

 Journal of Management and Business Innovation (JOMBINOV) https://v-learnov.com/index.php/jombinov Volume 02 Number 03 September 2026 Page: 224-241 ISSN: 3123-6464 (Online)	A Study on Middle-Class Gen Z Consumers in Kupang City: Materialism and the Status Consumption Trap Klaasvakumok J. Kamuri*¹, Maya Sinlae² ^{1,2} Department of Business Administration, Politeknik Negeri Kupang, Indonesia
Article History: Received: 27 June 2026 Revised: 01 August 2026 Accepted: 13 August 2026 Corresponding Author: Klaasvakumok J. Kamuri Corresponding E-mail: klaasvakumok.kamuri@pnk.ac.id	Abstract: Research Aims: This research studies the influence of materialism on the status consumption trap among middle-class Generation Z consumers in Kupang City, and analyzes the mediating role of status consumption in that relationship. Methodology: The study used a causal-explanatory quantitative approach, with a cross-sectional survey design comprising 200 respondents chosen through purposive sampling. The SmartPLS 4.0 software was used to perform partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) on the data. Research Findings: The findings show that materialism increases status consumption and directly contributes to the status consumption trap. Status consumption also significantly strengthens the consumption trap and partially mediates the relationship between materialism and the trap among middle-class Generation Z consumers in Kupang City. Theoretical Contribution/Originality: This study operationalizes the status consumption trap as a measurable variable that is conceptually distinct from traditional status consumption, bridging the gap between the literature on status consumption and compulsive purchasing. This is the first study to look at this link in the non-metropolitan setting of Eastern Indonesia. Practitioners/Policy Implications: The findings are useful for financial authorities creating digital credit limitations based on purchasing behavior, social media platforms analyzing the algorithmic impact on aspirational consumption, and colleges incorporating financial literacy into the curriculum. Research Limitations/Implications: Cross-sectional design constrains the ability to capture the dynamics of trap creation over time. The findings' generalizability is limited because they only cover a single city. Further study with a longitudinal approach and cross-city comparative studies is strongly encouraged. Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Materialism, Status Consumption, Status Consumption Trap, Generation Z, Middle Class, Kupang City, PLS-SEM
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INTRODUCTION

Behind the narrative of seemingly dynamic consumption growth, data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2025 revealed a startling fact: the number of Indonesia's middle class

shrank from 57.33 million in 2020 to 47.85 million in 2024, a 9.48 million decrease in just four years (Wahyudi et al., 2025). What is more troubling is that this fall in numbers does not correspond to a decrease in consumption behavior. On the contrary, social pressure thru digital media encourages this group to continue sustaining, even expanding, their expenditure on lifestyles above their financial capacities (Bursztyn & Jensen, 2017). This scenario makes the study of middle-class purchasing behavior extremely important, particularly when the actors are Generation Z, the group most thoroughly involved in the flow of digital consumption culture.

The Indonesian middle class is in a structurally contradictory situation, where they are rich enough to enter the modern consuming market yet too frail to withstand the financial hazards that come with it (Komalasari et al., 2025). Between 2018 and 2024, signs of middle-class pressure increased, including vehicle sales that had yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels, while the rate of problematic vehicle loans increased from 1.4 percent to 2.5 percent, and savings weakened as deposit growth slowed. Nonetheless, the middle class and aspiring middle class account for around 81.49 percent of total national consumption, making their purchasing habits a significant variable in determining the country's socioeconomic stability (Chatib, 2025). The contradiction of having a weak economic position while still supporting national consumption generates fertile ground for the growth of status-based consumer culture among Indonesia's middle class.

This dynamic is compounded by the situation in eastern Indonesia, notably in the province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), which has Kupang as its capital. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries continue to dominate NTT's economic structure in 2025, accounting for 28.87 percent of total GDP, while Household Consumption Expenditure accounts for 66.70 percent (Saragih, 2026). The high household consumption figures inside this economically weak structure show that the Kupang city community's spending is not matched by corresponding productivity growth. This is a circumstance that potentially increases the likelihood of consumption motivated by social and symbolic factors rather than functional need. Chikweche et al. (2021) assert that the middle class in emerging markets, including non-metropolitan cities in Southeast Asia, exhibit consumption aspiration patterns that exceed their income capacity, especially when exposed to high intensity of digital media.

The psychological core of this consumption conundrum is a value idea known as materialism. According to Richins and Dawson (1992) materialism is a value system that causes people to prioritize the possession of items in their lives, to judge success by what they own, and to believe that happiness can only be obtained via the purchase of goods. This three-dimensional paradigm includes acquisition centrality, possession-defined success, and acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, which has long served as the primary benchmark for judging consumer materialism. Furthermore, Richins (2017) argues that materialism is more than just a buying desire. It is a mindset that actively shapes and renews itself through social interactions and media exposure, making it considerably more difficult to change than simple consuming habits.

Materialism is not a standalone entity; rather, it emerges from a social ecology that reinforces itself. Pellegrino et al. (2022) found that materialism both directly and indirectly drives negative consumption behaviors, such as unplanned purchases made repeatedly (compulsively) and conspicuous consumption, with social media acting as a mediator, amplifying these effects through the intensity of platform use and attitudes toward consumed content. These findings suggest that the relationship between materialism and consumerism is mediated by digital

infrastructure rather than a direct link between values and behaviors. This conclusion is especially pertinent for Generation Z, who grow up in a digital environment dominated by image-based material and social status.

Generation Z is the first generation in history to grow up and learn about the world through digital devices. Unlike earlier generations that learned to adapt to technology, Generation Z believes that their digital presence is an integral element of their social life (Ramadhani & Khoirunisa, 2025). According to Huwaida et al. (2024), the fast changing social media landscape has offered new opportunities while redefining Indonesia's Generation Z purchase decisions through platform-based digital commerce. Thus, platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are more than just communication channels; they are venues where social identities are created, recognized, and compete for in real time.

Despite advocating for an ethical and ecological lifestyle, Generation Z is torn between materialism and their devotion to those values. This generation is continuously grappling with the desire to express themselves and obtain social status through the acquisition of things, notably fast fashion, which contradicts their environmental principles and ethics (Halibas et al., 2025). This scenario demonstrates that materialism in Generation Z stems not from indifference, but rather from multiple and unavoidable identity demands inside the digital social system.

Despite economic pressures, Indonesian Generation Z prefers to minimize spending on health and basic needs rather than sacrificing lifestyle expenses. This situation is compounded by the influence of social media, which encourages impulsive consumption among Indonesia's Generation Z, with 63% devoting more than 30% of their salary to supporting their lifestyle. This tendency is exacerbated by the simplicity of digital transactions, which continue to fuel impulsive shopping habits (Rahardjo et al., 2025). This conduct is not the result of blind consumerism, but of people purchasing identities and beliefs rather than stuff. This reasoning is what distinguishes status consumption as more than just a financial decision, but also a psychological investment in impression management, which is rooted and reactivated by today's digital media ecosystem (Kirin et al., 2026; Dantas & Abreu, 2020).

Status consumption is a person's predisposition to purchase products or services not only for their utility, but also for the status value and social image associated with the commodity. According to Eastman et al. (1999), status consumption is the desire to purchase things that others perceive to be prestigious or status-enhancing. This notion is based on Veblen (1989) thesis of ostentatious consumerism, which refers to consumption behavior used to demonstrate social standing. However, in the present digital era, particularly among Generation Z, status consumption is not limited to pricey things. Status can also be expressed through the adoption of specific brands, following popular trends, and engaging in social media activities that aid in the development of recognition and social identity, particularly among the middle class (Kertamukti et al., 2019).

Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory gives a psychological framework for understanding why status signals never achieve a state of satisfaction balance. In a socioeconomically unequal society, people tend to measure their self-worth through social comparison, and perspectives on luxury frequently align with this mindset, in which people use various means, including credit, to gain the most recognition in these social comparisons (Guo et al., 2024). This dynamic is at the heart of what this study refers to as the status consumption trap,

which is a cycle of consumption that constantly renews itself because social references always climb upward, while consumers' economic ability stays unchanged or even weakened.

Access to diverse digital services increases the likelihood of consumerist behavior. According to data from the Financial Services Authority of Indonesia in 2024, total Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) financing in Indonesia reached Rp6.13 trillion in March 2025, up 23.90% over the same period the previous year. Generation Z accounts for roughly 26.5% of the total consumers (Agustin et al., 2025). One of the reasons for its popularity is that the installment system makes product costs appear lighter and more cheap, encouraging consumers to spend more than they can afford (Kamil et al., 2024). This condition occurs frequently in Generation Z, which is the primary user of BNPL services (Hidayati et al., 2023).

Although research on materialism and status consumption is growing globally, there is still a large study gap. First, most research on materialism and status consumption in Indonesia is still limited to major cities on Java Island, particularly Jakarta (Pellegrino et al., 2022; Huwaida et al., 2024). As a result, little research has been conducted on this issue in Indonesia's eastern areas, such as the city of Kupang, which has distinct economic and social conditions than Java's big cities. Although the community's income levels are relatively low, the inhabitants of Kupang are exposed to the same trends and digital consuming culture via social media and digital technologies. This circumstance makes Kupang an intriguing place for investigating the relationship between materialism and prestige consumption. Until now, research on this topic outside of Java Island has been quite limited and rarely appears in international scientific papers.

Second, while the concept of status consumption has been widely explored in the literature, particularly through the work of Eastman et al. (1999) and Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption (1899), research specifically analyzing the status consumption trap is quite restricted. Until far, few research have examined the concept as a psychological and economic situation that can result in a never-ending consuming cycle, particularly among middle-class Generation Z. However, scholarly interest in Generation Z's experiences with materialism and social pressure is growing, as seen by a considerable increase in publications. However, research on how psychological and social factors impact the status consumption trap in this group is still limited.

Third, most recent research has looked at materialism and status consumption separately or just through a single intermediary variable (Halibas et al., 2025; Chikweche et al., 2021; Richins, 2017). There is still relatively little study that directly investigates how materialism, which includes numerous value dimensions, can influence a person's proclivity to engage in status consumption behavior. This limitation becomes increasingly relevant to analyze in the middle class, which is under economic pressures while remaining heavily connected to the digital environment and social media.

Based on these conditions, the research conducted in the city of Kupang not only repeats existing studies but also offers new contributions to understanding consumer behavior in developing regions outside metropolitan cities. This research is expected to enrich the understanding of the relationship between materialism and the status consumption trap in a social and economic context different from the regions that have been more extensively studied.

This study aims to answer a number of interrelated problems. First, this study examines the amount of materialism among middle-class Generation Z consumers in Kupang City. Next, this study determines the extent of status consumption inclination in that group and evaluates if their

consumption behavior indicates a status consumption trap. The primary goal of this study is to determine whether materialism influences the tendency of middle-class Generation Z in Kupang City to engage in repeating status consumption practices. The findings of this study are expected to not only provide an overview of Generation Z consumer behavior in Kupang City, but also contribute to the study of consumer behavior in Indonesia. Furthermore, this research has the potential to contribute theoretically and empirically to the growth of literature on materialism and status consumption, particularly in the setting of rising markets in Eastern Indonesia's non-metropolitan regions, which are currently understudied.

METHODS

The nature of the hypothesis in this study necessitates the quantitative evaluation of correlations between variables, including the direction, strength, and significance of their influence. As a result, this study takes a quantitative approach and employs a causal-explanatory research design. This approach enables researchers to empirically test the associations between variables (Sari et al., 2022).

The study's demographic consists of middle-class Generation Z customers who live and work in Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara. The population is defined by two primary criteria: According to the Indonesia Central Statistics Agency 2025, Generation Z is 18-27 years old, economically independent, and actively participating in purchase decisions. They are from the middle class, with per capita monthly expenditures ranging from Rp2.04 million to Rp9.9 million (Wahyudi et al., 2025). Based on demographic statistics from Kupang City in 2025, the number of productive-age Generation Z individuals is expected to reach 110,000-125,000 (Saragih, 2026). Based on a middle-class share of 17.13%, the target population is predicted to be between 18,000 and 21,000 people.

Because a comprehensive sample framework for the middle-class Generation Z population in Kupang City does not exist, this study employs purposive sampling procedures, with respondents chosen based on factors relevant to the research aims. The selected respondents must be between the ages of 18 and 27, live in Kupang, have a monthly personal consumption and lifestyle expenditure of at least Rp500,000, be active social media users, and have purchased branded products or lifestyle items that consider social status within the last 12 months. To increase the number of responders who satisfy the criteria, this technique is combined with a limited snowball sampling approach based on suggestions from previous participants (Hair et al., 2019).

The sample size in this study was determined using the PLS-SEM recommendations for mediation models. Although the minimum sample size meets the 10-times rule approach, it is deemed insufficient to assess the mediation link, which necessitates greater precision and statistical power. This study used a power analysis approach with an assumed medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a 5% significance threshold, and a statistical power of 0.80. According to the calculation results, the minimal sample size is around 68 respondents. However, to improve the stability of the analytic results, better enable mediation testing, and anticipate partial or inaccurate data, this study sets a sample size of 200 respondents. This amount is also consistent with the recommendations in the PLS-SEM literature for mediation models containing three latent constructs and reflective indicators.

In this work, hypothesis testing is performed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach and SmartPLS 4.0 software. This method was chosen

because it can test both the measurement and structural models at the same time, making it appropriate for research on mediation interactions. The analysis is done in two stages (Nitzl et al., 2016; Hair et al., 2019). The first stage involves evaluating the outer model for construct validity and reliability using factor loading values (≥ 0.70), Average Variance Extracted (AVE ≥ 0.50), Composite Reliability, Cronbach's Alpha (≥ 0.70), and discriminant validity using HTMT values (< 0.85). Indicators that do not satisfy the criteria will be removed before further analysis begins. The second stage involves evaluating the inner model to test the research hypothesis using a bootstrapping approach with 5,000 subsamples. The hypothesis is considered supported if the path coefficient is positive, the t-statistics value is ≥ 1.96 , and the p-value is less than 0.05. Furthermore, the R^2 and f^2 values provide insight into the model's capacity. Mediation testing is carried out by determining the significance of the indirect effect based on bootstrapping results. Mediation is said to happen when the indirect effect is significant. Furthermore, mediation is classified as partial mediation if the direct path is still substantial, and full mediation if it is no longer significant.

RESULTS

Respondent Description

Data was collected from 200 respondents who satisfied all of the predefined research criteria. The demographic profile of the respondents is shown below in order to provide an overview of their characteristics.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Presentation (%)
Gender	Male	88	44
	Female	112	56
	Total	200	100
Age	18 – 20 Years	42	21
	21 – 23 Years	89	44,5
	34 – 27 Year	69	34,5
	Total	200	100
Level of Education	High school	38	19
	Diploma (D1-D3)	27	13,5
	Bachelor	121	60,5
	Postgraduate	14	7
	Total	200	100
Job Status	Student	61	30,5
	Employe	58	29
	Police / Military	34	17
	Civil Servant	29	14,5
	Entrepreneurship	18	9
	Total	200	100
Monthly Expenses	Rp2.000.000 –Rp3.500.000	74	37
	Rp3.500.001 –Rp5.500.000	83	41,5
	Rp5.500.001 –Rp9.900.000	43	21,5
	Total	200	100
Status of Products Previously Purchased	Premium Smartphone	112	56
	Branded Clothing/ Accessories	98	49
	Branded Shoes	76	38
	Motor Vehicle	44	22
	Premium Beauty Products	61	30,5
Purchase Method	Cash	67	33,5
	Credit	81	40,5
	Paylater (BNPL)	52	26

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Presentation (%)
Note: The product status category and purchase method are multiple response, so the total percentage exceeds 100%.			

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

The respondents' demographic features match the context of the research on status consumption among Generation Z in Kupang. The majority of responses were female (56%), with the 21-23 age group (44.5%) being the largest, followed by the 24-27 age group (34.5%). This age distribution implies that the bulk of respondents are in their early adulthood phase, which is when social identity and lifestyle begin to develop. From an educational standpoint, the majority of respondents (60.5%) hold a bachelor's degree, showing the competence to comprehend and complete the research instruments. Based on economic conditions, the majority of respondents (41.5%) have monthly expenditures of Rp3.5 million to Rp5.5 million, demonstrating the characteristics of a middle-class group with relatively good purchasing power. The most popular social media apps are Instagram (43%) and TikTok (39.5%). These two platforms are notorious for promoting lifestyle, trends, and status symbols. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents (66.5%) use non-cash payment methods such as credit and paylater, demonstrating a high level of access to digital financial services in their consumption activities.

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

Before testing the hypothesis, the outer model is evaluated to ensure that each indicator is valid and reliable in measuring the target construct. According to Hair et al. (2019), this evaluation includes three components: convergent validity assessed through outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), internal consistency reliability measured using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha, and discriminant validity evaluated via the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

1. Outer Loading

The outer loading value is utilized in PLS-SEM analysis to measure the convergent validity of each indicator. Indicators with an outer loading value ≥ 0.70 have strong convergent validity, explaining 49% or more of the variation of the construct they assess (Hair et al., 2019). As a result, indications that match these criteria are regarded valid and included in the study model.

Tabel 2. Results of Outer Loadings for All Indicators

Construct	Item Indicator	Indicator Questions	Outer Loading	Explanation
Materialisem (X)	X.1	I spend a lot of time thinking about the branded items I want to have.	0,782	Valid
	X.2	Having branded or expensive items makes my life feel more meaningful.	0,811	Valid
	X.3	The branded and expensive items I own reflect my identity.	0,794	Valid
	X.4	I judge someone's success by the possessions they have.	0,823	Valid
	X.5	People who own expensive and branded items are successful individuals.	0,856	Valid
	X.6	I have more respect for people who have classy belongings.	0,801	Valid

Construct	Item Indicator	Indicator Questions	Outer Loading	Explanation
	X.7	I feel happy if I can buy the branded or expensive items I want.	0,768	Valid
	X.8	Having more quality and branded items will make my life better.	0,843	Valid
	X.9	My happiness is greatly influenced by my ability to own the desired branded and quality items.	0,819	Valid
Status Consumption (M)	M.1	I buy branded and expensive items because of the social status that comes with them.	0,801	Valid
	M.2	It's important for me to have a product that shows I'm successful.	0,834	Valid
	M.3	I am interested in buying the latest product that is trending among my social circle.	0,856	Valid
	M.4	I am willing to spend more money on products that make me look more prestigious.	0,812	Valid
	M.5	I pay attention to the possessions of others as a measure of their social status.	0,779	Valid
Status Consumption Trap (Y)	Y.1	After buying a branded or expensive product, I feel the need to complement it with another product of equal quality.	0,823	Valid
	Y.2	Although lifestyle expenses have already burdened my finances, I still find it hard to stop buying branded or expensive items.	0,857	Valid
	Y.3	I'm afraid of being considered "classless" if I stop buying branded or expensive products.	0,834	Valid
	Y.4	I realize that my financial condition is affected by my consumption patterns, but the urge to consistently appear as a "classy person" is stronger.	0,798	Valid

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

The analysis results show that all indicators in the three constructs have outer loading values that exceed the minimal threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.768 to 0.857. As a result, there is no need to remove any signs from this model. These findings show that each indicator may accurately represent the measured concept, implying that the measurement model passes the criteria for convergent validity and can advance to the next evaluation stage.

2. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency Reliability

According to Hair et al (2019), convergent validity ensures that the indicators inside a construct actually represent the same concept. PLS-SEM testing uses outer loading values and Average variation Extracted (AVE) criteria. Outer loading > 0.70 and $AVE \geq 0.50$ imply that the construct can explain more than 50% of the variation of its

indicators. The internal consistency reliability is then utilized to analyze the consistency of indicators in assessing a construct using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). A construct is deemed to have strong reliability if the CA and CR values are ≥ 0.70 . However, a CA value between 0.60-0.70 is still acceptable in exploratory research. A CR value above 0.95 may indicate redundancy across indicators and require more assessment.

Table 3. AVE, Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	AVE	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Explanation
Materialisem (X)	0,658	0,945	0,921	Requirements Met
Status Consumption (M)	0,668	0,909	0,884	Requirements Met
Status Consumption Trap (Y)	0,686	0,897	0,859	Requirements Met

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

Table 3 demonstrates that all constructs meet the criteria for convergent validity and reliability. First, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for the three constructs range from 0.658 to 0.686, all of which meet the minimum requirement of 0.50. This means that each construct can explain more than half of the variance in its indicators, meeting the criteria for convergent validity. Second, the Composite Reliability values range from 0.897 to 0.945, indicating that all constructions have very high internal consistency because their values above the minimum requirement of 0.70. Third, Cronbach's Alpha values vary from 0.859 to 0.921, indicating a high level of reliability. Thus, the results of this test show that the research instrument has enough validity and reliability levels, making it appropriate for use in the following step of analysis.

3. Discriminant Validity

According to Hair et al. (2019), discriminant validity ensures that each construct in the model accurately measures various concepts and does not overlap with one another. Discriminant validity assessment in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is carried out utilizing the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and Cross Loadings. If the HTMT value is less than 0.90 (or less than 0.85 for stricter criteria), the square root of each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is greater than its correlation with other constructs, and each indicator has the highest outer loading value on the construct it measures when compared to other constructs, discriminant validity is considered to be met. If all of these requirements are met, each concept can be classified as having excellent discriminant validity, allowing the measurement model to move on to the structural model evaluation step.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	Materialisem (X)	Status Consumption (M)	Status Consumption Trap (Y)
Materialisem (X)	—		
Status Consumption (M)	0,743	—	
Status Consumption Trap (Y)	0,698	0,761	—

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

The results in Table 4 reveal that all Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values are less than the maximum of 0.85. The association between status consumption and status consumption trap has the highest HTMT value (0.761), whilst the relationship between materialism and status consumption trap has the lowest value (0.698). These findings show that the three dimensions in the study, materialism, status consumption, and status consumption trap, have significant differences, meeting the criteria for discriminant validity. Although conceptually interconnected, each construct measures a distinct topic. Overall, the outer model evaluation found that all validity and reliability requirements were met. As a result, the measurement model is certified valid and reliable, allowing the study to move on to the internal model review and hypothesis testing stage.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

After the measurement model has been deemed valid and reliable, the study moves on to the evaluation of the inner or structural model. This step is intended to evaluate the interactions between variables in the study model, such as the direction and strength of materialism's influence on status consumption and the status consumption trap, as well as the role of status consumption as a mediating variable. The structural model is evaluated in four stages: assessing the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect magnitude (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and hypothesis testing.

1. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

In the PLS-SEM model, the coefficient of determination (R^2) measures how well exogenous factors explain the fluctuation of endogenous variables. A higher R^2 value indicates that the model can explain more of the endogenous variable's variance. In general, a R^2 value > 0.75 implies high explanatory power (considerable), $0.50 < 0.75$ shows moderate explanatory power, $0.25 < 0.50$ indicates weak explanatory power, and < 0.25 indicates extremely low explanatory power. Hair et al. (2019) emphasize that the quality of a structural model is not just determined by its R^2 value. Evaluation also needs to consider other measures, such as effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and path coefficients, so that the model's performance can be assessed more comprehensively.

Table 5. The R^2 and Adjusted R^2 Values of the Endogenous Variable

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Category
Status Consumption (M)	0,452	0,449	Moderate
Status Consumption Trap (Y)	0,587	0,582	Moderate - Strong

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

The analysis findings suggest that the status consumption variable has a R^2 value of 0.452. This suggests that materialism accounts for 45.2% of the variation in status consumption behavior, with the remainder impacted by factors outside the research model. The status consumption trap variable has a R^2 value of 0.587, indicating that materialism and status consumption jointly explain 58.7% of the variation. The remaining 41.3% is impacted by other factors not analyzed. Both R^2 values are moderate, indicating that the research model effectively explains the relationships between the variables tested.

2. Effect Size (f^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

In the PLS-SEM model, effect size (f^2) measures the extent of each exogenous variable's contribution to the endogenous variable. This is represented by the change in R^2 value when an exogenous variable is eliminated. A f^2 value of ≥ 0.35 indicates a

significant influence, 0.15-<0.35 shows a medium effect, 0.02-<0.15 indicates a moderate effect, and <0.02 indicates an effect that can be ignored (Hair et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, predictive relevance (Q^2) evaluates the model's ability to predict observable data through the blindfolding technique. A model is considered predictive if the Q^2 value > 0 , with values ≥ 0.35 indicating good predictive ability, 0.15-<0.35 moderate, 0.02-<0.15 weak, and <0.02 very weak (Nitzl et al., 2016).

The evaluation of R^2 , f^2 , and Q^2 complements each other in assessing the quality of the structural model. R^2 indicates the model's ability to explain variance, f^2 measures the contribution of each exogenous variable, and Q^2 evaluates the model's predictive ability against empirical data.

Table 6. The values of f^2 and Q^2

Relationship / Construct	f^2	Category of Effects	Q^2	Explanation
Materialism $\rightarrow$ Status Consumption	0,825	Big / Strong	-	-
Status Consumption $\rightarrow$ Status Consumption Trap	0,458	Big / Strong	-	-
Materialism $\rightarrow$ Status Consumption Trap (Direct)	0,182	Medium	-	-
Status Consumption (M)	-	-	0,274	Relevant
Status Consumption Trap (Y)	-	-	0,388	Relevant

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

The analysis's findings indicate that materialism has a considerable influence on status consumption, with an effect size (f^2) of 0.825. This suggests that materialism has a significant role in the development of status-consuming behavior. With a f^2 value of 0.458, the impact of status consumption on the status consumption trap likewise belongs to the substantial group. The direct impact of materialism on the status consumption trap, on the other hand, has a moderate f^2 value of 0.182. These results suggest that materialism has a greater impact on the status consumption trap when status consumption acts as a mediator.

Furthermore, both endogenous variables' predictive relevance (Q^2) values exhibit positive outcomes. The Q^2 value of the status consumption trap is 0.388, whereas that of the status consumption variable is 0.274. The research model has strong prediction capacity because all of the Q^2 values are greater than zero. This indicates that the model has the ability to predict empirical data in addition to explaining the relationships between variables in the study data.

3. Hypothesis Testing: Direct Effects

Finding the direct impact of exogenous factors on endogenous variables in the PLS-SEM model is the goal of the direct effect hypothesis test. The path coefficient (β), t-statistic, p-value, and confidence interval are obtained by the bootstrapping technique. If the bias-corrected confidence interval does not cross zero or the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05 at a 5% significance level, the hypothesis is deemed supported. The direction and strength of the influence are interpreted using the path coefficient value; a positive coefficient denotes a unidirectional link, whereas a negative coefficient denotes a bidirectional interaction (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, statistical significance and an interpretation of the direction and strength of the link between variables are used to determine whether to accept or reject the hypothesis.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Results – Direct Influence

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-Statistics	p-Value	Decision
Materialism $\rightarrow$ Status Consumption (H_1)	0,672	0,054	12,453	0,000	Accepted
Status Consumption $\rightarrow$ Consumption Status Trap (H_2)	0,451	0,062	7,234	0,000	Accepted
Materialism $\rightarrow$ Status Consumption Trap (H_3)	0,312	0,064	4,891	0,000	Accepted

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

With t-statistic values > 1.96 and p-values < 0.05 , the test results demonstrate the statistical support for all three direct influence hypotheses. These results show that every direct association suggested by the study model has a favorable and noteworthy effect.

With a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.672$ (t-statistic = 12.453 and p-value = 0.000), hypothesis (H_1) exhibits the greatest influence in the model. These findings suggest that middle-class Generation Z consumers in Kupang City are more likely to engage in status consumption the more materialistic they are. These results support the idea that one of the primary motivations for people to buy commodities as status symbols is a materialistic perspective.

Additionally, a route coefficient of $\beta = 0.451$ (t-statistic = 7.234 and p-value = 0.000) supports hypothesis (H_2). These findings suggest that the status consumption trap is positively impacted by status consumption. Put another way, a person is more likely to become stuck in a repeating consumption habit if they have a higher propensity to engage in status consumption.

The path coefficient of $\beta = 0.312$ (t-statistic = 4.891 and p-value = 0.000) for hypothesis (H_3) suggests that materialism also directly affects the status consumption trap. These results show that materialism not only promotes status consumption but also directly enhances the propensity to continue such consumption patterns, even when they start to put pressure on financial circumstances. Thus, the development of status consumption traps is influenced by materialism both directly and indirectly.

4. Hypothesis Testing: Indirect Effect and Mediation

The indirect impact test in the PLS-SEM model determines if the exogenous variable affects the endogenous variable via the mediating variable. The bootstrapping process is used to calculate the indirect effect value (β), t-statistic, p-value, and confidence interval. A mediation effect is regarded significant if the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96, the p-value is less than 0.05, or the bias-corrected confidence interval does not exceed zero. Next, the kind of mediation is established by weighing the importance of the direct and indirect effects. Full mediation occurs when the indirect effect is substantial but the direct effect is not significant; partial mediation happens when both are significant; and no mediation occurs when the indirect effect is not significant (Hair et al., 2019). To explain the mechanism of the link between variables in the study model, mediation results are interpreted using path coefficient values, t-statistics, p-values, and the relationship between direct and indirect effects.

Table 8. Results of Testing Indirect Effects and Mediation

Hypothesis	Direct Effect (β)	Indirect Effect (β)	Total Effect	t-Statistics	p-Value	95% Confidence Interval	Types of Mediation
Materialism $\rightarrow$ Status Consumption Trap (H ₄)	0,312*	0,303	0,615	6,234	0,000	(0,211; 0,398)	Partial Mediation

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

The test findings indicate that Hypothesis (H₄) is accepted, with an indirect effect value of $\beta = 0.303$ (t-statistic = 6.234, p-value = 0.000). Furthermore, the confidence interval (0.211; 0.398) does not exceed zero, implying that status consumption strongly mediates the association between materialism and the status consumption trap.

The analytical results also show that the sort of mediation used is partial mediation. This result is based on materialism's continued large direct influence on the status consumption trap, even when the status consumption variable was introduced as a mediator. These data suggest that materialism influences the status consumption trap via two pathways: indirectly through status consumption and directly without passing through that variable.

Overall, these findings suggest that status consumption serves as a mechanism for understanding some of materialism's influence on the status consumption trap, but it is not the sole mechanism at action. The total effect of materialism on the status consumption trap is $\beta = 0.615$, indicating a combination of direct influence ($\beta = 0.312$) and indirect influence through status consumption ($\beta = 0.303$), with relatively balanced contributions from both paths.

DISCUSSION

Materialism as the Dominant Predictor of Status Consumption

The study's first finding indicates that materialism has a positive and substantial effect on status consumption ($\beta = 0.672$; $t = 12.453$; $p < 0.05$). Materialism is a significant predictor of status consumption among middle-class Generation Z consumers in Kupang City, as indicated by the large path coefficient and effect size value ($f^2 = 0.825$). These findings suggest that the decision to buy things for social status is driven more by the individual's value system than by environmental considerations.

These findings are consistent with Richins and Dawson (1992) theory, as stated by Shammout et al. (2022), who argue that those with a materialistic mindset perceive ownership as a measure of success and happiness. As a result, individuals are more likely to acquire things that reflect their social position. This trend is becoming increasingly significant in the context of Generation Z in Kupang City, as social media has emerged as the primary medium for presenting goods, lifestyles, and successes to the public.

Interestingly, the findings of this study reveal that materialism has a considerable influence on status consumption even in Kupang City, which has different economic features than other Indonesian metropolitan cities. These findings show that economic constraints do not necessarily alleviate the desire for status spending. In contrast, as social media's influence grows, some people see owning branded goods or objects with symbolic value as a method to express their identity and

earn social recognition.

Consumption Status as an Entry Point to the Consumption Trap

The second study found that status consumption has a positive and substantial impact on the status consumption trap ($\beta = 0.451$; $t = 7.234$; $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that the greater an individual's proclivity to purchase items in order to achieve or retain social status, the more likely the individual may become locked in a cycle of repeated consuming. Thus, status consumption does not end with a single purchasing decision, but rather fuel a need to perpetually preserve the image and status that has been established.

These findings support Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory. According to the hypothesis, people compare themselves to others in order to determine their social standing. When someone begins to acquire status-related things, they will compare themselves to groups with greater consumption standards. As a result, there is a strong desire to continue purchasing products that are thought to maintain or improve one's social status. The findings of this study further confirm Ghiglino and Langtry's (2026) theory that the benefits of status consumption stem not only from the ownership of things, but also from the sense of belonging to a specific social group. Individuals modify their spending patterns because they want to remain accepted in that group. Individuals' desire to remain accepted in that group encourages them to conform to existing consumption standards.

In the context of Kupang City's middle-class Generation Z, the rise of social media and easy access to digital financial services has exacerbated this process. Individuals can use social media to continuously demonstrate their lifestyle and possession of items to their social environment, while payment options such as installments and paylater make purchases more convenient by allowing them to avoid paying the whole cost at the time of transaction. This circumstance is reflected in the characteristics of the research respondents, with 66.5% using non-cash payment methods. This simplicity can hasten the establishment of the status consumption cycle, as people are more likely to continue making purchases even when their financial resources begin to run low.

The Direct Influence of Materialism on the Consumption Trap

Hypothesis testing (H_3) reveals that materialism has a positive and substantial impact on the status consumption trap ($\beta = 0.312$; $t = 4.891$; $p < 0.05$). These data show that materialism not only promotes individuals to participate in status consumption, but it also increases the likelihood of becoming trapped in such spending behaviors. In other words, materialism's influence on the status consumption trap operates both indirectly and directly.

Minor and Hossain (2017) proposed the symbolic self-completion theory, which our findings support. According to the hypothesis, people who form their identities around specific symbols would work hard to keep those symbols in place in order to preserve a consistent self image. In the context of this study, branded products or status symbols can serve as emblems of identity. As a result, people with a high level of materialism are more likely to continue purchasing or owning prestige goods, even if such decisions put a strain on their financial situation.

This study's findings also support the findings of Pellegrino et al. (2022) who found that materialism has a direct influence on consumption behavior, such as compulsive buying and ostentatious consuming, and that this tendency is exacerbated by social media use. These findings, when applied to the middle-class Generation Z in Kupang City, show that materialism is not only a factor driving the formation of status consumption, but also one that sustains such behavior. As

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a result, people with a strong materialistic orientation find it more difficult to break old consumption habits, even when they become aware of the consequences for their financial situation.

Partial Mediation in the Consumption Trap

The hypothesis testing (H_4) indicates that status consumption plays a significant role in mediating the association between materialism and the status consumption trap ($\beta = 0.303$; $t = 6.234$; $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the total effect of materialism on the status consumption trap is $\beta = 0.615$. These data suggest that status consumption functions as a mechanism, explaining some of materialism's influence on the status consumption trap.

The form of mediation discovered is partial mediation, because materialism's direct influence on the status consumption trap persists even when status consumption is added as a mediating variable. This finding suggests that materialism affects the status consumption trap via two pathways: indirectly through status consumption and directly without passing through the variable. Thus, status consumption is not the sole mechanism that connects materialism to the status consumption trap.

The indirect effect ($\beta = 0.303$) is virtually equal to the direct effect ($\beta = 0.312$), indicating balanced contributions from both channels. These findings suggest that simply regulating status consuming behavior is insufficient for reducing the status consumption trap.

Changes must also be aimed on the materialistic values that underpin such behavior. Thus, avoiding the status consumption trap necessitates a strategy that focuses not only on consumption behavior but also on changing people's attitudes toward ownership, achievement, and social status.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research provides three theoretical contributions. First, this research introduces the concept of the status consumption trap as a construct distinct from status consumption, thereby expanding the study of consumption behavior by linking the literature on status consumption and compulsive buying. Second, the research results confirm that the materialism model developed by Richins and Dawson (1992) remains relevant in explaining the behavior of Generation Z consumers, including in non-metropolitan city contexts such as Kupang City. Third, this study proves that status consumption partially mediates the relationship between materialism and the status consumption trap, so the influence of materialism occurs thru both direct and indirect paths.

From a practical perspective, the research findings highlight the importance of strengthening financial literacy and consumer literacy for Generation Z so that they can manage consumption behavior more wisely. In addition, regulators need to continue strengthening oversight of digital credit services to ensure their use does not encourage excessive consumption. Social media platforms are also expected to pay more attention to the impact of algorithms and content that have the potential to increase status-based consumption. Thru these various efforts, it is hoped that the risk of status consumption traps forming among Generation Z can be minimized.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to analyze the influence of materialism on the status consumption trap thru status consumption among middle-class Generation Z consumers in Kupang City. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis on 200 respondents indicate that all research hypotheses are empirically supported.

First, materialism has been proven to have a positive effect on status consumption, indicating that the higher a person's materialistic orientation, the greater their tendency to consume in order to obtain or maintain social status.

Second, status consumption has a positive effect on the consumption trap, so the higher the status consumption behavior, the greater the tendency for individuals to get trapped in a cycle of repeated consumption.

Third, materialism also has a direct influence on the status consumption trap, which shows that a materialistic orientation not only encourages status consumption behavior but also directly reinforces individuals' tendency to maintain such consumption patterns.

Fourth, status consumption has been shown to partially mediate the relationship between materialism and the status consumption trap. These findings indicate that the status consumption trap is formed thru two pathways, namely directly thru a materialistic value orientation and indirectly thru status consumption. Therefore, efforts to reduce the status consumption trap need to consider both mechanisms simultaneously.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits the research's ability to explain changes in the status consumption trap over time, so future research is recommended to use a longitudinal design.

Second, the research only involves middle-class Generation Z consumers in Kupang City, so generalizing the findings to other regions should be done with caution.

Third, the research model has not yet included moderator variables, such as financial literacy, self-esteem, social media usage intensity, or reference group influence, which could potentially affect the relationships between variables.

Fourth, the construct of the consumption trap status still requires further validation in different populations and contexts to enhance its generalizability.

Therefore, future research is expected to expand the scope of the area, apply longitudinal designs, integrate moderator variables, and re-test the consumption trap status construct in various research contexts.

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