



Original Article

TIKTOK SHOP: CONSUMER CULTURE TRANSFORMATION IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Background. The presence of social media has transformed human communication and interaction patterns. Communication typically occurred through face-to-face interactions. However, in the modern era, thanks to technological advancements, communication can take place without the need for physical meetings.

Research Purpose. This research aims to analyze changes in consumer culture in the context of TikTok Shop, a social media-based video platform connecting users to virtual stores, particularly among millennial female students in the Blitar Raya area.

Research Method. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection is carried out through unstructured interviews using purposive sampling. This research was conducted on students in the Blitar Raya area using sample selection criteria. The data analysis in this research is conducted using scaling measurement.

Findings. Consumption patterns on the TikTok Shop social media platform include the intensity of watching live streaming and short videos containing product reviews from buyers. Millennial students in Blitar tend to consider online shopping as an effective and efficient method. They trust the authenticity of products more because promotions on the TikTok Shop social media platform create the impression that they can see the products as if in a physical store.

Conclusion. Through this research, it is hoped that society can become more aware of the influence of social media on consumer behavior, avoiding falling into false consciousness and resisting the allure of advertising. Furthermore, the role of capitalism in fostering consumer behavior by blurring the line between wants and needs should also be given attention.

Keywords: Consumer Culture, Consumerism, TikTok Shop

BACKGROUND

The presence of social media has transformed human communication and interaction patterns. Before technological advancements, communication occurred through face-to-face interactions. However, in this modern and sophisticated era, communication can take place without the need for physical meetings. Social media enables people to communicate through various means, such as chatting, phone calls, video calls, and more [1].

The rapid development of social media has created dependency, leading to the term "no day without opening social media" [2]. Social media has also become a form of entertainment with various activities such as playing games, watching videos, or simply

scrolling through social media feeds. This is particularly popular among the millennial generation, who can spend up to 18 hours a day on entertainment activities..

Millennials exhibit individualistic characteristics and tend to rely more on technology for obtaining information rather than depending on other sources. They enjoy seeking new knowledge by exploring the internet. A study, The Nielsen Global Survey of E-Commerce, on online shopping behavior among millennials in various countries, shows that mobile device ownership, such as smartphones, tablets, and computers, is one of the most influential factors affecting online shopping behavior. In Indonesia, mobile device ownership reaches 88% [3].

TikTok has become one of the many social media applications that offer online shopping features. TikTok is a short-form video platform initially launched by a Chinese company in September 2016 [4]. Initially, TikTok was considered to have a negative impact, especially on children, and it was even temporarily banned by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology for two years.

From 2018 to the present, the TikTok app has become a new trend and cultural phenomenon in social media, highly popular among the Indonesian population. Based on the researcher's observations on March 24, 2022, the number of TikTok app downloads on Google Play Store had reached over 500 million. The popularity of TikTok, particularly among millennials, can be measured by the fact that Indonesia became the second-largest market in the world for TikTok in 2020, with a monthly active user base of 22.2 million [5].

The widespread use of TikTok has opened up opportunities and unleashed potential for businesses in terms of product marketing. Initially, TikTok was used as an entertainment platform, but it has now evolved into a strategic tool in the business world. [5]. One of the main differences between TikTok and other social media lies in the marketing medium used. TikTok is a short-form video platform that allows users to create and watch brief videos, typically ranging from 15 to 60 seconds. This provides users with the opportunity to creatively produce engaging content in various categories, such as dance, lip-sync, comedy, tutorials, and more. Compared to traditional social media platforms that primarily focus on text, images, or links, TikTok stands out as a video platform that enables businesses to interact with their audience through creative visual and audio content. This makes it an effective tool for product marketing and reaching a younger, actively engaged audience accustomed to consuming short video content [6]. TikTok is equipped with the TikTok Shop feature, allowing users to promote products through live streaming, enabling direct interaction between sellers and consumers without the need for third-party involvement [1]. There is also promotional content in the form of genuine product reviews shared by buyers, designed to capture the attention of consumers and encourage them to make purchases. Additionally, the presence of discount offers and free shipping makes TikTok Shop even more appealing to businesses..

Social constructs in social media can be created through advertising [7]. Advertising has the ability to shape thought constructs in the minds of consumers. It can influence how consumers perceive something, whether it is considered good or bad, right or wrong, or whether a product will be accepted or rejected [2]. If advertising successfully shapes a positive perception, then that behavior can become a common habit among consumers, ultimately creating consumer culture. Consumer culture, in turn, produces commodities highly influenced by advertising and can be socially constructed through advertising media. Advertising directs how people perceive the objects they consume and is used as a mirror to reflect themselves [8].

In the context of the current mass online shopping reality, research becomes intriguing due to new challenges in shaping the online shopping culture on TikTok Shop, which has now become a culture for some consumers. Therefore, this research is interested in exploring consumer culture in shopping on TikTok through TikTok Shop, particularly among millennial female students in the Blitar Raya area.

RESEARCH METHOD

Phenomenology is used in this research to analyze the meaning of consumer culture in the TikTok Shop social media. The qualitative approach aims to identify and describe the existing reality and develop a deeper understanding of the research object. The phenomenological approach, in the context of this research, is used to explore the common meanings of a group of people regarding various experiences related to a specific phenomenon. Therefore, this research will focus on understanding the meaning of consumer culture in the context of TikTok Shop, with a focus on the subjective experiences and understanding of individuals involved in this consumer culture [9]. The phenomenological approach aims to reduce individual experiences of a particular phenomenon and then describe them more generally.

In the phenomenological approach, there is the application of the "verstehen" or understanding method, which is used to describe in detail how the process of consciousness is formed through understanding. The phenomenological approach is more focused on the meaning and content of conscious human experiences, especially those directly related to the research object [10]. Therefore, the phenomenological approach seeks to understand the conscious understanding of informants regarding the phenomena they experience and how these phenomena relate to their surroundings, thus forming a more comprehensive understanding of consumer culture on the TikTok Shop social media.

This research was conducted in Blitar with the consideration that Blitar is a small town where most of the population falls within the category of modern society. This makes it an appropriate location to conduct research on consumer culture. The sampling method used is purposive sampling, which means that samples are selected based on specific criteria. The research subjects consist of 6 individuals who meet the following criteria:

The research subjects consist of 6 individuals who meet the following criteria:

1. Millennials (aged 24-39 years).
2. Female, as they have a concept of self that is easily influenced and tend to be consumer-oriented.
3. Residing in Blitar.
4. Users of the TikTok application.
5. Have a strong interest in shopping.
6. Have experience in shopping on the TikTok Shop social media platform.

To collect data in this research, several techniques are used, including:

1. In-depth interviews with unstructured interview format.
2. Observations.

3. The use of audio-visual materials such as photos, videos, and sound recordings as supporting data to validate research findings.
4. Literature review, including journals, books, and internet sources relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis in this research employs the scaling measurement method, involving interview transcriptions and categorizing relevant data for the study. Subsequently, empirical generalization is conducted to analyze and reveal meanings through the understanding of the informants, and logical induction is used to interpret data that has been theoretically associated with meanings.

FINDINGS

The consumers who are informants in this research view TikTok Shop as a new form of online shopping. They use TikTok Shop because they are aware that the app is currently a popular trend among the public. Moreover, TikTok Shop often offers free shipping promotions using attractive marketing methods, which create a positive mindset among consumers about the marketed products.

The consumption patterns of the informants in this study are influenced by the promotional methods on TikTok Shop's social media platform. The live streaming feature used by sellers allows consumers to view authentic product images. Additionally, promotional content in the form of short videos based on real buyer reviews makes consumers more confident in making purchases. In several quotes, the informants express how the influence of advertising and product reviews on TikTok Shop piques their interest and ultimately leads to purchasing the products.

The frequency of purchasing items on TikTok Shop varies, but within a one-month timeframe, most informants shop regularly. They search for various types of products, ranging from clothing, shoes, bags, cosmetics, skincare, idol group albums, merchandise, to food and drinks. Their purchasing decisions are influenced by various factors, including the product's originality, specific brands, affordable prices, and current trends.

There are also indications that the appeal of the content presented on TikTok Shop, such as compelling promotional videos, can influence the intensity of consumer item purchases. The informants also express their preference for online shopping due to reasons like effectiveness, efficiency, a wide range of product choices, and more attractive promotions compared to offline shopping. Therefore, millennials are considered the right target audience for TikTok Shop consumers. They believe that online shopping is a more advantageous option than offline shopping due to its competitive pricing.

The consumption patterns of millennials on TikTok Shop reflect a complexity that makes it challenging to differentiate between needs and wants. This is relevant to capitalist society theories that transform the meaning of "needs" into "wants" that merely satisfy shopping desires. In the context of TikTok Shop, interest in a product often arises accidentally on social media pages or in content appearing on TikTok's "For You Page." This unintentional interest turns into a strong attraction, which then drives online shopping activities to satisfy consumer's self-gratification.

Consumption patterns as described by the informants show that they are sometimes drawn to items even when they don't really need them, and they are often influenced by the

words of sellers or content they see on TikTok. Although they are aware that the items are not truly necessary, they still proceed to checkout because of the satisfaction of obtaining the desired item.

Continuous consumption patterns like these can create a strong consumer culture. Consumer culture shapes individuals to compete in displaying their existence in their surroundings. Individuals want recognition from others, but often this recognition is not conveyed directly. The desire to continuously compete and achieve a certain level of excellence creates pride among individuals. The satisfaction sought through self-existence becomes an ever-evolving aspect of life, and consumer culture continues to evolve as a part of society.

DISCUSSIONS

The three driving factors that encourage millennials to form consumer culture on TikTok Shop's social media are as follows:

1. Pressure from Consumptive Lifestyle:

The continuous shopping lifestyle affects millennials. They feel the need to keep buying new items and allocate time and money to fulfill their shopping needs. These consumers tend to be consumptive and prioritize pleasure, material enjoyment, and self-existence as their main goals.

2. Pressure from Capitalist Industry:

The industry consistently pushes consumers to buy the latest products and follow ongoing trends. Through TikTok Shop's social media, the industry markets its products and creates trends within society. This drives consumers to keep consuming products produced by the capitalist industry.

3. Symbolic Meaning or Consumption of Signs:

Consumers sometimes buy items because they are currently trendy in society. They fear being left behind if they don't have these items. This feeling creates symbolic meaning where owning these items becomes crucial for demonstrating self-existence and gaining social recognition.

These driving factors create a strong consumer culture on TikTok Shop's social media. Advertising also plays a significant role in shaping social constructs through this platform. Advertising creates a pseudo-reality that influences people's understanding of needs and wants. Through advertisements, consumers observe reflections used to find self-reflection and meaning in life through the items they consume.

This process involves three stages: externalization (consumers project themselves onto the social environment), objectification (owning items used to boost confidence), and internalization (taking back activities that have been objectified to influence subjective values). Through this, TikTok Shop's social media creates a consumer culture among millennials that struggle to distinguish between needs and wants, and they continually strive to follow existing trends. This consumer culture unconsciously fosters ongoing consumptive behavior.

This research supports the results of research by Yuniarti [11] that interesting promotional content videos via TikTok Shop have a huge influence on consumers to buy products. Apart from that, TikTok provides many features foster user creativity, equipped with energetic music choices so that it can increase consumer appeal. The interesting thing

about promotional media is that consumers will continue to consume and ultimately form a new lifestyle consumerism which is called culture.

CONCLUSION

The TikTok Shop application is capable of creating an engaging and user-friendly online shopping environment. Features such as live streaming and video reviews allow consumers to feel more confident in their shopping. However, the complexity of consumption patterns, where desires often outweigh needs, reflects the challenges consumers face in maintaining control over their consumptive behavior in the era of social media and online shopping applications.

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