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# The Role of Social Media as a Means of Mass Communication in Influencing the Consumptive Behavior of Padang City Residents

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## ABSTRACT

Social media is now not only a mass communication tool but also a means of massively and rapidly shaping people's consumption patterns. In Padang City, the increase in social media use has triggered significant changes in consumer behavior, particularly among the younger generation. The emerging issues are not only related to impulsive consumption but also to individuals' increasing reliance on social media as a primary reference in determining consumption needs. This phenomenon raises concerns about the blurring of the line between real needs and digitally constructed desires. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, the data in this study were obtained through literature review and interviews with 30 respondents aged 18–40 who actively use social media for at least 2 hours per day. The results indicate that platforms such as Instagram and TikTok play a significant role in influencing purchasing decisions, particularly through promotional content and viral trends. These findings confirm that social media is a crucial actor in shaping urban consumer culture. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy and education on healthy consumption are needed to enable the public to respond wisely to social media exposure.

***Keywords:*** digital consumption, mass communication, social media, consumer behavior

## INTRODUCTION

Mass communication is communication from an individual or group of individuals through a sending device (media) to an audience or market (Sobour, 399: 2016). In practice, mass communication is the dissemination of information through mass media, such as television, radio, newspapers, and internet social media, which are capable of disseminating information widely to the public. Information in the mass communication process is spread simultaneously throughout the radius of the mass media used. The completeness of technical equipment greatly determines the dissemination of information. The development of mass communication in the world of information is slowly influencing the dimensions of human life. These influences and changes apply to cultural values, socio-economic practices, traditions, and forms of belief, as well as belief systems. The digital information era has succeeded in making a series of whispers of information the background of human life. Information slowly and relentlessly floods humans in an invisible rain of electricity.

These influences and changes are inseparable from the results of interactions between people, which ultimately produce new meanings for their lives. These new meanings then determine the formation of new social practices or new forms of interaction. One form of new social interaction today is social interaction in virtual spaces. This form of interaction is facilitated through digital information technology that attracts people to participate en masse. With community participation in virtual spaces, other social interaction tendencies also occur, such as socio-economic interactions that form a digital market (Marlin: 2018). This also occurs in the people of Padang City, who are now increasingly active in interacting on social media and are also part of the digital economic system that encourages trend-based and visual consumption patterns.

The digital marketplace has revolutionized the way people shop and interact with products and services. Ease of access and widespread reach have driven rapid growth in the digital economy, but have also fueled increased consumer behavior. Aggressive digital marketing strategies, personalized advertising, and the influence of social media have created an environment that encourages impulse buying and overconsumption. In the context of sustainable mass communication, uncontrolled consumer behavior poses serious challenges. Natural resources are depleted, waste increases, and environmental impacts worsen. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of the digital market and its impact on consumer behavior is crucial for building sustainable mass communication. This paper also highlights that a similar phenomenon is occurring in Padang City, where the public, especially the younger generation, exhibits consumer tendencies due to high exposure to digital content.

The existence of this societal condition is essentially the same as what Lyotard described as a postmodern society. Postmodern society is characterized by technological transformations that have a significant impact on knowledge. The miniaturization and commercialization of machines have changed the way knowledge is acquired, classified, created, and exploited. This process ultimately forms a shared myth, believed to be a shared truth. This belief supports the existence of mythic disguises. The truth of myths is no longer questioned but is based on the intensity and response of society in experiencing and using these myths. Truth is veiled within the language of myths, thus obscuring society's surface reality.

This paper discusses the existence of virtual societies using Lyotard's perspective to present forms of change in the postmodern era. Postmodernism presents a society overflowing with diverse truths; truth is no longer homology but paralogy. On the other hand, language games contribute to the reality of these truths, making the state of postmodern society increasingly complex. These forms of truth and language games, in turn, support the formation of myth production in virtual spaces and their impact on consumer behavior..

## METHODS

This research is a qualitative study with a descriptive approach. The aim is to describe and understand how social media plays a role as a means of mass communication in influencing consumer behavior in Padang City. The research was conducted in Padang City, West Sumatra.

**Research Subjects**

The subjects in this study were residents of Padang City who actively use social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter, especially those in the productive age range.

**Informant Selection Techniques**

The informant selection technique was carried out using purposive sampling, with the following criteria:

- Aged between 18-40 years old
- Residing in Padang City
- Actively using social media for at least 2 hours per day

A total of 30 informants were selected to gather information relevant to the research focus.

**Data Collection Technique**

Data is collected through:

1. In-depth interviews: Conducted with informants who meet the research criteria to explore their perspectives, experiences, and consumption habits as influenced by social media.
2. Literature review: Reviewing various literature, journals, articles, and books related to mass communication, social media, and consumer behavior.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

The data was analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach, namely by reducing the data, presenting it in narrative form, and drawing conclusions based on patterns and trends that emerged from the results of interviews and literature studies..

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social media has become an integral part of the daily lives of Padang residents, especially among those aged 18 to 40. Interviews show that most informants access social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok regularly every day, with a relatively high usage duration of more than three hours. These platforms are not only a medium for entertainment, but have also shifted their function to become a center for information and lifestyle references, including regarding the consumption of goods and services. One informant stated, "I open TikTok almost every night before bed, sometimes not with the intention of looking for something, but just scrolling through and finding cute items that make me want to buy it." This statement shows that consumptive decisions often arise unplanned, as a result of constant exposure to content designed to appeal to emotional attention.

Most informants admitted to having purchased a product after seeing a sponsored advertisement, viral content, or a review from their favorite influencer. Interestingly, these purchasing decisions weren't always based on actual needs, but rather were influenced by the perception that the product was popular or recommended by someone they trusted on social media. One informant revealed, "I once bought a cookware just because I saw a woman on Instagram using it and said it was good. When I bought it, I didn't really use it, but because I was already interested, I

ended up buying it." This shows that social media not only conveys information but also shapes preferences and strong emotional drives towards certain products. Consumption becomes an action driven by lifestyle and visual representations that are collectively formed in the digital space.

This tendency is further reinforced by social pressure and the need for acceptance within virtual friendship circles. Several informants admitted that they felt "out of touch" or "out of touch" if they didn't follow current trends on social media. One respondent said, "When a trendy drink product went viral, all my friends tried it. I wasn't interested at first, but after a while, I felt weird if I didn't buy it and post about it too." This statement demonstrates how social media shapes new social norms based on consumption. Not only the product itself, but also the experience of buying and sharing it on social media has become part of this new consumption pattern. This aligns with the notion that consumption is no longer just about goods, but also about image, feelings of acceptance, and identity formation in the digital social space.

In the context of Padang City society, this becomes even more relevant given the large number of active young social media users who are also connected to an urban and modern lifestyle. The need for social presence, connection, and recognition from virtual environments are driving factors in consumer behavior. Exposure to visually rich content, creative promotions, and digital celebrity testimonials has created a situation where the line between wants and needs has become blurred. People no longer buy based on function, but rather on the image and symbolism attached to the product. "Sometimes I buy a bag or shirt because it looks cool in someone else's post, even though I already have a similar one. But this one just seems more popular," one informant candidly admitted.

From the perspective of Jean-François Lyotard's theory of postmodern society, this condition demonstrates how society lives within a construct of meaning shaped by petite narratives, where truth and necessity are not absolute. In the digital space, truth is constructed through the repetition of symbols, compelling visualizations, and collective emotions that emerge from user interactions. Certain products become "needs" because they are widely discussed, not because of their function. Information is no longer judged solely on accuracy, but on the intensity of exposure and the emotional response it generates. In Padang City, this phenomenon is reflected in how social media has become a primary source for determining consumption trends, even displacing the role of family or the immediate environment as consumption references.

The impact has led to irrational, even wasteful, consumption patterns. Several informants admitted to regretting purchasing products they ultimately didn't use or only bought out of a momentary temptation. "After buying and getting home, I sometimes think, 'Why did I buy this? But it looked so good on TikTok?'" said one respondent. This demonstrates the urgent need to increase critical awareness and the ability to sort information when using social media. Without adequate digital literacy, people will be increasingly susceptible to manipulative content, even if it's packaged creatively and attractively. Overall, these results and discussion demonstrate that social media is not only a means of mass communication, but also a social actor influencing the formation of Padang City's consumer culture. Consumption is now symbolic, shaped by visual narratives that are shared widely and rapidly. Therefore, the challenge ahead is how to build a society that is not only technologically literate but also aware of healthy and sustainable consumption patterns..

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that social media plays a significant role as a means of mass communication in shaping and influencing the consumer behavior of the people of Padang City. The high intensity of social media use, particularly

among the 18-40 age group, has created new consumption patterns that are impulsive, emotional, and heavily influenced by visual trends and narratives created in the digital space. Purchasing decisions are no longer based purely on functional needs, but rather on the urge to follow lifestyles, build self-image, and gain social recognition in the virtual environment.

Social media not only conveys information but also acts as an agent for shaping consumer values and perceptions through visually appealing content, influencer endorsements, and algorithms that amplify product exposure. This makes society, including in Padang City, increasingly vulnerable to excessive consumption driven by social pressures and symbolic constructs shaped by the media. The reality of needs becomes blurred and shifts toward desires that are socially constructed through social media.

In the context of postmodern society, this condition demonstrates that consumption has become part of a game of language and symbols that influence social reality. Therefore, it is crucial for the public to have critical awareness and adequate digital literacy to respond more wisely to the flow of information and promotions. Strengthening education on healthy and responsible consumption needs to be carried out continuously, both by the government, educational institutions, and community groups, to shape consumption patterns that are not only economically intelligent but also ethical and sustainable.

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