



The Influence of Class Culture of Social Media on Generation Z's Apparel Purchase Behaviour in Guangzhou

Yuting Zhang ¹, Jacky Mong Kwan Watt^{2,*}

¹ North Bangkok University, Thailand : 118015955@qq.com

² North Bangkok University, Thailand :: drwattnbu@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author : Jacky Mong Kwan Watt

Abstract: The study examines the impact of class culture on Generation Z's apparel purchasing behavior in Guangzhou, focusing on the influence of social media. It highlights how social media platforms are crucial in allowing Generation Z to express their identities and aspirations, revealing the complex relationship between class, status, and consumer habits. The research indicates that social media shapes fashion trends and reinforces the need for social validation through interactions with peers and influencer endorsements. As Generation Z navigates a rapidly changing cultural landscape, their purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by their desire to conform to perceived social norms and values. The findings emphasize that brands need to understand and adapt to the nuances of class dynamics in order to connect with this demographic effectively. It suggests that marketing strategies should prioritize authenticity and relatability, based on insights gathered from a sample of 392 participants in the study.

Keywords: Class Culture of Social Media, Generation Z, Apparel Purchase Behaviour

1. Introduction

The Generation Z, born during China's rapid economic growth, shows strong pride in Chinese culture. They grew up with the internet and digital technology, which shaped their unique traits and shopping habits [1] This generation values individuality and independence. Social media is now the main way Generation Z interacts. They spend much of their time online, where they can gather information, express themselves, and connect with others. Engaging in community discussions about interests helps them bond with people who share similar values [2]. Generation Z tends to prioritize experiences and value data. They are skilled at finding and processing information, influencing their shopping. Their buying habits emphasize community, experiences, and personal style. They seek economic value and are open to various lifestyles, free from strict preferences. In Guangzhou, social media significantly impacts how Generation Z buys clothes. These platforms help them connect with brands, trends, and peer influences amid a diverse cultural landscape [3] Gen Z pays close attention to trends and values showcased on social media, often seeking approval through likes and shares. They usually follow influencers and peers who represent aspirational lifestyles, which affects their clothing choices. The class culture on social media sets standards for what is desirable, focusing on brand prestige, uniqueness, and up-to-date fashion. Social media also creates a sense of community, where users discuss fashion trends, sustainability, and ethical shopping. These conversations raise awareness of social and environmental issues, leading many in Gen Z to choose clothing more carefully. However, the competitive nature of social media can lead to excessive consumerism, where the desire to fit in or stand out overshadows practical choices [4]

Received: 30 Maret 2025

Revised: 20 April 2025

Accepted: 07 Mei 2025

Published: 09 Mei 2025

Curr. Ver.: 09 Mei 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.
Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

2. Research Objectives

This study explores Generation Z's apparel buying behaviour through the class culture of social media with the following objectives: (1) To examine the influencing mechanisms of enhancing the Guangzhou Generation Z's apparel buying behavior through social media based on user belief, perceived value, and social influence. (2) To offer suggestions for the class culture of social media on improving Guangzhou Generation Z apparel buying behavior by enhancing their identity and satisfaction through class culture and social value.

Theoretical Foundation

Definition of Social Presence Theory on Generation Z in Apparel Buying Behaviour

Social Presence Theory suggests that the degree of social presence in online interactions significantly influences consumer behavior [5]. This concept is especially pertinent for Generation Z, a cohort of digital natives who engage with brands primarily through social media platforms. For these consumers, a brand's online presence fosters a sense of connection and community, which is vital for building trust and loyalty, influencing their purchasing decisions. Research has shown that Gen Z's interactions with clothing brands on social media can indicate their purchase intentions. Greater levels of engagement, such as liking, sharing, commenting, and participating in conversations about a brand, enhance the perceived social presence of that brand. Consequently, companies that actively interact with their audience and cultivate a lively online community are more likely to appeal to Gen Z consumers [6]

Definition of Consumer Culture Theory on Generation Z in Social Media

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) examines how culture affects consumer behavior and identity [7]. For Generation Z, social media is a key platform that shapes their clothing buying habits through cultural stories and trends. Generation Z lives in a digital culture that values individuality and self-expression. They engage with various cultural influences on social media, including fashion trends and social movements that affect their shopping choices. These platforms allow them to show their styles and connect with specific cultural themes. Influencers play an essential role in this process. They act as cultural middlemen who influence how consumers view brands and trends. Generation Z often seeks inspiration from these influencers, making their recommendations powerful in purchasing decisions. Social media encourages community, where Gen Z members can share their experiences and support each other's choices [8]

Definition of Terms

- Generation Z's purchasing behavior is significantly influenced by its values related to class culture, shaped by its digital upbringing and heavy social media use. This generation relies on social media for communication, self-expression, and cultural engagement, directly impacting buying decisions. Authenticity and relatability are paramount for Generation Z when choosing brands. They prefer companies that reflect their values, especially regarding sustainability and inclusivity. This demographic is acutely aware of the social implications of their purchases and actively seeks out brands committed to ethical practices, such as environmental sustainability and social justice initiatives. As a result, Gen Z increasingly favors brands that sell products and embody the values they stand for, emphasizing a shift towards conscious consumption [9]
- Beliefs about Generation Z's values regarding class culture on social media show a mix of identity, authenticity, and social awareness. Generation Z has grown up in a digital world, and they see social media as a key way to express themselves and understand different cultural stories. They often connect certain brands and products to social status, influencing what they buy. Many believe that Generation Z values authenticity in the

brands they choose. They prefer companies that genuinely care about social and environmental issues and avoid those they see as fake or elitist. This generation is skeptical of brands that practice shallow activism or do not match their actions to their stated values. As a result, Generation Z is more likely to support brands that share their beliefs about inclusivity and sustainability. They view their purchasing choices as a way to take social responsibility and promote positive change, making shopping a buying decision and a statement of their values [10]

- The perceived value of Generation Z's view of class culture on social media is complex and closely tied to their identity and shopping habits. As digital natives, they have always used social media as a main way to communicate and express themselves. This means they often see social media reflecting society's values, especially class and status. Generation Z values authenticity and relatability in the content they consume. They are usually skeptical of brands and influencers who show overly polished or unrealistic lifestyles, seeing these portrayals as out of touch with reality. Instead, they prefer content that feels genuine and mirrors their own experiences. This preference heavily influences their buying decisions, making them more likely to support transparent brands committed to social responsibility.[11]
- Social influence significantly shapes Generation Z's values regarding class culture on social media. This group is profoundly affected by the content they encounter on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, where influencers and peers present their lifestyles and consumer choices. The aspirational images and narratives these figures share can foster a desire for specific brands or products associated with status and a sense of belonging. Generation Z often turns to social media as a key reference for emerging trends, with endorsements from trusted influencers playing a critical role in their purchasing decisions. However, this generation also demonstrates a heightened awareness of the authenticity behind these endorsements. They tend to favor relatable and genuine content, leading them to dismiss brands that seem overly polished or disconnected from their lived experiences [12]

3. Conceptual Framework

The framework of user belief, perceived value, and social influence is essential for understanding how Generation Z makes purchasing decisions, especially about clothing on social media in Guangzhou. This framework shows how these three key elements affect what consumers buy in today's fast-changing digital world. User beliefs include the attitudes and opinions that Generation Z holds about brands and products on social media. This group often values authenticity and relatability, preferring brands that resonate with their personal experiences and social values. In Guangzhou, popular platforms like WeChat and Weibo significantly shape these beliefs through content shared by friends and influencers. The trustworthiness of these endorsements is crucial in building loyalty to particular brands [13]. Perceived value refers to the benefits that Generation Z associates with their purchases, which can be practical or emotional. For clothing, practical value may include quality, price, and function, while emotional value relates to the feelings and social status gained from wearing certain brands. Generation Z is especially aware of how the clothing they buy reflects their identity and social goals. They prefer products that serve practical needs and boost their social status and self-expression among their peers [14]. Social influence is another major factor in Generation Z's buying choices. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok help trends spread quickly. Influencers and friends serve as key sources of social approval, affecting what Generation Z views as trendy or acceptable. This influence may also increase awareness of class culture, as certain clothing brands become associated with social status and belonging. In Guangzhou, social influence and user beliefs significantly affect how this generation buys clothing while exploring their identities in a rich and diverse culture [15]

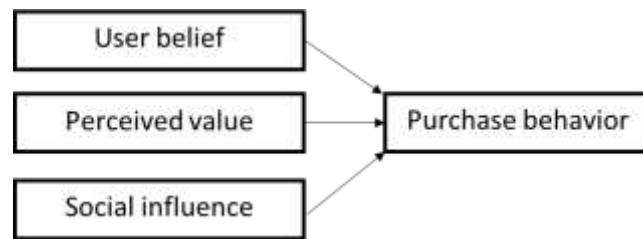


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework

4. Research Restriction

The rapidly evolving nature of social media platforms and trends presents challenges in capturing a consistent and comprehensive view of consumer behavior over time. This dynamism can lead to difficulties establishing long-term patterns or correlations, as preferences and influences may shift quickly. Additionally, there may be limitations regarding the representativeness of sample populations. Studies often rely on specific demographics or user groups, which may not fully capture the diverse experiences and perspectives within the broader Generation Z cohort in Guangzhou. This can result in findings that are not generalizable across all population segments. Access to data can also be challenging, as data might face difficulties obtaining detailed insights from social media platforms due to privacy concerns and data protection regulations.

Research Hypothesis

The Correlation between User Belief and Purchase Behaviour

The hypothesis regarding the correlation between user beliefs and Generation Z's purchasing behavior in apparel through social media suggests that user beliefs significantly influence purchasing decisions. It indicates that Generation Z values authenticity and relatability in brands, often preferring those that resonate with their values and social identities. This alignment is anticipated to foster brand loyalty and increase purchase probability. Additionally, the hypothesis highlights that positive user beliefs are primarily influenced by interactions on social media, particularly through peer endorsements and influencer marketing. As Generation Z engages with content from trusted sources, their perceptions of brand credibility and desirability will likely be reinforced, affecting their purchasing behavior [16]

H1 There is no positive correlation between user belief and Gen Z purchase behaviour of apparel through social media in Guangzhou.

The Correlation between Social Influence and Purchase Behaviour

The hypothesis concerning social influence on Generation Z's purchasing behavior regarding apparel through social media in Guangzhou suggests that social influence plays a crucial role in their buying decisions. Research indicates that Generation Z tends to be influenced by their peers' and online influencers' opinions and behaviors, significantly affecting their perceptions of brand desirability and credibility. This demographic commonly utilizes social media platforms to stay informed about fashion trends and assess brand reputations, increasing the likelihood of purchasing apparel endorsed or recommended by trusted figures

within their social networks. Additionally, the hypothesis highlights the impact of social validation on purchasing behavior. When Generation Z observes their peers or popular influencers showcasing specific clothing brands, it enhances the perceived desirability of those products. This social validation fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance, encouraging individuals to align their purchases with the trends promoted by their social circles [17]

H3 There is no positive correlation between social influence and Gen Z purchase behaviour of apparel through social media in Guangzhou.

5. Research Methods

Population and Sample

This research population of Gen Z was selected in Guangzhou, China, and participated in apparel purchase behavior through social media. A sample of 392 was collected for this study's analysis in March 2025 through the WeChat Survey Platform.

This study's minimum research sample size is based on the study of Kadam Bhalerao (2010)

- The margin of error (confidence interval) – 95%
- Standard deviation 0.5
- 95% - Z Score = 1.96
- Sample size formula = $(Z\text{-score})^2 * Std\ Dev * (1 - StdDev) / (\text{margin of error})^2$
- $(1.96)^2 * 0.5(0.5) / (0.05)^2$
- $(3.8416 * 0.25) / 0.0025$
- $0.9604 / 0.0025 = 384$
- 384 respondents would be needed for this study based on a confidence level of 95%

Research Model Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is widely used to measure the degree of association between different variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient is commonly used to test the correlation. The value of the correlation coefficient (r) indicates the strength of the correlation between variables, while the significance level of the correlation is shown in the P-value.

Correlation Analysis of User Belief and Purchase Behaviour

The correlation coefficient r between user belief and purchase behaviour is 0.793, and $P=0.000$ is less than 0.01. Thus, user belief significantly correlates with the purchase behaviour

Correlation Analysis of Perceived Value and Purchase Behaviour

The correlation coefficient r between perceived value and purchase behaviour is 0.758, and $P=0.000$ is less than 0.01. Thus, perceived value significantly correlates with purchase behaviour.

Correlation Analysis of Social Influence and Purchase Behaviour

The correlation coefficient r between social influence and purchase behaviour is 0.811, and $P=0.000$ is less than 0.01. Thus, social influence significantly correlates with purchase behaviour.

6. Conclusions

The research findings concerning Generation Z's purchasing behavior in the apparel sector, particularly in Guangzhou, reveal several key factors influenced by social media.

Firstly, user belief is crucial to this demographic's purchasing decisions. Generation Z tends to prefer brands that they perceive as authentic and relatable. They are more inclined to trust brands that demonstrate transparency and align with their values, such as sustainability and social responsibility. The study suggests that brands that successfully communicate authenticity through social media are more likely to cultivate loyalty and drive purchases among Gen Z consumers [18]

Secondly, perceived value is a significant determinant of purchasing behavior. The research highlights that Generation Z evaluates apparel based on various functional attributes, including quality and price, in addition to emotional and social considerations. Clothing that

enhances their self-identity or aligns with their social aspirations is regarded as having greater value. Social media plays a prominent role in shaping these perceptions, as exposure to aspirational content and endorsements from peers often increases the desirability of specific brands [19]

Lastly, social influence strongly motivates Generation Z's purchasing choices. The findings indicate that recommendations from peers and influencers considerably impact their decisions. When Generation Z observes their social circles endorsing particular apparel brands, it heightens the perceived desirability of those products. This social validation fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance, encouraging them to purchase popular items that resonate within their networks [20]

H1 There is a positive correlation between user belief and Gen Z purchase behaviour of apparel through social media in Guangzhou.

H2 There is a positive correlation between perceived value and Gen Z's purchase behaviour of apparel through social media in Guangzhou.

H3 There is a positive correlation between social influence and Gen Z's purchase behaviour of apparel through social media in Guangzhou.

Managerial Implications:

Social media influences how Generation Z in Guangzhou buys clothes. This is important for brands and marketers who want to connect with this group. By understanding how social media affects consumer behavior, businesses can create effective strategies that appeal to Gen Z. Brands should use social media to shape how people view class and status. Generation Z often wants to show their identity and social goals through clothing, which is influenced by what they see online. Companies should create content highlighting the positive aspects of their clothes and showing how their products can improve social status. Using influencers that Gen Z relates to can help spread brand messages and build trust. Influencers who reflect the values and lifestyles admired by Generation Z can effectively communicate the brand's identity and foster a sense of community. This approach can increase brand visibility and sales since Gen Z tends to buy products promoted by relatable figures. Authenticity

is crucial when marketing to Generation Z, as they care about transparency and social responsibility. Brands that commit to ethical practices, sustainability, and inclusivity will likely connect better with this audience. When brands share values with Generation Z, they can boost their perceived value and build customer loyalty. It is also important to understand the local culture in Guangzhou. Rapid urbanization and globalization are changing the culture there. Brands should recognize cultural preferences that influence buying behavior. Marketing strategies should reflect these local trends to improve engagement and increase sales[21]

References

- [1] Z. Khan, Y. Yang, M. Shafi, and R. Yang, "The role of social media marketing activities (SMMAs) in apparel brands' customer response is a moderated mediation analysis: sustainability," vol. 11, pp. 51-67, 2019.
- [2] A. J. Kim and E. Ko, "Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of a luxury fashion brand," *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 65, pp. 1480–1486, 2012.
- [3] M. Falahat, Y. Y. Lee, Y. C. Foo, and C. E. Chia, "A model for consumer trust in e-commerce," *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 93–109, 2019.
- [4] A.-S. Mishra, "Antecedents of consumers' engagement with brand-related content on social media," *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, vol. 37, pp. 386–400, 2019.
- [5] F. Biocca, C. Harms, and J.-K. Burgoon, "Toward a more robust theory and measure of social presence: review and suggested criteria," *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*, vol. 12, no. 5, pp. 456–480, 2003.
- [6] C. Oh, J. Bailenson, and G. Welch, "A systematic review of social presence: definition, antecedents, and implications," *Virtual Environments*, vol. 5, pp. 101–123, 2018.
- [7] E. Arnould and C. Thompson, "Consumer culture theory (CCT): twenty years of research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 868–882, 2005.
- [8] J. Rokka, "Consumer culture theory's future in marketing," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 114–124, 2021.
- [9] M. Arora and P. Khurana, "A study on gender-wise apparel buying behavior of Gen Z," *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 656–671, 2024.
- [10] Y.-M. Kaytaz, "The factors affecting Gen Z's online impulse buying behavior," *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 272–298, 2020.
- [11] C. Liu, J. Bernardoni, and Z. Wang, "Examining Generation Z consumer online fashion resale participation and continuance intention through the lens of consumer perceived value," vol. 15, no. 10, pp. 82–113, 2023.
- [12] M. Brodowicz, "The influence of social media on Generation Z's values and behavior," *Modern Society*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 1022–1035, 2024.
- [13] J. Guo and L. Li, "Exploring the relationship between social commerce features and consumers' repurchase intentions: the mediating role of perceived value," *Organizational Psychology*, vol. 12, pp. 77–93, 2022.
- [14] C.-L. Hsu and J. C.-C. Lin, "Effect of perceived value and social influences on mobile app stickiness and in-app purchase intention," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, vol. 108, pp. 42–53, 2016.
- [15] D. Jiménez-Castillo and R. Sánchez-Fernández, "The role of digital influencers in brand recommendation: examining their impact on engagement, expected value, and purchase intention," *International Journal of Information Management*, vol. 49, pp. 366–376, 2019.
- [16] J. Liang, J. Li, and Q. Lei, "Exploring the influence of environmental values on green consumption behavior of apparel: a chain multiple mediation model among Chinese Generation Z," *Sustainability*, vol. 14, no. 19, pp. 128–150, 2022.
- [17] X. Wang, M. Tajvidi, X. Lin, and N. Hajli, "Towards an ethical and trustworthy social commerce community for brand value co-creation: a trust-commitment perspective," *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 167, pp. 137–152, 2020.

- [18] O. Rahman, B. Fung, and Z. Chen, "Young Chinese consumers' choice between product-related and sustainable cues—The effects of gender differences and consumer innovativeness," *Sustainability*, vol. 12, no. 9, pp. 381–405, 2020.
- [19] M. Xiao, R. Wang, and S. Chan-Olmsted, "Factors affecting YouTube influencer marketing credibility: a heuristic-systematic model," *Journal of Media Business Studies*, vol. 15, pp. 188–213, 2018.
- [20] C.-H. Lee, C.-W. Chen, S.-F. Huang, Y. T. Chang, and S. Demirci, "Exploring consumers' impulse buying behavior on online apparel websites: an empirical investigation on consumer perceptions," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce Studies*, vol. 12, pp. 223–241, 2021.
- [21] C. Berne-Manero and M. Marzo-Navarro, "Exploring how influencer and relationship marketing serve corporate sustainability," *Sustainability*, vol. 12, pp. 43–62, 2020.
- [22] F. Afzal, Y. Shao, M. Sajid, and F. Afzal, "Market sustainability: a globalization and consumer culture perspective in the Chinese retail market," *Sustainability*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 575–593, 2019.