



ICBIR

2022

2022 7th International Conference
on Business and Industrial Research

May 19-20, 2022

Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology (TNI)
and Artificial Intelligence Association of Thailand (AIAT)
Bangkok, Thailand

**2022 7th International Conference on Business and Industrial Research
(ICBIR2022)**

Proceedings Book

**19 – 20 May 2022
Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology via Online Platform**

Factors Affecting Intention of Online Fashion Consumption of Gen Z during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract—This study investigated factors influencing intention of online fashion shopping of consumers in Generation (Gen) Z during Covid-19 pandemic. The sample of this research was students in Gen Z, attending at a large private university located in Pathum Thani province, Thailand. The total sample of 324 survey questionnaires were gathered. Most of the respondents were females at the age of 20 years old. They typically paid around 10,001 to 20,000 baht for their monthly expenditures. Mostly they were interested in buying fashion items such as shirts, shoes, pants online, which would probably cost more than 601 baht per one purchase. They would do their online shopping through pomelofashion.com, topshop.com, or Zalora.com. Nevertheless, most of them would not stay loyal to only one or any particular website or application for online fashion shopping. Their preferred SNSs were Facebook, Instagram, or Line. This research utilized the descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. It was founded that emotional value, good value, prestige, and attitude towards online fashion shopping consumption had positive impact towards intention of online fashion consumption of Gen Z consumers during Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords—Purchase Intention, Online Fashion Shoppers, Covid-19, Generation Z, Thailand

I. INTRODUCTION

In India, both psychological and financial limitations from Covid-19 pandemic have caused the obstacles for the decrease in purchasing apparels among Indian consumers [1]. Due to pandemic lockdown and social distancing, the consumers preferred to shop apparels through online stores. The consumers decreased their apparels purchases during the pandemic because they did not want to buy clothes to stay at home. Moreover, the various fashion collection available in showrooms and promotional activities which could attract purchases seemed to cease or slowdown during the pandemic times [1]. In the US, the good side of the Covid-19 for fashion businesses has been the beginning of a new green era by aiming towards the concept of circularity meaning that the resources and products of clothing items should stay in use for a long period of times before regenerating into new products [2]. The Covid-19 pandemic caused the entire fashion industry to disrupt. The fashion retailers closed their stores,

but created or increased their online shopping stores. Although consumers worked at home, reduced their social lives, and economic uncertainty decreased clothing sales, clothing businesses did try to stay on businesses. While many fashion brands cancelled orders in Bangladesh factories, luxury brands like Prada donated to hospitals in Italy or Dolce & Gabbana donated to universities to help against the fight of the Covid-19. Additionally, fashion events like Shanghai Fashion Week used platform 'Labelhood' 31 designers showcased new collections through social channels, websites, and live stream looks [3]. Then, during the hardship of apparel industries around the world, the need for researches of online fashion consumption during Covid-19 pandemic has been necessary in order to understand and adjust to new consumer behaviors.

Even though Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand might disrupt many businesses and cease to exist, it may promote other businesses including ICT, food, do-it-yourself, healthcare, hygiene, or even online products and services. Hotels, restaurants, airlines, real estate businesses, oil businesses, as well as automotive businesses [4] have directly affected by the lockdown, market stagnation, economic instabilities, as well as changes in consumers' purchasing behaviors related to various products and services in many countries [1]. Furthermore, the behaviors of the consumers from the Covid pandemic have increased 32% in online shopping, 42% in video streaming services, and 30% in ordering food [4]. The products that consumers purchased less were alcohol drinks (30%), luxury goods (27%), meat and seafood (21%). Changes of consumers' behaviors included going out less (52%) which was the same as going out to eat less (52%). Consumers focused more on necessary items such as food and medicine with the increase in online shopping habits (50%). The reduction of 56% occurred in tourism and 30% in entertainment and clothing purchases [4]. The 30% reduction of entertainment and clothing purchases would be challenge for fashion businesses' owners or marketers in Thailand trying to recover their businesses from the changes in consumers' purchasing patterns. Major fashion companies in Thailand such as Esprit, Bossini, or Charles & Keith, Arrow, Guy Laroche, Greyhound reported their revenues decreased by an average of 20-40% [5]. Greyhouse marketing and business development director expected that the situation

would improve once there has been the widespread of vaccinations. Interestingly Mc Jeans reported the increase in sale from January to March of 2021 by 4.3% to 776 million baht because their multichannel including online, corners in department stores, its own free-stained shops, and mobile trucks [5]. Then, the Thai online fashion industries have also struggled through the hard times during Covid-19 pandemic. Research findings in this area should give directions for the fashion businesses' owners and marketers to stay and develop new business models in their industries.

Generation (Gen) Z has played more important roles in the marketplace due to their innovation, disruption, and demands for brands [6]. They have been known as individuals born in 1997 to 2012 with the ages between 9 and 24 years old [7]. They can adopt to anything rapidly such as new products or various developments of social media. Interestingly, they have been categorized as a "green generation" who demonstrate higher awareness and consciousness of environment than older generations [8]. Zain et al. used gamification method for health consciousness campaign in Malaysia to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic among Gen Z [9]. Additionally, Gen Z had exceptional attributes compared with the prior generations, which they were more conscious of the health concern [9]. The Covid-19 pandemic did push the Thai consumers to migrate from offline to online purchase. Phuthong found that Gen Z (18 to 25 years old) did use Augmented Reality (AR) in online shopping [10].

Since the research about Generation Z who did their fashion shopping online during the Covid 19 pandemic had been limited; therefore, this research aimed to study positive influence of personal norm for sufficiency, attitude towards online fashion shopping communication, emotional value, social value, human touch, prestige, and good value towards intention of online fashion consumption of Gen Z consumers during Covid-19 pandemic.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There were several scholarly supporting evidence related to fashion buying behaviors of consumers especially Gen Z before and after Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the generational theory, researchers from Romania, Italy, and Spain revealed that 977 Millennials and Gen Z consumers emphasized on social and environmental sustainability practices applied by fashion companies in Italy such as organic production of raw materials, pollution generated during production, respect of workers' rights and health, or use of recycled materials after the spread of the virus [30]. Furthermore, drawing on social practice theory, a research compared changes in clothing acquisition practices during Covid-19 across 9 countries including the USA, the UK, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Iran, Czech Republic, India, and Hong Kong SAR suggested that all forms of fashion consumption, including closed physical shops, shipping disruption, cancelled events, remote work, or more sustainable practices, had decreased during the pandemic. However, changes from these disruptions may result in more demand for more sustainable, new competencies, and new skills acquired during the pandemic that could guarantee more lasting practices of more sustainable forms of fashion consumption [31].

Referring to the multiple goals theory [11], normative motives were the way a person would normally do to show personal or social norms. Informational strategies could strengthen sufficiency behavior by fostering normative motives towards sufficiency and decreasing gain opposed to consumption reduction. Then, *personal norm for sufficiency* described a feeling of moral obligation related to sufficiency intentions in clothing items [12]. The questionnaire items were adjusted from the past literature [12]. For instance, "I would feel obliged to only buy new clothes when I really needed them" and "My own values told me that it was wrong to buy unnecessary clothing." In this study, the consumers should feel that they would purchase clothing items only when it was necessary.

Online environments offered sellers and customers with a wide variety of communication channels including blogs, smartphone, websites, social media and applications, peer reviews through social media communication such as videos or pictures with likes, shares, or supportive comments, had influence behavior and communication's popularity [13]. Ads used through these online media helped promoting the products and impacting consumption behavior. In this study, *attitude towards online fashion shopping communication* strengthened the social norm for intention to buy [12]. The questionnaire items were adjusted from the past literature [12], [13]. To illustrate, "Ads related to online fashion shopping through blogs or mobile apps often appealed to me", "Ads related to online fashion shopping though social media is interesting", and "Ads related to online fashion shopping through online reviews is easy to understand."

Many studies suggested how product display might encourage and improve the experience of online shopping since the presentations of online products were displayed in the way that could create consumer interactions with the products [10], [14]. The technology can be used to suggest dynamic presentations of apparel product, for instance rotation, display of, videos, three-dimensional images or interactivity, shoppers could "try on" clothing items virtually and activating their imagination about where, when, and how they might dress the clothing items [15]. Apparel items presented on human models induced more positive expressive responses than items in a flat display [16]. Thus, the magnificence of the presentation of a product could inspire stronger imagination and distinctive *emotional value* perception, which consequently could affect successive shopping performance [17]. The questionnaire items were adjusted from the past literature [15]-[17]. For example, "I would feel fun purchasing clothing online", "I would feel relax purchasing clothing online" and "I would feel happy purchasing clothing online."

While emotional value concentrating on feelings and affective states originated from the products, *social value* characterized as the skill to improve self-concept of the consumer [17]. In this study, social value concerned with how clothing style of an individual improved his/her self-concept by others. McKinsey and company revealed that Chinese young shoppers' characteristics for luxurious goods including strong preferences for fashion and art, greater requirements for staff service, and frequent media activities (online and offline) [18]. Chinese luxury shoppers were concerned with friendliness of local residents, which was found to be valuable in influencing overall experiences of the customer in shopping destination. The questionnaire items were adjusted from the

past literature [17], [18]. For instance, "Wearing clothes from online shopping should be acceptable by my friends" and "Wearing clothes from online shopping should make me look impressive."

Then the shoppers' first and last impressions of the stores' staff services were referred as *human touch* [19]. So, in this study, human touch referred to how sales' representatives from online fashion stores could serve and satisfy the customers. The questionnaire items were adjusted from the past literature [19]. For example, "I often emphasize on services from online fashion sellers who were friendly to customers" and "I often emphasize on services from online fashion sellers who could find sizes of styles that I want."

Moreover, *prestige* described as how the shoppers concerned with brands and reputation. The questionnaire items would include new product releases, the availability of limited editions, reflecting customers' desire to obtain an item that was not normally sold everywhere. The shoppers sought uniqueness [19], [20]. The questionnaire items were adjusted from the past literature [19], [20]. For instance, "I like online fashion items produced with limited editions" and "I like online fashion items recommended from fashion experts."

However, *good value* referred to low transportation costs, lower prices, low local costs for the same products of luxurious goods. In other words, Chinese luxury shoppers sought value when purchasing luxury products in their chosen stores. Such value was resulting from lower prices for luxury products compared to other stores, due to features such as lower taxes, favorable exchange rates, and more frequent sales. Chinese luxury shoppers would be willing to pay for luxury products while seeking to reduce transportation costs by booking less expensive flights, cheaper routes, and lower costs of accommodations and meals. For example, Business units in Hawaii reported that Chinese tourists spent more than Japanese but stay in three-star hotels [19]. The questionnaire items were adjusted from the past literature [19]. To illustrate, "I like online fashion items due to low transportation costs" and "I like online fashion items because I can save many expenses from going out to buy them at the stores."

Additionally, *purchase intention* referred to the opportunity that consumers make a purchase decision by subjective assessment of products under a certain income level [21]. The likelihood of consumers purchasing a particular product or brand was the decision and explanation of the behavior process before the behavior result emerged. Purchase intention could measure the probability of consumers buying a product and could be used as an important sign of forecasting consumer behavior [22]. The questionnaire items were adjusted from the past literature [21], [22]. For example, "I intend to purchase clothing online" and "I want to purchase online fashion."

Chinese Gen Z consumers manifested low interest in return, especially when the procedure was complex or referred to second-hand products. However, Italian Gen Z consumers had a higher interest in returning wrong purchases or defective products, considering the return policies to mitigate the risk of wrong purchases [23]. In China, Chinese Gen Z consumers were considered the world's largest consumer group. They influenced and had ability to facilitate the upgrading of consumption. Moreover, Chinese Gen Z tended to trust groups that were socially close to them on online platforms [24]. Since Gen Z was known as active in the digital online

environment, the gamification approach in defeating the Covid-19 pandemic was effective to Gen Z because they were more aware of the health issue compared with previous generations [9] and accepted new technologies quickly. The gamification approach for Gen Z involved using game features in the campaign including leader boards, levels, challenges, points, and rewards [9]. Thus, the authors hypothesized that personal norm for sufficiency, attitude towards online fashion shopping communication, emotional value, social value, human touch, prestige, and good value had positive influence towards intention of online fashion shopping of Gen Z's during Covid-19 pandemic.

III. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The theories used in this research involved some previous literatures which were integrated into this research's conceptual model. One expert in the research field and two experts in managing online fashion businesses in Thailand helped validating the contents and agreement of wording modification of the questionnaires. The seven independent variables used in this paper were personal norm for sufficiency, attitude towards online fashion shopping consumption, emotional value, social value, human touch, prestige, and good value shopping online for fashion items. Intention of online fashion shopping was used as a dependent variable. A five-point Likert scale were implemented, ranging from 1 as being "strongly disagree" to 5 as being "strongly agree." The undergraduate students in business schools were the target population of this study. The samples were undergraduate students attending in different business classes in a large private university locating in Pathum Thani province, Thailand. These students were in Gen Z ages and had sufficient or monthly allowance to spend on fashion apparel items. They lived their lives during Covid-19 pandemic. The non-probability method was applied using convenience sampling [25]. The G*power version 3.1.9.2 were used for 40 pilot questionnaires [26], [27], with 0.76 as the Power (1- β) while 0.24 as the Alpha (α). 7 was a number of tested predictors, with the effect size of 0.0233330 (Calculated by Partial R² of 0.022801). At least 310 sample size were required. Consequently, a total of 324 sets of data were compiled. In accordance with the suggestion [28], 0.652-0.905 were the reliability values of all components, which surpassed the Cronbach's alpha of 0.65. Consequently, all Cronbach alphas were consistent. The data collection was analyzed using descriptive statistics which were percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Multiple regression analysis was used in order to examine how the varied independent variables affected the dependent variable for hypothesis assessment

For all 324 respondents, 230 students were females (71%), and 94 of them were males (29%), 129 students with the highest age of 20 (40%), followed by 100 students with the age of 21 (31%). 230 students were sophomore students, studying in the 2nd year in the university (71%), and 55 students who were in the 3rd year in the university (17%). 220 students achieved their grade Point Average of 3-3.99 (68%), followed by 91 students who achieved 2-2.99 for GPA (28%). Most of the participants were in School of Business Administration for 252 students (78%) and School of Accounting for 72 students (22%). 143 students spent their monthly expenses approximately 10,000 – 20,000 baht (44%) and 136 students spent less than 10,000 baht (42%). Most of

them spent 5-6 hours being online. If they had wanted to buy online fashion apparel, they would be willing to spend around 601 baht per time. They preferred to spend their money on shirts, pants, or shoes first. Most of them did not know where to purchase yet. Some might purchase from pomelofashion.com, topshop.com, or Zalora.com. However, most of them had not been loyal to any particular website or application yet. If they wanted to purchase fashion items online, they would prefer to transfer money online. Their favorite SNSs were Facebook, Instagram, and Line.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study utilized multiple regression analysis. The results are shown in Table I. Moreover, the hypothesis test results are also presented in Table II.

TABLE I. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL NORM FOR SUFFICIENCY, ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONLINE FASHION SHOPPING COMMUNICATION, EMOTIONAL VALUE, SOCIAL VALUE, HUMAN TOUCH, PRESTIGE, AND GOOD VALUE TOWARDS INTENTION IN ONLINE FASHION SHOPPING OF GENERATION Z CONSUMERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THAILAND.

| Dependent Variable: Intention of Online Fashion Shopping, R = .700, R ² = .490, Constant = 0.759, Standard Error = 0.329 | | | | | |
|---|---------|------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Independent Variables | β | Stand ar d Error | T | Sig | VIF |
| Personal Norm for Sufficiency | -0.157 | 0.043 | -3.633 | 0.000 | 1.150 |
| Attitude towards Online Fashion Shopping Communication | 0.106* | 0.064 | 2.137 | 0.033 | 1.527 |
| Emotional Value | 0.297* | 0.054 | 5.633 | 0.000 | 1.724 |
| Social Value | 0.056 | 0.047 | 1.112 | 0.267 | 1.568 |
| Human Touch | 0.033 | 0.064 | 0.758 | 0.449 | 1.156 |
| Prestige | 0.141* | 0.053 | 2.747 | 0.006 | 1.641 |
| Good Value | 0.280* | 0.048 | 5.601 | 0.000 | 1.550 |

* significant level at .05

The interpretation of the statistics on the test results of the hypotheses were in the followings.

Personal norm for sufficiency had no positive impact towards intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic.

Attitude towards online fashion shopping communication had positive impact towards intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic.

Emotional value had positive impact towards intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic.

Social value had no positive impact towards intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic.

Human touch had no positive impact towards intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic.

Prestige had positive impact towards intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic.

Good value had positive impact towards intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic.

Since the researchers theorized that personal norm for sufficiency, attitude towards online fashion shopping communication, emotional value, social value, human touch,

prestige, and good value had positive impact towards intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic. However, the researchers found that only emotional value ($\beta = 0.297$), good value ($\beta = 0.280$), prestige ($\beta = 0.141$), and attitude towards online fashion shopping communication ($\beta = 0.106$) had positive impact toward intention of Gen Z consumers for online fashion shopping during Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand with of 0.05 of the significant level. As a result, emotional value, good value, prestige, and attitude towards online fashion shopping communication could be shown as the factors that have positively effect on perceived intention of online fashion consumption of Gen Z consumers during Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand at the ratio of 70%. The rest of 30% were affected by other factorss which were not mentioned in this paper. The standard error was ± 0.329 by the equation as followed.

$$Y (\text{Intention of Online Fashion Shopping}) = 0.329 + 0.297 (\text{emotional value}) + 0.280 (\text{good value}) + 0.141 (\text{prestige}) + 0.106 (\text{attitude towards online fashion shopping communication})$$

It is showed in Table I that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of each independent variables value did not exceed 4 [29], with the highest value of 1.724. Then, the use of multiple regression analysis was valid since there was no multicollinearity among the independent variables.

The findings proved that *emotional value* indicated the magnificent presentation of a product, stimulating richer imagination and distinct perception of emotional value, which might in turn contribute to purchase behavior [17]. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Thai Gen Z clothing shoppers preferred the use of technology on how product display might enhance the overall experience of online purchase, for instance, designing online product presentations, stimulating increased consumer interaction with the product [10], [14]. Interestingly, the Thai Gen Z fashion shoppers were similar to Chinese shoppers that they preferred *good value* in luxury clothing products, but they would save their money in other living expenses such as transportation, accommodation, or meal costs [19]. Additionally, the Thai Gen Z apparel shoppers emphasized on *prestige* meaning that they preferred brands and reputation of the clotting products. They would purchase the limited editions and new product releases, reflecting their desires the items with uniqueness [19], [20]. Last but not least, the Thai Gen Z fashion shoppers might be affected by *attitude towards online fashion shopping communication*. They seemed to believe in peer reviews in blogs, websites, or social media. They would view videos or pictures with likes, shares, or supportive comments. They view ads used by online media to receive sales promotions [12], [13].

Nevertheless, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Thai Gen Z fashion shoppers did not perceive *personal norm for sufficiency* [11], [12], *social value* [17], and *human touch* [19] in their intention to purchase clothing items, which were different from the previous literature. It was clear that the Thai Gen Z fashion shoppers liked to purchase apparel items even though they might have many of those items in their closets already since they did not have clear perception of *personal norm for sufficiency*. Interesting, they might not care much about their self-concept, which was related to *social value*, because they might want to follow fashion trends instead of choosing the clothing styles which might be suitable for their sizes or shapes. Moreover, in terms of *human touch*, they did

not care much how sales' representatives from online fashion stores could serve or satisfy their needs, which were different from Chinese shoppers [18], [19]. It might be because they were technology savvy generation, and they could quickly learn how to shop fashion items online even with gamification features [9] or Augmented Reality Applications' features [10] by themselves.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research explored factors impacting intention of online fashion shoppers who were Gen Z during Covid-19 pandemic. The sample of this research was undergraduate students at a large private university located in Pathum Thani province in Thailand. The samples were 324 respondents who mostly were females at the age of 20 years old. They mostly paid around 10,001 to 20,000 baht for their monthly expenses. Most of them were interested in buying fashion items such as shirts, shoes, pants online. They were likely to pay more than 601 baht per one purchase. Most of them would do their online shopping through pomelofashion.com, topshop.com, or Zalora.com. The descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis were implemented in this study. The researchers suggested that only emotional value, good value, prestige, and attitude towards online fashion shopping consumption had positive impact towards intention of online fashion consumption of Gen Z consumers during Covid-19 pandemic.

The results of this research extended behavioral intention to purchase theory with emotional value, good value, prestige, and attitude towards online fashion shopping consumption theories of Gen Z consumers especially during Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand. Even though during the Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand, many consumers specifically Gen Z consumers might purchase fewer due to economic difficulties, they were still high potential buyers for online fashion shopping if the sellers could present the magnificence of the presentation of the product (*emotional value*), low transportation costs, lower prices, low local costs for the same products of luxurious goods (*good value and prestige*), a wide variety of communication channels including blogs, smartphone, websites, social media and applications etc. (*attitude towards online fashion shopping consumption*).

The findings of this study were also very beneficial to owners of online fashion stores, online entrepreneur, designer, marketers, system developers and administrators, website owners, especially during Covid-19 pandemic in order to create or increase their online presence for Gen Z consumers in Thailand. Fashion businesses could survive through Covid-19 pandemic by taking emotional value, good value, prestige, and towards online fashion shopping communication of the consumers into consideration when developing the web sites or the mobile and computer applications focusing on potential fashion customers who are Gen Z in Thailand.

However, there are some limitations of this research. The researchers collected data from of 18 to 22 years old of Gen Z. Therefore, the future researches could include the data from 9 to 17, and 23-24 years old of Gen Z. The data collected from only one private university, thus, more universities and business schools in Bangkok and other provinces may be needed in order to generalize different results of this research. Since the research aimed to study the intention of online fashion consumption of Gen Z consumers during Covid-19 pandemic. The samples were undergraduate students attending in different business classes in a large private

university locating in Pathum Thani province, Thailand. Then, it was common that undergraduate classes of the university would have females more than males in Thailand. However, future research could include different level of intention to purchase in terms of different genders, social, psychological, and biological factors. The longitudinal studies might be done to compare the results through times. Meditating variables and moderating variables could be incorporated into the conceptual model as well.

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