

## Shaping the Digital Fashion Industry with Generation Z's Buying Behavior

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**Abstract:** Marketing forms have evolved over time, and as the world transitions into a new generation of audiences and consumption behaviors, marketing has gone from the traditional to the more essential digital form, with the use of social media technology such as Instagram and Facebook. The main objective of this study is to empirically examine how hedonic motives, emotional response, and involvement in fashion can impact impulsive buying in the fashion industry within Generation Z. In this context, data were collected from 100 respondents in the age range of 16 to 23 years in the greater areas of Jakarta and Surabaya through an online survey. The data were then tested and finally analyzed. The most influential determinants affecting impulse buying are involvement in fashion, followed by hedonic motives, and emotional response. Even though the scarcity factor fills the gap created by prior studies' inconsistencies, it fails to moderate the link between emotional response and impulse buying.

**Keywords:** Impulse buying, Hedonic behavior, Emotional response, Involvement in fashion, Scarcity

### INTRODUCTION

Compared to the previous generations, the buying behavior of Generation Z is very different (Djafarova & Bowes, 2020). Not only are they more digital-savvy and image-centric (Goryunova & Jenkins, 2023), members of Generation Z are also highly impulsive in decision-making. Nonetheless, they have a better understanding of possible marketing strategies and information. In recent years, as the influence of Generation Z is becoming more prevalent, the outbreak of the global pandemic has further strengthened this buying behavior (Li et al., 2020). Instagram, Facebook, and Shopee are some of the examples of shopping platforms suitable for Generation Z as they are vision-based and allow users to make quick decisions and impulse purchases just by looking at product pictures. Members of Generation Z also prefer to shop digitally because they have a preconceived notion that shopping online is more affordable than shopping in a physical store (Skeldon, 2020).

Recent data show that Instagram has a large proportion of posts belonging to the fashion category (Kochhar, 2020). The emergence of fashion blogging and social influencing as jobs and professions has had a significant impact on the entire fashion industry. Thus, with the rise of influencers, more people are starting to use the platform to see what fashion trend has been going on in the media lately. Consequently, with more influencers partaking in trends and receiving sponsors from newcomers to high-end brands, it unknowingly 'forces' audiences, mostly

teenagers or adolescents, to view the hedonistic lifestyle contents that are being put out, and at the same time encourages them to adopt the same lifestyle in order to be seen as 'up to date' (Prilyantinasari & Mulyana, 2020).

It has been evident that the relationship between hedonic motives and impulse buying is positive. A previous study by Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2001) stated that hedonic or experiential shoppers shop online with the main purpose of gathering information, as in conducting hobby-based searches, involving themselves in a chosen product category, pursuing positive sociality, or finding serendipity, as well as hunting for a bargain or other kinds of deals, all of which are the main characteristics of behaviors that would lead to impulse buying. Studies have also found that involvement in fashion positively affects consumer confidence in their purchase decisions as they are aware of the brand, quality, and price, therefore leading to a faster or more impulsive process of purchase (O'Cass, 2004). Emotional response is believed to have a positive relationship with impulse buying due to the fact that 'positive moods and affective states' with 'unconstrained feelings' and 'desires to reward' oneself would end up motivating consumers' impulse behavior (Park & Kim, 2008).

However, a recent study found the opposite to be true, where the feelings of guilt, regret, and financial distress that are imposed against the buyer might arise after an impulse purchase, hence the inconsistency (Yu, 2022). Here is where scarcity fills the gap. Previous research on how scarcity is present in identifying the relationship between emotion and impulse buying is still relatively limited, given the nature of how scarcity incites impulse buying, which is by alerting the consumers and applying psychological pressure from the way the product is being advertised (Akram et al., 2018). This would involve either limited quantity, where the quantity of goods/services that are available is limited, or limited time, where the period allowed for buying the products is limited. Contrastingly, as this sense of alert rushes or requires consumers to be impulsive, it eliminates the feeling of 'fear of missing out' and emphasizes 'satisfaction and enjoyment' upon obtaining the item the consumers wanted (Zhang et al., 2021).

Based on this knowledge, the limited past research on how scarcity moderates emotional response and impulse buying urges the need to ignite discussions on the relationship despite the huge causal link between the two. Hodkinson (2016) suggested that scarcity arouses a type of emotion, that is, 'fear of missing out' or FOMO, in which the emotion serves as one of the major factors that influence impulse buying. Additionally, scarcity in a commercial setup is especially developed to encourage customers to seize a specific opportunity that might or might not come back in the future, hence triggering them to make a 'call to action': to make an impulsive decision. Hodkinson (2016) further added that post-consumption or response outcomes after a purchase are definite, but mostly negative emotions are highly expected, particularly when impulsive decisions based on scarcity are made under hope and uncertainties.

The concept of hedonic motivation in a marketplace setting was previously catered to primarily women, where customers are highly encouraged to make purchasing decisions without any pressure, in which case, to support this action, stores are designed to provide entertainment with 'leisure activities' and a 'sense of luxury' rather than mainly commerce (Vyse, 2018). Customers with hedonic

intentions mainly seek emotional gratification, as opposed to attaining utilitarian goals, in their purchasing process; hence, purchase intents are based on positive stimuli such as experience, enjoyment, and pleasure. The presence of hedonic values in the consumer journey may be leveraged by companies to gain brand loyalty (Plume et al., 2017; Pangaribuan et al., 2021).

With the stimulus present in the hedonic motivation of a consumer during their consumer decision journey, emotions will be produced during the purchase of the goods or subsequently. These emotions are usually linked with spontaneous feelings that would have an impact on the consumer's reactions and are mostly uncontrollable (Dhurup, 2014). Such feelings might be different for each individual, in which case unpleasant psychological states might occur. However, positive moods such as satisfaction and excitement after successfully obtaining a good might be the case. Additionally, these emotions are considered to be the main drive a consumer would rely on when shopping, as strong emotions can encourage them to make a call-to-action decision, or in this case to make a purchase (Utami et al., 2021).

Consumption behavior under the notion of fashion involvement is thought to display a customer's core 'tastes and values,' given the fact that fashion pieces vary greatly from time to time and serve to socially identify oneself (Dhurup, 2014). In a consumerism context, the degree of involvement in fashion refers to the extent to which a customer perceives the area of focus as a vital part of their life, whether it is being constantly updated in the fashion trends, concepts, as well as awareness and knowledge of the significance it has in the society (O'Casey, 2004). Scarcity is commonly referred to as a perceived threat to a consumer's ability to fulfil their wants and needs due to the limitation of the goods or services available on the market (Hamilton et al., 2019).

Scarcity involves a perceived shortage in products that can be accessed by the customer; hence, focus on the product is drawn to the product's limited aspect as it often magnifies the valuation of the product and consequently leads to high demand (Zhang et al., 2021). Scarcity can be utilized by marketers to deliberately evoke interest among customers by producing limited editions of a product, applying restriction on order sizes per person, or limiting the period of sales (Hamilton et al., 2019). Additionally, customers who see a product with an element of scarcity would want to participate in the purchase of the product for fearing of missing out, or 'FOMO,' on another chance of obtaining the product.

Impulse buying or impulsive purchases are found to be rooted in thoughtless actions that are mainly characterized by quick acting and are defined on the three main consumer behavior determinants of the affective, the cognitive, and the reactive (Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982). While the nature of impulsive buying itself is unplanned, Weinberg and Gottwald stated that not all unplanned purchases should be considered as impulsive as, in the case of some unplanned purchases, cognitive control is still present to make rational purchases; in impulse buying, this control is relatively minimal or even nonexistent. This purchasing action is found to be utterly more prevalent in Generation Z, with around 41% of online consumers belonging to this generation, compared to other older generations (Djafarova & Bowes, 2020). Therefore, it is essential for businesses to look into this phenomenon in order to better position themselves on the market. This study

contributes valuable insights into the contemporary dynamics of consumer behavior within the fashion industry, specifically among Generation Z. By empirically examining the impact of hedonic motives, emotional response, and involvement in fashion on impulsive buying, the research sheds light on the evolving landscape of marketing, transitioning from traditional methods to a digitally driven approach. Significantly, the research addresses the scarcity factor, a novel addition that fills gaps in prior studies.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

A quantitative approach was adopted in this study. According to Bryman (2008), quantitative research allows researchers to test theories. The quantitative technique was deemed to be the most appropriate strategy in this regard because the study attempted to validate the dimensionality of the construct of consumer awareness through a comparison of theory and research.

### **Population and Sample**

The researchers chose the respondents in proportion to the total size of sample, which was 100. This is consistent with Ghozali's (2008) proposal that the size of the research sample for a Partial Least Squares analysis should range from 30 to 100. In this way, any other researcher who comes across the data in this profile and finds the findings valuable can utilize them. This study was set in the context of Indonesian greater areas of Jakarta and Surabaya. The sample might not be representative of the general Generation Z population in other countries. The respondents' residences were similarly constrained, as they were all concentrated in the said areas. This study used a conceptual model to describe relevant variables and collect data for hypotheses testing.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection instrument used in this study was an online survey questionnaire. The measurement items included in the instrument were adopted from previous investigations. The instrument was distributed to respondents—who were students aged 16 to 23 who had purchased fashion products on social media—via Google Forms. The convenience sampling technique was used to recruit the respondents. The data collection was conducted from August to September 2022.

### **Measurement**

Some constructs of earlier investigations were adopted, with some modifications, as the measurement items for the questionnaire used in this study. The questionnaire was split into two sections to elicit demographic information and responses to key questions or survey items. In the first section, four demographic variables were asked: gender, age, education level, and online shopping frequency per week. In the second section, a total of 19 items were asked. These items

covered five variables: hedonic motives, emotional response, involvement in fashion, the moderating effect of scarcity, and impulse buying.

Hedonic motives were measured based on a scale proposed by Barbopoulos and Johansson (2017). The eight-item scale consists of three dimensions: pleasure, stimulation, and comfort. An example item on pleasure is: “When I shop online, I do it for joy and satisfaction.” An example item on stimulation is: “Buying something that is unique will make life more enjoyable.” An example item on comfort is: “Buying something that is fun and fulfilling will help me avoid the problems and discomfort I am facing.” Emotional response was assessed using a scale created by Destari et al. (2020). The emotional response scale includes four items, one of which is: “Every time I shop online, it is easy for me to adapt and feel comfortable in using it.” Involvement in fashion was assessed using a scale created by Sumarmi and Prasyanti (2021).

The involvement in fashion scale comprises four items, one of which is: “I am one of the first people in my group to buy a fashion item when it was just released.” Impulse buying was assessed using a scale created by Destari et al. (2020). The impulse buying scale comprises four items, one of which is: “I usually buy fashion items without thinking twice.” Scarcity was assessed using a scale created by Chen et al. (2021). The scarcity scale comprises four items, one of which is: “When I see seasonal limited items, I feel it is very worth buying the product due to its exclusivity.” Participants rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”). Higher scores indicate higher levels of scarcity.

### **Data Analysis**

The current study utilized partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), a statistical method that allows for the estimate of various interrelationships among different variable sets at the same time. The two-step process advocated by Henseler et al. (2009) was used in the research procedure. It consists of an outer model evaluation and an inner model assessment. The process began with a focus on the measurement models. The PLS-SEM estimates revealed the measurement validity and reliability in accordance with the requirements in relation to the reflecting and formative outer models. In this study, five constructs were measured using the measuring model. The inner model or structural model was evaluated in the second step. The inner route model was initially measured using reliable and valid outer model judgments, including the loadings of each of the survey items. The researchers conducted a number of evaluations as recommended by Henseler et al. (2009), encompassing evaluations of  $R^2$  (coefficient of determination), multicollinearity, and hypotheses. The hypotheses proposed in this research were presented as follows:

- H1. Hedonic motives have a direct impact on Gen Z's impulse buying.
- H2. Emotional response has a direct impact on Gen Z's impulse buying.
- H3. Involvement in fashion has a direct impact on Gen Z's impulse buying.
- H4. Scarcity moderates the relationship between emotional response and Gen Z's impulse buying

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondents' Demographic Profile

According to the survey data collected, 62% of the respondents identified as female, 29% identified as male, and 9% did not specify their gender. The majority of the respondents were around 22 to 23 years old (61%), and the rest were in the age ranges from 19 to 21 years (32%) and from 16 to 18 years (7%). In terms of educational background, most respondents were holders of a Bachelor's degree (50%), followed by high school diploma holders (28%), Master's degree holders (12%), and college diploma holders (10%). Thirty-nine percent of the respondents went online shopping 1–2 times a week, 32% did 3–5 times a week, 17% did more than 10 times a week, and 12% did 6–10 times a week.

### Outer Model Evaluation

Chin (1998) proposed a set of criteria to evaluate partial model frameworks. In this study, these criteria were implemented in a systematic manner following a two-step procedure that includes (1) an outer model assessment and (2) an inner model assessment. Model assessment is the first phase in the two-step procedure. A systematic evaluation of PLS estimates indicates the measurement reliability and validity according to specific criteria linked with reflective and formative outer models. It makes sense to examine the inner path model estimates only when the generated latent variable scores demonstrate sufficient reliability and validity.

Reflective measurement models should be evaluated for their reliability and validity. The first criterion that is usually assessed is internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (Cronbach, 1951) is the conventional criterion for internal consistency, which provides an estimate of reliability based on indicator intercorrelations. Composite reliability accounts for the fact that indicators have varying loadings and can be evaluated in the same way as Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . No matter which reliability coefficient is used, an internal consistency reliability value greater than 0.7 in early stages of research and greater than 0.8 or 0.9 in later stages of research is considered satisfactory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), whereas a value less than 0.6 indicates a lack of reliability.

**Table 1.** Alpha, CR, and AVE Values

Construct	Alpha	CR	AVE
Emotional Response	0.866	0.908	0.711
Hedonic Motives	0.842	0.905	0.760
Impulse Buying	0.893	0.933	0.824
Involvement in Fashion	0.939	0.956	0.845
Scarcity	0.829	0.844	0.657

When evaluating validity, two validity subtypes are typically examined: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity indicates that a series of indicators represents the same underlying construct, as evidenced by the indicators' unidimensionality. Fornell and Larcker (1981) proposed using the average variance extracted (AVE) as a criterion of convergent validity. An AVE value of at least 0.5 shows sufficient convergent validity, which means that a latent variable can explain more than half of its indicators' variance on average.

According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), a latent variable shares more variation with its assigned indicators than any other latent variable. To achieve discriminant validity, the AVE of each latent variable should be greater than the maximum squared correlation of the latent variable with any other latent variable. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , composite reliability, and average variance extracted (convergent validity) values. The Fornell-Larcker criterion (discriminant validity) can be seen in Table 2. In summary, we can see that a reliable and valid reflective measurement of latent variables meets all the criteria given in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 2.** Fornell-Larcker Criterion

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Emotional Response</b>	<b>Hedonic Motives</b>	<b>Impulse Buying</b>	<b>Scarcity</b>
Emotional Response	0.843			
Hedonic Motives	0.790	0.872		
Impulse Buying	0.716	0.689	0.805	
Involvement in Fashion	0.686	0.684	0.876	0.944
Scarcity	0.696	0.778	0.613	0.680

An indicator may be irrelevant to the construction of the formative index because it exhibits high multicollinearity, which may imply that the indicator's information is redundant. To test for the case, we need to examine the degree of multicollinearity among the formative indicators by determining the variance inflation factor (VIF) or tolerance values. VIFs larger than 10 indicate a crucial level of multicollinearity. Any VIF greater than 1, on the other hand, suggests multicollinearity and should raise researchers' awareness of the common challenges related with multicollinearity. All the indicators shown in Table 3 demonstrate acceptable VIF values, hence the absence of any harmful collinearity.

**Table 3.** Multicollinearity

<b>No.</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>VIF</b>
1.	EMOT1	2.112
2.	EMOT2	1.725
3.	EMOT3	2.697
4.	EMOT4	2.256
5.	HED1	2.322
6.	HED2	2.321
7.	HED3	1.703
8.	IMP2	2.532
9.	IMP3	3.969
10.	IMP4	2.665
11.	INV1	3.853
12.	INV2	6.262
13.	INV3	3.781
14.	INV4	3.055
15.	SCAR1	2.149
16.	SCAR2	2.815
17.	SCAR3	2.205
18.	SCAR4	1.790

### Inner Model Evaluation

The inner path model estimates can be evaluated using reliable and valid outer model estimations. The structural model analysis was carried out to assess each construct's overall ability to explain the endogenous variables. The structural model was evaluated using the coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and path coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and the criteria are given in Table 4.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the endogenous latent variables is the most important criterion for this evaluation.  $R^2$  values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 in PLS path models are described as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Chin, 1998).  $R^2$  denotes the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by variation in the independent variable. The value  $R^2 = 0.873$  shows that emotional response, hedonic motives, and fashion involvement can affect impulse purchase by 87.3%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research model is in the substantial category.

The value of the effect size in the path model can be calculated using Cohen's (1988)  $f$ -square ( $f^2$ ). The effect size  $f^2$  is determined as the increase in  $R^2$  relative to the fraction of variance of the endogenous latent variable that remains unexplained. Cohen (1988) defined  $f^2$  values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as indicating modest, medium, and large impacts, respectively. It is known that the hedonic motives variable has a medium effect on impulse purchase because the value is above 0.02 and below 0.15. Meanwhile, the effects of emotional response and fashion involvement variables on impulse purchase are high because the values are above 0.35.

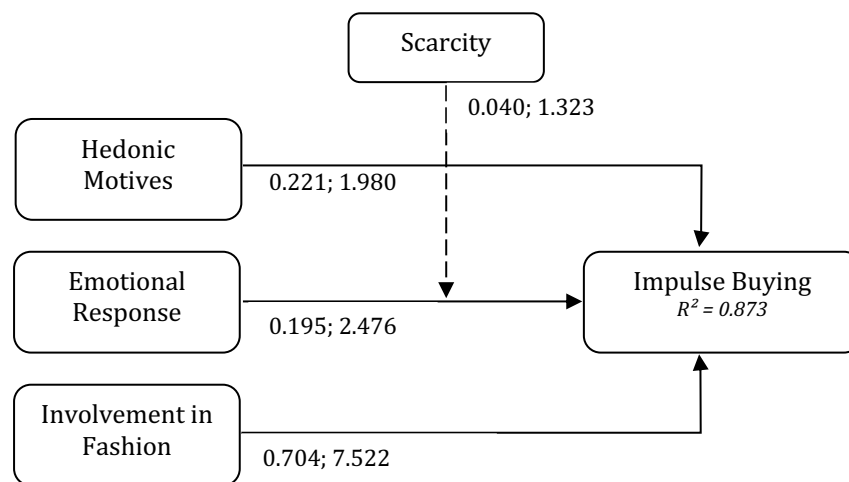
$Q$ -square indicates predictive accuracy, which means that a structural model has a good ability to predict the endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2018). The results showed that the path model's accuracy is acceptable with a  $Q^2$  value of 0.493. As seen in Table 4, the  $Q^2$  value is greater than 0, indicating the predictive relevance of factors (emotional response, hedonic motives, and fashion involvement) to purchase impulse.

**Table 4.** Structural Model Evaluation

Hypotheses	$\beta$	$t$ -value	$p$ -value	Supported	$f^2$	$Q^2$	$R^2$
H1. HED $\rightarrow$ IMP	0.221	1.980	0.048	YES	0.029	0.493	0.873
H2. EMOT $\rightarrow$ IMP	0.195	2.476	0.014	YES	0.073		
H3. INV $\rightarrow$ IMP	0.704	7.522	0.000	YES	0.806		
H4. EMOT $\rightarrow$ SCAR $\rightarrow$ IMP	0.040	1.323	0.187	NO	0.013		

The final step is to evaluate the relevance of the links and hypotheses developed by using the bootstrap technique (see Figure 1). The PLS bootstrapping results revealed that all of the path coefficients are statistically significant. With path coefficients of 0.221, 0.195, and 0.704 and  $p$ -values  $> 0.05$ , respectively, the test results supported hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. This shows that emotional response, hedonic motives, and fashion involvement have positive impacts on purchase impulse, which means that every increase in the value of emotional response, hedonic motives, and fashion involvement will increase the value of purchase impulse. However, the results of the study did not support hypothesis 4 with a path coefficient of 0.040 and  $p > 0.05$ .





**Figure 1.** Bootstrapping Result

## Discussion

The following is a summary of the study's significant findings. First, the hedonic appeal of modern and aesthetically beautiful clothes, which is frequently discovered via social media and internet platforms, elicits a desire for instant satisfaction. Members of Generation Z are inspired by the excitement of discovering new styles and the satisfaction derived from expressing themselves via fashion. The allure of limited-edition releases, exclusive designs, and the overall sensory experience of acquiring new fashion items increases their intention to make impulsive purchases as these actions contribute to the ongoing narrative of their personal style journey and the enjoyment derived from staying on the cutting edge of fashion trends.

Second, this technologically adept generation is particularly sensitive to the emotional and experience components of shopping. Engaging with fashion content on social media sites elicits feelings of excitement, desire, and a sense of belonging. Trends' immediacy and visual attractiveness, which are often enhanced by influencers and online groups, elicit strong emotional reactions. These emotional responses, combined with a need for self-expression and identity development, motivate the intention to buy impulsively. Online shopping's rapid nature matches with Gen Z's tendency for short, flawless experiences, confirming the link between emotional involvement and the decision to impulsively acquire fashion products that resonate with the generation's expanding sense of style and personality.

Third, defined by a strong sense of uniqueness and an affinity for self-expression, the digitally native generation places a premium on staying up to date on the newest trends and styles. With a strong presence on online platforms, social media, and fashion communities, Gen Z is more likely to be impacted by the dynamic and fast changing fashion scene. Their need to fit with current trends, exhibit their distinctive individuality, and participate in the ever-changing fashion debate often drives their purpose to make impulsive purchases. Constant exposure to new trends and limited-edition releases promotes a sense of urgency and excitement, which contributes to impulsive purchasing behaviors as Gen Z'ers strive to express and showcase their fashion-forward perspectives.

Surprisingly, this study found no substantial moderating influence of scarcity on the connection between emotional response and impulse buying. Scarcity methods may be perceived as deceptive by Gen Z individuals, who are generally characterized by digital savviness and skepticism toward traditional advertising. Genuine links to trends, social consciousness, and originality are likely to impact their emotional response to fashion products more than imagined scarcity. Furthermore, the Gen Z cohort's collective emphasis on sustainability and ethical consumerism may encourage careful purchasing above impulsive purchasing motivated just by scarcity.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this paper is to examine how hedonic motives, emotional response, and involvement in fashion can impact impulsive buying in the fashion industry within Generation Z. This paper confirms that involvement in fashion is the most important driver of impulse buying, while emotional response is less important. This research also has many important implications. First, the understanding of the hedonically driven nature of Generation Z's purchasing behavior highlights the importance of limited-edition releases, exclusive collaborations, and aesthetically stunning designs in attracting Generation Z's attention and encouraging impulsive purchasing. Businesses can tap into the hedonic impulses of Generation Z by deliberately incorporating these factors into marketing and product strategies, promoting brand loyalty, and driving sales through the appeal of immediate pleasure and gratification.

Second, brands targeting Gen Z may prioritize storytelling, customization, and diversity in their marketing efforts by recognizing the power of emotional engagement. Content that evokes good emotions and a sense of community matches with this generation's beliefs, establishing a greater link between consumers and brands. Third, companies aiming at Gen Z should appreciate the importance of staying current with fashion and trends and modify their marketing strategy accordingly. Emphasizing limited-edition releases, collaborative collections, and trend-forward designs may attract the interest of this demographic group's highly fashion-conscious members, fueling their impulsive purchasing habits. In conclusion, firms should actively incorporate Gen Z'ers in the development of their products and marketing campaigns.

This study contributes to the exploration of impulsive buying behavior of the fashion industry among Generation Z in the context of online platforms. This study is limited in its use of a limited sampling scope within the Indonesian Generation Z and in the survey's non-specification of a geographic-related question in the respondent's profile section. Future research utilizing a quantitative design with a bigger sample size and a more detailed geographic segmentation can be conducted to extend the relevance of the findings to a larger population. Future research can also investigate the influences and behavioral responses of consumers to certain promotional activities carried out by influencers on various social media platforms.

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