable results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

a. Respondent Characteristics

This study examines various variables related to the dynamics of Generation Z's consumer behavior in an era of economic uncertainty: between a modern lifestyle and the fulfillment of essential needs. The respondents in this study amounted to 100 people from Generation Z. The characteristics in question relate to age, employment status, and average expenditure.

A person's age is often associated with high consumption behavior due to the influence of social media, digital trends, and lifestyle. As Generation Z, we face challenges that require us to distinguish between needs and wants, especially amidst economic uncertainty. This requires mature thinking appropriate to our age and socioeconomic circumstances.

Table 1. Percentage of Gen-Z Age Levels

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 - 20	75	75%
21 - 25	25	25%
Total	100	100%

b. Validity Test and Reliability Test

Validity Test

This validity test is used to determine the level of validity of the questionnaire instrument used for data collection. A questionnaire is considered valid if the questions and the questionnaire are able to reveal something that can be measured. (Sahabuddin et al., 2022). To assess whether the values below are valid or not, compare the Rtable at

DF=N-2 and probability 0.05 (Hasnidar., Saharuddin, R., Azhari, A. Burhamzah, Maccening, A, R, A, 2024). If r count > 0.1975 then the question is declared valid.

Table 2. Validity test results

Variables	Indicator	Pearson Correlation	Significance	Information
Modern Lifestyle	X1.1	0.737	0.001	<i>Valid</i>
	X1.2	0.755	0.001	
	X1.3	0.755	0.001	
	X1.4	0.704	0.001	
	X1.5	0.750	0.001	
	X1.6	0.740	0.001	
Economic Uncertainty	X2.1	0.608	0.001	<i>Valid</i>
	X2.2	0.700	0.001	
	X2.3	0.780	0.001	
	X2.4	0.748	0.001	
	X2.5	0.480	0.001	
	X2.6	0.744	0.001	
Fulfillment of Essential Needs	X3.1	0.415	0.001	<i>Valid</i>
	X3.2	0.511	0.001	
	X3.3	0.524	0.001	
	X3.4	0.282	0.001	
	X3.5	0.778	0.001	
	X3.6	0.416	0.001	
Consumer Behavior	Y1.1	0.505	0.001	<i>Valid</i>
	Y1.2	0.663	0.001	
	Y1.3	0.758	0.001	
	Y1.4	0.686	0.001	
	Y1.5	0.792	0.001	
	Y1.6	0.617	0.001	

Reliability Test

A reliability test is an index test that indicates the extent to which a measuring instrument can be trusted or relied upon. It indicates the extent to which measurement results remain consistent when carried out twice or more on the same symptoms, using the same measuring instrument. (Amanda et al., 2019) To assess the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach's Alpha for each

instrument will be calculated. The higher the reliability coefficient, the more reliable the answers obtained from respondents. (Sahabuddin et al., 2022). Cronbach Alpha reliability standard > 0.60 .

Table 3. Reliability test

<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
0.820	0.842	24

The reliability test for all variables or questionnaires is declared reliable based on the SPSS test, namely where Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items is 0.842, which is greater than 0.06 ($0.842 > 0.06$). If it is greater than 0.06, the data is reliable. The greater the value, the more reliable it is.

c. T-Test (Partial Test)

The t-test is a statistical test used to test the difference in means between two groups or to test whether a sample has a mean that differs from the hypothesized value. (Sugiyono, 2012) This test is carried out by comparing the significance of the calculated t value $>$ t table and the probability value is less than 0.05. (Nainggolan, 2022).

To find the ttable, use the formula below:

$$\begin{aligned} T_{table} &= (a/2 : nk-1) \\ &= (0.05/2 : 100-2-1) \\ &= (0.025 : 97) \text{ [seen in the distribution of ttable values]} \\ &= 1.985 \end{aligned}$$

Table 4. T-test of the three variables

Model	T	Sig.
Modern lifestyle X1	2,434	0.000
Economic uncertainty X2	8,608	0.000
X3 essential needs	3,472	0.000

In accordance with the table above, the results of the t test (partial) show that the significance value of the influence of Modern Lifestyle (X1) on Consumptive Behavior (Y) is $0.00 > 0.05$ and the calculated t value is $2.434 <$ the t table value of 1.985, so there is an influence of Modern Lifestyle (X1) on consumptive behavior (Y). For the second variable, it shows that the significance value of the influence of economic uncertainty (X2) on consumptive behavior (Y) is $0.00 < 0.05$ and the

calculated t value is $3.608 >$ the t table value of 1.985, so there is an influence of economic uncertainty (X2) on consumptive behavior (Y). For the third variable, it shows that the significance value of the influence of fulfilling essential needs (X3) on consumptive behavior (Y) is $0.01 < 0.05$ and the calculated t value is $3.472 >$ the t table value of 1.985, so there is an influence of fulfilling essential needs (X3) on consumptive behavior (Y).

d. F Test (Simultaneous Test)

This test is conducted by comparing the significance of the calculated F value $>$ F table and the probability value is less than 0.05. If the regression model is in accordance with the model, it can be said to have a joint influence. (Nainggolan, 2022).

To find the F table, use the formula below:

$$\begin{aligned} f_{table} &= (a/2 : nk-1) \\ &= (0.05/2 : 100-2-1) \\ &= (0.025 : 97) \text{ [seen in the distribution of } f_{table} \text{ values]} \\ &= 3.09 \end{aligned}$$

Table 5. Simultaneous F-test

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	617,144	3	205,715	24,352	.000b
	Residual	810,966	96	8,448		
	Total	1428.110	99			

a. Dependent Variable: TOTALLY

b. Predictors: (Constant), TOTALX3, TOTALX1, TOTALX2

From the table above, it is known that the significance value for the influence of modern lifestyle (X1), economic uncertainty (X2), and fulfillment of essential needs (X3) on consumer behavior (Y) is $0.000 < 0.05$ and F count $24.352 > 3.09$. This proves that there is an influence modern lifestyle (X1), economic uncertainty (X2), and fulfillment of essential needs (X3) significantly influence consumer behavior (Y).

Discussion

Based on the results of our research, respondents indicated that modern lifestyles, economic uncertainty, and the fulfillment of essential needs influence consumer behavior. They are more likely to shop not based on needs, but rather based on desires

influenced by trends. Generation Z stated that they tend to be motivated to shop after seeing new products promoted by influencers or on other platforms. This situation is reinforced by several marketing strategies that are quite tempting for Generation Z, namely massive discounts and advertisements from various platforms. Items frequently purchased by Generation Z tend to be items related to their style or appearance, such as clothing and accessories. Consumer behavior refers to the act of buying or using products without a rational basis, focusing more on desires than needs and characterizing oneself with a tendency to pursue luxury and excessive goods, where the use of these goods only provides physical satisfaction and comfort. The hedonistic factor can be one of the main factors that drives Generation Z to buy branded or trendy goods. Some of them are satisfied when they get items that match their desires, especially luxury and expensive items. Therefore, Generation Z needs to exercise self-control to avoid excessive purchases. Generation Z should be better able to manage their finances so they can use them more wisely. (Muna & Aenurofik, 2022).

One equally important factor driving consumer behavior is their low self-control. When Generation Z is unable to control themselves, they tend to make impulsive purchases that can worsen their financial situation. The impact of consumer behavior on Generation Z can certainly have both negative and positive consequences, for example, when Generation Z can become wasteful in terms of financial management, and the positive impact is an increase in the economy from prices offered by producers and increased self-confidence.

In general, the results of this study indicate that Generation Z's consumer behavior in an era of economic uncertainty is driven more by desires and trends than by basic needs. This finding is in line with the opinion (Zilioli, 2015) which states that individuals tend to consume goods and services not only to fulfill basic needs, but also to obtain emotional and psychological satisfaction. As a generation living in the digital age, Generation Z is highly influenced by social media trends. This leads them to purchase items not out of necessity, but for immediate gratification or pleasure.

CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, we can see that the consumer behavior of Generation Z in Makassar is influenced by various factors, such as modern lifestyles, economic uncertainty, and the fulfillment of essential needs. Despite facing economic uncertainty, Generation Z is more likely to shop based on desires and emerging trends, especially those influenced by social media and influencers, rather than simply to fulfill basic needs. This suggests that external influences, such as social media, are more influential in guiding their purchasing decisions than more rational self-control. For future researchers, it would be good to delve deeper into other psychological

factors that can also influence Generation Z's consumer behavior, such as peer pressure or the FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) phenomenon. Researchers can also expand the research location to other cities to see whether Generation Z's consumption patterns in Makassar are similar or if there are differences elsewhere. For business people and policymakers, the results of this study can be used as considerations for designing wiser marketing strategies, as well as providing education to Generation Z about the importance of healthy financial management amid economic uncertainty.

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