

PUBLIC CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE SHOPPING TRENDS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Hanisa Syava Farhata Indilah^{1)*}, Nisa¹⁾, Sri Damayanti¹⁾
UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
*Email: hanisasyava13@gmail.com**

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze consumer behavior in online shopping trends in the digital era, focusing on urban communities in Kota Bandung. The research employs a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation techniques involving active e-commerce users. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal that consumer behavior is no longer driven by rational needs but by symbolic value (sign value) associated with identity and lifestyle. Specifically, the study finds that (1) purchasing decisions are largely driven by digital promotions that create a sense of artificial urgency, (2) social media plays a significant role in constructing artificial needs through mechanisms of simulation and hyperreality, and (3) the use of paylater services contributes to a shift in the meaning of debt from a financial burden to a normalized digital lifestyle practice. These conditions lead to increased individual spending and a transformation of social values, where consumption functions as a means of identity expression and social recognition. From the perspective of Jean Baudrillard, this phenomenon reflects a consumer society dominated by symbols, images, and simulation within the context of digital urban life. **Keywords:** Consumerism, Digital Lifestyle, Social Identity, Urban Sociology, Online Shopping

A. INTRODUCTION

The massive digital transformation that has taken place over the past few decades has fundamentally altered the structure of society's social and economic life. Advances in information technology, particularly the internet and mobile devices, have not only accelerated the flow of information but also shifted patterns of interaction and individual behavior in meeting daily needs. The development of information technology, supported by increasing internet access, has made society increasingly digitally connected. According to the latest data, the number of internet users in Indonesia will reach approximately 221.5 million in 2024, with a penetration rate of 79.5%, indicating that the majority of Indonesians are integrated into the digital ecosystem (APJII, 2024). This condition indicates that the internet is no longer a supplement but has become a primary necessity in daily life (Prasetyo et al., 2024).

This trend will continue to increase in 2025, when the number of internet users in Indonesia will reach approximately 229.4 million, with a penetration rate of 80.66%. This figure indicates that more than eight out of ten Indonesians are connected to the internet. This increase reflects the acceleration of digital transformation, which is increasingly pervasive across all levels of society, both in urban and rural areas. Furthermore, the dominance of younger generations, such as Generation Z and millennials, in internet use further reinforces the shift in consumption behavior patterns toward digital (APJII Indonesia, 2025).

In this context, consumption activities have undergone a significant shift in meaning. Online shopping is no longer simply an alternative way to meet needs, but has evolved into a social practice rich in symbols and representations. Ease of access, a wide variety of product choices, and the intensity of digital promotions encourage people to consume more quickly and instantly (Statista, 2024). However, from a sociological perspective, this phenomenon cannot be understood solely as a change in economic behavior, but rather as part of the transformation of consumption culture in modern society.

Jean Baudrillard's thinking provides a relevant analytical framework for understanding this phenomenon. Baudrillard stated that modern society has entered a "consumer society" phase, where consumption is no longer based on use value or exchange value, but rather on sign value. In this context, goods are consumed not for their utilitarian function, but for their inherent symbolic meanings, such as social status, lifestyle, and self-image (Bakti et al., 2019) (Anjani, 2025). In other words, consumption becomes a means of social communication used by individuals to express their identity.

In the digital era, this concept of sign value has been further strengthened through the presence of social media and digital platforms. Products are not only consumed but also displayed, exhibited, and disseminated in virtual public spaces. Activities such as uploading product photos, creating "haul" content, or following certain shopping trends demonstrate that consumption has become part of the practice of self-representation. In this context, individuals not only consume goods but also consume the signs and meanings inherent in those goods.

Furthermore, Baudrillard explains that modern society lives in a state of hyperreality, a state in which the boundaries between reality and representation become blurred. In the digital world, the image displayed often dominates reality itself. Products that appear attractive on screen do not always represent the actual situation, but still encourage individuals to consume them. This suggests that consumption is no longer based on real needs, but rather on simulations constructed through media.

Furthermore, the convenience of digital payment systems such as e-wallets and paylater further accelerates the consumption process by eliminating direct financial constraints. This condition reinforces the logic of consumption in modern society, where individuals are driven to continue consuming without considering real needs (V. A. Putri et al., 2025). From Baudrillard's perspective, this demonstrates that consumption has become an autonomous system, continuously reproducing itself through signs and symbols without clear boundaries.

However, most previous research on consumer behavior in online shopping is still dominated by economic and marketing approaches, focusing on variables such as price, promotion, and technological convenience. This approach fails to fully explain the social and cultural dimensions of consumption practices, particularly in understanding how consumption functions as a symbol of identity and a means of social differentiation. Furthermore, research specifically examining this phenomenon in a local context like Bandung City is relatively limited, particularly in examining how local culture interacts with the flow of digital globalization.

Furthermore, the penetration of global digital platforms has also driven a shift in consumption culture at the local level. People's consumption practices are no longer solely influenced by local values, but are increasingly influenced by global trends disseminated through digital media. This indicates a process of global cultural infiltration that shapes people's consumption patterns, making consumption an arena where local and global identities interact.

Based on this description, there is a research gap that requires further study: the lack of research using a sociology of consumption perspective to understand consumer behavior in online shopping, particularly in the context of urban communities. Therefore, this study aims

to analyze consumer behavior within the online shopping trend, identify the factors influencing it, and examine its impact on the economic conditions of individuals in Bandung City using a sociological approach.

This study aims to analyze consumer behavior within the online shopping trend using a sociology of consumption perspective. Specifically, this study aims to identify the characteristics of consumer behavior, analyze the social, cultural, and digital factors that influence it, and examine its impact on the economic conditions of individuals in Bandung City.

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research contributes to enriching the study of the sociology of consumption, particularly in understanding the phenomenon of digital consumption through the perspective of Jean Baudrillard. Practically, this research is expected to increase public awareness in managing consumption behavior more wisely and serve as a consideration for the government and businesses in formulating policies related to the digital economy.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Behavior

Consumptive behavior is an individual's tendency to engage in consumption activities that are not entirely based on rational needs, but rather are influenced by desires, emotional drives, and environmental factors. This behavior is often associated with impulse buying, which is the act of spontaneously purchasing without careful planning. In modern life, consumptive behavior is increasingly developing along with the increasing availability of products and easier access to various services.

From a social perspective, consumption is understood not only as an economic activity but also as part of an individual's lifestyle and identity. Individuals often consume to demonstrate social status, follow trends, or adapt to their surroundings. Thus, consumptive behavior is influenced not only by individual factors but also by the values, norms, and culture that develop within society.

Online Shopping in the Digital Age

The development of information and communication technology has brought about significant changes in people's consumption patterns. The presence of the internet and e-commerce platforms allows individuals to conduct transactions more easily, quickly, and efficiently. Online shopping has become a primary alternative due to its conveniences, such as unlimited access, a diverse product selection, and the ease of comparing prices.

Furthermore, various features offered by e-commerce platforms, such as discounts, cashback, flash sales, and free shipping, further enhance the appeal of online shopping. This convenience is also supported by digital payment systems such as e-wallets, mobile banking, and paylater services, which enable practical and flexible transactions. However, this convenience also has consequences for changing consumption behavior. Individuals are increasingly inclined to make purchases without careful consideration, thus increasing the tendency for consumer behavior in everyday life.

The Influence of Social Media on Consumption Behavior

Social media plays a significant role in shaping consumer behavior in the digital age. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube serve not only as communication tools but also as promotional tools and trendsetting tools. Content displayed on social media, such as product reviews, influencer recommendations, and viral trends, can influence individual perceptions and preferences for a product. Repeated exposure to this content can create interest and even a need for a product that was previously unplanned.

Furthermore, social media also encourages the emergence of a trend-driven consumption culture, where individuals tend to follow what's popular in the digital environment. This suggests that consumer decisions are not solely based on personal needs but are also influenced by social pressure and the desire to fit in with the group.

Urban Lifestyle

Urban communities are characterized by dynamic characteristics, adaptability to change, and a tendency to follow technological developments and global trends. In large cities like Bandung, people's lifestyles are heavily influenced by the development of digital technology and the intensity of social media use. Modern lifestyles in urban communities are often characterized by high consumption of trendy products. Consumption is not only intended to meet needs but also serves as a means of self-expression, identity formation, and social adjustment. In this context, individuals tend to make purchases to project a certain image to others. This reinforces the tendency for consumptive behavior, especially when supported by a social environment that also shares similar consumption patterns.

Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

Consumptive behavior is influenced by various interrelated factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include an individual's psychological state, such as desires, emotions, motivation, and self-control. Individuals with low self-control are more likely to make impulsive purchases. Meanwhile, external factors include the social environment, culture, media, and technological developments. In the digital era, external factors have a significant influence, particularly through social media, digital promotions, and ease of access to transactions. Promotions such as discounts and free shipping can create an emotional impulse to buy, while social media can shape consumption preferences and trends. Furthermore, the convenience of digital payment systems such as PayLater also plays a role in increasing consumptive behavior by reducing barriers to the purchasing process.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach with the aim of in-depth understanding of consumer behavior in the online shopping trend in the digital era. This approach was chosen because it can explore individual meanings, perceptions, and subjective experiences that cannot be fully explained through quantitative approaches (Wulan et al., 2025). Furthermore, this approach allows researchers to examine consumption practices as a social phenomenon related to lifestyle, identity, and cultural dynamics of urban communities. The study was conducted in Bandung City, which was purposively selected due to its high level of digital technology penetration, dominant young population, and dynamic urban lifestyle characteristics. The study was conducted in March 2026.

The research subjects were residents of Bandung City who actively shop online. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) actively making online shopping transactions at least 2–3 times a month, (2) actively using social media, and (3) being within the productive age range. This study involved six informants: (1) two students (aged 20–23), (2) two private sector employees (aged 24–28), and (3) two creative sector workers/freelancers (aged 23–30). This selection of diverse backgrounds aimed to represent the lifestyle characteristics of urban communities in Bandung. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which occurs when data obtained is repetitive and provides no new information (Ani et al., 2021).

Data collection techniques in this study included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore informants' consumption experiences, motivations, and perceptions of online shopping activities. Observations were conducted to observe consumption behavior patterns in daily life,

particularly related to the use of shopping apps and social media. Documentation was conducted through a review of relevant scientific journals, books, and official reports as supporting data (Soesana et al., 2023).

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher herself (human instrument), who played a role in the data collection, interpretation, and analysis. To maintain the research focus, an interview guide was used as a supporting instrument, developed based on the problem formulation.

The data analysis process was conducted in stages using the interactive analysis model developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (Nurhaqqi et al., 2025). Prior to the data reduction stage, the researcher first conducted a systematic coding process. Coding was carried out by identifying important themes from the interview results, such as "impulse buying," "social media influence," "lifestyle," and "ease of digital payments." These codes were then grouped into broader categories to facilitate the analysis process. Following the coding process, data reduction was carried out by selecting relevant information. The data were then presented in descriptive narrative form, and conclusions were drawn in stages.

To maintain data validity, this study employed more specific triangulation techniques, namely source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information between informants from different backgrounds (students, employees, and creative workers), to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure consistency of findings. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by reconfirming interview results with informants to ensure data accuracy.

The tools used in this study included a voice recorder, a smartphone, and a notebook, while the research materials consisted of interview guidelines and relevant literature. With this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior regarding online shopping trends in the digital era, particularly in the context of urban communities in Bandung.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Consumer Behavior of People in Online Shopping in Bandung City

Consumer behavior in modern society can no longer be understood solely as an individual's tendency to make purchases driven by psychological or economic factors. In the context of a digital society, consumption has undergone a more complex transformation, where purchasing activity is no longer oriented toward fulfilling rational needs but rather toward the symbolic meaning inherent in a product. From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, this phenomenon is explained through the concept of a consumer society, where individuals consume not for their use value but for their sign value, namely the social and symbolic meanings contained within the goods (Baudrillard, 1998).

The development of e-commerce and social media in the digital era has accelerated this transformation process. The digital environment creates a consumption space that not only facilitates transactions but also produces meaning and image (Wardini & Dasalinda, 2024). Consumption becomes part of a sign system that is continuously reproduced through the visualization of products, trends, and lifestyles displayed massively in digital spaces. In this context, individuals no longer simply purchase goods but also consume symbols that represent identity, status, and lifestyle (Amanda et al., 2023).

Field research found that consumer behavior in Bandung is quite high and has become part of everyday practice. Observations of social media information reveal that people in Bandung make purchases regularly, even when they don't have urgent needs. Descriptively, this indicates

a tendency towards impulsive buying. However, interpretively, this phenomenon reflects a shift in consumption structure from one based on needs to one based on symbols (Sucifa, 2025).

Interviews revealed that purchasing decisions are often influenced by promotions such as discounts and free shipping. One informant, Dinda (student, 21), stated:

"I often shop online when there's a discount or free shipping. Sometimes I buy because I'd hate to miss out, not because I need it."

A deeper understanding reveals that promotions function not only as economic stimulus but also as part of a system of signals that create a false sense of urgency. From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, discounts don't simply lower prices but also create an illusion of value, so that individuals perceive a symbolic benefit when purchasing. Thus, consumption decisions are no longer based on real needs but on socially constructed meanings (Ratnaningrum et al., 2024).

Furthermore, social media plays a very dominant role in shaping people's consumption behavior. Informants stated that interest in products often arises after viewing content on TikTok or Instagram. Dinda explained:

"I often get interested in buying something after seeing it on TikTok or Instagram, especially if it's going viral."

This phenomenon cannot be understood simply as the influence of media, but as a process of producing pseudo-needs. Within Jean Baudrillard's framework, social media creates a state of hyperreality, where the boundaries between real and imagined needs become blurred. Products displayed through digital content are often more appealing in image form than in reality, thus encouraging individuals to consume based on this simulation. In other words, needs no longer originate within the individual, but are constructed by a media system that continually reproduces signs and symbols of consumption. This aligns with research suggesting that constant exposure to social media content can shape consumption desires and encourage individuals to follow emerging trends (Febrianti et al., 2024).

Furthermore, interviews revealed that the convenience of digital payment systems, such as PayLater, also reinforces consumer behavior. An interview with Mrs. Ayu (a 27-year-old private worker) revealed the following statement:

"Using PayLater makes shopping easier; you don't even notice the money being spent."

On the surface, paylater facilitates transactions. However, more deeply, this phenomenon demonstrates a shift in the way debt is perceived. In traditional cultures, debt is often associated with a burden and responsibility to be avoided. However, in the digital context, debt has transformed into something normal and even part of a lifestyle (Widiasih et al., 2023).

From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, this situation demonstrates that the consumption system has transformed the symbolic meaning of debt into a sign of convenience and flexibility. Paylater is no longer perceived as a financial obligation, but rather as part of an instant and seamless consumption experience. This leads to individuals becoming increasingly compelled to consume without considering long-term consequences, as financial realities are deferred by the digital payment system.

Overall, the consumer behavior of people in Bandung City, influenced by online shopping trends, is influenced not only by technological factors and promotions, but also by the sign systems that shape the meaning of consumption itself. Consumption no longer serves to fulfill needs, but rather as a means of self-representation, participation in trends, and adaptation to digital culture.

Thus, from Jean Baudrillard's perspective, modern consumer behavior reflects a consumer society dominated by symbols, images, and simulations. Individuals no longer consume based on real needs, but rather on meanings continuously produced and reproduced in digital systems.

Therefore, this phenomenon not only impacts the economic aspect but also indicates a shift in values and culture within urban society in the digital era.

Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior in Online Shopping Trends in Bandung City

Based on findings regarding the high level of consumer behavior in Bandung, it is important to examine the factors underlying this phenomenon. Consumer behavior in today's digital society cannot be understood solely as the result of individual factors, but rather as part of a broader social system that shapes how individuals interpret consumption. From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, consumption in modern society is no longer oriented toward use value, but rather toward sign value, namely the symbolic meaning attached to a product. This demonstrates that consumer behavior is a social construct that is continuously produced through the sign system within a consumer society (Baudrillard, 1998).

Based on research results obtained through in-depth interviews with informants, observations of digital media usage activities, and analysis of documentation related to online shopping behavior in Bandung, it was found that consumer behavior in online shopping trends is influenced by various interrelated factors, such as digital promotions, social media, lifestyle, and the convenience of digital payment systems. One field finding from the interviews indicated that promotions such as discounts and free shipping are the primary drivers of purchasing decisions. Informants revealed that they often purchase products because they feel "it's a shame to miss out on a promotion," even though the product is not really needed. This finding is also reinforced by the researcher's observation of informants' shopping patterns, which tend to increase during promotional periods. Interpretatively, this condition indicates that promotions not only function as economic incentives but also create what can be called a false sense of urgency. In Jean Baudrillard's framework, discounts are part of a sign system that creates an illusion of value, so that individuals are encouraged to buy not out of need, but because of the symbolic meaning of the "opportunity" offered. This finding aligns with research stating that digital promotions have a significant influence on consumer behavior, although this study found that this influence is also symbolic (Ratnaningrum et al., 2024).

Furthermore, based on interviews and observations of informants' social media activity, it was found that purchasing intentions often arise after seeing a product go viral on platforms like TikTok or Instagram, even though they had no prior need for the product. This finding is also supported by documentation in the form of screenshots of product trends frequently appearing in informants' social media algorithms. This suggests that needs are no longer intrinsic but are instead constructed through repeated exposure to digital content. From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, this phenomenon is a form of simulation and hyperreality, where the reality of needs is replaced by representations created by the media. Social media not only influences preferences but also actively produces pseudo-needs in society. This finding is supported by research showing that social media influences consumer behavior through digital lifestyles.

Another factor that contributes to consumer behavior is the convenience of digital payment systems, particularly the use of paylater. Based on interviews with informants and observations of digital transaction histories, it was discovered that the use of paylater makes individuals more willing to make purchases because payments can be delayed. Informants stated that using paylater "doesn't feel like spending money directly." Interpretatively, this indicates a shift in perspectives on debt. From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, this phenomenon demonstrates that the consumption system has created an economic simulation, where the boundaries between financial capacity and consumption desires are blurred. Paylater is no longer perceived as a financial obligation, but as a symbol of convenience and flexibility in consumption. This finding aligns with research suggesting that paylater increases consumer behavior (Syifani & Mustika, 2024).

Furthermore, observations of informants' lifestyles and interviews regarding consumption patterns indicate that urban residents in Bandung tend to use consumption as a means of self-expression and social adjustment. Products purchased are not only based on need but also on symbolic value that can enhance self-image. From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, consumption functions as a system of social differentiation, where goods are used as signs to demonstrate one's social position. This finding aligns with research suggesting that digital lifestyles influence consumer behavior (A. Putri et al., 2025).

Overall, the research findings obtained through a combination of interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that the factors influencing consumer behavior in Bandung are not merely causal, but are part of a digital consumption system that shapes meaning, creates pseudo-needs, and shifts social values. Thus, from Jean Baudrillard's perspective, consumer behavior is not merely an individual phenomenon, but rather a reflection of a consumer society dominated by symbols, images, and simulations in the digital era.

The Impact of Consumptive Behavior on the Economic Conditions of Individuals in the City of Bandung

After understanding the factors influencing consumer behavior, it is necessary to analyze the impact on the economic and social conditions of people in Bandung City as a result of following the online shopping trend in the current digital era. Consumer behavior in the digital era not only impacts individual consumption patterns but also has broader implications for the economic and social conditions of society. From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, consumption in modern society is no longer simply an economic activity but also part of a symbolic system that shapes social reality. Therefore, the impact of consumer behavior can be seen not only from a financial perspective but also from changes in values, norms, and how individuals interpret social life.

Based on research results obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation of people in Bandung City, it was found that one of the main impacts of consumer behavior is the emergence of imbalances in individual financial management. Informants tend to make repeated purchases without careful planning, resulting in spending often exceeding actual needs. This is as expressed by one informant:

"Sometimes I realize I've spent more since I shop online more often, especially if I use PayLater, so I don't realize I've spent so much." (Informant 3, employee, 26 years old)

This statement indicates that consumption is no longer entirely controlled by rational considerations, but rather influenced by the convenience of digital systems. Interpretatively, this phenomenon indicates that individuals no longer consume based on their actual economic capacity, but rather on the perceived capacity created by digital systems. Within Jean Baudrillard's framework, this constitutes a form of economic simulation, where financial reality is deferred and replaced by the illusion of ease of consumption.

Beyond its economic impact, consumer behavior also has implications for changing social values within society. Research shows that consumption is increasingly viewed as a means of building self-image and gaining social recognition. Individuals tend to purchase trending or viral products not out of necessity, but to demonstrate their presence in the social environment, particularly on digital media. This condition reflects a shift in values from consumption as the fulfillment of needs to consumption as a representation of identity. In Jean Baudrillard's perspective, consumption functions as a sign system used by individuals to communicate socially, so that the value of an item no longer lies in its function but in its symbolic meaning.

Furthermore, research findings also indicate that high consumption intensity influences how individuals interpret satisfaction. Satisfaction is no longer derived from fulfilling rational needs, but from the consumption experience itself, such as the thrill of shopping, following trends, or gaining recognition on social media. In this context, consumption becomes a

continuously reproduced activity without clear boundaries. Within Jean Baudrillard's framework, this condition demonstrates the dominance of hyperreality, where individuals are more attached to symbolic images and experiences than to actual reality.

This finding aligns with various previous studies that suggest that consumer behavior in the digital age can impact individuals' financial conditions, such as increased spending and lower savings (A. Putri et al., 2025). Furthermore, research (Widiasih et al., 2023) also shows that the use of paylater contributes to increased consumer behavior and potential financial problems. However, this study provides a more in-depth contribution by demonstrating that these impacts are not only economic but also related to changes in the value structure within society.

Overall, the impact of consumer behavior in Bandung demonstrates a significant shift in both economic and social aspects. Consumption no longer functions solely as a means of fulfilling needs, but has become part of a symbolic system that shapes lifestyle, identity, and social relations. Thus, from Jean Baudrillard's perspective, consumer behavior reflects a consumer society dominated by symbols, images, and simulations in the digital age.

The overall findings of this study indicate that consumer behavior in Bandung is influenced not only by economic or technological factors but also by the symbolic system that shapes the meaning of consumption in everyday life. This differs from previous research, which tends to view consumer behavior descriptively. This study emphasizes the dimensions of meaning and social construction in a digital society.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the consumer behavior of people in Bandung City, amidst the trend of online shopping in the digital era, has undergone a significant shift in meaning. Consumption is no longer solely based on rational needs, but rather is increasingly influenced by the symbolic meaning attached to a product. From Jean Baudrillard's perspective, this phenomenon indicates that society has entered a consumer society phase, where individuals consume based on sign value related to identity, social status, and lifestyle.

Consumer behavior is influenced by various interrelated factors, such as digital promotion, social media, urban lifestyles, and the convenience of digital payment systems like PayLater. These factors not only serve as drivers of consumption but also as part of a symbolic system that creates pseudo-needs through a process of simulation and hyperreality. Social media, for example, not only influences preferences but actively shapes consumer desires through the continuous reproduction of images and trends.

The impact of this consumer behavior is not only evident economically in the form of increased spending and reduced financial control, but also socially in the form of a shift in the meaning of consumption. Consumption has become a means of self-expression and a means of gaining social recognition. Furthermore, the convenience of digital payment systems has shifted people's perspectives on debt, which has become more permissive and integrated into digital lifestyles.

Thus, this research confirms that modern consumer behavior is not simply an individual phenomenon, but rather a reflection of social construction within a digital society dominated by symbols, images, and simulations. This finding also demonstrates the novelty of this research, viewing consumer behavior not merely as an economic activity but as a meaningful social practice within the framework of a consumer society.

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