



## **Generation Z, Disruption and Algorithms: Doom spending as a Social Practice Disposition of Youth (A Phenomenological Study in Surabaya)**

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**Abstract:** *Generation Z is a community group that grows through digital interaction. This has led to rapid change, including shift in consumption patterns driven by social media preferences. This dynamic provides a new space that is formed through doom spending, which is a culture of excessive shopping to overcome social anxiety and emotional distress that is considered prevalent. Based on this reality, this study aims to analyze and understand how doom spending works as an element of shifting consumption patterns, contributing alongside social media to the lifestyle of Generation Z in the city of Surabaya. This study uses a qualitative method, drawing on Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach, to examine the meaning informants experience in the realities they face. Data were collected through a observation, interviews, and documentation with 7 Generation Z informants in Surabaya, representing various statuses. The results of the interviews were processed using the N Vivo application to categorize the findings and integrate theoretical concepts with the reality in the field. Thus, this study provides findings that doom spending is a structured social practice and reflects the dynamics of habitus in the digital disposition of today's Generation Z.*

**Keywords:** *habitus, Generation Z, social media, social practices, consumption*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Generation Z is a group born in a digital technology ecosystem that is almost entirely in touch with *modern* patterns. As many as 79.5% of Generation Z are registered internet users, with Instagram and TikTok dominating (Sitompul, Noviani, and Sembiring 2023; later 2024). They engage heavily social media, which helps build and contribute to their identity and sense of existence. Digital space is not only a medium and a means of entertainment, but has begun to shift toward determining the elements of individual identity.

Consumption no longer functions as an element of very important and urgent need, but becomes a way for young people to show their existence, status, and contribution in a



community. So this contributes to the transition to different and very rapid lifestyles. *Doom spending* is a pattern of excessive consumption in shopping, as a response to emotional pressure, future anxiety, and social pressure to fulfill it. Generation Z view a consumption as a means to find control as well as reward, acceptance and confidence in the validation of social circles (Vițelar 2019; NielsenIQ 2024).

This event does not stand alone ; it occurs without cause. There are elements of arena and capital that also support the existence of *doom spending* among the younger generation. Digital has an important role in strengthening patterns that are beginning to change due to the current flow of sophistication. The features offered and the platform's facilities, such as For You Page (FYP), shopping recommendations, and on an advertising, make social media a determining factor in consumer appetite. The presence of influencers then accelerates social cycle's elements that encourage Generation Z to follow the lifestyle they have found. Algorithms are not just objects connected through digital connectivity, but facilities that form new habitus (Li 2024; SproutSocial 2024).

The presence of this phenomenon is leading to shifting priorities. Economic sustainability is no longer the main source of foundation to maintain existence in the world of interaction. However, Generation Z insists that recognition and confidence are embedded mindsets, even though this has the potential to come at the expense of the economic element in the long run. Consumption is a practical capital as an effort to maintain the element of social connectivity, and does not solely come from individual decisions. Previous research then contributed a lot to this research to present an element of novelty in analyzing the cases that occurred. Several previous studies such as those researched by Mutia Cahyani in 2025 in the title *Generation Z and Doom Spending : The Influence of Income, Social Media and Lifestyle in Tegal City* have shown that social media has an important role in shaping doom spending actions, especially through promotional content (Mutia Cahyani, 2025).

In addition, research conducted by Dhiptya Ratri entitled *The Role of Digital Financial Literacy in Mitigating Doom Spending Behavior : A narrative Literature Review* found that financial literacy makes a real contribution to the ability of individuals to manage finances in the digitalization era (Dhiptya, 2025). Research conducted by Vania Fidella in 2025 with the title *Doomscrolling on Gen-Z Twitter and Instagram Social Media Users in*

Indonesia found that social media plays a major role in shaping Generation Z's participation through FoMo (Vania Fidella, 2025). Based on previous research that has been carried out and presented, this research makes a new contribution to the dialectic of phenomena and the development of science. This research not only examines the combination of external factors that shape *doom spending* behavior, but also deepens how these habits are influenced by complex cycles, including mindsets, social media dispositions, and algorithmic interactions in connectivity.

This research aims to further identify how the role of habitus creates a new dilemma in *doom spending* which is equipped with economic, social, and cultural capital positions, the effectiveness of the digital arena which further strengthens the element of consumption disposition in daily life. The usefulness of the research is able to achieve the theoretical elements of sociology and practical reality experienced by Generation Z in the city of Surabaya. Thus, the sustainability of research can be a source of development and the existence of greater collaboration from all circles (Sitompul, Noviani, and Sembiring 2023).

### **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach based on Alfred Schutz's phenomenological perspective, which is formed through the *in order to motive* and the *because to motive* (Daratirta 2024; Arief 2024). This method and approach were chosen to achieve the research objectives, which include finding the meaning of individual consumption experiences and behaviors and their connection to social dispositions formed through digital networks. Therefore, this research does not merely uncover the superficial act of excessive spending, but also delves into the *habitus*, capital, and digital *arena* that play a role in shaping the social practices of Generation Z.

Informant selection utilizes a purposive sampling technique with criteria including active use of social media, experience with both offline and online shopping, and being part of Generation Z in Surabaya City. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews aimed at obtaining the informants' in-depth subjective experiences. In addition to interviews, this research is also complemented by non-participatory observation to supplement the dialectics of the interview data. The analysis of the findings is supported by a coding process enhanced by the N Vivo software to observe various connected pattern elements in the empirical findings,



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 integrated with the key concepts of *habitus*, capital, and *arena*. Data interpretation is not only descriptive narrative but can also contribute new insights into the dynamic phenomenon of Generation Z's consumption practices in the digital era.

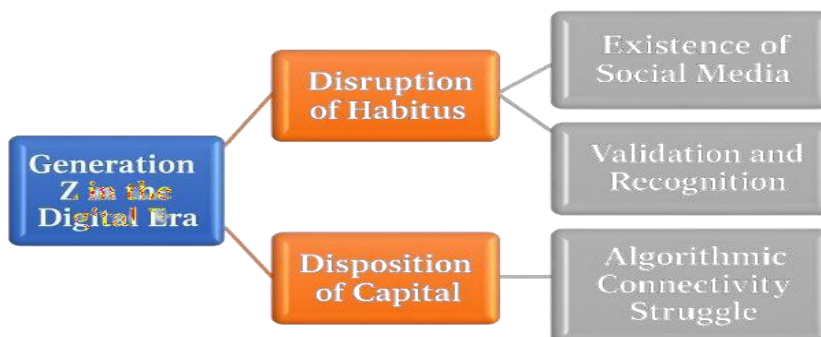


Chart 1. Research Flow

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The findings of the informants in this study consist of different backgrounds, there are resource persons who are studying, working, and *freshgraduate*. The results of interviews that can be used as the main *emmic* data during the field process include the following:

No	Informant Code	Status	Cost Of Connection & Data Emmic Data Processing
1	G-01-MHS	Student (Surabaya residents)	<b>Digital platform:</b> "Usually that's the case from... Influencer. Yes, from the usual reviews From this, social media"
2	P-02-MHS	Student (Surabaya residents)	<b>Digital platforms :</b> "It's just like for example, At night, FYP-FYP make up skincare often appears"
3	S-03-MHS	Student (Surabaya residents)	<b>FoMo:</b> "I'm the son of FOMO, yes Every time there is someone who tells a story about maybe an influencer or a celebrity like that. Spill about good stuff."

4	A-04-PKR	Surabaya Workers	<b>Digital platforms:</b> "Because the first one may be the emergence of many influencers, then the marketplace is easy. Now in the past, the marketplace was only Tokopedia Bukalapak, right, now we open instagram The marketplace is like that, we open TikTok and there is also a marketplace"
5	D-05-PKR	Surabaya Workers	<b>Vent:</b> "Maybe it also more or less influences. Kayak... Feel kayak... I used to be unable to buy it, now I can buy it. Like that. So, the feeling."
6	T-06-PKR	Surabaya Workers	<b>Impulsive buying:</b> "Alone, in the room, strolling tiktok. Eh, suddenly it's too late. A lot of times, yes, it's true, but it's worth it."
7	R-07-FRGD	Fresh Graduate	<b>FoMo:</b> "Initially, from FoMo, it continued to look cool on Social Media"

Based on the table, the research contributes new to the findings based on theories that are used as a basis, including habitus, capital, and domain. These three elements are mutually continuous to create new social practices in the era of Generation Z connectivity.

### 1. A New Habitus in Digital Disposition

Generation Z is an element that grows in the structure of the digital ecosystem, where this shapes and underlies their way of thinking, connecting and exploring the meaning of consumption patterns. The platform no longer acts as an element of entertainment space, but becomes a component that becomes a new place to find elements of identity, values, and self-existence. *Doom spending* is not a phenomenon that exists without a cause, but is an accumulation of learning processes that form elements of the mindset in it. Activities such as scrolling, tiktok live, and trending trends that are aired daily on social media slowly instill and teach the principle that the act of consumption is part of being a normal human being in the present and is accepted in the friendship of the social environment.

*"I can't do it without people, I can't do it. So I always spare money for that. It's already*



Based on the habitus theory initiated by Pierre Bourdieu, disposition is an aspect formed in social experience as well as cultural influences owned by a person. The habitus then works spontaneously and unconsciously, directing the individual to determine the direction of thinking and acting. Generation Z through elements of *online shopping habits* and building social validation through digital media are the results that occur because of the element of internalization of self, values, and social symbols that are received continuously. Their behavior and decisions in the elements of consumption patterns do not only occur alone, but also become elements of new expression through habitus formed through the encounter between experience and the existence of technology.

Social media plays an important role in shaping the digital consumption habitus that occurs. Algorithms and platform devices such as Instagram, TikTok, and other e-markets not only provide information, but also produce tastes and form new lifestyle standards. The circulation displayed such as FYP (*for Your Page*) also contributes to the stability of feelings, that one must follow various novelties that occur to feel relevant and appropriate. Consumption patterns are no longer based on needs, but arise from the presence of an element of social recognition in it. Along with the rapid advancement of technology, interaction with social media makes identity difficult to let go.

*"If you often find funny things on TikTok, I keep thinking, 'I think I need this,' even though I don't need it."* (A-04-PKR, 2025).

Judging from the pattern of Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach, doom spending behavior is then understood through two streams of social action, including *because to motive* and *in order to motive*. The motives that cause Generation Z to shop excessively include the presence of stress, pressure, and anxiety that is squeezing. As an outlet space, consumptive action is a tool to find certainty in the element of uncertainty that is occurring. When they manage to buy something that is trending in their environment, they will feel connected, equal, and recognized in the elements of the circle of friends both in the real world and in the virtual world.

However, despite this, Generation Z still feels regret for their excessive consumptive behavior. They remain trapped in an impulsive circle that keeps them in existence to do so. This arises from the thought in youth that the impulse of desire through social and symbolic aspects is more important than considerations of financial stability. Generation

Z acts reflectively, but the element of choice within them is shaped by the forces of social structures that regulate tastes and lifestyles. Digital consumption habits are the foundation of the doom spending cycle that is dominating generation Z. Shopping is a means of social participation to maintain one's existence in an increasingly competitive digital world.

## 2. Consumption as Capital Accumulation for Generation Z

Nowadays, consumption is no longer meaningful as the fulfillment of functional needs, but becomes part of a social practice that has many meanings in the capital that is formed. Shopping activities are a tool to present one's self, show one's identity and strengthen social position and status in the digital space. Individuals feel the need to display their best self-image to show that a person is succeeding in keeping up with the rhythm that is happening so as not to feel left behind. Thus, they can accept social acceptance with the dominating trends and lifestyles that they have succeeded.

This behavior is also based on the capital that must be owned and mastered by generation Z, including cyclical to social, symbolic, and cultural capital. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's principles, social capital is a network element that is used to obtain elements of social benefit through networks as well as values and norms that are trusted. Symbolic capital is an element of recognition, prestige, and privilege possessed by a person to obtain the honor that the individual then desires. Generation Z then took advantage of this opportunity to acquire capital accumulation which was used as a tool to win the battle in the digitalization arena and modernization flow. The goods or lifestyles they display on social media function to obtain an element of recognition that functions as the existence of the capital they have. *"Ideally, it's when I can still save money, and when I want to buy something I can still achieve without having to think too much. It's just so comfortable, it's just so comfortable."* (R-07-FRGD)

Digital culture then shapes consumption as a tool to shape and create an informative performance stage. Through product purchases, uploads which they display on social media, then create symbolic rituals to clarify their existence in front of many people. Pierre Bourdieu's *concept of distinction* further emphasizes that consumption appetite is part of the existence of certain social group elements in an *up-to-date* and contemporary

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manner. Consumption then reaches a wider range of things, including showing equality in a higher composition.

*Pressure* in the digital arena then strengthens the practice of consumption through social media algorithms. The ideal lifestyle is then formed in a hierarchy where value is determined by access to trends that are considered to have value according to their development. Symbolic capital then plays an important role in this, individuals seek to conform to the aspects of social representation recognized in the rules of the digital network in it. Buying products is not part of the urgency of needs, but because of the aspect of social legitimacy that must be built through a consumptive display.

*"If it's on Instagram, yes, sometimes I feel like I have to look neat, so that people can see that it's okay. Sometimes I also buy new clothes so that when I take pictures, I don't see that."* (G-01-MHS, 2025)

Doom spending *behavior* is understood as part of a symbolic strategy to gain capital, through social existence and recognition and reward to strengthen positions in connectivity participation. Generation Z also unconsciously buys recognition and the continuity of social interaction. Through consumption, they strive to maintain the sustainability of relationships, expand validation, and ensure that they stay connected through the structures that are formed. This phenomenon then opens up opportunities to reach out to how the digital arena functions as a component that frames and formalizes social practices.

### **3. The Digital Arena in Consumptive Dynamics**

The arena in digitalization not only functions as a social space for interaction and exchange of symbols, but also acts as a living environment that forms the daily rhythm of Generation Z. A life that is always connected, then forms time, attention, and self-meaning that are increasingly constructed. Activities such as online shopping, following social media trends, and monitoring the presence of entertainment content elements are no longer just distractions to unwind, but are also related to the lifestyle part of continuous participation.

*"Sometimes when I open TikTok, I see people reviewing good products, yes, I immediately think of buying it. Even though I don't necessarily need it."* (S-03-MHS, 2025)

For the younger generation, stopping to strengthen the flow of connections is the first step to losing their absolute orientation. Consumption in the digital arena is not aimed at sustaining the economy, but to feel always alive and relevant in the midst of the times. Through the digital arena, many social experiences are then created and emerge through fast-paced stimuli. The trends and products that are offered every day then provide the sensation of an increasingly fluctuating rhythm. This condition then brings the need to become a place for disruption, to become the basis for following new symbols that are increasingly emerging, while being based on increasingly squeezed emotional and social impulses.

*"If you often appear at night, FYP-FYP makeup, skincare. At the end of the day, it's just a matter of time before you get used to it, and then you have to do it again."*(P-02- MHS, 2025)

This pattern then also brings a *fast culture* that makes the boundary between needs and desires invisible. The cycle that occurs then forms a temporary logic in every consumption decision a person makes. The shift in the meaning of consumption among Generation Z is increasingly visible and visible, through the interaction space that has now turned into a space to grow their identity. The digital space also plays a role as an ecosystem that produces a lifestyle as well as a tool to maintain social existence in search of meaning in a fast-paced world. *Doom spending* no longer discusses economic practices and the accumulation of habitus and capital, but is part of a life system that must run in the era of connectivity. The digital arena shows the efforts and existence of young people to live in balance in social demands and emotional pressure in a fast-moving world, as well as becoming a new language pattern for generation Z to express their existence in order to remain visible, recognized, and live in the never-ending flow of digitalization. *"I feel like if I don't update I'm missing out. It's not just about the stuff, it's like everyone has something new, and I don't want to look like I'm just following along."* (T-06-PKR)

## CONCLUSION

*Doom spending* among Generation Z is not only as consumptive and impulsive behavior, but as a space to form social practices in habitus, capital accumulation, and the digital arena as supporting media elements. Consumption is no longer about needs, but a



social strategy to gain recognition, maintain connectivity, and find identity in a fast-paced digital world. The digital arena also acts as a system that arranges elements of life rhythm and value orientation for young people. Engagement and enthusiasm in the *platform* space then create pressure to be able to keep up, follow trends, and participate in consumption activities. Thus, consumption not only stands in individual practice but is also oriented in collective action that reflects a new social logic, that existence and connectedness are the most important things above economic rationality. Through this, this research is able to contribute to the development and existence of social theory aspects by finding habitus and interacting arenas to shape the consumptive lifestyle of the younger generation in the era of connectivity.

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