

# Consumerism Culture and Its Impact on Social Identity in Urban Areas: Study in Makassar City

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## Abstract

This is a cross sectional qualitative research design aimed at establishing the effects of consumerism culture on social identity in urban Makassar, Indonesia. Through examining how the effects of class, brand allegiance and societal demands interact, this research explains the internal and external factors defining people's experience within a culture of consumption. These findings were generated from semi-structured interviews with the target consumers and it was established that consumer consumption is a form of identity and conquest. The implications of the study reveal that consumers from the lower end of the SES are insignificant in the consumer society and are burdened with the expectations of the consumer, which they cannot afford. Furthermore, brand allegiance emerges as a component of identity construct, as established by the participants' references to the impact of luxury brands in indicating status. These pressures are further compounded by the use of social media resulting in the creation of unachievable standards that lead to increased insecurities. Last but not the least, this research raises concern over other consequences of consumer culture related to emotions and psychological impact on the self and social identity. The knowledge obtained from this research not only expands the body of knowledge but also reveals the need for considering secondary increased consumer culture effects on society in urban contexts.

**Keywords:** Consumerism, Social Identity, Socioeconomic Disparities, Brand Loyalty, Social Pressures

## 1. Introduction

Population has flocked towards urban centers as these cultures, society and economy are turning into consumerist ones. More especially, with the expansion and development of cities as agents of a consumer culture, they are incorporated into the social fabric, economy and identity system within the cities. Globalization has encouraged the growth of consumer markets, ubiquity of branded products, and raised the relevance of the ownership of resources where the use of resources reflects people's identity and status. This paper aims at knowing the effects of Consumerism culture in social identity in urban areas by learning consumption-related activities and their Relation To Self And Social Self- Images.

This Idea Of (Consumerism, in the broadest definitional vein that might qualify as such) as the pursuit and promotion of acquisition of goods and services is a subject of study in sociology, economics and cultural studies. Since cities became synonymous with business productivity and creation of artistic works, the places also developed perks of consumerism. In urban settings, the

act of shopping is not about acquiring goods, but about service, belonging and class. People rely on certain objects to advertise their status and distance themselves from others, a trend that has been noted in cross-cultural studies of world cities (Turkle, 2023). Essentially, consumption is defined as a semiotic process where people use objects to convey information about them and their roles in society.

This study finds that consumerism is closely correlated with social identity, even though the correlation is more powerful in urban environment due to the accumulation of social capital and differentiation of classes. As Zukin rightly mentions, cities are a locus of the dramatic stage of economic division and cultural consumption is intimately tied to status. In cities, which are usually associated with social mobility, the work and material values can be seen as more important as in other regions. Distorted by advertisements, and hovering over a vast variety of significant consumer goods and services, urban dwellers are inculcated with the consumerist paradigm of success defined by possession of specific brands, lifestyles, and experiences (Fennis & Stroebe, 2020). This culture is supported by the media, the social networks and the pressure that peers exert on the members of society so as to build identity through consumption.

An element that is significant in consumerism and is associated with the consumption of branded goods in populated territories is the function of brands as-signifiers of social status. One of the convenient results of globalization is a high variety of MNCs and brands that define the consumer environment in cities. Of these brands, which connote luxury, status and the modernist ideals, one cannot understate their importance in the position of identity in society. Research evidence have established that people tend to link a number of brands with given classes in society and make efforts to own products from such brands to be accepted as belonging to that class (Raimondo et al., 2022). In this case, consumerism turns into a form of identity construction since a consumption of branded commodities is a means by which people can narrate their values, desires, and social class.

Another aspect of consumerism and social identity as far as urbanized societies are concerned is the concept of conspicuous waste, made famous by Veblen in his book: 'The theory of the leisure class' (Atkin et al., 2021). Conspicuous consumption may be defined as the purchase and use of products primarily to showcase one's financial might rather than the utility that comes with the products. In urban settings, people are concerned about their rank and status, competition is high, and the income gap is well defined, intentional consumption patterns are apparent. Ramakrishnan et al. (2020) have noted in the past that urban dwellers have adopted conspicuous consumption to secure social status and mileage between them and the poor. This behavior is shown mostly in areas where social contacts are blame and shows affects people's status in the society.

In other words, it becomes clear that consumerism affects the perception of social identity in urban environments regardless of the status of the inhabitant. Indeed, consumerism impacts all classes of people, though differently. Berger (2020) argues that while the values of consumer culture are appealing to everyone, they are particularly alluring to lower income people because they upsuck lower income people into consumer culture, where people will spend beyond their means in an effort to appear to be successful. This fact is as evidenced by this so-called 'keeping up with the Joneses' where consumerism fixes the social identity of people including those who are unable to afford the culture (Kent et al., 2022). In such instances, consumerism reinforces social injustices as everyone is given a social, even though often economic, role to play in consuming despite their precarious status.

The urban environment is also useful to consider due to its diverse and cultural density, because

it makes consumerism and its connection to the concept of identity even more fascinating. This is especially due to the fact that cities have had a multicultural, multiethnic and multishop society where consumers have culturally and socially different purchasing behaviors. Consumption becomes a process through which multicultural individuals may position themselves within multicultural urban contexts. According to Mohamed (2022), in the context of the modern postindustrial post-postmodern cities, identities are postmodern or rather they are in the process of becoming, and the main theatre of this becoming is consumption. For instance, ethnic markets in Ghana end up using consumer goods to affirm ethnic identity or to become mainstream depending on what standing and situation they want to portray.

## 2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how consumerism culture influences social identity in urban areas. The qualitative approach was chosen to allow for an in-depth examination of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors related to consumption and social identity. Through the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, this study sought to uncover the nuanced ways in which individuals in urban settings interpret and construct their identities through consumer practices.

The study was conducted in an urban area characterized by a high level of consumer activity and diversity in social classes. The target population included residents from various social strata to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how consumerism affects social identity across different income levels and backgrounds. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants who demonstrated varying degrees of consumer behavior and social identity expression, ensuring that a broad spectrum of experiences was captured. In total, 20 participants were interviewed, representing a range of age groups, occupations, and socio-economic statuses.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to allow participants the flexibility to express their views and experiences while ensuring that the conversations remained focused on the research objectives. The interview guide included open-ended questions that explored participants' perceptions of consumer culture, their motivations for engaging in particular consumption practices, and how they believe these practices relate to their sense of identity. Interviews were conducted in person and lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

In addition to interviews, field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues, behaviors, and contextual details that contributed to a deeper understanding of participants' responses. These observations provided further insight into the social dynamics and consumer environments that influenced participants' views on consumerism and identity.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the interview data. The process began with an initial reading of the interview transcripts and field notes to familiarize the researcher with the data. During this phase, the researcher noted preliminary patterns and key concepts related to consumer behavior and social identity.

Next, the data were coded manually by categorizing relevant sections of text that pertained to the research objectives. Each code represented a specific idea or experience related to consumerism and social identity, such as "status symbol," "brand loyalty," or "social comparison." Once coding was complete, the codes were grouped into broader themes that encapsulated the central ideas emerging from the data.

Themes such as "consumerism as a marker of social status," "brand loyalty as identity expression," and "social pressures to consume" were developed through this iterative process. The themes were refined by continuously reviewing the data to ensure that they accurately represented participants' experiences and addressed the research questions. Throughout the analysis, attention was paid to how these themes varied across different social classes and demographic groups, providing a nuanced understanding of the role consumerism plays in social identity construction.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, several strategies were employed. Triangulation was used by comparing the interview data with field notes and relevant literature to ensure consistency and depth in the interpretation of the findings. Additionally, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary results with a subset of participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback or clarify any points raised during the interviews.

Furthermore, reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process to acknowledge and mitigate potential biases. The researcher kept a reflective journal to document personal assumptions, biases, and reactions to the data, ensuring that these did not unduly influence the analysis.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

The consumerism has further emerged as a vital sociopolitical factor that defines identity among individuals living in urban centers especially the growing cities of Makassar. When availability of goods and services are facing the advancement through economic growth and the globalization process and consumption is not only considered as the imperative of needs but it is involved with status, identity, and affiliation factors. City consumers are in a matrix of social stratification where fashion, IT and all types of consumer electronics signify status in social identities. In Makassar, this dynamic becomes particularly well-expressed as consumers from various socioeconomic backgrounds navigate the process using consumption to display their status and staking out their positions or conforming to and/or subverting societal expectations. In particular, the city's middle class is gradually becoming the driving force of consumerism as a means of achieving success, and the working class is experiencing other similarly strong pressures. This paper aims at establishing how these consumption patterns in Makassar iconize and reproduce social existence and existence.

#### **Consumerism as a Marker of Social Status**

In urban areas, consumption seldom goes unnoticed as it is a sign of status, and Makassar is a young city that in the process of expansion. The acquisition and use of consumer items in the city certainly has utility dimensions but are also strongly status oriented, status signifying inclusive of adverts of success and membership to certain groups. I believe that one relevant theory for this phenomenon is the "conspicuous consumption" by Thorstein Veblen that reveals how people buy luxury items to let others know how powerful and successful. Previously, a process of *klashifikaysia* occurred where products such as the newest model smartphones, fashionable clothes, and luxury cars became important signs of one's status in the social structure in Makassar today.

In the case of Makassar, there is nothing more emblematic of the way people set the stage to declare and assert their class status than conspicuous consumption. Middle to upper income groups especially use consumer products in an attempt at trying to create a social distance with

the rest of the population groups. The concept of conspicuous consumption developed points to such materials as being the intended products bought for their use value in the social status struggle, which makes them tools per excellence. For instance, acquiring an expensive automobile, branded costumes or using sophisticated gadgets are cultural behaviors by which people express their status within higher social classes, even if this entails borrowing or extending themselves.

Interviews with Makassar residents revealed that for many, consumption is not just about personal satisfaction but also about maintaining or enhancing their social standing. One interviewee, a young professional, emphasized the societal pressures to consume:

*"In Makassar, people judge you based on what you wear and what you own. If you have the latest smartphone or wear branded clothes, they see you as successful. It's almost like you need these things to prove yourself."*

This quote reflects how deeply consumerism is tied to social identity in the city. The purchase of branded clothes or the latest technology is perceived as a means of signaling success and gaining acceptance in social settings. Without these markers, individuals may feel out of place or inadequate in the eyes of their peers, further reinforcing the importance of consumption as a marker of social distinction.

In Makassar, the pressure to engage in conspicuous consumption extends across various social strata, but it is most pronounced among the middle class, who often feel compelled to project an image of success. The desire to own certain products is not purely based on personal preference but is shaped by societal expectations. This creates a dynamic where consumption is driven by the need to conform to social norms rather than individual desires. As a result, many individuals prioritize buying status-signifying goods, even when it imposes financial strain. One respondent, a businesswoman in her early 40s, shared her experiences of navigating these pressures:

*"It's not just about buying things you like; it's about showing others that you can afford these things. In my social circle, having a luxury car or wearing designer clothes is expected. If you don't, people start to question your status."*

Thus this statement reveals the social pressures that drive conspicuous consumption in Makassar. Conspicuous consumption is a culture embraced by many people especially those in the higher income earning category due to status of these possessions results in social stigma or the feeling one has lost position, and this makes many people spend a dime on items they need not afford just to keep up with the trend.

The sampling study reveals that social groups become influential in re-establishing consumerist behavior among Makassar. that consumption is not only a matter of economic capital, but also of cultural capital; what and how one consumes is a sign of one's position in relation to concrete and abstract others hence defining the social and cultural systems in which the consumer operates. This is especially apparent in Makassar because people choose their noble and distinctive status related to luxury items that will let them fit into their respective groups and rank above rest. The businesswoman's remark about the expectations of her social circle:

*"having a luxury car or wearing designer clothes is expected"*

highlights how consumption works as a social responsibility. This develops a sort of 'status anxiety' which makes people to feel that they should keep in the trend, to keep buying expensive

items. Should one fail to do so such a person may be expelled or they may be deemed to be of a lower status in the society. Hence, consumption in Makassar goes beyond the decisions that people make in the context of their social roles and responsibilities and within the flow of day-to-day life.

Consumerism in Makassar is also ideological, and an emphasis on some form of upward social mobility is implied. To many other people owning some of these high status products is not only about status preservation, but also status enhancement. This is especially important to consider in the context of rapidly growing megapolises such as Makassar where fast tempo economically development leads to improvement of the access to and consumption of the luxury goods among the growing middle class. Consequently, conspicuous consumption ability provides an evidence of an individual's advancement in the social status line. The young professional interviewed alluded to this by noting that the latest consumer goods serve as proof of success:

*"If you have the latest smartphone or wear branded clothes, they see you as successful."*

Here, consumption is portrayed as a key element of social advancement. In this context, consumer goods are not just objects of personal satisfaction but symbols of one's ability to achieve and maintain upward mobility. This dynamic is particularly strong in an urban setting like Makassar, where economic disparities are evident, and consumerism offers a way to bridge or highlight these gaps.

### **Social Pressures and Identity Negotiation**

In Makassar there exists more than the consumer choice that many have postulated but consumerism is a mechanism for identity creation. Such tendencies reflect the fact that people have to consume to uphold a particular image, which is further ingrained in the society due to various roles that are required of an individual within society. To many a person, particularly those living in big cities, there are specific expectations about consumer identity which cannot easily be reconciled with one's own principles. This negotiation is usually informed by the social pressure that comes with either rejection by society or the lowering of one's social standing because of not meeting the current consumer standards.

The pressure to consume, as defined in the Makassar context, causes the people to make consumption decisions that reflect the social roles they would like to play instead of the ones they would like to have. For instance, status-status means that many middle income earners feel it is mandatory to own things like branded arrogances, expensive cell phones or trendiness handbags, shoes etc. These consumer goods have a sort of status marker which, if not met, can denote one is a failure or not well off within one's circle. As one young professional explained:

*"You have to keep up with what people around you are buying. If your friends or colleagues have the latest iPhone, you feel like you need to get one too, otherwise you'll be seen as someone who can't keep up."*

This statement raises the awareness of consumers' influence on people's choices and personal development in Makassar. Obsession with new items even though one has no financial capacity to afford the items is usually as a result of the 'fear of being rejected by friends and peers'. To most people consumer goods are not simply mere tangible items but rather some of the most important aspects of their status symbols. Lack of such keeps people feeling inadequate or isolated from social groups and thus are constantly weighing the need to conform to consumer culture and their financial reality.

Making consumerism a mechanism through which identity is negotiated everyday is one way of living in Makassar because status comes with property ownership. Consumerism in this regard is a struggle that people embark on, to get the look that they want so as to create a particular social image. Sometimes, people purchase status goods in order to be in compliance with expectations of a certain subculture to which they belong. For instance, those people in middle class will have to buy the status symbols from the upper class as part of their stratification mobility. Another interviewee, a university student, shared their experience of using consumer goods to craft a social identity:

*"I bought a designer bag because everyone in my friend group had one. It wasn't that I needed it, but I felt like without it, I didn't belong. It's almost like having these things makes you part of the group."*

This quote shows how consumer products serve as a boundary and means for inclusion into social realms. What the university student was doing when deciding to spend his money on a designer bag was not a decision based on his needs, but in trying to conform to a certain group he wants to be associated with. This opens understanding of consumerism as the process of identity construction during which it becomes mandatory to own those particular objects that are recognized within a given culture and a given social group as being superior.

This study also found that Makassar citizens are subjected to increased social pressure to consume, and social media is particularly instrumental in diffusing these expectations. The question here is Hasn't Instagram, Facebook and TikTok become places where, yes, people don't only demonstrate what they consume, but also where they come with their worth? The exposure of luxury products and services on the internet means that people get the feeling that they must also copy what others are doing when it comes to buying luxuries. Social media therefore becomes a definite reflection of societal expectations, and with constantly seeing others consume high status goods, the pressure builds. One interviewee, a marketing executive, explained how social media impacts their consumption decisions:

*"You see your friends on Instagram with new clothes, new cars, and you feel the need to get the same things, or at least something similar. If you don't, you feel left out, like you're not doing as well as they are."*

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*"I'm always worried about what people think of me based on what I wear or what car I drive. Sometimes, I spend more than I can afford just to make sure I don't look like I'm falling behind."*

This statement highlights the emotional burden of negotiating one's identity through consumer goods. The constant pressure to conform to societal expectations can lead to anxiety and financial stress, as individuals strive to project an image of success and affluence. The respondent's experience reflects the broader societal dynamic in Makassar, where social identity is closely tied to material possessions, and the fear of falling behind socially drives consumer behavior.

### **Brand Loyalty as Identity Expression**

Developing a brand loyalty in Makassar is not mere preference for a brand; rather it is an important aspect of personal as well as social identity. Consumers do not affiliate themselves with the totality of a brand but for what the brand stands for, what it portrays, and the subcultures it supports. But in a city where one's social character is linked with consumption patterns, the selection of brands is also an important factor of how people define themselves. The above is a perfect IFE whereby a strong bond between brand loyalty and identity is seen within the urban populations in as much as conspicuous of some brands serves as an acceptable status symbol.

Peculiarities of decision making in Makassar mean that consumers often have specific emotional attitudes towards definite brands. Interlinkages are earned through the lens of individuals' sensitivity, ethnicity, and a synthetic connotation of identity that a brand represents. In this regard, many think that brand selection is an ability to select a mode of life as well as a number of values associated with the desired personality. It creates a sense of attachment that extends to the consumers' loyalty level, where they will continue using a particular brand irrespective of other cheaper brands within the market or other prevailing market trends. One interviewee, a young entrepreneur, elaborated on this connection:

*"I've been loyal to this particular clothing brand for years. It's not just about the clothes; it represents who I am. Every time I wear it, I feel confident and connected to a community that shares similar values."*

By using this quote, it is fully understood how branding can affect consumers' self-identity to the point of using it as their symbol. The youth's loyalty to the clothing brand is anchored on personal identity that reflects how brands are cultures and social institutions of consumption. To such entrepreneurs being a customer is not just about the transaction but it is a sense of being, an identity that they choose to belong to.

Choice of certain brands is also known to create some form of affiliated networks especially with people in similar position in life in cities such as Makassar. Consumers tend to follow brands that are in line with their personal beliefs and way of life; there tend to be, therefore, social networks of like-minded consumers. This creates a sense of belonging that will make people stick to a brand, because they are part of a story that is appealing to them. There is more to the process than consumer Markets promoting the particular brands of which they form a part and identifying themselves as part of a special social group or way of life. A university student shared their experience:

*"When I wear my favorite sneaker brand, I instantly connect with others who are also fans. It's like we have this unspoken bond. We share similar tastes and experiences, and it makes me feel part of something bigger."*



This statement underscores the communal aspect of brand loyalty in Makassar. The student's choice of footwear becomes a means of connecting with others, fostering a sense of belonging among those who share similar brand preferences. This communal identity reinforces their loyalty to the brand and highlights how consumer choices can create social networks based on shared interests and values.

In a society where status is often linked to consumption, the image of a brand can significantly impact an individual's social standing. In Makassar, premium brands are associated with success, sophistication, and upward mobility. As a result, consumers may exhibit brand loyalty as a means to project their social status and enhance their identity. By aligning themselves with well-regarded brands, individuals not only express their personal tastes but also navigate the social hierarchy present within their communities. An interviewee working in the fashion industry remarked:

*"People often think that wearing high-end brands makes them look successful. It's not just about liking the product; it's about what it says about them to others."*

This quote highlights the dual role of brands in social identity formation. By choosing to remain loyal to high-status brands, individuals signal their social aspirations and reinforce their position within a specific social group. The fashion industry professional's observation reveals how brand loyalty can serve as a tool for individuals to craft their public personas and navigate social expectations.

While brand loyalty can be a source of identity and community, it can also pose challenges for consumers in Makassar. The pressure to maintain brand loyalty can lead individuals to prioritize

consumption over financial well-being. Many consumers feel obligated to keep up with new releases and trends, which can result in overspending and financial strain. This dynamic reflects a broader societal expectation that links personal identity and worth to the brands one consumes. A respondent, a recent graduate, expressed the challenges faced by brand loyalists:

*"I love my favorite brand, but sometimes I feel like I'm spending too much just to keep up. It's hard when everyone expects you to have the latest styles, and I don't want to be left out."*

This quote captures the tension between brand loyalty and personal finances. The graduate's experience illustrates the pressures of consumerism, where maintaining loyalty to a brand can conflict with practical financial considerations. Such challenges highlight the need for individuals to navigate the complexities of brand loyalty as a means of expressing their identity while managing the associated pressures.

### **Socioeconomic Disparities in Consumerism**

Socioeconomic disparities also influence consumer preferences and aspirations. For those with limited financial resources, the focus often shifts from brand loyalty to necessity and value for money. Lower-income consumers may prioritize functional purchases over luxury items, seeking out the most affordable options to meet their basic needs. In contrast, wealthier consumers have the luxury of making purchases based on personal preferences, brand prestige, and lifestyle aspirations. A young professional from a middle-class background expressed their observations:

*"People in my circle buy things because they want to show off their wealth or style. But*

*for others, it's about getting by. Sometimes, I feel guilty for wanting to buy expensive items when I know others can't even afford the basics."*

This quote sums up the duality of desire and the practical life within consumer culture. As middle middle class, consumers do not deny that they have the ability to spend on luxury products yet they feel guilty when using such products fully knowing that other low income earners have nothing to use during festivals. The dynamic highlighted here represents other social correlate of consumerism: the intersection of purchasing behavior with social status and social roles, self-identifications.

The use of social media and marketing extends the social and economic differentiation of consumerism. This is evident in any city like Makassar whereby advertising and social media ensures that the society aspires to own high-status brands some of which they cannot afford. This constant bombardment can help create desire among consumers cutting across all classes; however, the obtainment of these desires depends on consumer wallet strength. An interviewee, a marketing student, commented on the impact of social media:

*"Social media is full of influencers flaunting luxury brands, which makes everyone want those items. But it's frustrating because not everyone can afford them. It creates a gap where some people feel pressured to buy things that are out of reach."*

This observation highlights how social media marketing perpetuates a culture of consumerism that can be exclusionary. The aspirational lifestyle portrayed by influencers can lead to increased pressure on individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to conform to consumer trends that they cannot afford, further widening the gap between different social classes.

The disparities in consumerism based on socioeconomic status also have profound effects on social identity and perception. Individuals from lower-income backgrounds may struggle with feelings of inadequacy or inferiority when comparing themselves to their wealthier peers. The societal emphasis on material possessions as indicators of success can lead to a negative self-image for those who cannot participate in the same level of consumption, reinforcing societal stereotypes about class and worth. A respondent working in social services shared their insights:

*"I see so many young people feeling depressed because they think they're not successful enough if they can't buy the things their friends have. It creates a cycle of negativity around money and identity."*

This quote illustrates the emotional and psychological ramifications of consumerism, particularly for those affected by socioeconomic disparities. The pressure to align one's identity with material possessions can lead to mental health challenges, impacting overall well-being and community cohesion.

When considering the impact of socio-economic differentials on consumptive behaviors in Makassar, one realizes that status plays a critical role in determining who is able resources to enable him her assume a certain identity. The research evidence shows that people from the lower class are in a way excluded within consumer culture. This marginalization takes form of a feeling of incompetence, especially within the frameworks of consumer practices that are accepted and appreciated in the given references within a given society by certain subgroups. Boltanski & Esquerre (2020). argues that socioeconomic status determines people's opportunity to consume particular commodities and the extent to which their consumption choices are viewed as legitimate. Such contrast contributes to forming a social hierarchy: owners of high- priced

consumer goods are considered to be success and socially superior, increasing the division between the classes.

The social implications of these differences are emotional. As indicated by the participants there is pressure to be consumers in ways that most of the time are beyond the financial capacity of one. For instance, one of the respondents said, 'I notice my friends flaunting their designer items and I feel bad that I can't afford that kind of life'. Some reasons for shopping at thrift stores are because that is all that can be afforded, but that appears to exclude them from the group. This accords with Bagozzi et al. (2020) who posit that materialism and consumer culture result in negative self-conceptions most especially among people who are marginalised consumer culture. This mental load of not being able to compete with peers in terms of consumption results in feelings of isolation and resentment the affects one's self-esteem and social relations.

The study also find out that brand loyalty is also the major way through which consumers in Makassar can express their identities. There was top acknowledgment on how participants had aligned their personal brand preferences with their identity and the overall social status. This phenomenon supports the work of Bagozzi et al. (2020) who argue that brands operate as a form of self-branding that deploys consumers to the social scenes to display. It was observed that for many respondents stemming brand loyalty was the ability to convey message of status and group belonging.

But this association between the brand loyalty and identity is rather paradoxical. Although brand attachment helps people to assert their personal identities, there is a downside as it also perpetuates people's class differences. participants observed that the wealthy only chooses expensive brands associated with the success, power and status and those of less standard only copy the actions of the first group even if it is financially unprofitable. This is what one of the interviewees said: I wish that I could just go and purchase the same brands as my friends. Now and then, you may purchase copies that are imitation just to conform to this culture, but you feel like you are not being genuine. This view is simultaneous with the argument made by Hampson et al. (2021) that while consumer choices can be protective of the self, they can also mark status. The social expectations and thus pressure to stick to brands forces the consumption and experiment paradox where consumers embrace their freedom and restraint at the same time.

The impact of social media on consumer behavior in Makassar highlights the significant role of social pressures in identity negotiation. Participants noted that exposure to social media influencers and marketing campaigns creates a constant stream of ideals that shape consumer expectations and desires. This observation resonates with Jaikumar & Sharma (2021) concept of "conspicuous consumption," wherein individuals engage in consumption practices as a means to signal status and identity. However, the study extends Veblen's insights by illustrating how social media amplifies these pressures, particularly among younger consumers who are highly susceptible to the influence of online portrayals of wealth and success.

The psychological ramifications of these social pressures are critical to understanding how identity is negotiated in contemporary consumer culture. Many participants expressed feelings of anxiety and inadequacy when they were unable to meet the consumer ideals perpetuated by social media. As one interviewee articulated, "I feel like I have to keep up with the latest trends on Instagram, but it's exhausting because I can't always afford it." This sentiment underscores.

Research by Odgers et al. (2020), which documents the mental health implications of social comparison in the digital age. The constant exposure to curated lifestyles can lead to a distorted

self-image, prompting individuals to engage in consumption behaviors that are misaligned with their actual financial circumstances. The findings suggest that social media not only influences consumer behavior but also profoundly impacts self-perception and social identity, indicating a need for greater awareness and critical engagement with digital consumption practices.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper thus offers a complex account of the relations between social consumerism and social identity within Makassar to show how consumers' economic strata, brand preference, and social expectations influence consumership and consequently their identities. Thus, it is ascertained, that along with the positive effect of self-identification of a subject, consumerism operates as a structure that perpetuates established social power relations and generates feelings of inferiority in consumers who cannot afford to consume according to modern patterns. By shedding light on these dynamics, this research fills significant gaps in the existing literature and highlights the importance of raising public awareness of consumer psychology and the influx of the culture in the contemporary society and especially as it moves to the digital era. Thus, studies are required in the future during the further development of urban areas in order to determine the actual influence on the social processes and formation of the subject, including interaction.

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