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The Hyperreality and Simulacra Theory of Jean Baudrillard: On Fashion Trends in TikTok

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of the times impacts the changing culture of society. The tendency towards technology and social media has become a common thing in the current postmodern era. In the modern era, humans tend to use technology and mass media as something they must do. This research aims to find facts from Jean Baudrillard's theory regarding hyperreality and simulacra that are currently occurring in people's lives. The author uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Descriptive research aims to provide a comprehensive picture and clear exploration of a phenomenon or social reality that occurs. The results of the research are that people wear shimmery clothes because they want to achieve their existence as simulacra. People choose social media when wearing simulacra clothes on TikTok social media as hyperrality. This research concludes that simulacra and hyperreality occur in society which give rise to cultural shifts and have an impact on previous societal habits and tendencies towards technology and social media.

Keywords: hyperreality, simulacra, trend fashion, TikTok

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan zaman yang begitu pesat berdampak pada perubahan budaya masyarakat. Kecenderungan ke arah teknologi dan media sosial sudah menjadi hal yang lumrah di era postmodern saat ini. Di era modern, manusia cenderung menggunakan teknologi dan media massa sebagai suatu hal yang harus dilakukannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan fakta dari teori Jean Baudrillard mengenai hiperrealitas dan simulakra yang saat ini tengah terjadi dalam kehidupan masyarakat. Penulis menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Penelitian deskriptif bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran yang menyeluruh dan eksplorasi yang jelas terhadap suatu fenomena atau realitas sosial yang terjadi. Hasil penelitiannya adalah masyarakat mengenakan pakaian yang berkilauan karena ingin meraih eksistensinya sebagai simulakra. Masyarakat memilih media sosial saat mengenakan pakaian simulakra di media sosial TikTok sebagai hiperrealitas. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa simulakra dan hiperrealitas terjadi di masyarakat yang memunculkan pergeseran budaya dan berdampak pada kebiasaan serta kecenderungan masyarakat sebelumnya terhadap teknologi dan media sosial.

Kata Kunci: hiperrealitas, simulakra, tren fesyen, TikTok

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INTRODUCTION

Human life is constantly evolving as society moves forward. People's behaviors are gradually shifting away from traditional norms, with modernization influencing nearly everyone today. This influence is evident in various aspects of daily life—individuals using motorcycles, owning branded cars, cooking with advanced appliances, and relying on information technology for many activities. Often, people adopt modern ways without even realizing it. Modernization is closely tied to consumerism, which has both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, modernization makes life more convenient; on the other hand, it fuels a desire not just to meet basic needs but to embrace a more luxurious and status-driven lifestyle (Roheyedi & Maulana, 2020).

Every layer of society is carried away by the strong currents of consumerism, regardless of age or social strata. The change in consumerist culture occurs worldwide. Modern society is already attached to the culture of consumption; consumption of a product is no longer for necessity but for desire or fulfilling a lifestyle. Consumerist society follows the order of social interactions. Values and self-esteem become more important than basic needs. Consumerist culture has poisoned and been applied in daily life (Fauzia & Riyadi 2014).

Dress styles are also part of lifestyle, especially women really like to follow dress styles (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2005). The influence of clothing is influenced by several factors, namely fashion trends, social environment, personal preferences and culture. One of the characteristics of teenagers is following fashion trends which are influenced by social media and influencers(Lajnef, 2023). Because following fashion trends is part of self-expression. Adult women who are of a mature age in thinking are often influenced by fashion trends that are developing in general, especially fashion that develops through social media (Allyn, 2007)

Mass media, which is used as a means of mass communication to convey general information messages to the public in relatively large numbers, uses technology such as television, radio, and the internet (Wahyudi 2001). The current rapid development of mass media cannot be avoided. The use of mass media such as the internet has become mandatory as a primary need. According to Cahyono 2016, various activities are now greatly assisted by the presence of technology, one of which is social media. Social media is an online platform that allows sharing, participating, and creating various things, from social networks, forums, and virtual worlds.

Fashion trends are also influenced by the use of social media. Social media has become a media for fashion trends because it spreads quickly, through social media fashion trends from abroad can be accessed and adopted by social media users (Nash, 2019) There are various types of social media. However, one of the social media that is currently in demand by Indonesian people is TikTok. Several things make TikTok popular with the public, namely (1) there is a short video service that is interesting and easy for users to understand, (2) the algorithm that TikTok users are interested in will appear in the user's feed, (3) TikTok has an active community, including related communities. with fashion design, (4) TikTok users can try their creativity (content) and upload it easily on the TikTok page.

This research stands apart from previous studies by focusing specifically on the trend of shimmery clothing through the lens of Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and simulacra. While earlier research may have explored fashion trends or the impact of media on societal behavior, this study uniquely combines these elements to analyze how shimmery clothing serves as a simulacrum—an imitation or representation that replaces reality. The objective is to investigate how individuals use this trend to construct and project their identity,

particularly on social media platforms like TikTok, where hyperreality blurs the line between authentic self-expression and simulated existence. By doing so, this research aims to uncover the deeper cultural shifts and the implications of these trends on society's evolving relationship with technology and media.

METHODS

This research takes a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to deeply understand the phenomena being studied. Descriptive research, as explained by Rusnadi (2014), is designed to explain both natural and human-made occurrences, providing a detailed and clear picture of social realities as they unfold. In this case, the focus is on how the trend of shimmery clothing acts as a form of simulacra—an imitation or representation that distorts reality—and how the TikTok platform embodies hyperreality. The goal is to explore how these concepts play out in everyday life, particularly in how people use fashion and social media to shape and present their identities in ways that blur the lines between what's real and what's constructed.

The research is thoughtfully designed to ensure a thorough examination of the shimmery clothing trend and its portrayal on TikTok. To gather rich and diverse data, the study employs a mix of interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews are conducted with teenagers in the Malang area, a group deeply engaged with both fashion and social media. These conversations seek to understand why they are drawn to shimmery clothing and how it plays a role in how they express themselves. Meanwhile, observations and documentation are carried out within the Malang community and on TikTok, focusing on how this trend is showcased and perceived in both physical and digital spaces. This multi-faceted approach ensures a comprehensive analysis of the trend.

For analyzing the data, the study uses thematic analysis, which involves identifying and exploring patterns within the collected information. This method is well-suited to qualitative research because it allows for a deep dive into complex social phenomena. In this study, themes related to simulacra—where shimmery clothing represents something beyond its original meaning—are explored alongside hyperreality, where platforms like TikTok create a reality that feels more real than the actual world. By examining these themes, the research aims to uncover the cultural shifts driving these trends and how they reflect broader changes in how society interacts with technology, media, and personal identity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Jean Baudrillard's Simulacra Analysis on Fashion Shimmer Trends

In his work titled Simulacra and Simulations (1985), Jean Baudrillard mentions that simulation society is a form of contemporary society's identity, always entangled with absurdity, code, signs, symbols, and models as production and reproduction in a theory Jean calls simulacra. In essence, humans in simulacra do not exist in real presence but always think imaginatively and are deluded in seeing reality in the space where the simulation mechanism takes place (Fauziah 2023). This condition creates a distance between truth and falsehood, reality and fiction, feeling far and having similarities. Therefore, what is produced in this reality is a state of illusion and falsehood, the result of simulation (hyper-reality). In analyzing the progress of virtual technology, Jean Baudrillard explains that false reality and engineering or

manipulation are conditions where humans are trapped in reality considered original or real. In the world of simulation, the depiction of reality is models of manipulation, not actual reality. Simulacra are intended to subtly control society by deceiving and convincing that the simulation is real, making society dependent on simulation and possessive of it. Humans eventually become unaware of the presence of this simulation (Saumantri & Zikrillah 2020).

Simulation determines society's view of a reality. When an object that can attract public interest, such as art, home needs, and others, is displayed through various media with ideal models, the line between simulation and reality becomes blurred. Jean Baudrillard (1994) mentions that everything about the world is created or simulated by digital technology, making it appear real. He calls this simulacra or artificial images. In simpler terms, a simulation of reality that has been distorted is simulacra. If simulation represents a reality, in simulacra, the represented reality has lost its reference. It is indistinguishable between what is true and false, real and illusory (Oktavia Ningtyas 2021).

Figure 1. Shows the shimmer fashion trend among teenagers sumber: lemoaofficial@tiktok.com

Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra essentially states that humans do not exist in real presence (Saumantri & Zikrillah n.d.). This is similar to human life in the modern era. Society uses social media as real life. Like the use of fashion clothes that become trends on social media, as clothes that are popular among the public (Oktaviani & Rustandi 2018). The factor influencing the use of shimmer clothes by the public starts from a public figure using them as a trend. Besides being used by public figures, other analyses also show that shimmer clothes have patterns that attract the attention of everyone who wears them. The term shimmer clothes itself comes from the English word "shimmer," which means to shine or glitter. In this context, glitter refers to silk clothes with a shiny touch on the surface.

In today's social media-driven culture, the popularity of shimmery clothing often leads people to become less connected to actual reality. Instead of choosing clothes for their practical function, many individuals are drawn to these trends simply to showcase them online, particularly on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. The desire to be part of this trend often outweighs the need for clothing that serves a practical purpose. As a result, the use of shimmery clothes becomes more about participating in an unreal, digitally constructed world rather than meeting real-life needs, highlighting the shift from function to form in modern fashion.

Jean Baudrillard's Hyperreality Analysis on TikTok Mass Media

Hyperreality creates a condition where falsehood blends with authenticity, the past blends with the present, facts are mixed with manipulation, signs blend with reality, lies merge with truth. The categories of truth, falsehood, authenticity, issues, and reality seem to no longer apply in today's world. Jean Baudrillard accepts the radical consequences of what he sees as the pervasive nature of codes in modern times. This code is clearly related to computerization and digitalization, which bypass the real and open the opportunity for the emergence of what Jean calls Hyperreality (Jauhari 2017).

Hyperreality is a concept deeply rooted in the technological advancements that characterize our current era. It represents a profound transformation in how we perceive and engage with reality, shifting the boundaries between the real and the artificial. Hyperreality is not just about technological progress; it marks the beginning of a new era of social relationships that exist primarily in the virtual world. According to Jean Baudrillard, this shift leads to a world that becomes hyperreal—where the line between reality and its representation blurs, and images and symbols take precedence over traditional concepts like "production" and "class conflict" as the driving forces of contemporary society. In this hyperreal world, there is no need for the imaginary mediation that once helped to produce and represent reality; instead, reality itself is replaced by its simulation.

Baudrillard further elaborates in his work *Simulacra and Simulation* that in the age of hyperreality, reproductions, such as holographic images, are no longer real but rather hyperreal—creating a version of reality that feels more genuine than the reality itself. This phenomenon is clearly observable in today's mass media, with TikTok being a prime example analyzed by the author. On platforms like TikTok, the content produced and consumed often transcends traditional notions of authenticity, as users create and engage with a reality that is constructed, edited, and curated to appear more real than the real world. This shift reflects the growing dominance of hyperreality in our social interactions and cultural expressions, where the boundary between what is real and what is simulated becomes increasingly indistinguishable.
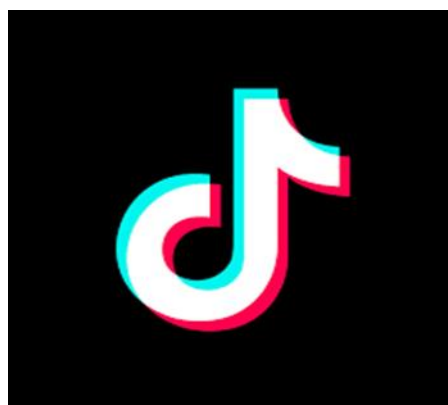
Figure 2. Shows TikTok as a mass media trend as proof of human existence sumber: tiktok.com

TikTok, a social media platform popular among the Indonesian public since 2020 until now, poses a new challenge in the form of controversial content(Sastramidjaja & Rosli, 2021). However, such content is deliberately designed to create a reality different from actuality or hide certain aspects of actual reality, making the boundaries between fact and issue blur. Social

media has become a confusing platform where news and gossip, facts and issues mix, and between reality and issues, it is difficult to distinguish (Haryono and Surabaya 2022). The emergence of fake news that presents fabricated stories trying to disguise themselves as authentic content ultimately affects other social media users (Appel et al. 2020).

The hyperreality that occurs creates a desire among users to upload videos that can attract views(Anderson, 2024). The desire of the community to follow trends that are viral on TikTok mass media becomes a rapidly spreading phenomenon and eventually implemented into the real world(Azni, 2024). This leads to a cultural change in society where an illusionary world is turned into reality. Social media like TikTok changes societal habits and culture, such as uploading a video, image, or other content based on the number of views and used as a means of self-existence.

CONCLUTION

The findings of this research highlight the profound cultural shifts brought about by the current era of technological development. Jean Baudrillard's theory suggests that the lines between simulation and reality have become blurred, as they are now deeply interconnected and mutually dependent. In today's world, the signs and images produced by media and technology create simulations that are often mistaken for reality. The ongoing trend of shimmery clothing is a clear example of this phenomenon, where people no longer consume products based on their practical utility but rather on what they see trending in the moment. This shift indicates that simulacra not only represent reality but also assert dominance over it, shaping societal behavior in ways that prioritize appearance over substance.

The study also underscores the significant impact of technological demands on social activities, particularly in the digital age where hyperreality increasingly substitutes for actual reality. As society becomes more immersed in platforms like TikTok, there is a noticeable cultural shift towards valuing recognition in the digital space, even if it is rooted in an illusory world. The content that becomes viral or featured on TikTok's "For You Page" (FYP) often reflects this hyperreal environment, which is subsequently emulated by users who believe in the reality of this simulated world. The implications of these findings suggest that fashion trends are now heavily influenced by social media rather than the practical comfort of clothing. As a result, platforms like TikTok play a crucial role in how individuals express their identity and assert their existence in the digital age.

For future research, it would be valuable to explore how other forms of media contribute to the construction of hyperreality in various aspects of life, such as politics, education, or personal relationships. Additionally, examining the psychological impact of long-term immersion in these simulated realities could provide further insights into how hyperreality shapes not only cultural trends but also individual perceptions and behaviors. This ongoing exploration could help society better understand and navigate the complexities of living in a world where the lines between the real and the simulated continue to blur.

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