

AN EXPLORATION OF GENERATION Z'S SHOPPING PREFERENCES AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN MODERN RETAIL: A CASE STUDY OF CLARISSA STORE TUBAN

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore Generation Z's preferences in selecting and shopping, describe the shopping decision-making process, and identify the factors underlying these preferences and decisions at Clarissa Store Tuban. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method was employed. Ten Generation Z informants who had shopped at Clarissa Store Tuban were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana interactive model assisted by NVivo 12 Plus. The results show that Generation Z's shopping preferences at Clarissa Store Tuban are shaped by product, price, place, quality/service, and promotion, while the decision-making process moves through need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. These preferences and decisions are jointly influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors, with personal factors found to be the most dominant.

Keywords: *Consumer Preference; Generation Z; Purchase Decision Process; Consumer Behavior; Modern Retail*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The modern retail industry in Indonesia has transformed from merely providing basic necessities into becoming a lifestyle provider. Modern retailers are now expected to offer not only quality products but also a comfortable and trend-oriented shopping experience. Although e-commerce continues to grow, physical stores remain strategically important, particularly in the fashion industry, where visual appeal and direct product interaction play significant roles in consumers' shopping experiences (Wasiati, 2026). Indonesia's local fashion industry was projected to exceed IDR 125 trillion in 2024 and reach IDR 156.47 trillion by 2029, with an average growth rate of 4.26% (Pratiwi et al., 2022). These figures underscore the strong public interest in fashion products within the modern retail sector.

Generation Z, generally defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Awalia & Zulkarnaini, 2025), represents an increasingly important market segment because of its strong connection with technology and social media as a generation of digital natives. This characteristic means that their shopping activities are not solely aimed at fulfilling functional needs but also serve as forms of entertainment, self-expression, and trend participation. Generation Z tends to be more responsive to visual stimuli, shopping experiences, and social influences than previous generations (McKinsey, 2018). Their purchasing decision-making processes are therefore shaped not only by rational considerations, such as price and product quality, but also by emotional and social factors, including social media trends, recommendations from friends, the atmosphere of the shopping environment, and the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Consequently, their shopping preferences and purchasing decisions tend to be dynamic and context-dependent.

Clarissa Store is one of the modern fashion retailers in Tuban Regency that targets Generation Z consumers by offering fashion products, cosmetics, and accessories that reflect current trends. Preliminary observations indicate relatively high visitation among adolescents and young adults, despite several limitations, including a relatively confined store space, suboptimal product displays, and limited parking facilities. Nevertheless, consumers continue to demonstrate strong shopping interest, suggesting that their purchasing decisions are not based solely on functional needs but are also associated with their shopping experiences and individual preferences.

Previous studies by Saefi (2022), Syam et al. (2022), and Pratiwi et al. (2022) have indicated that consumer preferences and emotional factors are associated with purchasing decisions, while Aiman et al. (2017) and Wahyudi (2019) have highlighted the important role of consumer preferences in decision-making. However, much of the existing research has focused on identifying individual factors in isolation and has frequently been conducted in online shopping contexts or through quantitative approaches. Consequently, there remains a gap in understanding how Generation Z's preferences are formed, how their shopping decision-making processes unfold, and what contextual factors shape their shopping behavior in modern fashion retail settings in developing local markets such as Tuban Regency.

Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to answer three research questions: (1) What are Generation Z's preferences when selecting and purchasing products at Clarissa Store Tuban? (2) How does Generation Z's shopping decision-making process unfold at Clarissa Store Tuban? and (3) What factors underlie these preferences and shopping decision-making processes? This study aims to explore these three aspects through a qualitative approach. It is expected to contribute to the broader understanding of consumer behavior while providing practical insights for modern retailers in developing marketing strategies that are responsive to the characteristics and shopping behavior of Generation Z.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Behavior and Preferences

Kotler and Keller (2016) define consumer behavior as the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, purchase, and use goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants, encompassing the entire process from before to after purchase. Kotler (2000) further defines preference as consumers' inclination or choice toward a particular product or service, which may be influenced by product, price, place, promotion, and store atmosphere. Simamora (2004), meanwhile, emphasizes that preferences are shaped by consumers' needs, experiences, and perceptions. Syam et al. (2022) further demonstrate a positive and significant relationship between consumer preferences and purchasing decisions.

Purchasing Decision-Making Process

Kotler and Keller (2016) describe the purchasing decision-making process as consisting of five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Kotler and Armstrong (2012) further explain that purchasing decisions are influenced by cultural factors, including culture, subculture, and social class; social factors, including reference groups, family, roles, and status; personal factors, including age, occupation, economic circumstances, and lifestyle; and psychological factors, including motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes. These four categories provide a framework for understanding consumer shopping behavior, including that of Generation Z.

Previous studies have shown that consumer preferences are positively associated with purchasing decisions (Syam et al., 2022; Donovan & Hurdawaty, 2022), while product quality, price, and shopping habits influence purchasing decisions among Generation Z consumers (Santoso & Triwijayati, 2018). Consumer preferences have also been found to vary according to consumer characteristics (Rasmikayati et al., 2021). Other studies have highlighted the role of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in encouraging purchasing behavior in response to flash-sale offers (Muhamad et al., 2025) and have identified differences between Generation Z's online and offline shopping preferences (Romdoni et al., 2025). Nevertheless, much of the existing literature continues to emphasize quantitative approaches or online shopping contexts. Consequently, an in-depth understanding of how Generation Z's preferences and purchasing decisions are formed in physical retail settings, particularly in developing local markets, remains limited.

The conceptual framework of this study begins with the characteristics of Generation Z as a digital-native and trend-oriented generation whose shopping behavior may also be shaped by social media exposure and FOMO. These characteristics contribute to preferences regarding products, prices, store location and environment, product quality and service, and promotional activities. These preferences are then examined in relation to the purchasing decision-making process, beginning with need recognition and continuing through information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decisions, and post-purchase behavior. Cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors provide the broader context underlying this process. Since the study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach, no statistical hypotheses are formulated. Instead, the conceptual

framework serves as an analytical guide for addressing the three research questions formulated in the introduction.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study design (Sugiyono, 2018) to obtain an in-depth understanding of Generation Z consumers' preferences and purchasing decision-making processes. A case study was considered appropriate because the research focused on a single research setting, namely Clarissa Store Tuban, thereby enabling a comprehensive examination of consumer behavior within its specific retail context. The study was conducted at Clarissa Store Tuban, located at Jl. Sunan Kalijaga No. 54, Tuban, East Java, over a three-month period from February to May 2026. The research period included preliminary observations, proposal development, data collection, data analysis, and report writing.

The participants consisted of Generation Z consumers who had purchased products at Clarissa Store Tuban within the three months preceding the data collection period. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives and their direct shopping experience at the store. A total of 10 informants participated in the study, ranging in age from 18 to 25 years and representing diverse backgrounds, including students, university students, entrepreneurs, and housewives. Data collection was discontinued when data saturation was reached, indicated by the emergence of no substantially new information or themes from subsequent interviews.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2020). The in-depth interviews were used to explore participants' shopping preferences, experiences, considerations, and decision-making processes, while non-participant observation was conducted to examine consumer behavior and the retail environment without direct involvement in shopping activities. Documentation was used to complement the interview and observation data by providing relevant visual and contextual evidence. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. NVivo 12 Plus was used to support the coding process, node organization, and data visualization, including Word Cloud, Matrix Coding Query, Hierarchy Chart, and Cluster Analysis. Data credibility was established through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation

involved comparing information obtained from different informants, while technique triangulation involved comparing findings derived from interviews, observations, and documentation (Nurfajriani et al., 2024). This process was undertaken to enhance the consistency, credibility, and interpretive validity of the findings.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The NVivo 12 Plus analysis of interview transcripts from ten informants revealed that Generation Z’s shopping preferences at Clarissa Store Tuban were shaped by five main aspects: product, price, place, quality/service, and promotion and discounts, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Generation Z’s Shopping Preferences at Clarissa Store Tuban

Preference Aspect	Dominant Indicators	Illustrative Findings
Product	Style/model, product completeness, variety, and suitability to needs	Styles follow youth trends; a wide range of products is available
Price	Price consideration, perceived price appropriateness, and affordability within budget	Consumers compare prices with those of other stores before purchasing
Place	Product arrangement, product display, and store location	Neat product arrangement makes it easier to locate desired products
Quality/Service	Product material quality and service quality	Material quality determines comfort and durability; friendly service supports the shopping experience

Promotion and Discounts	Influence on purchasing, purchase interest, and perceived savings	Promotions encourage purchases that were initially unplanned
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Source: Compiled by the researchers (2026) based on NVivo 12 Plus analysis.

The Word Cloud generated from the interview data identified “product” as the most dominant term, followed by “buying,” “interested,” “choosing,” “model,” “needs,” “comparing,” and “information.” This pattern indicates that Generation Z consumers are relatively selective in their shopping behavior. Their preferences are not determined solely by interest in trendy products but also by considerations of product utility, suitability to their needs, and available alternatives before making a purchase. In terms of price, the Matrix Coding Query indicates that consumers do not simply seek the lowest price; rather, they assess whether the price is appropriate for the product offered and whether it fits within their available budget. Regarding place, product arrangement emerged as the most prominent indicator compared with store appearance and location, as an orderly and category-based arrangement facilitates consumers’ efforts to find the products they need. In terms of quality, Generation Z’s preferences were more strongly associated with product material quality than with service quality, although friendly and responsive service continued to contribute to a comfortable shopping experience. Regarding promotion, the category “influences purchasing” had the highest frequency of occurrence, suggesting that promotions and discounts play an important role in encouraging Generation Z’s purchasing decisions at Clarissa Store Tuban.

The shopping decision-making process of Generation Z consumers at Clarissa Store Tuban followed the five stages proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016): need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Stages of Generation Z’s Shopping Decision-Making Process

Stage	Key Findings
Need Recognition	Driven by personal needs and the search for specific products; recommendations from friends, store location, and social media also serve as additional triggers

Information Search	Social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram, are the most prominent sources of information, followed by recommendations from friends and direct visits to the store
Evaluation of Alternatives	Consumers compare prices, styles/models, and quality across products and with other fashion stores before making a decision
Purchase Decision	Based primarily on needs, model suitability, and price within budget; impulse purchases occur but are not the primary consideration
Post-Purchase Behavior	Most informants reported satisfaction because the products met their expectations, resulting in an expressed intention to shop again

Source: Compiled by the researchers (2026) based on NVivo 12 Plus analysis.

These findings indicate that Generation Z's purchasing decisions do not occur entirely spontaneously but rather develop through a sequence of considerations beginning when a need is recognized. During the information-search stage, the prominent role of social media reflects the characteristics of Generation Z as digital natives who use platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to obtain product references, fashion trends, and promotional information. During the evaluation of alternatives, consumers do not rely on a single attribute but combine considerations of style, price, quality, and product variety, both at the product level and at the store level. At the purchase-decision stage, needs, model suitability, and affordability within the available budget appeared more frequently than impulse buying, suggesting that shopping decisions among the informants were primarily based on deliberate considerations rather than spontaneous purchasing. Positive post-purchase experiences were also associated with expressed intentions to repurchase, particularly when consumers perceived the store as offering new products, affordable prices, a wide range of choices, practical shopping, satisfactory product quality, and convenient accessibility.

The preferences and shopping decision-making processes of Generation Z consumers at Clarissa Store Tuban were further examined through four categories of factors proposed by Kotler and Armstrong (2012): cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Cultural factors were reflected in consumers' tendency to

follow fashion trends and contemporary youth styles. Social factors were evident in the role of friends and peer environments in providing product recommendations and information, although a small number of informants indicated that they prioritized their own needs over peer recommendations. Personal factors were reflected in considerations of personal needs, product suitability, and financial capacity, with these considerations occurring more frequently than the other three categories. Psychological factors were reflected in feelings of satisfaction and enjoyment after purchasing, which were associated with an expressed interest in shopping again.

Among these four categories, personal factors appeared most frequently in the interview data, as most informants considered their needs, the suitability of products to their preferences, and the affordability of prices within their budgets before making a purchase. This finding suggests that consumer preferences provide an important interpretive link between the various factors shaping shopping behavior and the purchasing decisions expressed by Generation Z consumers. Positive post-purchase experiences were subsequently associated with intentions to revisit and repurchase, particularly when the products, prices, variety, quality, and store accessibility were perceived as meeting consumer expectations.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are consistent with Kotler (2000), who conceptualizes consumer preference as the degree of inclination toward a particular product based on various considerations that correspond to consumers' needs. They are also in line with the findings of Donovan and Hurdawaty (2022), Syam et al. (2022), and Santoso and Triwijayati (2018), which indicate that preferences, product quality, price, and shopping habits are associated with purchasing decisions. In contrast to Romdoni et al. (2025), whose study emphasizes the importance of accessibility and convenience in online shopping preferences, the present study finds that Generation Z consumers in an offline retail setting such as Clarissa Store place considerable value on direct shopping experiences, including the opportunity to examine products physically and experience the store environment. This finding suggests that physical stores remain relevant to Generation Z consumers when they are able to provide an adequate and meaningful shopping experience.

Regarding the purchasing decision-making process, the findings reinforce the five-stage model proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016) and are consistent with Santoso and Triwijayati (2018) and Nasution and Kurnia (2021), which indicate that Generation Z consumers engage in various considerations before making a purchase. In contrast to online shopping contexts, where purchasing decisions may be facilitated by digital accessibility and convenience, this study demonstrates that direct engagement with products through physical observation and comparison remains an important component of the decision-making process in offline retail. The opportunity to inspect product characteristics, compare alternatives, and assess products in their actual physical setting provides consumers with information that may not be fully available through digital representations alone.

With regard to the factors underlying consumer preferences and purchasing decisions, the findings are broadly consistent with consumer behavior theory proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016) and with previous studies by Alda Pebrianti et al. (2025), Nasution and Kurnia (2021), and Muhamad et al. (2025), which have highlighted the relevance of cultural, social, and psychological factors, including FOMO, in consumer decision-making. However, whereas previous studies have frequently emphasized the role of technology and digital environments in shaping Generation Z's purchasing behavior, the present findings indicate that personal considerations—particularly individual needs, product suitability, and financial capacity—appeared most frequently in the interview data within the context of modern offline retail in a developing local market such as Tuban. This finding contributes to a broader understanding of Generation Z's shopping behavior by demonstrating that, despite their strong digital orientation, their purchasing decisions in physical retail settings remain closely connected to practical and personal considerations.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Generation Z's preferences when selecting and shopping at Clarissa Store Tuban are shaped by five interconnected aspects: products that follow current trends and meet consumer needs, affordable prices that fit consumers' budgets, a shopping environment with well-organized product displays, good product quality and service, and attractive promotions and discounts that stimulate purchase interest. The shopping decision-making process follows the stages of

need recognition, information search—predominantly through social media—evaluation of alternatives, purchase decisions based primarily on deliberate considerations, and post-purchase behavior that is generally characterized by satisfaction and expressed intentions to shop again. These preferences and decision-making processes are shaped by interconnected cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors, with personal considerations—particularly individual needs, product suitability, and financial capacity—appearing most frequently in the interview data and therefore representing the most prominent factor in the shopping behavior of Generation Z consumers at Clarissa Store Tuban.

For Clarissa Store Tuban, it is recommended that the store continue monitoring current fashion trends, expand its product variety, maintain product and service quality, improve the comfort and organization of the store environment, and offer promotional programs and discounts periodically. These efforts may help maintain a positive shopping experience and support consumers' expressed intentions to revisit and repurchase. For Generation Z consumers, it is advisable to consider personal needs, product utility, and financial capacity when making purchasing decisions, even while engaging with current fashion trends and social influences. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the research setting, involve more diverse informants, and examine additional factors such as digital marketing, brand image, and lifestyle to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's shopping behavior. This study is subject to several limitations, particularly its focus on a single retail location and a relatively limited number of informants within a qualitative research design. Therefore, the findings provide contextual insights rather than statistically generalizable conclusions for the broader population of modern fashion retail consumers.

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