

**Aesthetics, simulacra, and lifestyle consumption:
A social practice in the representational space of “Ada Apa Dengan Kopi”
café on Gen-Z**

***Estetika, simulakra, dan konsumsi gaya hidup:
Studi tentang praktik sosial dalam ruang representasi kedai “Ada Apa Dengan
Kopi” pada Gen-Z***

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Abstract

This study examines the symbolic and aesthetic construction of the coffee shop *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* as a simulacrum—a representation that mediates and dominates social reality—and its implications for consumption practices and identity formation among Generation Z. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research seeks to understand the subjective meanings that Gen Z visitors construct through activities such as socializing, studying, working from the café (WFC), and taking personal “metime” within the café space. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard’s theories of simulacra, simulation, and hyperreality, the analysis highlights how aesthetic elements (interior design, product presentation, atmosphere) function as signs that not only reflect reality but also shape and precede the café’s social reality. The findings reveal that *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* provides a representational space in which Gen Z individuals perform their social and aesthetic identities, experience existential fulfillment and prestige amid the fragility of everyday reality. This space constructs a hyperreal condition where coffee becomes not only a commodity but also a symbol of status and identity and a stage for lifestyle performance. Thus, this coffee shop becomes a simulacrum, namely, the social reality of Gen Z is constructed through signs and aesthetics that paradoxically produce consumption and social interaction in the context of contemporary urban culture.

Keywords: aesthetic café; Gen Z hangout practices; simulacra and hyperreality of consumer culture

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji konstruksi simbolik dan estetika kedai kopi “Ada Apa Dengan Kopi” sebagai suatu simulakra—representasi yang memediasi dan mendominasi realitas sosial—serta implikasinya terhadap praktik konsumsi dan pembentukan identitas Generasi Z. Pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologi digunakan untuk memahami makna subjektif yang dibangun pengunjung Gen Z melalui aktivitas nongkrong, nugas, bekerja dari kafe (WFC), hingga menikmati waktu sendiri (metime) dalam ruang kafe. Dengan menggunakan teori simulakra, simulasi, dan hiperrealitas Jean Baudrillard, analisis menyoroiti bagaimana elemen-elemen estetika (interior, penyajian produk, atmosfir) berfungsi sebagai tanda-tanda yang tidak sekadar mencerminkan realitas, melainkan membentuk dan bahkan mendahului kenyataan sosial mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa “Ada Apa Dengan Kopi” menyediakan ruang representasi di mana Gen Z menegaskan performa sosial dan estetika diri mereka, merasakan sensasi eksistensial dan prestise di tengah kerapuhan realitas normal. Ruang ini menciptakan kondisi hiperreal, di mana kopi bukan hanya komoditas tapi juga simbol status dan identitas, serta arena pertunjukan gaya hidup. Sehingga kedai kopi ini menjadi sebuah simulakra yakni, realitas sosial Gen Z dibangun melalui tanda dan estetika yang secara paradoks memproduksi konsumsi dan interaksi sosial dalam konteks budaya urban kontemporer.

Kata kunci: estetika ruang kafe; praktik nongkrong Gen Z; simulakra dan hiperrealitas budaya konsumsi

Introduction

According to Singh and Dangmei, Gen-Z is a generation raised by social media, as their lives revolve around digital technology, which can be said to be their identity (Firamadhina & Krisnani 2022). In this context, coffee shops have become more than places to consume beverages; they have turned into symbolic arenas where identity is performed, displayed, and consumed. The coffee-drinking habits of Gen-Z today follow the same pattern as online shopping; they consider many other factors besides taste,

such as the comfortable atmosphere of the coffee shop and the facilities it offers (Fitriani et al. 2021). The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) plays a central role in shaping these practices. The coffee habit carried out by Gen-Z is also based on the existence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) or a syndrome that refers to the phenomenon of worrying about not being up to date with trends so that Gen-Z is encouraged to create virtual lives such as hanging out activities, holiday posts, contemporary coffee shops that are interesting to show in order to get recognition that he is an up-to-date person (Aisafitri & Yusriah 2020). FOMO therefore transforms social activities such as hanging out into performative acts intended for online circulation, shifting the meaning of everyday leisure.

This is particularly evident in Surabaya, a city where coffee shops mushroom on almost every corner. From large chains like Janji Jiwa, Kopi Kenangan, and Fore, to local favorites such as *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*, cafés have become integral to Gen-Z's everyday lifestyle. The proliferation of coffee shops and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) behaviour experienced by Gen-Z is the basis for this research choosing *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* as the research location. Surabaya thus provides a unique context where global consumption trends intersect with local youth culture.

Ada Apa Dengan Kopi (AADK) represents one of the most distinctive cases in this trend. *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has become a popular spot amongst the Gen-Z crowd in Surabaya due to its aesthetically pleasing interior with an industrial concept and offering more than just coffee. Quoting from timesindonesia.co.id, Fernando as the owner of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* said that the café's mission is not just to be a hangout place but to be a friend for #KawanAADK to create the best moments (Yuana 2023). *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is also a pioneer café that provides a photo booth for visitors to capture their hangout moments (Yuana 2023). *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* was established in the COVID-19 era which made the brand a little difficult to develop its business, but by utilising social media Fernando managed to maintain his business (Yuana 2023). With three branches in Surabaya and two in Malang, *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has become a lifestyle destination marketed not merely as a place to drink coffee but also as a symbolic stage for social interaction.

Beyond lifestyle consumption, this phenomenon highlights a broader cultural transformation. Gen-Z's engagement with coffee shops illustrates how postmodern desires blur the distinction between needs and wants. In the era of postmodernism, consumption increasingly emphasizes prestige, making shopping and leisure integral to lifestyle construction (Putri & Hidayah 2024). In line with the habit of hanging out done by Gen-Z, coffee shops are no longer spaces to enjoy coffee but also places for self-expression, social existence, and self-creation in the digital space (Putri & Hidayah 2024). Hanging out becomes less about the coffee itself and more about producing a curated image of life, especially when shared across social media platforms. Because, shows that currently consumers enjoy coffee not for its taste, but rather people come to coffee shops to enjoy the atmosphere. Not many coffee shop visitors have knowledge about coffee; instead, they just want to fulfil their need to socialise (Rahayu et al. 2019).

To theorize this shift, Baudrillard's concepts of simulation, simulacra, and hyperreality offer critical insights. Simulation refers to the imitation of reality; simulacra are representations detached from any original reality; and hyperreality occurs when these representations become more real than reality itself (Baudrillard 1994). In *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*, the act of "having coffee" functions as a simulacrum: what is consumed is not merely the beverage but the symbolic meaning of being in a trendy café. Through social media, these representations circulate and reinforce an idealized lifestyle that may surpass the reality of the coffee itself.

There have been many studies conducted on coffee shops, such as the one by Mawarbani, which found that hanging out at coffee shops is a means of self-healing for students in Yogyakarta, as they engage in solitary activities to introspect or simply enjoy the atmosphere of the shop (Marbawani & Hendrastomo 2020). However, this study will be developed by considering other perspectives this study aims to find out how Gen-Z's coffee drinking habits at the trendy coffee shop *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* are used to show off and at the same time trap them in hyperreality. This research is significant because it addresses a gap in understanding how global theories of postmodern consumption and hyperreality intersect with localized

youth cultures. The focus of this research is in the context of consumption culture, how the symbols and aesthetics of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* are constructed as simulacra that influence its social meaning and how Gen-Z builds its self-performance in hanging out activities at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* shops.

While much has been written about Gen-Z's reliance on social media, fewer studies examine how these practices intersect with specific cultural spaces such as coffee shops in Surabaya. By situating Baudrillard's ideas within the lived experiences of Gen-Z, this study contributes to both theoretical discussions of hyperreality and empirical insights into Indonesian youth culture. Specifically, it asks: how the symbols and aesthetics of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* are constructed as simulacra that influence its social meaning, while also exploring how Gen-Z performs their identities through the practice of hanging out in the café.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach to explore how Gen-Z constructs identity through symbolic consumption in the context of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*. The author uses a phenomenological approach. Husserl established phenomenology as a science that does not begin with doubt, but rather with a focus on what is actually true in experience (Husserl 1999). This is used to describe the actual situation regarding Gen-Z's habit of hanging out, which has become a sign of a change in lifestyle (Husserl 1999). A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate because the research questions concern complex and subjective experiences that cannot be captured through quantitative measurement. More specifically, phenomenology allows the researcher to examine how meanings are lived and embodied in everyday practices. By focusing on the lived experiences of Gen-Z visitors, this approach enables a deeper understanding of how the café is consumed not merely as a place to drink coffee, but also as a symbolic arena for self-performance and identity formation.

The study involved 12 informants who were selected purposively to ensure rich and relevant data. All participants were members of Gen-Z aged between 18 and 25 years, consisting of students and young workers who regularly visited *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*. This research was conducted at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* because this coffee shop was established during the COVID-19 era but has remained stable and continues to grow, with six branches in Surabaya and Malang. But, this research was conducted from April 2024 to October 2024. This coffee shop is also one of the pioneers in providing photobooth facilities and has five areas designed according to their functions for visitors, making it a unique icon of this café. The five areas are the comfort zone, the breeze zone, the inspiration zone, the creative zone, and the story corner. This research was conducted at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* branches in Tegalsari, Wiyung, and Keputih Surabaya. Informants were also differentiated by gender, with eight women and four men, to provide a more balanced perspective. Selection criteria included frequency of visits, diversity of activities (such as studying, socializing, or spending leisure time), and variation in visiting times (weekdays versus weekends). This composition enabled the research to capture diverse experiences reflecting the social dynamics of urban Gen-Z.

Data were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and non-participant observations at three *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* branches in Surabaya. The interviews provided narrative accounts of participants' motivations, experiences, and self-representations, while observations captured everyday practices, the use of thematic zones, and interactions within the café environment. These primary data were complemented by secondary sources such as news articles and scholarly literature on Gen-Z consumption. Data analysis followed Creswell's (2014) qualitative framework, beginning with the transcription of interviews and field notes, followed by categorization to identify patterns of symbolic consumption. The final stage involved interpreting the emerging themes to explain how social meanings and identity performances are constructed through the coffee shop space.

Result and Discussion

Public spaces are discussion spaces that are open to everyone. People gather to form a public sphere, where public reason refers to the function of monitoring government and state power. In this case, coffee shops are also part of the public sphere that can be enjoyed by all levels of society (Igiasi 2017). *Ada*

Apa Dengan Kopi is one of the coffee shops that is in great demand by the public, especially Gen-Z in Surabaya. *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi Coffee & Eatery* is a coffee shop brand that was established in 2020. *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is not only present in Surabaya but also expanded its coffee shop business to Malang. In this contemporary era, social practices have developed into more than just relaxation activities or social interactions, with the emergence of social media and visual consumption today coffee shops are no longer seen as a space for conversation but also as a symbolic space in producing and consuming self-image (Arisanti 2021). In this study, *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* becomes part of visual culture and social identity, where the symbolic and aesthetic elements offered have an important role in attracting consumers.

Symbols and aesthetics of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* as simulacra that give rise to social meanings

Contemporary society no longer operates solely on the basis of the real relationship between objects and their meanings, but rather through a system of mutually referential signs (Raho 2021). In the realm of simulation, space and objects no longer represent real reality, but instead create a pseudo-reality shaped by images, aesthetics and lifestyle (Saputri et al. 2023). *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has now become part of visual culture and an arena for social identity. Symbolic and aesthetic elements are inherent in this café and play a role in attracting consumers. The design and atmosphere created by this café are constructed as a place that is not just for enjoying coffee, but as a social experience shaped by certain symbols and aesthetics. This coffee shop presents a unique theme by separating each area according to its function, such as the Inspiration Zone, which is used for concentration and is described as an ‘inspiring’ space. This section will explain how the symbols and aesthetics of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* are constructed and function as simulacra that influence the social meaning of the hanging out practices of Gen-Z.

Simulacra itself refers to copies that replace reality and become more real than reality itself (Baudrillard 2018). The unique design that arouses visitors’ curiosity makes *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* a concrete example of simulacra. There are five zones to enjoy when visiting this café, namely: (1) the Comfort Zone, located indoors, which is suitable for visitors who want some me-time; (2) the Breezy Zone, located outdoors, which is often used to get some fresh air; (3) the Story Corner, located outdoors in a fairly private spot where visitors can comfortably share stories; (4) the Inspiration Zone, located indoors and designed with a more conducive concept so that it can be used to do work or seek inspiration, and (5) the Creative Zone, located outdoors and used to enjoy the surrounding view. Thus, this shop does not refer to actual reality but rather to a reality that has been engineered or shows how this shop has become a simulacrum. Visitors are free to choose where they will spend their time in this café, which is not only a physical marker but also shows the emotional symbols, moods, and psychological needs that this café has prepared to build visitors’ feelings as if they were entering a room specially designed for their emotions.

“*Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* gives us space, for example, if I’m upset I can go to the story corner, if I want to do an assignment I can go to the inspiration zone, if I want to find the wind I can go to the breeze zone, if I want to relax just choose the comfort zone. This is really an advantage for me, so I don’t get distracted, because each space has its own function.” (Informant VCI).

This informant’s statement emphasises that *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has become a consumption space that has undergone a significant transformation in meaning. The statement shows that *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has succeeded in creating an area that can be maximally utilised by visitors, such as choosing the inspiration zone if they want to work on tasks, going to the comfort zone if they want to relax, and so on. It is evident that *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is no longer merely a place to enjoy coffee, but has become a symbolic arena filled with signs and aesthetics that are exchanged within social and cultural imagery. Polishcuk reveals that simulacra in modern society have now become an important element of constructed urban spaces, especially when these simulacra take on a visual form, because contemporary artistic myths create many simulacra (Polishcuk 2019). This is what makes the thematic concept of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* appear more like a simulacrum because it is symbolic and representational, giving rise to new meanings for visitors. The existing zones are aesthetic narratives that seem to represent how

a person's life should look like. This study did not include informants from secondary school students, but (Chammearc et al. 2023) also conducted a survey on the hangout preferences of secondary school students. They found that cafes can sometimes be very crowded with 'consumers,' but cafes are places that can make students calmer, as seen from the fact that 84.2% of students chose cafes as places that can make them calmer (Chammearc et al. 2023). This complements how Gen-Z's behaviour regarding coffee drinking is indeed part of simulacra.

Baudrillard argues that society today lives in an era where reality has been replaced by simulation and humans now live in a world of signs (Baudrillard 1994). The behaviour of capturing moments while hanging out at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has become a hyperreality, a state where the representation of the practice of hanging out is more important than the actual reality. Capturing moments is done to be shared on social media in order to gain validation for what is being shown, but this is different from reality. Posting pictures of coffee, the atmosphere of the café, or recommending cafés is a practice carried out by Gen Z out of a desire to construct a certain identity narrative to be displayed in public. Utilising social media by showcasing aesthetically pleasing visuals of the café and its comfortable atmosphere, as well as flaunting its facilities, is a behaviour shared by *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* and its visitors to represent a postmodern space governed by the logic of simulation. Both demonstrate that aesthetics and symbols are no longer mere supplements to consumption but have become the primary commodities to be consumed. This is because, when engaging in their hanging-out practices, Gen-Z often seeks out references to contemporary coffee shops that offer comfortable atmospheres, appealing ambiances, and new experiences to showcase.

In his book *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Baudrillard states that in postmodern society, consumption is not driven by the need for objects but rather by the need for the meaning attached to those objects (Baudrillard 1998). This is evident in the practices of Gen-Z at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*, where they come not because of the quality of the coffee, but to show off their work-life balance, their desire to look good, and their desire to stay up to date.

"Hanging out is an activity that we must do as humans, we can't live alone. So, to let people get to know us, we need to hang out more. Well, I think *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is suitable for men, the concept is not too crowded. So, I feel that hanging out here is cool." (Informant YGA).

The informant's statement is a clear reflection that his presence at this café is not to enjoy coffee, but to gain recognition that he exists within his social circle. His statement reveals gender classification in the choice of hangout spots; for him, this café represents masculinity in his mind, which is why he often hangs out there. This gender classification shows the symbolic consumption he engages in to gain public recognition. His actions illustrate how simulacra operate, with the calm atmosphere of the café being overly interpreted as a symbol of masculinity and authenticity, even though it is entirely an aesthetic construction. With a wide variety of informants and genders, this study contributes to another perspective on coffee drinking itself. Shahryari sees a hidden life and construction of female identity in coffee drinking, showing that the habit of going to cafes gives women a sense of freedom through greater attention to their physical, psychological and social needs (Syahryari 2025). However, this study further finds that it is not only women who have this freedom, but men as well, as revealed by the informants.

Ada Apa Dengan Kopi has undergone a transformation in meaning from a simple coffee shop to a complex symbolic consumption space. The practices carried out by Gen-Z in this shop are an important part of the social and personal lives of visitors. Gen-Z comes to this shop to find job prospects, do assignments, keep up with the latest news (gossip), and so on. This shop is more than just a café; it also functions as a symbolic space where individuals consume meanings about freedom, relationships, identity, and existence. Social media plays a major role in the social practices of Gen-Z at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*. It is used as the main arena for the construction of self-image and representation. Thus, drinking coffee becomes a performance constructed through visual symbols on social media. The performance on social media has two functions: as an expression and as a performance. As an expression, it is done when

Gen-Z presents themselves on social media by posting aesthetic café scenes to express their aestheticism. However, if what is posted is their activities during meetings or opening their laptops to do assignments, this becomes part of the performance.

“I don’t think so, people judge us from social media now, what you update on social media determines whether you have a name or not. For example, if I see a friend of mine who updates about his relationship with his messy girlfriend, I’m lazy, like what is this kid doing on social media? The impression is really pitiable, well from there people litany he is a toxic figure, already knowing the relationship is not good to continue.” (Informant RHN).

Informants’ statements indicate that social media users tend to curate their experiences to match digital social expectations. Thus, being cool when hanging out at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* also depends on how someone presents themselves on social media. *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has become a place for Gen-Z to showcase narratives of togetherness, comfort, and social success on social media, which often differ from reality. This refers to Baudrillard’s statement that simulacra are representations that no longer refer to reality, but rather to images or signs that stand alone. The hanging out activities posted by Gen-Z are activities that produce meaning. That meaning is to show themselves as ideal people. This statement successfully explains why other informants use social media to show the best side of their lives. They post activities on *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* to show their productive lives, to show that they are doing well, or even to show how enjoyable their lives can be (by hanging out almost every day) so that they do not receive negative judgements. “*Coffee shops and hanging out are part of my life. I swear I can’t do it without hanging out. I live to hang out, hang out to live, don’t hang out, don’t live.*” (Informant AGN). This informant’s statement shows how cafes can become a second home, as they seem to be dependent on coffee drinking. As Bado said, Gen-Z today actualises themselves to the extent that some people see coffee shops as a second home when they feel tired (Bado et al. 2023).

Hanging out thus becomes a way to fill emotional voids while also a means of animating personal meaning. However, hanging out at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* becomes a sign of existence and life quality itself. Here, the meaning of life is replaced by simulations constructed by the hanging-out community. Statements like “*I live to hang out, I hang out to live; without hanging out I don’t live*” affirm that this activity has been deeply ingrained into personal identity and existence.

From the experiences shared by Gen-Z, it can be seen that the more representations are produced, the thinner the actual meaning becomes. Table 1 shows that the visual aesthetics of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* have become symbolic consumption through thematic zones that make this café stand out from other cafés. These thematic zones can be spaces to represent the moods and emotional needs of visitors. However, these zones become concrete forms of simulacra, where the authentic experience of hanging out is no longer related to social interaction and enjoying coffee. This cafe then becomes a space for consuming emotions.

In the section The Café as a space of Social Identity, *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* becomes a space for self-expression, a refreshing break from social roles (as students or workers), but also a space to show one’s identity as (productive students or workers with a good work-life balance), and even a space for professional meetings. *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is not just a place to enjoy coffee; Gen-Z has made this café a space to do everything. Social media then became the primary medium for reproducing and disseminating simulacra of these cafés. Informants not only sought information or promotions through social media, but also actively posted their activities to project an image of productivity, stability, or aesthetics. These activities reveal how the aesthetics of the café were constructed into a digital image representing an ideal life, which did not necessarily correspond to the daily reality of visitors. Pramelani also discussed the role of social media in these hangouts, saying that the urge to drink coffee also stems from a desire to be considered trendy by following the trend of visiting trendy coffee shops that are popular on social media (Pramelani 2020).

Table 1.

Symbols and aesthetics of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* as simulacra that give rise to social meanings

Symbols & aesthetics of <i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i>	Research findings
Visual Aesthetics as a Product	Ada Apa Dengan Kopi has five thematic zones that visitors can enjoy according to their mood: 1. Comfort Zone: Located indoors, often used for personal time, daydreaming, and enjoying the café atmosphere. 2. Inspiration Zone: Often chosen by visitors to do work or other activities from the café. 3. Creative Zone: Often used to enjoy the surrounding scenery, such as city lights, or to create content during golden hour. 4. Cool Zone: Designed for socialising, chatting with friends, and smoking, as it is located in the outdoor area. 5. Story Corner: Intended for sharing personal stories, located in a quiet corner of the café to avoid crowds and focus on conversations with friends.
The Café as a Space of Social Identity	1. As a place for visitors to refresh themselves. 2. As a place to express oneself. 3. As a place to meet clients. 4. As a place to work on assignments. 5. As a place to express oneself.
Digital Representation and Online Identity Imaging	1. Social media is used to find information about up-and-coming coffee shops. 2. Social media is used to provide information about <i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i>. 3. Social media is used to post about <i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i>'s activities, promotions, and aesthetics. 4. Social media is used to post about <i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i>'s activities to make it look productive and well-run.

Source: Primary research in 2024

Thus, the social meaning of this café space is no longer just a place to drink coffee, but a stage for Gen Z to express themselves. The use of social media further emphasises that this activity is not just about enjoying coffee, but about consuming images. The social meaning of hanging out at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has shifted due to the dominance of simulacra.

In 2013, Viviani conducted research on how cooking shows became so popular on television. Television became a medium for showcasing aesthetic perfection and enjoyment through food, which was no longer important for its functional value, but became a means of promoting a lifestyle that individuals considered necessary (Viviani 2013). Nowadays, people not only use television as a medium to promote lifestyles that have lost their functional value, but also use social media as a medium. This study shows how social media plays an important role in influencing Gen-Z in determining their actions in coffee-drinking activities.

Gen-Z's performance of the self in the context of consumption at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*

This section discusses how Gen Z performs when they are at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*. Through the coffee shop space, the consumer experience is shaped by the image created through media and marketing, forming a hyperreality where visitors do not just drink coffee, but also consume the experience and identity offered by the coffee shop space (Yanto & Hikmah 2023). Observations show that activities at this coffee shop give rise to patterns of behaviour that shape Gen Z's social existence. *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* becomes a social performance to describe the status and ideal image of Gen-Z. Gen-Z's familiarity with social media makes it easy for them to show their ideal image. Through *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*, which acts as a stage, they express their desire to show their social performance by building their ideal narrative through social media.

The concept of simulation shows how signs and values in mother society no longer reflect reality but create a simulacrum world that influences one's consumption behaviour (Bakti et al. 2019). Gen-Z now views coffee shops as important social spaces. Visiting a coffee shop is not about enjoying coffee but about displaying one's social identity among Gen-Z itself.

“What I once heard was that they said I wasn't a good wife because I was rarely at home, and that I wasn't a good mother because I often took my child outside. But the one who truly knows about my life is me, right? After getting married, I felt like I lost a lot of time to take care of the house, my husband, and my child, so I started hanging out at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* to get to know myself better. It's part of my effort to rediscover who I am, so that I can still have a space to voice my own self.” (Informant PDF).

“*Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* gives us space, you know. For example, if I'm feeling down, I can go to the Story Corner; if I want to do assignments, I can go to the Inspiration Zone; if I want to get some fresh air, I can go to the Breezy Zone; and if I just want to relax, I can choose the Comfort Zone. This is a huge advantage for me, because I'm not disturbed at all—each area has its own function.” (Informant VCI).

The informant uses *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* as a space to maintain her identity after marriage. When she began to be labelled a housewife or wife at a young age, she wanted to reclaim her identity as a Gen-Z who keeps up with trends. Therefore, she chose to continue visiting coffee shops regularly, especially *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*. The social logic of consumption, among students who enjoy consuming at Starbucks, shows that there is a standardisation of lifestyle, which is indirectly the result of various ideas and views that are believed in so that this standardisation can be formed. Through this standardisation, a person can be considered to exist or not (Lubis & Elida 2024). These findings show a similar pattern, how individuals try to show their identity through coffee drinking activities, especially at trendy cafes. This means that this coffee shop has become an arena for people to negotiate their identities through the practice of hanging out. Furthermore, when a student does their assignments or holds an organisational meeting at this shop, or when a worker has a meeting with a client there, it shows that *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has successfully become an arena for Gen-Z to produce their identity. This shop has become a symbolic medium that displays comfort, openness, productivity, and resistance to the roles they play. *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* further facilitates symbolic consumption behaviour by introducing thematic zones that visitors can utilise, as if when in these zones they can engage in activities aligned with the intended function of the area when it was created.

This shows that the spatial design indeed supports comfort, productivity, and social expression. The space is consciously designed to create a hyperreality of an experience that feels more real than reality itself. This statement shows how this café works well in fulfilling the desires of Gen Z, who are really only interested in social performance and their ideal image. The space, which is designed to suit its function, consciously becomes a hyperreality of an experience that feels more real than reality itself. *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* becomes an idealised simulacrum, where Gen Z feels like the most ideal version of themselves because of the illusion of freedom to express their ego, self-actualisation, and social recognition within these spaces. Baudrillard states that contemporary society no longer lives in a stable relationship between signs and meanings, but rather individuals live in a system of representations that imitate each other without any original reference (Baudrillard 2018). Therefore, the identity displayed in these cafes is not a reflection of a fixed identity, but a dynamic symbolic construction that arises from the consumption of signs.

Posting about themselves while hanging out is an effort by Gen Z to establish their existence in front of others. They choose *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* so that they will not be considered young people who are not up to date. Meanwhile, some others choose this cafe because they are afraid of losing friends or missing out on gossip among their circle of friends. According to informants, by regularly hanging out, they will become better known. There is a perception that if they do not participate in these hangouts, they will not be able to follow the conversations because they will have missed out on many things in their social circle. However, not satisfied with just being present at the coffee shop, they also take to social media to continue to receive validation that they are not missing out on trends.

Through Baudrillard's simulacrum lens, *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* shows its presence as a performative social representation. The aesthetic design, diverse and unique facilities, and the atmosphere created by this shop make it a stage for Gen-Z to play their roles. Informants stated that they try to show the best side of their lives, such as being productive, not looking depressed because of a breakup, still being able to hang out even though they are part of the sandwich generation, and presenting themselves as young mothers who are not confined to the label of 'young mother'. These actions show how simulacra operate. Because in contemporary society, simulacra are not only copies of physical reality, but also copies of more ideal desires and identities (Chang 2015). Priyanti et al. (2022) state that consumption activities are not only carried out out of necessity, but more than that, consumption is carried out for symbolic reasons, trends, and prestige. More deeply, this study found that this also applies to what Gen-Z uses, so that hanging out is a place to find out about trends and follow trends.

"Because I often hang out, especially at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*, I follow the style of my friends, in terms of makeup I am usually poisoned and then I end up buying it too. Clothes, bags, shoes are also included so it's like poisoning each other, but most of my stuff is because I was poisoned by my friends." (Informant PRH).

The informants' statements show how social practices at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* become an arena for the formation of social performance through simulacra. Identity does not emerge because it is born as itself, but is constructed through the symbolic consumption that it does at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*. The activity of mutually influencing fashion trends (clothing, make-up, skincare) while hanging out shows that Gen-Z consumes a lifestyle shaped by interactions at this coffee shop. This action is as stated in the research conducted by Suryani, that fashion or outfits for young people that are currently hyped are the most talked about styles of clothing and will also look cool when worn to a coffee shop. In addition, they can be used for taking photos (Suryani & Kristiyani 2021). Thus, *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* increasingly reveals its presence as a simulacrum, where it shapes social identity because appearance is considered a social performance.

"Honestly, yes. I had just broken up with my girlfriend and was really upset, so I looked for ways to keep myself busy and not think about her constantly. I ended up coming here all the time, sometimes staying until closing. Over time, I realized I could actually be alone, and the bonus was that I didn't look sad; it was just like when I had a girlfriend or not. When I had a girlfriend, I would update my Instagram with trips and work-life balance stuff, even though that was mostly because of my girlfriend's suggestions. After the breakup, I thought, if I don't post anything, people might think I'm sad, so I kept coming to *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* to show that I was okay." (Informant YGA).

Informants show how *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* and social media have become good friends because they are used to manage their ideal self-image. This means that the ideal self-image is not only realised physically in coffee shops, but also digitally. This phenomenon shows that *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has become a space for the production and exchange of meaning. The actions taken by these informants, as stated by Shaheen et al. (2022), show that social media currently applies a form of reductionism to a person's identity because individuals are now consumers of images and simulations. Other visitors also clarify that *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is positioned as a simulacrum because it wants to look ideal on social media, which in reality is not the case. According to Baudrillard (2018), contemporary society no longer lives in a stable relationship between signs and meanings, but rather individuals live in a system of representations that imitate each other without any original reference. Gen-Z aligns with Baudrillard's thinking. They view what their friends showcase on social media as a reference to maintain their existence within their social environment. An informant stated that they use social media to update their social life, leading many friends to visit the cafes they post about. Receiving feedback brings them joy. This indicates that Gen-Z lives in a system of representation that imitates each other without any original reference. Therefore, Gen-Z's social identity formed in *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is not a reflection of a fixed identity, but a dynamic symbolic construction displayed through symbolic consumption.

Social media represents ideas that are simulacra of simulacra, with the entities themselves in accessible in our era of recyclical social reproduction and, thus, objects students may never interact with in actuality, and yet it shapes their lives in very tangible ways (Kessel et al. 2025). In line with Kessel et al's statement, the informant's actions are a simulation of happiness, which he shows to the public through social media to maintain his existence. This means that social media truly represents the idea of simulacra of simulacra, because the original entity is not visible, but still shapes a person's life in a real way.

The regular hanging out that Gen Z engages in traps them in hyperreality. Baudrillard argues that simulation is no longer about territory, reference, or real substance. It is a generation of a model of reality without origin or reality itself: a hyperreality (Baudrillard 2018). In the context of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*, visitors live in hyperreality because the activities they engage in are driven by media, community, and visual trends. The space offered by this café functions as a symbolic code that facilitates performative expression. Thus, the social performance of Gen-Z at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is part of a sign system that no longer represents real needs, but rather the desire to be part of a collectively constructed symbol. As conveyed by the informant AGN "Well, is it bad sis? Now when I'm working, I still hang out a lot, that's why I have a double job, so that I can always have money to hang out." The informant's actions turned out to be relevant to the consumptive behaviour exhibited by young customers at Kedai Rakyat. The act of drinking coffee indicates impulsive buying, non-rational buying, and wasteful buying, they show that they are buying for pleasure rather than because they want to drink coffee (Widiawati et al. 2023).

In his research, Badi found that Gen-Z in the city of Palopo visit coffee shops to show off their lifestyle as a symbolic message to those who see them, because other people's judgements are based on what they display, visiting coffee shops ultimately serves to please themselves by acknowledging their social class identity (Bado et al. 2023). It turns out that this also happens in the lives of Gen-Z in Surabaya. Being someone who has to support the family economy (sandwich generation), someone who has to sacrifice their food budget in order to have money for socialising, or even has to take on a second job, as stated by the informant, further clarifies how Gen Z's lives have been caught up in the mechanism of simulacra and trapped in hyperreality. Hyperreality occurs when the boundary between reality and representation becomes blurred, and what is consumed is no longer reality itself but its simulation (Baudrillard 2018). *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has become a social renaissance shaped by the images and experiences it creates. Gen-Z hangs out for things that are no longer necessities, no longer aligned with their original reality. This signifies that *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has now become a social and symbolic landscape filled with signs and has become hyperreality.

According to the informant, in order to satisfy his desire to hang out, he had to work at two places. Thus, *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* became hyperreal because hanging out was simulated as a form of self-actualisation that created symbolic dependence to the point of blurring the line between needs and performative demands. Table 2 shows how Gen-Z's performance in hanging out at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* is influenced by image, social representation, and symbolic demands. In the first category, motivation and image show that this café functions as a space to gain social recognition. Recognition of themselves so that they are considered cool and not homebodies, or to show their social circle that getting married at a young age does not hinder the freedom of a young person's lifestyle. This means that the identity displayed by Gen Z is a simulation of the social image they project onto their social circle. This has been studied by Mubaroq, who found that the influence of hanging out on the formation of social climbers is the behaviour of updating one's status by uploading photos of food or drinks featuring well-known café brands, which is commonly done by students at Panca Marga University. This is done to gain high popularity (Mubaroq & Aisyah 2021).

In the Self-expression and Participation trend category, *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* has successfully become a medium for self-expression and a means of staying connected with trends. Utilising existing facilities, they show their ideal side to the public. Thus, drinking coffee here is not about enjoying the coffee, but about accommodating self-expression within the framework of popular culture. Meanwhile, in the

performativity and digital representation category, *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*, social media, and Gen-Z have a close relationship. Gen-Z utilises digital media to present their ideal image as productive, aesthetic, up-to-date individuals, using this café as a stage.

Table 2.

Gen-Z's performance of the self in the context of consumption at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*

Categories	Research Findings
Social Motivation and Image Construction	1. Visitors come at the invitation of their friends. 2. Having coffee at <i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i> is perceived as a pleasurable form of indulgence. 3. To eliminate the label of being a homebound individual. 4. To demonstrate that early marriage does not prevent individuals from having time to socialize at cafés.
Self-Expression and Engagement in Trends	1. The use of thematic zones as a means of mood adjustment and self-expression. 2. Broadening perspectives on contemporary trends.
Performativity and Self-Representation	1. Showcasing activities at <i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i> to gain recognition as a productive, aesthetic, and well-adjusted individual. 2. Demonstrating behavior that reflects work–life balance.
Financial Sacrifice for Image Construction	1. Forcing oneself to continue visiting <i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i> despite limited financial resources. 2. Taking on additional work in order to maintain the ability to socialize at "<i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i>."
The Stage of Identity Performance	<i>Ada Apa Dengan Kopi</i> is conceptualized as a space that facilitates multiple social roles: a professional setting, a site for intellectual exchange, and an avenue for escaping social pressures."

Source: Primary research in 2024

Arisanti's findings show that café visitors come only to show off on their Instagram social media accounts, such as enjoying expensive menu items, seeking entertainment, meeting with relatives, social gatherings, and so on. The reason for doing so is because they need recognition from others to perceive themselves as having a social class identity that matches their appearance (Arisanti 2021). This pattern is still relevant at the time of this study, with informants using social media to show the most ideal side of themselves in order to gain recognition. This traps them in hyperreality, as they prioritise their image over actual reality. The fact that they share their seemingly perfect lives, financial sacrifices, double jobs, or even sacrificing sleep is done solely to maintain their social performance. This behaviour refers to Abdusshomad's findings, which are still relevant at the time of this study. For some people, a hedonistic lifestyle is important because, according to them, following the latest trends is a must (Abdusshomad 2021). Then, in the category *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* as a stage for identity shows how this social performance process occurs. Gen-Z uses this café as an arena to display and negotiate their identity. At *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi*, they display an idealised version of their diverse lives, forgetting the reality in order to gain recognition. This behaviour is driven by the logic of representation and social existence.

In the context of Gen-Z's self-performance, the simulacrum theory explains that identity is formed through symbolic consumption, which allows them to present an idealised version of themselves. Choosing specific areas to work, relax, or take photos, and uploading them to social media, are performative acts that reinforce a productive, aesthetic, and modern self-image. Consumption here is no longer about enjoying coffee or space, but about shaping and displaying a social identity that aligns with public expectations and simulated social norms.

Conclusion

This study explains how the symbols and aesthetics of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* have become a major commodity consumed by Generation Z. The industrial-style interior design, thematic zones, comfortable atmosphere, and aesthetic impression promoted by this café serve as a space of representation where

simulation has replaced reality. Taking photos in the photobooth or at aesthetic corners of the shop shows how this shop is not just for enjoying coffee, but as a sign of a lifestyle worth showing off on social media. Thus, the social practices carried out at *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* are not only for enjoying coffee or casual interaction, but have shifted in meaning to become symbolic practices oriented towards social performance. This is different from previous generations who chose coffee shops for practical functions, namely drinking coffee or interacting with friends. Now, Gen-Z makes hanging out a practice of sign consumption, where social existence depends on one's ability to build a digital identity in line with trends. Thus, these findings show that Gen-Z's consumption practices exist in hyperreality, where real experiences are defeated by signs.

The uniqueness of this study lies in how Generation Z's coffee culture in contemporary cafes is constructed as a simulacrum that produces new meanings. This study also explains how cafes become symbolic cultural stages due to social relationships mediated by aesthetics and digital media. This research contributes to the study of cultural consumption by highlighting the intergenerational shift from functional consumption to performative consumption driven by the logic of signs. This research was conducted in three branches of *Ada Apa Dengan Kopi* in Surabaya, but its implications, which focus on similar patterns of symbolic consumption, may occur in other urban contexts and on different digital platforms. Furthermore, subsequent research could expand the scope to several cafés and make intergenerational comparisons to provide a more comprehensive understanding of symbolic consumption. Practically speaking, since Gen-Z consumes aesthetic experiences, the success of coffee shops may also consider creating aesthetic experiences that can be represented and amplified through social media.

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