

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON FLEXING CULTURE PHENOMENON IN INDONESIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of the emergence of a flexing culture in people's behavior on social media. Flexing is the behavior of showing off property or wealth on social media with the aim of getting recognition from others. Launching from the website of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia which states that the population of Crazy Rich or Sultan in Indonesia in 2020 was recorded at 1,390 people. This number increased by 1 percent during the 2021 pandemic to 1,403 people. This research includes qualitative research with literature review and observation methods that can produce data in the form of descriptive analysis. The object of this research is several social media accounts such as Instagram, from several celebrity accounts, influencers, and people who have a large number of followers on their social media accounts. Flexing has positive and negative impact for society or for the perpetrators. Consumer behavior increases because of this flexing culture. Reality and fantasy become fused because of the behavior of people who like to show off their lives on social media, as a virtual world. There are 2 types of flexing, namely genuine and fake flexing.

Keywords: Flexing, consumer behavior, social media.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh munculnya budaya flexing dalam tingkah laku masyarakat di media social. Flexing adalah perilaku memamerkan harta atau kekayaan di media social dengan tujuan mendapat pengakuan dari orang lain. Melansir dari website kementerian keuangan republic Indonesia yang menyebutkan bahwa populasi crazy rich atau sultan di Indonesia pada tahun 2020 tercatat sebanyak 1.390 orang. Jumlah ini meningkat sebesar 1 persen selama pandemi tahun 2021 menjadi sebanyak 1.403 orang. Penelitian ini termasuk penelitian kualitatif dengan metode kajian pustaka dan pengamatan yang dapat menghasilkan data berupa analisa deskripsi. Objek penelitian ini adalah beberapa akun media sosial seperti instagram, dari beberapa akun selebritas, influencer, dan orang-orang yang memiliki jumlah pengikut yang banyak di akun social media mereka. Flexing memiliki dampak negatif dan positif bagi masyarakat maupun pelakunya. Consumer behaviour meningkat karena adanya budaya flexing ini. Kenyataan dan khayalan menjadi melebur karena perilaku masyarakat yang gemar memamerkan kehidupan mereka di sosial media, sebagai dunia virtual. Ada 2 tipe flexing, yaitu flexing asli dan flexing palsu.

Keywords: Flexing, consumer behavior, social media.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many people use social media as a medium to share their daily activities. However, some of them do not use social media wisely. Some of them are oversharing in sharing their activities on social media for many people to know. Over time, this has become more and more common and has become entrenched in society. Some of the things that are often exhibited are ATM balances, piles of money, expensive clothes, private jets, vacations abroad, luxury bags, luxury cars, and a series of other luxury items. So recently, terms like sultan and crazy rich have emerged. This causes people to compete to show off their possessions. Lately, the term flexing often refers to people who like to show off their wealth and even lie claiming to be rich even though they are not their property, in order to be accepted in society. With the existence of social media, the phenomenon of flexing is often encountered in various circles of society. Starting from artists, influencers to all people not from the celebrity class, they often do flexing for the sake of existence as measured by the high number of likes, followers, and subscribers.

These days, flexing culture has become commonplace and is no longer considered taboo by society. One example of flexing is to use branded goods with the aim of getting the attention of people who see it. Of the many flexing cultures that occur, not a few use it as a fraud mode. The purposes of flexing vary, such as the purpose of endorsement, showing credibility, marketing strategies/ market

signaling, and increasing popularity. With so many people doing flexing, this is called consumer behavior, because it can change people's behavior to become more consumptive.

According to Assael (1992), there are four consumer behaviors, namely:

1. Consumers who make purchases by making decisions (arising a need, seeking information and evaluating brands, and making purchase decisions), and in their purchases require high involvement. These two interactions produce a complex type of buying behavior (complex decision-making).
2. The behavior of consumers who make purchases of a particular brand repeatedly and consumers who have high involvement in the buying process. Such consumer behavior produces the type of consumer behavior that is loyal to the brand (brand loyalty).
3. The behavior of consumers who make purchases by making decisions, and in the buying process consumers feel less involved. Such buying behavior results in a type of limited decision-making consumer behavior.
4. Consumer behavior in purchasing a product brand is based on habits, and when making a purchase, consumers feel less involved. Such consumer behavior produces inertia-type consumer behavior.

Rhenald Kasali, a businessman from Indonesia, as well as management Science professor at the Faculty of Economics, Universitas Indonesia. He said if the term for a real rich person is a poor scream wealth whisper. People who are really rich just keep quiet, don't like to show off their wealth to people. They live simply by attaching importance to function rather than luxury. They are more concerned with comfort when using goods, rather than increasing prestige.

The existence of social media allows a person to interact very quickly and widely with other people. The advantages of social media are seen by capitalism as an opportunity to create needs in society. Today's society, with the existence of social media, is accustomed to transacting goods online. Not because of the value and benefits, when they buy or sell, but because of the need for a lifestyle. Devices on social media can make anyone become anyone, it can even be contrary to the reality of life. So that it can bring up cyberspaces, which is where the simulation process occurs and the development of communication technology and the emergence of new media causes individuals to distance themselves from reality, creating a new world, namely the virtual world, in order to increase their existence on social media.

From the background that has been described, the author takes a topic, namely *The Influence of Social Media on Flexing Culture Phenomenon in Indonesian Society*. Because the author sees many phenomena of flexing culture on social media, especially on Instagram.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research because the researcher tries to understand human behavior in specific situations. Research that uses qualitative research aims to examine the impacts of cultural flexing which is now widely practiced by people today. The use of this method is intended to reveal events, objects and actions that can improve the researcher's understanding of the symptoms of the problem under study. In addition, researchers took samples by making observations from several social media accounts such as celebrities, influencers, and people with high followers or subscribers on social media such as Instagram. The data generated from this research is descriptive analysis, namely the description of the explanation in the form of sentences. Therefore, the validity and accuracy of this research is guaranteed and reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

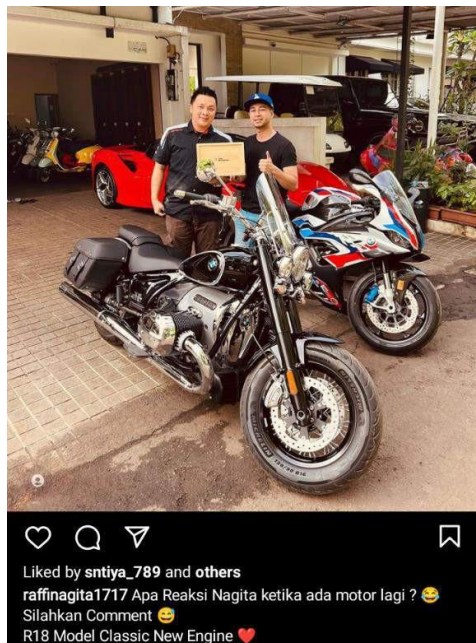
From the results of observations on several Instagram accounts of influencers and celebrities, researchers found their posts that lead to flexing behavior. In addition, there are also some influences from the Flexing culture itself.

a. Social media accounts of influencers/celebrities



Picture 1 and 2. Shandy Purnamasari

Shandy Purnamasari is an entrepreneur. She is an owner of a well-known cosmetic brand, MS Glow. The number of her followers on Instagram is 2.7 million followers. On her Instagram account, she often shares photos when traveling with her family abroad, riding private jets, and wearing luxury brand items. However, Shandy Purnamasari and her husband, *Juragan 99* (Gilang Widya Pratama), are suspected of being involved in money laundering from a political official one of which is by setting up a cosmetic factory so that the brand is considered fake. This allegation is related after the determination of Indra Kenz and Doni Salmanan as suspects in the money laundering crime case. which is revealed in 2022; The wealth of the Crazy Rich Malang couple is considered instantaneous and is thought to be the result of cheating.



Picture 3. Raffi Ahmad and Nagita Slavina posing with two Mini Coopers

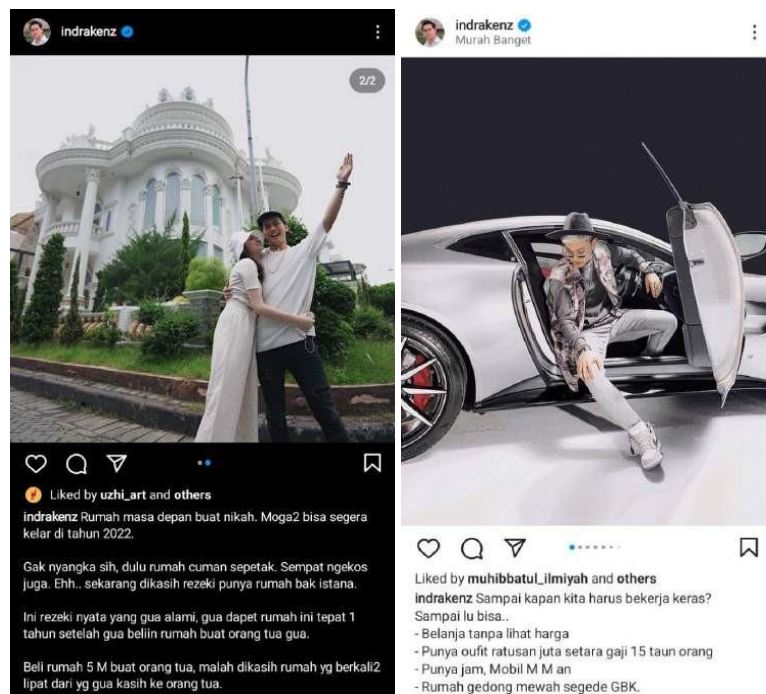
Figure 4. Raffi Ahmad Bought a New Motorcycle

Next is a photo of Raffi Ahmad and his wife, Nagita Slavina. They are both celebrities in Indonesia who always appear everywhere, both on social media and television. Raffi Ahmad is a well-known presenter who often fills several programs on television. They also have an entertainment company called RANS. Recently, Raffi has also owned RANS Nusantara F.C. (Football Club). They also often show their wealth through social media and their video vlogs, such as traveling abroad and buying expensive vehicles to collect. They are both nicknamed the Sultan of Andara, among celebrities and citizens. Currently, they have 63 million followers on Instagram.



Figures 5 and 6. Siska Kohl and Aliyah Kohl

Next up are Siska Kohl. Her sister, Aliyyah Kohl often appear in her video. Both of them often upload videos about reviews of expensive machines and foods that cost tens of millions. Their famous slogan when making videos is "Mari kita coba!" Some of her viral videos are like "fried rice RP.100 million". Not only that. They also sometimes exposes parts of her house. So luxurious, Siska Kohl is often considered as Crazy Rich Tangerang. Siska Kohl's house itself is known to carry the concept of classical medieval Europe. Currently, the number of Siska Kohl's followers on Instagram is 1.8 million people.



Figures 7 and 8. Indra Kenz/ Indra Kesuma

Indra Kesuma or commonly known as Indra Kenz is a former radio broadcaster who became an influencer and later plunged into the world of trading, becoming an affliator. He 's called Crazy Rich from Medan, because his wealth, like a luxury cars and house worth billions of rupiah. He also has many businesses from trading courses, beauty clinics, food businesses, clothing lines, and many more. However, on February 27, 2022, he was caught in a case and named a suspect after it was reported that 8 victims used the Binomo application.

b. The Influence of Flexing Culture on Society

1. Generating social jealousy among the people;

People who are flexing by showing their wealth, such as wearing branded goods (clothes, bags, shoes, etc.), driving luxury vehicles, and eating at luxury restaurants, can cause social jealousy among people in the lower middle class.

According to Veblen (1899), he argues that the upper class uses excessive consumption to distinguish itself from the classes below it in the social hierarchy, while the lower classes try to imitate their level, although usually it fails. So that it can cause social jealousy in society. The result of a failure to imitate the lifestyle of the upper class.

2. Increase the occurrence of debt for non-urgent needs;



Figure 9. iPhone Rental

In order to increase their prestige, they are willing to spent their money to buy luxury items or rent luxury items that they don't really need. In the context of flexing, falsehood mingles with authenticity. This situation makes modern society become excessive in consuming everything not to fulfill needs, but the influence of simulations that cause changes in people's lifestyles to be different. So that they are financially incapable of consuming various things so that they are fulfilled. For example, they rent an iPhone for 24 hours, with various rates, according to the type. They rent iPhones just to show off.

3. Make the culture of showing off into a trend that is fun to imitate;

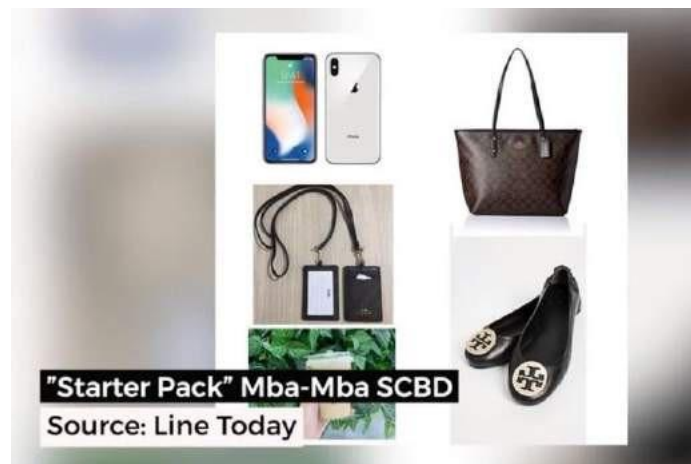


Figure 10. Items of SCBD Starter Pack

With a lifestyle that is above economic capacity, they get recognition, even though the actual conditions are not what they show off. They are willing to spend their money just to buy items that are identical to the upper class in order to be recognized as elite person too.

4. The role of flexing for the doer

a) As a Marketing Strategy

For business people / business people to do flexing to attract target consumers. This is done so that target consumers believe in the business they are running. Sometimes people believe when they see wealth. It could be that, after flexing, the goods they exhibit will be resold or pawned. For example, vehicles, electronic goods or gold. Even extravagant items such as branded watches, bags, or shoes can also be pawned. Thus, flexing is a way to build trust in customers.

b) Increase Popularity

Because they often show off their wealth, people become curious and talk about flexing actors. Then people flocked to follow their social media accounts, and finally had an impact on the popularity of the perpetrators.

c. Flexing Types

1. **Genuine/ real flexing**, for example, such as showing off achievements, abilities, talents, skills, achievements, and others on social media. Exposing this is certainly not aimed at attacking other people and is still within positive limits.
2. **Fake flexing**, which is a negative thing because the person doing fake flexing means showing off something that the perpetrator does not have in reality. Oftentimes, the false achievements they flaunt can lead to fraud cases that can benefit flexors in an improper way.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the flexing culture on social media such as Instagram, as a medium to show off their wealth. For example, those who do flexing share different lifestyle activities with people in the lower middle class. These symptoms represent the social reality of lifestyle madness and cause a clash of social identities which is a cultural practice of society as the actualization of the status of each individual. There are 2 types of flexing, namely genuine flexing and fake flexing. Genuine flexing is more positive than fake flexing.

The phenomenon shown by the existence of flexing in modern society is currently experiencing changes in behavior patterns along with changes that occur in the scope of social life. For example, to increase their existence to be accepted in the social environment, they are willing to rent branded goods such as iPhones. Even though the reality of their financial condition is not sufficient, it causes their mindset to become more consumptive or more commonly known as consumer behavior. The existence of a flexing culture triggers a consumption culture that has controlled people's minds without realizing it. Besides that, flexing activities also provide benefits for the perpetrators, including marketing strategies and increasing popularity. Therefore, the desire for consumption must be controlled because needs and desires must be placed in rational ideal proportions, so that the flexing culture that is rampant on social media can be minimized and avoided from cyberspaces.

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