Consumptive Behaviour of Gen-Z and Identity in the Digital Era

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Abstract: *The era of digital natives has offered many conveniences, including social media and e-commerce. This use contributes to personal branding, resulting in the creation of self-identity. This study aims to describe the social reality of Gen-Z in performing consumptive behavior for personal identity in the Digital Natives Era with the AGIL concept. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. Data collection techniques used are interviews and observations. There were five informants in Medan. The results showed that Gen-Z's consumptive behavior in Online Shopping in the Digital Natives Era was influenced by the demands of forming personal branding through fashion, which was becoming a trend on social media. Some informants normalize their consumptive behavior to follow directions and develop personal branding. According to the theory of Parsons (AGIL), this phenomenon results from social change related to consumption behavior. This study concludes that the need to form personal branding has manipulated students' awareness of wasteful behavior.*

Keywords: *Consumptive Behaviour; Digital Natives; Gen-Z; Personal Branding*

A.   INTRODUCTION

The era of digital natives is a term used for generations that grew up with the digital world and became part of the rapid progress of social networks (Helsper & Enyon, 2009). Gen-Z is part of the generation in the Digital Natives era who spend their time using the internet and interacting through social media (Supratman, 2018)—experiencing the rapid sophistication of technology that offers a lot of convenience and efficiency. Consumptive behavior is part of life in the digital navies era in Gen-Z, which is to fulfill pleasure and satisfaction. Consumptive behavior is a hedonistic behavior that prioritizes happiness over needs (Taqwa, 2022). According to Ancok (Thohiroh, 2015), wasteful behavior is buying products that someone does without considering aspects of needs but buying products that the individual does not need. Consumptive behavior can be interpreted as the tendency of individuals to consume a product excessively without making various considerations, where it is more concerned with pleasure and prioritization than needs.

Generation Z (Gen-Z) is the generation that was born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. They are the first generation to grow up in the digital age, and they have a unique set of values and behaviors that have shaped their consumer habits. One of the most notable aspects of Gen-Z's consumer behavior is their focus on

identity. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to purchase products and services that align with their personal values and beliefs. They are also more likely to use social media to express themselves and connect with others who share their interests.

Data released by the We Are Social Survey in 2021 states that Indonesia is ranked first as the highest country for e-commerce users globally. Around 88.1% of internet users in Indonesia use e-commerce services to buy a particular product. Online shopping through e-commerce is carried out in several applications, namely Shopee, Lazada, Tokopedia, Zalora, TiktokShop, Instagram, and other applications that always offer convenience. This application has optional features that buyers can adjust to their desired product, such as size, product description, original product photos, and product details. This is one of the conveniences offered by the modern era that can encourage the formation of consumptive behavior in individuals. E-commerce is one of the places that quickly sells viral fashion products to meet the general public's fashion needs. Data in 2022 shows that fashion products are the most popular products throughout the year on the Shopee application.

The Populix Survey in 2020 revealed that most Online Shopping activities are carried out by groups of people aged 18-28 years with an average of Rp50,000-Rp500,000. In general, students' basic needs are buying books and learning equipment to facilitate learning. However, there are aspects of the lifestyle that students want to fulfill, so they encourage them to adopt a consumptive lifestyle, one of which is by buying goods online outside of needs through e-commerce. The problem is that the items purchased tend not to be used and are not too important, only used to show a luxurious identity and impress others well. In forming an identity, individuals tend to provide symbols intended for people to include personal branding following what is expected. Referring to Haroen (2014), personal branding is formed to create a positive perception and highlight self-character built with the personality, abilities, and values that a person adheres to (Salam, 2020).

In forming their identity, individuals tend to buy image-aware products given by the product itself (Purboyo, 2021). Personal branding is an exciting phenomenon to discuss in the era of digital natives, where more and more people are aware of the importance of building an image in the eyes of the general public. Personal branding is forming an identity in society towards aspects of oneself to create a positive impression. Ganiem (in Wasesa, 2011) explains that personal branding is how a person markets himself to others systematically. Personal branding can be formed through how to dress. How to dress is one of the crucial indicators in creating personal branding. A person will develop personal branding through how one dresses by giving an image of certain impressions and messages channeled through the outfits and clothes used. The trend of how to dress also continues to develop in line with the change of time. Good personal branding encourages individuals constantly to monitor the development of existing fashion trends. Self-identity can be formed through social media by showing the best posts to friends so that a good self-identity is formed on social media.

Social media is a means users use to carry out various activities and various information through images, text, video, and audio. Instagram is one of the most popular social media known by many people. Some features can be used on Instagram to share photos and videos with fellow followers and other users. The use of social media in forming a self-identity has rapid development. Along with the

increasing social media users, social networking sites are used more widely as a medium for forming personal branding.

The news study lies in the AGIL Concept by Talcott Parsons, which the author uses to interpret the consumptive lifestyle phenomenon in Gen-Z. This study aims to describe the social phenomenon happening to Gen-Z, especially students related to consumptive behavior carried out to form personal branding through Online Shopping activities. Through the AGIL concept, the research will explain the consumptive phenomenon in forming identity through four main functions: Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latency. Tapscott (2013) states that if we can understand the generation close to the internet,, we can predict the future. So, it is essential to study the phenomenon of consumptive behavior in creating personal branding to address it correctly.

B.   METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. Interviews, observations, field notes, and researcher observations carry out data collection techniques is analyzed using the concept of A, G, I, L by Talcott Parsons. The research aims to describe life in the Digital Navies Era regarding the phenomenon of consumptive behavior and personal branding that they have experienced and have seen. Students are a generation familiar with technology, so they are more active in using social networks and become most online shop users (Rahayu, 2021).

For this reason,the author uses students as the correct informants to explain the subject matter and achieve research goals. Students who become informants are students from various universities, such as the Universitas Sumatera Utara 3 students, North Sumatra State Islamic University with one student, and Prima Indonesia University with one student. The five informants in this study were selected based on several criteria: Gen-Z, active and consistent e-commerce users, and active social media users. These five informants have met the author's criteria and can provide answers to the topics raised by the author.

C.   LITERATURE STUDY

An important topic in this study is the phenomenon of personal branding formation that underlies a person's consumptive behavior. This research is based on the current reality and is supported by several theories and previous studies. The theory used in the study is the concept of AGIL by Talcott Parsons. Talcott Parsons was one of the same followers of the functional structural school as Comte, Durkheim, and Spencer. Parsons views social change by focusing on the nature of the social structure that will lead to social evolution. Parsons argues that the study of social change must first begin with the study of social structure. More profoundly, Parsons' view refers to the dynamics within a social system as part of the social structure.

Parsons explained that structural changes that occur in society can be influenced by several aspects, one of which is trends (Turama, 2020). Changes in society are covered in several stages commonly referred to as the AGIL (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration,and Latency) concept. These four functions are used to maintain a system.

A.   Adaptation: This function emphasizes the importance of self-adjustment to the environment and its needs. This function is used to explain student behavior patterns in the digital native era. Gen-Z consumers are well-adapted to the digital age. They are more likely to use social media to research products and services, and they are more likely to be influenced by online reviews. This adaptation to the digital age has led to a more consumptive lifestyle among Gen-Z consumers. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to be exposed to new products and services through social media and more likely to be influenced to purchase those products and services.

B.   Goal attainment This function emphasizes the importance of a system in defining and achieving common goals. This function is used to explain the goals that students want to achieve in consumptive behavior. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to be motivated by self-expression and personal fulfillment than by financial gain. They are also more likely to be concerned about sustainability and social responsibility. This focus on self-expression and personal fulfillment has led to a more consumptive lifestyle among Gen-Z consumers. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to spend money on experiences and products that make them feel good about themselves and their identities.

C.   Integration: This function emphasizes the importance of balance in managing relationships between other functions, namely Adaptation, Goal Attainment, and Latency. This function is used to identify aspects that link consumptive behavior with the formation of personal branding. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to be connected to their peers through social media. They are also more likely to be involved in social causes. This integration with their peers and involvement in social causes has led to a more consumptive lifestyle among Gen-Z consumers. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to be influenced by their peers to purchase products and services and are more likely to be motivated to purchase products and services that support the social causes they care about.

D.   Latency: This function emphasizes the importance of pattern maintenance through maintaining existing systems and improving individual motivation and cultural patterns. This function is used to explain the behavior patterns carried out by students in maintaining their consumptive behavior. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to be open to new experiences and products. They are also more likely to be influenced by trends and fads. This openness to new experiences and products has led Gen-Z consumers to a more consumptive lifestyle. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to experiment with new products and services and are more likely to be influenced to purchase trendy products and services.

According to Parsons, these four functions are imperative or prerequisites for the continuity of the social system. The entire living system must meet some particular needs or functions. There are two essential points included in functional needs: the internal system needs or system needs when related to the environment and something related to the target system or goals and means that need to be done to achieve these goals.

The focus on identity is a crucial driver of Gen-Z's consumer behavior. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to purchase products and services that reflect their unique identities. They are also more likely to use social media to express themselves and

connect with others who share their interests. This focus on identity is likely due to some factors. Gen-Z consumers are growing up in a world constantly bombarded with messages about who they should be. They are also more likely to be exposed to different cultures and perspectives through social media. As a result, they are more likely to question the traditional definitions of identity. The focus on identity has some implications for businesses. Businesses must understand Gen-Z consumers' unique values and beliefs to target them effectively. They also need to create products and services that reflect the diversity of Gen-Z identities.

This research is supported by several previous studies on consumptive behavior, shaping personal branding, and discussing the digital natives era. In a study by Salam entitled "Personal Branding Digital Natives in the Era of New Media Communication" in Jurmal BECOOS in 2020, it can be concluded that personal branding that a person tries to form on his social media can create an impression of self-character to his followers. Also supported by the research of Rahayu et al., with the title "Consumptive Behavior as an Impact of the Existence of Online Shop among Sociology Students 2019 State University of Malang" in the journal Integration & Innovative Harmony of Social Sciences in 2021, it was concluded that in consumptive behavior people tend to buy an item based on desires, not needs.

D.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research found the reality that students are motivated to buy goods in E-commerce because it is more accessible, practical, and affordable. Students prefer buying clothes and fashion items in e-commerce rather than offline stores. This is because there are quite a lot of promos offered on online shopping applications. One is the free shipping promo that Shopee, TiktokShop, Lazada, and Tokopedia offer. Shopee is one of the most visited online shopping applications, with 161 million people, Tokopedia with 106 million people, and Lazada with 70 million people. One of the driving factors for students to use this online shopping application is that it always provides shipping promos and massive monthly discounts. Not infrequently, students are encouraged to buy a product because it is on promo without thinking about the usefulness and function of the product in the future. The product bundling promo "Buy 2 Only Rp. 150,000" encourages students to buy products that will not necessarily be used.

Another motivation encourages students to behave consumptively because they are tempted by marketing strategies or product advertisements on social media. Social media platforms have become powerful marketing tools for brands to reach their target audiences, including students. These platforms offer a variety of ways for brands to advertise their products, such as through sponsored posts, influencer partnerships, and targeted ads. Large platforms such as TikTok and Instagram are marketing platforms for brands to introduce their products. Marketing strategies on Instagram usually use the services of artists, celebrities, and influencers to attract followers to buy a product. Marketing strategies on TikTok are usually carried out by Content Creators and ordinary users who promote a product with the term "Honest Review." However, honest content here is only part of a brand's marketing strategy by only showing the positive side of a product. Marketing strategies on social media are designed to pique consumers' interest and curiosity, and students are no exception. When students see their favorite celebrities, influencers, and content

creators promoting a product, they are more likely to be interested in learning more about it. In addition to the marketing strategies mentioned above, social media makes it easier for students to purchase products impulsively. Students can buy products from their smartphones or computers without leaving their homes with just a few clicks. This convenience can make it difficult for students to resist the temptation to spend money on things they may not need or want. Social media plays a significant role in encouraging students to behave consumptively. Students are bombarded with daily marketing messages on social media, which can effectively persuade them to buy products. It is important for students to be aware of the marketing strategies that brands use on social media and to be critical of the content they see.

Changes in the structure of Gen-Z behavior in the Digital Natives Age can be seen more broadly through comprehensive stages. Parsons introduced these stages in the AGIL concept: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency. This table is expected to provide a clear picture of the changes.

Table 1. AGIL Concept

AGIL	Explanation
Adaptation	Online shopping activities on e-commerce and forming self-identity on social media are forms of Gen-Z's adaptation to technological developments and the digital world in the Digital Natives Era, which always offers convenience and efficiency in every activity.
Goal attainment	Gen-Z aims to consume fashion items to form their branding on social media. Personal branding is formed to provide a positive image and self-identity to others.
Integration	Fashion trends unite Gen-Z in buying an item that is going viral.
Latency	Gen-Z normalizes their consumptive behavior to keep up with trends and lifestyles. This can be seen from students' awareness of their consumptive behavior but still want to meet their personal branding needs.

Source: Author Analysis

Parsons explained that the adaptation function is seen through a behavioral system (Annisa, 2021). The development of technology and internet networks has formed a new pattern of all-digital life by offering convenience and efficiency. In the era of digital natives, there is a change in behavior patterns carried out by the younger generation in shopping activities, namely, the change from direct shopping to shopping through online applications. Media continues to evolve to form new media, such as social media, which has changed the direction of communication to be more active (Shimp & Andrews, 2013). The Digital Natives era is where many active social media users use social media as a medium of communication, information media, online shopping, and entertainment. Personal branding is one of the highlights of the widespread use of social media. Personal branding is forming a positive impression conveyed by individuals through certain symbols. According to McNally and Speak, there are three indicators in forming personal branding: individual competence or

ability, style, and personal branding standards. Style or style can form a unique impression on individuals in the perception of others (Yunitasari & Japarianto, 2013). Individuals tend to follow style trends to give an up-to-date impression to their followers on social media. This will then give birth to excessive consumptive behavior in individuals forming the desired personal brand.

AGIL theory's adaptation function is evident in how Gen-Z students have adapted their shopping behavior to the digital age. In the past, students would typically go to physical stores to shop for clothes. Students can shop from the comfort of their own homes and have their purchases delivered to their door. The rise of social media has also played a role in shaping the consumer behavior of Gen-Z students. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are popular among Gen-Z students. These platforms allow students to share their fashion sense and lifestyle with others. Students also use social media to follow fashion influencers and learn about the latest trends. The desire to create a positive personal brand on social media can lead to excessive consumption among Gen-Z students. Students may feel pressured to buy new clothes and fashion items to keep up with the latest trends. This can lead to financial problems and a cycle of debt.

Parsons explains that the goal achievement function is a function of the personality system. Personal branding is consistent in the form of an image and identity that you want to show to others. The study found that 4 out of 5 informants stated the importance of image formed through style or dress. A product's image can give others an impression, such as a feminine, stylish, and charismatic impression. Students tend to buy clothes and fashion items that are tailored to the image they want to show. Students prefer to buy these clothes and fashion items through e-commerce. Not infrequently, these items are only for one or two uses, not even used at all.

Students form their branding through personal social media such as Instagram. The Instagram Story feature and Instagram posts show the best image that individuals want to form. No wonder most also pay attention to how to dress to form their impression. The personal branding students want to form is a positive, elegant, and calm image through their outfits. That way, students must pay attention to the style of their clothes through a combination of suitable colors and a balanced combination of fashion items. All will be returned to the image that each student wants to form. Another important aspect in forming personal branding through how to dress is to pay attention to the cleanliness and neatness of clothes. Students even tend to be selective in choosing the posts they will upload on social media. This emphasizes the importance of personal branding for students.

The third function in Talcott Parsons' AGIL concept is integration. This research shows that fashion trends affect student motivation in shopping for clothes and other fashion items. There is an encouragement for students to fulfill the desire to follow the style that is becoming a trend on various platforms so that they can finally buy the product. One of them is the trend of dressing all pink when the Barbie Movie was released last July. The research informants stated that they were interested in buying various fashion items that were all pink.

The fourth function in the AGIL concept by Talcott Parsons is Latency. This study found that students are aware of their consumptive behavior. They also realize that their clothes and other products are useless and unused for a long time. This is

because fashion trends will continually change over time. However, the reason for wanting to follow the trend and the need to form personal branding encourages them to continue buying the product. For students, appearance can create an impression that will shape their branding in the eyes of others. Glock (1984) states that consumptive behavior carried out by individuals is aimed at certain desires, one of which is the desire to be appreciated. Through the formation of personal branding, students feel more confident when meeting people out there.

There are positive impacts and negative impacts of forming personal branding. The positive impact is that the opportunity to get a job becomes greater. This is based on results showing that 70% of companies research prospective employees through social media. Data released by HCA Canada states that 28% of company managers search for job candidates through social media to find information. With good personal branding on social media, someone has more opportunities to be glimpsed by companies in finding work.

The negative impact of forming personal branding lies in the excessive tendency of individuals to follow their social group. The result will only harm itself because of the coercion to continue to meet the needs in the formation of personal branding. Always wanting to follow the trend to form a luxurious image will only encourage individuals to be more consumptive. In addition, extravagance will become a bad habit that persists in the individual. In some situations, the informant said they had to use their savings to buy discounted clothes or bundling promos. In a wider range, this personal branding will cause social jealousy that is formed because of our perspective in seeing something that cannot be obtained.

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be seen that consumptive behavior has become part of Gen-Z's daily life in the Digital Natives Era. Consumptive behavior has been normalized in online shopping activities. Gen-Z tends to use online shopping apps to buy fashionand beauty products. Some online shopping applications often used include Shopee, Tokopedia, TiktokShop, Lazada, and Zalora. The results showed that fashion is one of the crucial indicators in shaping their branding on social media. The motivation to buy an item changes from meeting a need to fulfilling satisfaction (discounts, funny goods, and viral reviews). Brands, Brands, and Trends are the reasons Gen-Z consumes goods excessively. Gen-Zwants to make their branding image more elegant, have positive vibes, and seem calm. In a conscious state, Gen-Z normalizes online shopping consumptive behavior to form a special image of itself through style in the form of fashion or appearance on social media.

E. CONCLUSION

The results show that personal branding is important for students. Social media is a place for students to show their impression, image, and identity to others through Instagram story posts and posts on their personal accounts. One of the indicators needed to form a personal brand is how you dress. How to dress contains aspects of combining outfit colors and the balance of fashion items used. Through the way students dress, students want to form a positive, charismatic, and calm identity. This causes students to tend to do consumptive behavior by buying clothes and fashion items on e-commerce to form their personal branding on social media. AGIL theory has explained the phenomenon of consumer behavior in meeting personal branding needs in the era of digital natives through comprehensive stages.

1) Adaptation: this function explains that the era of digital natives has created a new pattern of all-digital behavior by offering convenience and efficiency in line with the rampant development of social media and online shopping applications. Online shopping activities and identity formation on social media by students are a form of student adaptation in following the existing developments in the digital natives era. 2) Goal attainment: This function explains that the goal that students want to achieve in buying fashion products is to form their identity on social media in order to form a good impression and image. 3) Integration: This function explains that fashion trends have linked students' motivation in buying products with the image they want to highlight as self-identity. The last function, 4) Latency, explains that there is awareness made by students regarding their consumptive behavior in shopping, causing normalized behavior patterns.

F. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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