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From Trend to Choices: Cognitive Dissonance and Fast-Fashion Consumption Among Indonesian Influencers

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ABSTRACT: In 2010, Instagram was introduced as a free photo-sharing app for iOS and Android users, providing a unique platform for sharing life experiences through visual content. This study, spanning five months (July-December 2023), explores the rise of fast fashion consumption and influencer trends in Indonesia. It employs the diffusion model proposed by Beaudoin, Moore, and Goldsmith. Analysis of interview data using NVivo highlights a strong link between the fashion industry and influencers. NVivo enables remote collaboration, allowing individuals from different locations to work on shared data files in real-time. The study emphasizes data collection through structured interviews based on an in-depth examination of influencers. Findings reveal that the high-value nature of fast fashion significantly influences Indonesian influencers, driven by the growing popularity of consumer trends and ongoing style improvements in the fashion industry. However, it emphasizes the importance of recognizing that unquestionably following trends can profoundly shape an individual's lifestyle, echoing previous research on the pivotal role of trends in fashion choices. Overall, the research underscores the substantial impact of trends and influencers on Indonesia's fast fashion landscape.

Keywords: Fast-Fashion, Influencers, Cognitive Dissonance, Labor Practices, Southeast Asia.

INTRODUCTION

TITLE	WRITER AND YEAR	BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM
Aspek Pembentuk *Negative Emotion:* Studi pada Konteks *Fast Fashion* di Indonesia	Amiko Ajeng Oktadwianti, 2018.	The fashion industry's expansion can shape consumer attitudes, prompting trend-following and emotional responses post-purchase, influencing impulsive buying decisions. Clear delineation of emotional

		assessments is crucial for maintaining objectivity.
Purchase of Fast-Fashion by Younger Comsumers in Indonesia: Do We Like It or Do We Have to Like It?	Rokhima Rostiani & Jessica Kuron, 2019.	Attitude emerged as the primary factor influencing purchase intention, followed by physical vanity, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Additionally, there was a notable positive correlation between perceived behavioral control and purchasing behavior.
Kritik Globalisasi: Fenomena *Fast Fashion* sebagai Budaya Konsumerisme pada Kalangan Pemuda Kota Surabaya	Adiyaksa Lukmanul Hakim & Emmy Yuniarti Rusadi, 2022.	This research explores the impact of globalization-driven fast fashion on the youth of Surabaya City, examining the reasons behind their interest and suggesting solutions to address the associated culture of consumerism.

Based on previous studies, the fashion industry has a significant impact on the contemporary economy, acting as both a social and cultural phenomenon. The emergence of the Internet, particularly Web 2.0, has not only changed how consumers make purchases but has also influenced their perspectives on these transactions (Arriaga et al., 2017; Ertas et al., 2016). Online platforms, as emphasized by (Choi & Park, 2015), play a vital role in various stages of the consumer decision-making process. This current investigation addresses the widespread adoption of fast fashion among Indonesian youth, aiming to provide insights for ongoing discussions. It seeks to illuminate the normalization of fast fashion and intends to contribute to future academic inquiries and public awareness with the goal of mitigating consumerist tendencies.

Launched in 2010, Instagram started as a photo-sharing application, providing an enjoyable means to depict and share life experiences through images. Compatible with both iOS and Android, the platform enables users to share their photos and videos either publicly or privately. As of 2021, Instagram boasted a monthly user base of 1.21 billion people, representing over 28% of the global population. Projections anticipate a growth to 1.44 billion users by 2025, offering fashion marketers unparalleled access to customers, particularly within the demographic of Generation Y and Z (ages 18-34). Despite the limited extent of research on millennials' digital fashion experiences, Instagram continues to stand out as a potent platform for engaging with this demographic.

In the realm of fashion studies, the concept of "fashion diffusion" is widely acknowledged. Beaudoin, Moore, and Goldsmith's (Beaudoin et al., 2018; Boardman & McCormick, 2018; The Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company, 2017) diffusion model categorizes the adoption and adoption rates of fashion, ranging from innovators to laggards. "Fashion opinion leaders" play a crucial role in disseminating new trends, defined as individuals with the ability to influence and share knowledge (Gilly et al., 2019). These leaders, perceived as authoritative figures, exert significant influence over others due to their expertise. The term "influencer" encompasses various

ways these leaders impact social media. However, academic research on Instagram's effectiveness as a fashion communication tool lags behind industry usage. Studies on both high-end (Kusumasondjaja, 2019) and fast fashion (Bonilla et al., 2019; D.R.E.S.S.X., 2021) brands explore the role of social media, including Instagram, in disseminating fashion trends.

The influencer landscape is typically categorized into three distinct groups: mega influencers, macro-influencers, and micro-influencers. According to (Neil, 2018; Revell, 2017), micro-influencers are regular individuals with a follower count of approximately 10,000 or less, yet they maintain a close and engaged connection with their audience. However, scholars such as (Sammis, 2017; Weinswig, 2016) argue that these follower count thresholds lack precision. (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017; Fennis et al., 2017; Sammis, 2017) suggests that these limits are subject to interpretation, indicating that the classification of micro-influencers should not solely rely on follower count. (Weinswig, 2016) underscores that an individual's genuine influence is more reliant on authenticity and thoughtfully curated content than the sheer number of followers they accumulate (Aftab, 2018; Barada, 2013).

Micro-influencers meticulously craft an idealized lifestyle on their Instagram profiles, presenting themselves as authorities in their respective fields, projecting a flawless image. This curated presentation enhances the appeal and perceived reliability of their accounts to other users. (Eagar & Dann, 2016) observe that many Instagram users achieving a certain level of fame position themselves as a fusion of a celebrity and an ordinary person, seeking to be perceived as credible sources of information by their followers. The influence exerted by users demonstrating the effectiveness of a product or service aims to reshape perceptions of that specific social media platform.

Given the lack of a universally agreed-upon definition or classification for micro influencers, this study characterizes them as individuals who do not hold typical celebrity status but have garnered a substantial social media following due to their capacity to influence and promote fast-fashion consumption.

In recent years, the fashion industry has witnessed a concerning escalation in its adverse impacts on both the environment and society. The industry has sustained an average annual growth rate of around 5.5%, approaching a value of $2.6 trillion in the United States, as reported by The Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company in 2016. In 2019 alone, the industry produced an overwhelming 130.6 billion pieces of clothing and footwear, according to (Fashion Revolution, 2020). This surge in production is notably associated with the 'fast fashion' trend, characterized by swift collection turnovers and reduced prices. The trend has resulted in a doubling of clothing consumption by the expanding middle class over the last 15 years. Paradoxically, despite increased consumption, the lifespan of worn clothing has consistently decreased, highlighting the sustainability challenges faced by the fashion industry.
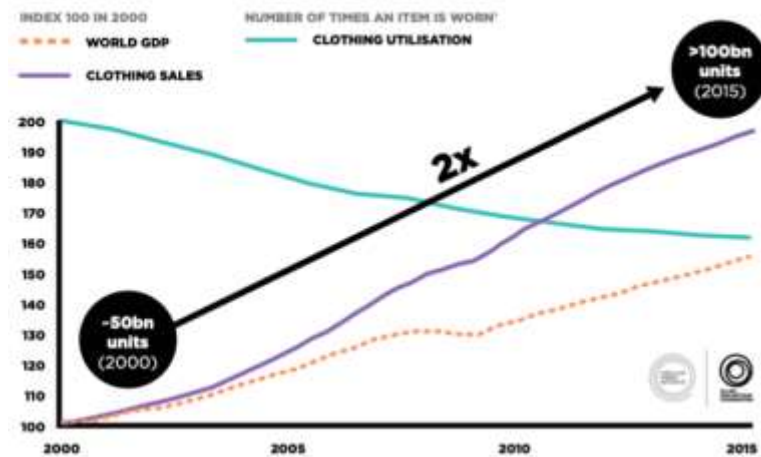
Fig 1. Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Clothing Sales Growth and The Decline in Clothing Utilisation

The textile sector in six key markets (Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore) has experienced substantial expansion, surpassing a valuation of more than US$50 billion. This growth is propelled by increased production and the influence of emerging middle-class demographics (Kim et al., 2020). These markets, characterized by digitally savvy and trend-conscious young consumers, exhibit a wide range of distinctive fashion preferences. For example, Thai consumers adopt trends from both Europe and Asia, with the kawaii style from Japan gaining popularity among young women (Toyoshima, 2016). In the Philippines, there is a pronounced preference for Western brands, complemented by a flourishing market for second-hand goods (Toyoshima, 2016). Fashion choices in predominantly Muslim nations like Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly among active social media users, have witnessed the hijab symbolizing progressive piety. This trend has led to the rapid success of luxury brand dUCkscarves in Malaysia and Brunei (Mohamad & Hassim, 2019).

A continuous population growth is being experienced in Southeast Asia, a region recognized for its diversity and dynamism. This demographic trend is seen as creating a highly promising opportunity for the fashion industry. According to the 2020 forecast by Yendamuri and Ingilizian, the ASEAN region is anticipated to be emerged as the fourth-largest economic collective globally in the next decade. This economic advancement is believed to have the potential to significantly boost the region's consumer market, with a projected value of US$4 trillion (Geissinger & Laurell, 2018; Jungnickel, 2018; Yendamuri & Ingilizian, 2020).

It is essential to comprehend consumer behavior in the fast fashion industry to formulate effective strategies promoting responsible consumption and sustainability. Meaningful changes aligned with ethical and environmental goals can be achieved by analyzing consumer motivations, attitudes, and decision-making processes. In the fast fashion context, cognitive dissonance refers to the psychological discomfort experienced by consumers when their attitudes and behaviors conflict with ethical and sustainability concerns. As awareness of negative labor practices and environmental impact grows, consumers may find themselves torn between their desire for affordable, trendy clothing and their ethical and sustainability considerations. This summary offers an overview of cognitive dissonance and its significance in understanding consumer behavior in the fast fashion industry, drawing from pertinent literature.

The cognitive dissonance theory, formulated by Festinger (Ruane & Wallace, 2013), suggests that psychological tension arises in individuals when they maintain conflicting beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. In the fast fashion sector, consumers might experience cognitive dissonance as they confront the disparities between their preference for stylish, budget-friendly clothing and their awareness of the adverse social and environmental impacts associated with the industry. To alleviate this tension, consumers often employ various strategies. A common approach is selective exposure, wherein individuals actively seek or avoid information that contradicts their beliefs or behaviors (Karmarkar & Putrevu, 2019; Mulyanegara et al., 2019). This bias may lead consumers to prioritize information supporting their choices in fast fashion while neglecting or minimizing details related to labor conditions or environmental consequences.

Another strategy utilized by consumers is selective interpretation. This entails reinterpreting information to align it with existing beliefs or behaviors. For instance, consumers might downplay negative labor practices by rationalizing that workers in developing countries benefit from employment opportunities in the fast fashion industry. Alternatively, they may convince themselves that their individual purchasing decisions have minimal impact on the environment. The role of communication and media is crucial in shaping consumer cognitive dissonance within the fast fashion context. Fast fashion brands often emphasize affordability, convenience, and social validation in their advertising, while labor and environmental concerns are downplayed (Zietek, 2016). Promoting positive attitudes toward fast fashion can contribute to consumer cognitive dissonance, creating a disparity between purchasing behaviors and ethical considerations.

To address consumer cognitive dissonance in the fast fashion industry, it is crucial to implement interventions that focus on awareness, education, and ethical fashion initiatives. By providing accurate information on labor practices and environmental impact, and placing emphasis on responsible consumption, individuals can be encouraged to align their attitudes with more sustainable choices. The recognition of consumer cognitive dissonance is essential for the development of effective strategies that promote ethical consumption, improve labor conditions, and mitigate environmental degradation in the fast fashion sector.

Online platforms are increasingly relied upon by young consumers, particularly those belonging to Generation Z, for seeking brand evaluations to inform their decision-making. This trend, highlighted by Pitchler et al. (Najjuko, 2023), prompts businesses to intensify their efforts in internet marketing and broaden their reach to cater to a younger audience. (Sinha & Fung, 2018) underscores the importance of adapting marketing strategies to target Generation Z, born after 1996, emphasizing their influence as the most literate, ethical, and diverse generation in history, with the eldest members being under 22 years old.

The younger demographic, often identified as "digital natives," actively engages with smartphones and participates extensively in various online activities, particularly on social platforms like Instagram, renowned for its rich visual and audio content (Mesch, 2019). Presently, there is a prevalent trend among young users of social media to seek inspiration from micro influencers they closely follow on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Zietek, 2016). Instagram, in particular, is immensely popular among teenagers, attracting individuals who may not be professional influencers but still manage to capture significant audiences through visually appealing and vibrant

content (Sinha & Fung, 2018). These micro-influencers gain recognition for their charming appeal and specialized knowledge.

Cognitive dissonance is experienced by consumers when their actions are found to be in conflict with their opinions about a retailer, as indicated by (Lam et al., 2016). Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance theory emphasizes that when an inconsistency (dissonance) arises between attitudes or behaviors, steps must be taken to eliminate the dissonance. Regarding the incongruity between attitudes and behavior, it is most likely that the attitude will undergo a change to accommodate the behavior, as noted by Festinger in Azizul & Vidi (2020). In alignment with this perspective, it is made explicit by Hogg and Vaughan (2005 in Azizul & Vidi, 2020) that consistency is actively sought by individuals; they invariably desire to act in ways that align with their beliefs and ensure the perpetual correctness of their beliefs and values.

In order to mitigate cognitive dissonance, it is essential for fast fashion retailers to be perceived as ethical by young consumers intending to make a purchase. An understanding of Generation Z customers, specifically those who engage in fast fashion, necessitates the acknowledgment of their ethical perspectives. This is highlighted by researchers such as (Joy, 2014), who have identified a disparity between the idealistic views of young individuals regarding social and environmental responsibility and their practical behavior when it comes to consuming fast fashion.

METHOD

Research Question

Despite the negative consequences causing cognitive dissonance, what elements contribute to the ongoing engagement of influencers in Indonesia with fast fashion?

1. Participants Collection

   - Micro-influencers with <20.000 followers on Instagram

   - 18–26 years old (Generation Z)

   - Consumer of fast fashion

   - Fashion enthusiast

2. Data Collection

Using purposive sampling to select participants who are fashion enthusiasts and have Instagram followers >10.000. Generation Z (1997-2005) with various ages of range 18-26 years. To conduct in-depth interviews, the researcher has categorized several lists of questions as references to gather information in the following table:

| The Categories for Questions	The List of Questions
Things related to fast fashion in the world of influencers	1. Tell us about your path as a fashion influencer in Indonesia.

	2. What's your definition of fast fashion? Familiar with it?
	3. How often do you share fashion-related content? Why?
	4. Do you promote fast fashion brands?
	5. Are you aware of its social impact like child labor?
	6. What about its environmental impact and global warming?
	7. If recent, how will you address them as an influencer?
	8. If you were aware before, why do you support it?
	9. Will you continue endorsing fast fashion?
The emotional journey of influencers endorsing fast fashion	1. Familiar with internal conflict between knowledge and actions?
	2. How do you manage this conflict?
	3. How do you balance image with sustainability concerns? - Considering them? Obstacles preventing it?
	4. Any actions to reduce fast fashion's negative impact?

Table 1. Interview's List Questions

As a preview, the researcher establishes a conceptual framework to ensure that the research stays on track and aligns with the issues being addressed, providing a basis for subsequent studies.
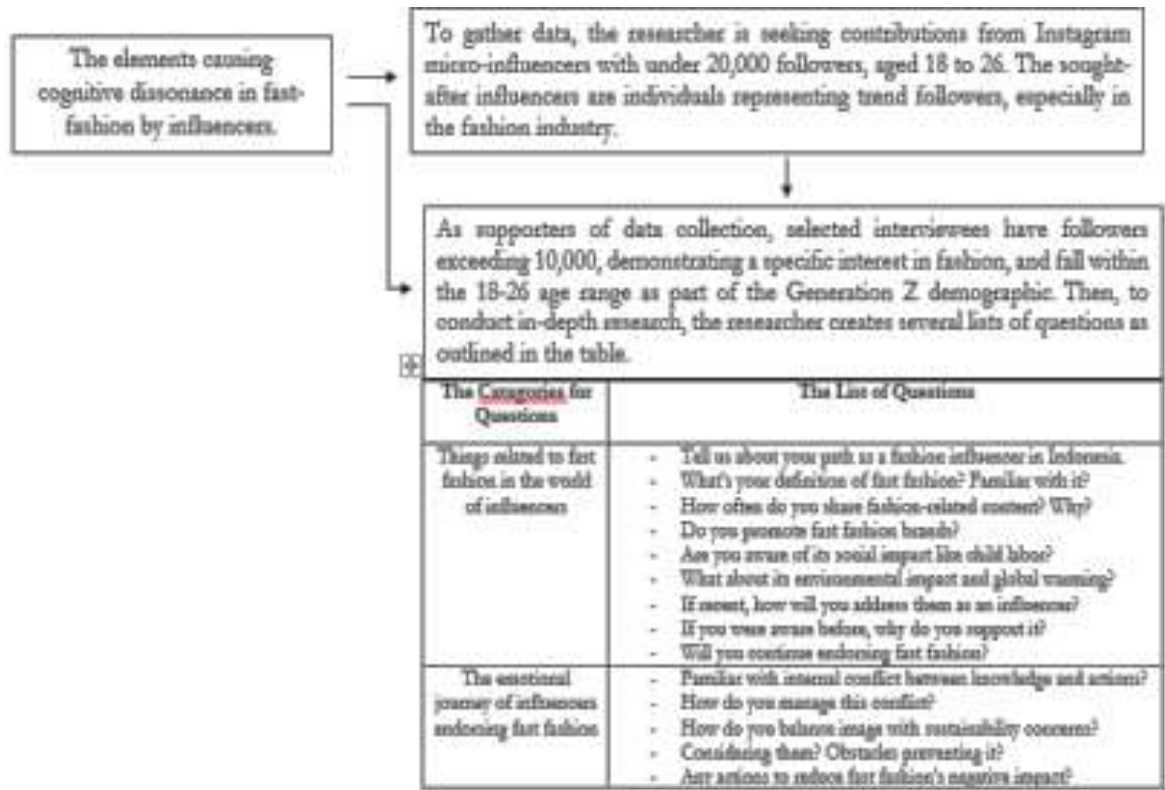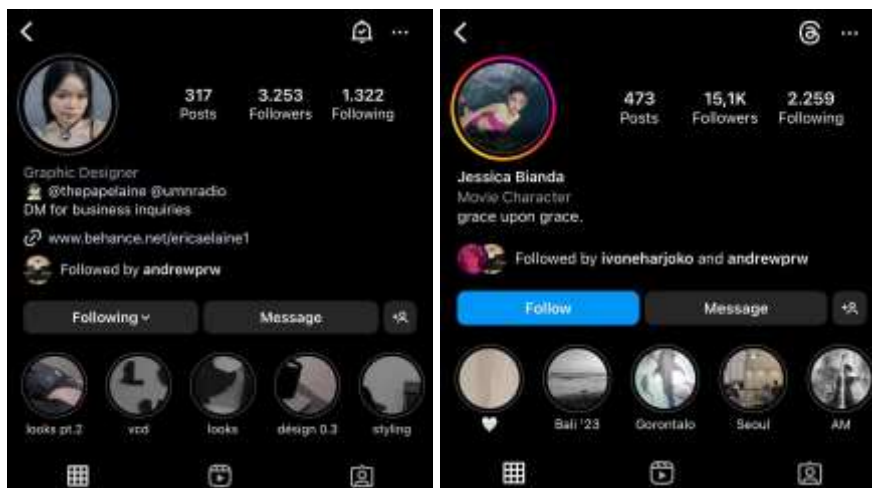
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fig 2 & 3. Instagram Profiles Respondents

Sources: Instagram

Nvivo analysis, a specialized application tailored for scrutinizing descriptive research data, is employed in the data analysis of this study. The utilization of Nvivo is in accordance with Barada's (2018) recommendation, particularly for examining data gathered through instruments like interviews. These instruments, with a primary focus on interviews, serve as a mechanism to address queries pertaining to the environment and seek resolutions to prevalent issues. Given the centrality

of descriptive data in this research, effective analytical tools become imperative for interpreting the findings. The application of Nvivo proves to be pivotal in dissecting and comprehending the descriptive data, thereby contributing significantly to the resolution of the identified issues.

The analysis of data using Nvivo in this study concentrated on information derived from interviews, utilizing the cloud word feature. This feature evaluates the frequency of word occurrences in the data, specifically emphasizing qualitative research, and presents a visual representation of the most prevalent words.

Based on the outcomes of the word cloud analysis applied in the research, the term 'fashion' was the most accurately depicted compared to any other word. The terms 'fashion' and 'influencer' recurred prominently in the interview data, prompting interviewees to correlate their responses with both fashion and influencer lifestyles. The figure below illustrates the congruence between the information obtained during the first and second interviews:

Cluster Analysis

Based on the result of analysis of item clustered on the research above, it shown the one of aspect that contributed on the table below are as following:
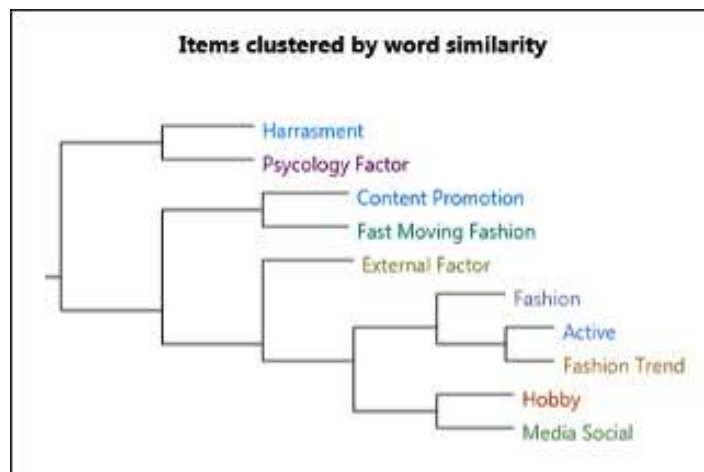

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Code A	Code B	Coefficient
Nodes\\Fashion Trend	Nodes\\Activities	0.603168
Nodes\\Media Social	Nodes\\Fashion Trend	0.44186

The table reveals that trendiness emerges as the primary catalyst for the adoption of fast fashion among Indonesian influencers, demonstrating a noteworthy value of 0.6031 that outpaces other factors. This underscores the pervasive impact of trends. (Ali et al., 2014) attribute the growth of the fashion industry to the escalating appeal of consumer trends, propelling ongoing enhancements in styles. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that unquestioningly adhering to trends can profoundly shape an individual's lifestyle.

THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED ON THE CONSUMPTION OF FAST FASHION AMONG INFLUENCER IN INDONESIA

In the fashion industry, influencers play a pivotal role in promoting specific lifestyles. According to (Duffy, 2020), influencers are fashion enthusiasts with the ability to popularize trends among their followers. (Prajoko & Nuryana, 2021) emphasize the significance of influencers, connecting it to their popularity, followers, and notable impact on clothing sales, particularly in the fast fashion sector. These elements contribute to the increasing prevalence of fast fashion in Indonesia. (D.R.E.S.S.X., 2021) reports an improved state of the current fashion industry, with a growing emphasis on personal style, particularly among Asians, including Indonesians. This underscores the widespread adoption of fast fashion in Indonesia. Despite the rapid changes in the industry,

According to (Harmon-jones & Mills, 2019), the second influential factor is psychology, which goes beyond the expression of emotions and significantly impacts human life. In the context of Indonesian fashion choices, psychological concepts play a crucial role, emphasizing user preferences. Influencers underscore the substantial impact of fashion trends as the primary contributing factor in this context.

CONCLUSION

Drawing conclusions from the results and discussions on "Exploring Why Influencers in Indonesia Still Consume Fast-Fashion Despite Its Impact Through Cognitive Dissonance Theory", several key points emerge. Firstly, trendiness stands out as a noteworthy factor driving the adoption of fashion styles by influencers. Secondly, influencers actively contribute to the transformation of fashion into fast-fashion. Moreover, there is a significant enhancement in the fashion landscape compared to previous years. Additionally, fast-fashion consumption is intricately linked to lifestyle and personal preferences, potentially giving rise to a sense of dissonance among individuals.

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