

The Phenomenon of Consumer Flexing of Branded Products for Members of Legislative On Social Media

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Abstract

The practice of flaunting a luxurious lifestyle among public officials through social media has drawn widespread attention, indicating a shift in political communication and self-representation patterns that have the potential to influence public trust and shape a consumerist culture in society. This phenomenon is problematic because it not only touches on social and ethical dimensions but can also lead to legal consequences related to the principles of propriety, integrity, and responsibility through the position obtained. This research has an urgency to legal studies that have not been optimally comprehensive and requires a special study regarding the relationship between officials' flexing with legal principles, government ethics, and social norms in the digital era. This study uses a qualitative method with a normative juridical approach and is supported by non-doctrinal studies through social concept analysis, with data collection techniques in the form of library studies of laws and regulations, legal doctrine, and relevant literature. The results of the study indicate that the flexing phenomenon is influenced by the theory of symbolic consumption and social dramaturgy in the form of the use of modern lifestyles as a means of image formation and status legitimacy. The originality of this research lies in the link between consumer flexing behavior and the legal ethics of public officials in the digital age. This study concludes that there is a need



to strengthen ethical regulations and social media oversight mechanisms for legislators.

KEYWORDS: Flexing Behavior; Consumer Behavior; Branded Products; Legislators (3-5 words)

Introduction

Patterns of social contact have changed significantly as a result of the advancement of information and communication technology. One way to express oneself is by sharing everyday life through social media. Today, social media is no longer just a means of communication; it has transformed into a medium for lifestyle representation and a symbol of prestige, allowing for open displays of consumption practices. According to statistics, social media users, regardless of age, from children aged 5 and above to teenagers, and even adults, have been enjoying consumption practices since 2022.¹

Based on Reportal Data By the end of 2025, there will be 180 million social media users in Indonesia. The largest percentage of social media users are women at 56.3 percent, while the remaining 43.7 percent are men.² In general, the total number of social media users is equivalent to 62.9 percent of the total population in Indonesia, which is estimated to reach 286 million people.³ It's known that social media users are currently dominated by women, which can influence the rate at which information spreads more quickly. Information on social media is now readily accessible, creating a digital footprint that's easily accessible to the public.

This is due to the number of platforms in it being very complete and popular such as currently a) Youtube consisting of 151 million users, b) Facebook consisting of 121 million users, c) Instagram consisting of 108 million users, d) Tiktok consisting of 180 million adult users, e) LinkedIn

¹ Imam Kusnadi, "The Phenomenon of Luxury Wealth Flexing Among State Civil Apparatus (ASN) and Its Implications," *Andragogi (Journal of Adult Education)* 11, no. 1 (2023): 38–50.

² Simon Kemp, "Digital 2026: Indonesia," DataReportal, 2025, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2026-indonesia>.

³ Yudha Pratomo Bill Clinton, "This is the Current Number of Social Media Users in Indonesia," *Kompas.com*, 2025, <https://tekno.kompas.com/read/2025/11/29/19000027/segini-jumlah-pengguna-media-sosial-di-indonesia-saat-ini>.

consisting of 37 million registered users. These platforms support the community's social life between Generation Z and Millennials. The members of Generation Z were born between 1997 and 2012. Millennials, on the other hand, are people who were born between 1981 and 1996. These two generations cannot be separated from social media.⁴ The following is the latest Goodstats data from 2025 which explains the duration of the two generations above when playing social media:⁵



Picture 1. Duration Level of Social Media Use

The data above shows that 51% of Millennials and 31% of Gen Z spend 4-6 hours per day on social media. This generation grew up with technology, which has given rise to various cultures, including modern lifestyles. This culture is often embraced by Generation Z to increase their social confidence without direct interaction. Although, in general, a person's lifestyle will continue to be dynamic and not change rapidly over a certain period of

⁴ Jason Dorsey, "What Are the Correct Birth Years for Gen Z, Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers?," Jason Dorsey Researcher/speaker, 2022, <https://jasondorsey.com/media/>.

⁵ Agnes Z. Yonathan, "Indonesian Youth Spend 4-6 Hours per Day on Social Media," GoodStats, 2025, https://data.goodstats.id/statistic/anak-muda-indonesia-habiskan-4-6-jam-per-hari-di-media-sosial-Uwbbp#goog_rewarded.

time.⁶ Lifestyle has a major impact on a person's desires or passions to behave and ultimately determines a person's consumption choices.⁷

The colonial era was certainly very different from today's lifestyle. While the colonial era prioritized consumption of necessities, today's lifestyle prioritizes consumption of desires, considering trends to align with their lifestyles. Excessive desire has had a positive impact on national trade, as evidenced by the increase in consumers thanks to the advent of online purchasing systems.⁸ According to Subagya, in this contemporary era, lifestyle no longer merely serves as a means of conveying diverse cultural heritage, but has shifted to become a medium for asserting individual existence within the social sphere. This social space provides an opening for the emergence of a consumer culture of processed products. One product favored by the public is fashion, which has a very high demand.

According to Goodstats data, fashion products that are in demand by Indonesian people come from online shopping applications.⁹ Fashion consumers often feel like they have no clothes, becoming trapped in the phenomenon of consumerism. This phenomenon indirectly leads to pollution, environmental degradation, and ecological imbalance in the fashion production process. The production process is carried out on a large scale due to the consumerist culture of society. However, before the industrial revolution, fashion was made manually with high skill, making it expensive and affordable only for a select few.

One of the changes in consumerism is judged by one's income level. Consumers who value creativity and durable materials choose branded

⁶ M.M Nugroho J. Setiadi, S.E., *Consumer Behavior: Revised Edition, 1st ed.* (Kencana Prenada Media Group, 2003),

<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=HdxDDwAAQBAJ&printsec=copyright&hl=id>.

⁷ Saddam Nasir Chowdhury et al., "The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior : A Study of the Fashion Retail Industry," 2024, 1666–99, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2024.123090>.

⁸ Cahya Frassetiati et al., "The Impact of Excessive Consumption in Online Shopping on Consumptive Lifestyles" 1, no. 03 (2024): 126–32, <https://doi.org/10.58812/sish.v1.i03>.

⁹ Siti Sarah Jauhari, "Fashion Products Become the Most Purchased Products in Online Shops," GoodStats, 2023, <https://data.goodstats.id/statistic/produk-fashion-jadi-produk-yang-paling-banyak-dibeli-di-online-shop-WNrZx>.

products, ensuring they last for years. However, over time, this has become seen as a means of self-expression, and the majority of society claims that certain consumers have been showing off their branded products. The majority of society believes that this phenomenon indicates a symbolic competition that utilizes various consumer products as instruments for shaping lifestyles, personal identity, and social status.¹⁰ This behavior has become a special trend in showing off ownership of branded products, especially if this trend is carried out by members of the legislature, which often becomes a stepping stone to gain social recognition, status legitimacy, and a certain personal image on social media.

This behavior is highly problematic because it violates the ethical guidelines held by members of the legislature. The exemplary nature of public integrity is undermined by reflecting excessive consumption dynamics, leading to serious legal implications. From a legal and sustainable development perspective, flexing behavior serves as a foundation for self-representation.¹¹ However, lawmakers' portrayals of a consumptive lifestyle have the potential to erode public confidence in government agencies and the foundations of sound governance. Additionally, if this behavior is not in line with declared wealth, it may be construed as a violation of the DPR's Code of Ethics and Government Regulation No. 94 of 2021 Governing Civil Servant Discipline, which could lead to accusations of gratification.¹²

Several studies in the past five years have examined the flexing phenomenon from various perspectives.¹³ The first study analyzed the positive legal provisions applicable to flexing behavior.¹⁴ The second study

¹⁰ Frassetiati et al., "The Impact of Excessive Consumption in Online Shopping on Consumptive Lifestyles."

¹¹ Sahda Ega Parahita et al., "MIDA Majalah Ilmiah Dinamika Administrasi Flexing in Public Leadership : The Dilemma Between Image Building and Integrity," 2025, 59–68.

¹² Nadia Intan Calista, Faculty of Law, and Udayana University, "Civil Servant Discipline in Overcoming the Phenomenon of Flexing on Social Media by Civil Servants" 13, no. 11 (2021).

¹³ Calista, Hukum, and Udayana.

¹⁴ Riski Saputri and Meri Yarni, "FLEXING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ASN BASED ON STATUTORY REGULATIONS" 4, no. 3 (2024): 364–86.

discusses the serious impact of flexing behavior on the integrity of State Civil Apparatus.¹⁵ The third study discusses flexing behavior, which shows the results of failure to manage a good official image and becomes symbolic, even the habitus of officials that has been formed for a long time. The fourth study discusses the flexing phenomenon which is used as a method in fake arisan fraud.¹⁶

These studies have made important contributions to the identification of social impacts and recommendations for the formation of regulations such as the anti-flexing bill. However, they still lack a multidisciplinary analysis that integrates civil law in the formation of consumer contracts for branded goods, Article 27 of the ITE Law, legislative ethics, and does not explore the role of flexing in influencing imitative consumer behavior. Therefore, the originality of this study places the phenomenon of consumer flexing of branded products by legislators as a moral issue that has legal consequences based on laws and regulations, legislative codes of ethics, and general principles of good governance.

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Flexing behavior itself has not been explicitly regulated, but the issues in this study can assist in the process of formulating regulations. The first issue concerns the primary basis for the phenomenon of consumer flexing

¹⁵ Elchi Rahmita, "The Influence of Income and Revenue on Behavior," *Cahaya Mandalika Journal* 3, no. 2 (2023): 279–89.

¹⁶ Tinjauan Yuridis et al., "Al-Bayan Journal" 1, no. 01 (2024): 51–66.

regarding branded products for central legislative members on social media, and the second issue concerns the process of the flexing phenomenon that gives rise to legal implications on social media. Furthermore, this study also offers a novel framework for digital practices through the sociology of law and the ethics of public officials. Therefore, this research can form a **multi-stakeholder synergy by strengthening partnerships** between the state, civil society, academics, and social media platforms in changing consumer digital culture and the need to maintain the dignity or ethics of public officials.

Methods

This study employs both doctrinal and non-doctrinal methodologies in a qualitative manner. The doctrinal approach is carried out through the collection of civil law and common law literature, such as the MPR Decree and the DPR's code of ethics. Meanwhile, the non-doctrinal approach is used empirically through in-depth review, observation, and analysis through social media and interviews with informants who are indirectly related to obtain information about consumer flexing perpetrators. According to Lexy J. Moleong, qualitative research emphasizes the process of interpreting legal phenomena and official practices in a naturalistic manner to obtain a complete picture. Data are analyzed interpretively through data reduction, norm categorization, and drawing logical conclusions to assess the validity and legal implications resulting from flexing behavior.

Result and Discussion

1. Factors of Flexing Behavior by Legislative Members on Social Media

The development of social media has created a new public space that allows the public and state officials, including members of the legislature, to

openly display their personal identities and work achievements. In practice, digital space is exploited to showcase luxurious lifestyles, resulting in significant social impacts among the public.¹⁷ Flexing behavior raises complex legal issues when it is carried out by members of the legislature. Public office always carries moral, ethical, and legal obligations to the individual, who may judge that such behavior should not be carried out. Consequently, recently, it has not been highlighted, and even riots have occurred between the public and members of the legislature who engage in flexing.

Flexing becomes a form of authority after consuming branded products and displaying a luxurious lifestyle in the hope of gaining recognition from others. This recognition leaves a mark on the public when displayed through social media platforms, particularly on networks like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok. These social media platforms encourage individuals to continually evaluate themselves based on the achievements of others. This has become a cultural phenomenon among millennial legislators and a liability for Generation Z. A consumptive lifestyle on social media is considered a self-representative behavior aimed at gaining praise from others, with the goal of demonstrating one's success. Consequently, there are still no clear regulations governing the boundaries of social media user behavior.

Social media provides a foundation for freedom of expression. However, the ITE Law only regulates provisions that stipulate that content containing false, misleading, or detrimental information can be subject to legal sanctions. Promotional content published through social media platforms must adhere to the criteria set out in the ITE Law and the Consumer Protection Law. However, flexing behavior is not regulated in the ITE Law, resulting in a normative vacuum that is open to multiple interpretations.

¹⁷ Roida Pakpahan and Donny Yoesgiantoro, "Analysis of the Influence of Flexing in Social Media on Community Life," *Journal of Information System, Informatics and Computing* 7, no. 1 (2023): 173, <https://doi.org/10.52362/jisicom.v7i1.1093>.

This behavior has caused public uproar over the inconsistency of lifestyles with the principle of modesty for state officials, thus implicating **the principles of accountability and integrity of legislative institutions.**

Initially, flexing was often practiced by influencers or social media users. However, over time, it has also been practiced by celebrities, including members of the legislature. This culture emerged after a major transformation in consumer culture driven by technological advancements, with the display of branded products from international brands.¹⁸ Many of the branded products and luxurious lifestyles displayed are manipulative. Therefore, this is extremely dangerous if used to promote investments, businesses, or even politics.

Branded products have a unique appeal to consumers, especially young people and upper-class consumers, including officials. Luxury products are perceived as a matter of prestige and are often seen as a marker of social status. In 2025, the latest approval rating for upper-class Asian consumers indicated a preference for timeless brands, such as those from branded brands with classic and elegant designs.¹⁹ Here is the Bluebell Databoks survey regarding countries in Asia whose consumers prefer branded products:

¹⁸ D A N Hukum, "CONSUMERISM AND CORRUPTION: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE" 11, no. 2 (2025): 277–301.

¹⁹ Akbar Ridwan, "'By Early 2025, the Majority of Asia's High-End Consumers Will Prefer 'Timeless Brands,'" Databoks, 2025, <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/layanan-konsumen-kesehatan/statistik/68ad26435477c/awal-2025-mayoritas-konsumen-kelas-atas-asia-lebih-suka-brand-timeless>.

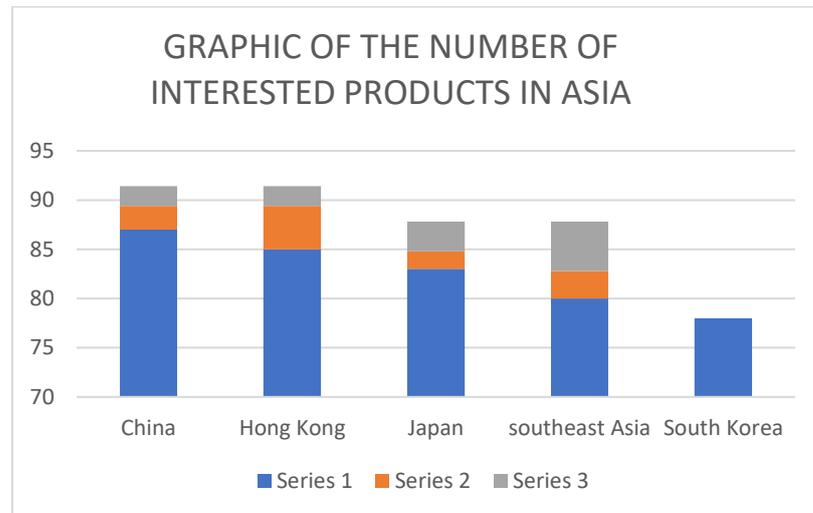


Figure 2. Data on Interest in Branded Products in Asia

Source By Databoks 2025

The data shows that branded products are in high demand in the international market, especially in Asian countries. Branded products serve as a primary lifestyle inspiration for the upper class in engaging in activities related to self-image. When branded products are displayed on social media, many viewers leave comments, even leading to criticism. This criticism escalates into negative comments, as they consider the act deviant because it involves exposing oneself in public. The comment feature on social media platforms captures audience reactions and is a key determinant of social life today.²⁰

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, flexing is the act of displaying something ostentatious to the individual or group that is the object of the exhibition.²¹ Flexing behavior displayed on social media can erode the distance between the public and the government. Furthermore, the distance between the two creates a sharp social inequality and worsens public perception. The following documentation shows posts of flexing

²⁰ Ety Nurhayat and Rakhmaditya Dewi Noorizki, "Flexing: Social Media Wealth-Flashing Behavior and Its Relation to Self-Esteem" 2, no. 5 (2022): 368–74, <https://doi.org/10.17977/10.17977/um070v2i52022p368-374>.

²¹ [FLEXING Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/flexing)

behavior of branded products by legislative members, namely Figure 1: Post of Legislative Members Always Wearing Branded Products and Figure 2: Disappointed Social Media Community Reactions to the Post:



Figure 1: Posts of Legislative Members Always Wearing Branded Products



Figure 2: Social Media Community's Disappointed Reactions to Flexing's Post

The post sparked debate in social media comment sections. One side considered this behavior normal, as each person has their own individual classification for displaying their self-esteem on social media. Meanwhile, the other side considered this behavior deviant from consumer behavior, where consumers flaunt their branded products. Consumers with high self-esteem are more likely to be independent and have better interpersonal trust than those with low self-esteem.²² Anthropologist Brandaan Huigen in his article entitled "Vulgar Things: Moral Dilemmas of Luxury Consumption in an Unequal Society" said that the luxurious lifestyle of officials by using branded products includes storing important meanings that mark a

²² mary h. guindon, *Self-Esteem Across the Lifespan* (New York Routledge, 2009), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203884324>.

person's position in society while also functioning as social capital to build relationships with fellow elites on the international stage.²³

This opinion is acceptable to some Indonesian people, but the majority of other people reject it because it raises suspicions of corruption.²⁴ From the beginning, the phenomenon of flexing branded products has not been well-received by the public, especially when it is presented by a representative of the people, whose people are currently facing poverty and scarcity of jobs. The supporting factors for the behavior of flexing branded products carried out by legislators are related to 1) consumerist culture and 2) modern lifestyle culture. Consumerist culture is identified as being born from mass production (supply) and market demand (demand).²⁵ Meanwhile, Modern Lifestyle Culture was born after the emergence of a consumerist culture that encouraged international trade in the form of high-quality branded products.

In reality, there's no prohibition on whether or not members of the legislature can adopt a modern lifestyle, given that their habits seem to reflect normal behavior. However, it's worth questioning whether it's appropriate for members of the legislature to flaunt branded products to the wider public. Legislative members should consider the economic conditions of their communities before flaunting a luxurious lifestyle on social media. Recently, the IMF has acknowledged that developing countries have improved their monetary and fiscal credibility, which has strengthened their economic resilience, including Indonesia's crucial position in the global

²³ Brandaan Huigen, "Vulgar Things : Moral Dilemmas of Luxury Consumption in an Unequal Society" 25, no. 4 (2025): 385–404, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14695405251376100>.

²⁴ M. DennyElyasa, "FLEXING AND HEDONISM ANALYSIS: FORMING A NEGATIVE IMAGE OF ASN IN SOCIAL MEDIA," *Journal Andragogi* 1, no. 1 (2023), file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/Jurnal Andragogi Vol.11_No.1_tahun 2023.pdf .

²⁵ Roberta Sassateli, *Consumer Culture: History, Theory and Politics*, First Edit (Sage Publications Ltd, 2007), https://books.google.co.id/books?id=vEHBB6uqlcQC&printsec=frontcover&hl=id&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false .

supply chain.²⁶ However, this does not rule out the possibility that consumer behavior towards flexing branded products on social media is accepted because it provokes social jealousy and even social inequality.

Currently, Indonesia is still grappling with structural issues. Behind the glamorous displays of legislative members lies a 0.375 percent increase in public spending.²⁷ According to the Central Statistics Agency, rural areas account for 21.75 percent of the population, while urban areas account for 17.64 percent. This demonstrates that rural communities are far more susceptible to jealousy than urban communities, which live individually. Class differences can influence lifestyles and consumption levels.²⁸ Therefore, the flexing of branded products carried out by Members of the Legislature is not in accordance with their integrity.

These two cultures have been seen as successful supporting factors in the flexing of branded products among public officials. Their success stems not only from their desire to consume modern lifestyles, but also from their need to interact with the public. However, this method of interaction is considered inappropriate because it violates the Regulation of the Indonesian House of Representatives No. 01 of 2011 concerning the Code of Ethics.

The existence of a code of ethics contains rules that reflect an organization's efforts to codify group values in the form of statements addressed to its members about what principles are wrong as a guideline for making decisions within the organization.²⁹ Pasal 3, paragraph 1, states that

²⁶ Robertus Andrianto, "While the world is in chaos, Indonesia has the opportunity to soar," CBNC Indonesia, 2026, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20260112124801-4-701569/dunia-kacau-balau-ri-justru-berpeluang-melesat>.

²⁷ Central Statistics Agency, "Gini Ratio in March 2025 Recorded at 0.375," Central Statistics Agency, 2025, <https://www.bps.go.id/id/pressrelease/2025/07/25/2519/gini-ratio-maret-2025-tercatat-sebesar-0-375.html>.

²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=WvhSEMrNWHAC&printsec=copyright&hl=id#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

²⁹ Prof. Dr. Jimly Asshiddiqie, *Judicial Ethics and Constitutional Ethics: A New Perspective on the Rule of Law*, ed. Tarmizi Rahman Yasin, Bobby Tisna Amidjaja, Revised (East Jakarta 13220: Sinar

"Members of the Indonesian House of Representatives must avoid inappropriate behavior that could demean their image and honor, disrupt the procedures and atmosphere of the session, and damage the dignity of the institution." The behavior of flexing branded products on social media creates public distrust of acquired assets. This tends to lead to gratification, thus tarnishing the institution's reputation. The following are the results of interviews with informants that can support this research:

TABLE 1. Informant's Statement Regarding the Subject

		Category Correctional Officer Performance Level		Total
		Central Legislators	Regional Legislators	
Level category Flexing style	Low	1 50%	1 50%	2 100%
	High	25 50%	15 50%	40 100%
Total		26 100%	16 100%	42 100%

Sources: Authors, 2025

In today's era, society is very sensitive to the wealth of an individual, especially following the rise of corrupt officials in Indonesia. In addition to their official duties, every public official is required to be responsible and also serve the family members of those officials in their social lives. According to the author's knowledge and understanding, state officials, including civil servants, are required by Article 3 letter f of Government Regulation Number 94 of 2021 concerning Civil Service Discipline, to act with integrity and exemplary behavior toward everyone, both inside and outside their official duties. However, it is different for members of the legislature, who cannot be generalized in the same way as the

Grafika, 2015),
<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=CednEAAAQBAJ&printsec=copyright&hl=id#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

aforementioned public officials, as the flexing behavior is considered part of their family members.³⁰ Nevertheless, it is still possible, based on the data analysis above, to see that many people disapprove of the flexing behavior of legislative members on social media.

Branded products have become the top choice for elite consumers, which then becomes the reason, motive, and legal awareness that the social status of the content uploaded must be a personal responsibility as a representative who should have a basis for action. Even Desi Dwi Prianti, S.Sos., M.Comn., Ph.D., a communications lecturer at Brawijaya University, stated that the Dutch colonizers deliberately divided society into different racial groups and placed one identity above another for political purposes. Public figures such as Soekarno and Sutan Sjahrir, who wore polo shirts, preferred to wear military-style jackets at that time. This fashion statement was an act of self-empowerment rather than Westernization or showing off wealth.

Showing off wealth is caused by the theory of consumerism, which explains that flexing behavior can influence the behavior of other consumers. According to Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection, there are several categories of consumers, including for 1) Conscious/Active Consumers, 2) Organizational Consumers, 3) End Consumers (Individuals), 4) Habitual/Routine Consumers, 5) Impulsive Consumers, and 6) Information Seeking/Research Consumers. This research focuses on Impulsive consumers who are then misused by business actors to increase their profits by requiring them to consume branded products. This type of consumer is indeed protected by law, however, due to technology, the level of consumer independence is reduced. This consumer behavior only relies on momentary emotions when seeing other consumers

³⁰ Hermanto Haq, Cendikiawan Ainun Ramdi, Ghafar Mawardi, "Legal Analysis of Violations of the Code of Ethics by Members of Legislative Institutions", Collaborative Journal of Science 8, No 1 (2025). DOI 10.56338/jks.v8i1.6916

have branded products so that they cannot protect themselves after seeing the advertising process through flexing media.³¹

This flexing behavior also has a connection with the Consumer Protection Law, although it is not constant or direct. Therefore, specific regulations are needed to prevent marketing exploitation that hinders consumers from doing more. In addition, flexing behavior can also mislead the public as consumers at large to make purchases or even be tempted by branded products that are not necessarily guaranteed to be authentic.

The emergence of consumer disputes that led to the flexing of branded products stems from an imbalance between consumers and businesses, both of which can be understood through free market theory and public regulation theory.³² Public regulation theory explains the process by which a country's economy operates, whether through goods or services. Meanwhile, free market theory explains the phenomenon of industrial development, originating from outside the country, into products that are widely sought after by the wider public. As a result, **social welfare and consumer rights protection** are often overlooked. Business actors involved in consumer transactions include producers, distributors, importers, agents, and retailers.

Flexibility can be a contributing factor to business owners' marketing behavior. However, elite consumers, such as legislators, are unexpectedly targeted by free market marketing tactics, targeting branded products imported from abroad.³³ Elegant designs and high-quality materials create a sense of class when worn. This makes public regulation theory crucial, following the introduction of public outcry clauses resulting from impulsive consumer behavior. The content of public regulation theory must be based

³¹ Febri Falisa Putri, Sylvia Mufarrochah, Achmad Murtadho, Elsa Assari, "A Study on Indonesian Consumer Legal Protection in Online Purchasing and Selling", *Cendekia: Journal of Law, Social and Humanities* 3, No 2, (2025). DOI <https://doi.org/10.70193/cendekia.v3i2.221>

³² *Scientific Journal and Educational Vehicle*, "6731-Article Text-15892-1-10-20231004" 9, no. 19 (2023): 417–28.

³³ Yetrin, Marina Mewu, Sriyati Kadek, & Mahadewi, Julia Mahadewi, Kadek Julia "Consumer Protection in Online Product Purchases: A Legal Perspective Analysis of Consumer Protection in Indonesia", *Citizenship Journal* 7, No 1 (2023).

on **the limits of consumer consumptive behavior** so that it can answer legal challenges regarding the phenomenon of flexing branded products on social media.

2. Stages of Flexing Behavior of Legislative Members as Impulsive Consumers of Branded Products on Social Media

Technological advancements often change human thought patterns. Initially, needs were the top priority, but over time, desires became the priority for people to fulfill their lifestyles. The era of modernization has changed everything, and social media has become no different. Social media has become a digital platform that connects individuals and allows for interaction, production, and sharing of messages. The content within it features a variety of informative and entertaining content, including corporate content that can attract consumers.³⁴

Consumer consumption has grown rapidly since the advent of social media and its platforms. The economy has boomed since the use of social media, and it's no surprise that some people are using social media as a source of income.³⁵ This income stems from the growth of online shopping features on social media. Social media content is largely geared towards business activities between online businesses, such as affiliates, and consumers. This requires businesses to create trending promotional content to attract consumers and generate revenue.³⁶

³⁴ Dian Irma Apriani and Muhamad Bhaihaki, "Content Marketing Strategy DalApriani, D. I., & Bhaihaki, M. (2024). Content Marketing Strategy in Increasing Consumer Interaction on Social Media. *Journal of Economics: Management, Accounting, and Islamic Banking*, 12(2), 21–31. Am Increasing Consumer Interaction on Social Media," *Journal of Economics: Management, Accounting, and Islamic Banking* 12, no. 2 (2024): 21–31.

³⁵ Rahmita, "The Influence of Income and Revenue on Behavior."

³⁶ Joseph A. Schumpeter and John Maynard Keynes, "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money.," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 31, no. 196 (1936): 791, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2278703>.

This content changes consumer behavior, as the content displayed is derived from a person's lifestyle. Online shopping business activities become consumption activities when people have needs and money (assets) as a medium of exchange in the transaction process. Money/assets are closely related to income, which is directly related to consumption. The relationship between consumption and income is explained by Keynes's theory that consumer income must be disposable income, defined as income after taxes. Therefore, if disposable income is high, a person's consumption level will also increase.

High levels of consumption stem from consumer decision-making to meet needs. The consumer decision-making process can go through three interconnected stages: the input stage, the processing stage, and the output stage. After going through these three stages, consumers have the right to decide whether or not to purchase a product or service. Therefore, when consumers consume a product or service, it's crucial to optimize their rights as consumers.³⁷

However, several phenomena occur after consumer transactions, one of which is the phenomenon of flexing. This phenomenon arises from a person's desire to interact with the public, whether between officials and the public. This interaction is interpreted in various ways, including strong criticism through social media content. Furthermore, officials have often been criticized recently for flaunting their incomes and embracing a modern lifestyle. Consequently, this interaction between legislators has caused unrest, especially at the end of 2025, when the country's problematic corruption, which **consistently adopts a conspicuously modern lifestyle**, was revealed.

³⁷ Mulyana, Septira Putri Bagus, Gusti Sumaragatha, Sakah Evangelista, Beverly Ristanti, Yuni Arthayoga, Prandy Fanggi, Louk, "Legal Counseling for Young Consumer Protection in Online Buying and Selling Transactions at Smpn 2 Batulayar", Legal Compilation Journal 10, NO 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.29303/jkh.v10i1.233>

This lifestyle has influenced the increasing number of fashion market consumers, and they even consider it a method for someone to manage their time and finances, to express themselves, competing with each other to appear to exist. According to the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-270 BC), The history of flexing basically started with a long-standing hedonistic or opulent lifestyle. Earlier, in the 1900s, hedonistic behavior was demonstrated through exhibitions of grand events or displays of wealth through valuable objects.³⁸ However, unlike today, all flexing behavior can be seen directly on our phone screens, from showing social status through clothing, to luxurious homes, vacations abroad, dining at fancy restaurants—in fact, everything becomes flexing material that fills our timelines with fantastic views. The tendency to live a luxurious life stems from FoMO (Focus on Money Management) and Obsession Consumption Behavior.³⁹

Living with FoMO can sometimes make us forget the rules that bind us. FoMO encourages social media users to be constantly active on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter, thus competing to maintain a luxurious lifestyle. Furthermore, this FoMO attitude occurs not only among teenagers, as the aforementioned platforms are also widely used by socialites, including members of the legislature, who are always surrounded by elite people. This FoMO attitude is very dangerous if left unchecked, as it can cause fear and even trigger anxiety, stress, and even excessive depression if not following trends.⁴⁰ The Activities, interests, and opinions

³⁸ Analisis Pengaruh et al., "Journal Iof IInnovative land ICreativity," *Journal of Innovative and Creativity* 5, no. 2 (2025): 2025.

³⁹ Salvia Myrilla and Fransisca Iriani, "Hedonism as a Moderator of FOMO and Conformity Consumption Behavior of Teenage Smartphone Users X," *Muara Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Humaniora, dan Seni* 6, no. 2 (2023): 507–16, <https://doi.org/10.24912/jmishumsen.v6i2.18599.2022>.

⁴⁰ D S S Wardani and R Cahyani, "The Influence of FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) on Generation Z on Piety to Allah SWT. Wardani, D S S, and R Cahyani. 'The Influence of FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) on Generation Z on Piety to Allah SWT.' *Darul Ilmi ...* 11, No. 02 (2024): 262.," *Darul Ilmi ...* 11, no. 02 (2024): 262.

influence will be development of FoMO, including FoMO regarding branded product flexing activities on social media.

This branded product flexing activity reflects institutional concerns about its negative impacts. However, interest in branded product flexing is also widespread, reaching millions of people seeking public recognition. Finally, negative opinions of individuals dominate branded product flexing content on social media. This symbolic delegitimization reinforces the narrative that the elite is separate from the people, fueling alienation and injustice. In the political realm, delegitimization can lead to a loss of public support, increased criticism, and the potential for social conflict that threatens stability. The ongoing legitimacy crisis opens up space for opposition movements to challenge power and demand structural reforms.⁴¹

To coordinate members of the legislature who engage in flexing, regulations regarding flexing behavior by members of the legislature are required, as stipulated in various laws and regulations in Indonesia. Although not always explicitly stated, these regulations outline principles prohibiting flexing behavior, ethics, integrity, and even discipline that must be observed by members of the legislature.

Some of these regulations are as follows: a) MPR Decree (Tap) No. IV of 2001 concerning National and State Life. This MPR Decree is a moral guideline containing the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, exemplary behavior, and responsibility in national and social life. b) MPR Decree No. I of 2003. "Violating Ethics, Officials and Political Elites Must Resign or Resign". c) Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia's People's Representative Council Number 01 of 2011 pertaining to the Ethics Code. In addition, there is also Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection (UU PK). Indonesia strives to protect consumer rights from

⁴¹ Frassetiati et al., "The Impact of Excessive Consumption in Online Shopping on Consumptive Lifestyles."

deceptive business practices by sellers or service providers. This law addresses issues such as product safety, the right to accurate information, and protection against misleading or unfair advertising. Administrative sanctions, criminal penalties, or compensation may also be imposed if flexing behavior is suspected to be motivated by criminal intent or violation.

The above regulations should be sufficient to serve as a basis for legislators to refrain from flexing branded products on social media. The initial mechanism for flexing among legislators is clear: FoMO (Focus on Motivation) is fostered, leading to increased popularity. This additional popularity is unnecessary and cannot even balance the intellectual capabilities of legislators, who act as representatives of the people. Several countries have experienced similar trends in the origins of the flexing phenomenon. Here are some countries where officials flex branded products:

Table 2

	COUNTRY	FLEXING PERFORMERS	FLEXING OBJECT
1	Philippines	family of state officials	Chanel and Hermes Brand Bags
2	Nepal	Official's Family	Rolls Royce cars, Louis Vuitton bags, luxury vacations
3	Kenya	Member of Parliament	Luxury cars, private helicopters, and piles of cash
4	United States of America	Trump's OPM official, McLaurine Pinover	Branded Fashion from Government Offices.
5	China	Member of Parliament	Jewelry and Luxury Assets on Douyin
6	Indonesia	Member of the Legislature	Official Salary, Chanel Bag, Rolex Watch

Total	662	100 %
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Administrators in the various countries mentioned above are essentially civil servants, and as such, this study argues that they need not only technical and leadership skills but must also prioritize ethics. State officials who lack ethics are more likely to be arrogant, indifferent, and even prejudiced against the lower classes. Virtues such as honesty, justice, equality, and solidarity—which manifest as care and concern for others—stem from ethical effort itself. Serving the people at all levels is the goal of state administration.

Therefore, as a legislative member representing the people, one should not create negative effects to attract attention to the government system and its officials as implementers. Understanding the freedom to express oneself, comment or criticize, and share electronic information is very important so that we do not violate rules and conventions or endanger ourselves or others. This is because it can become a double-edged sword. The author states that the prohibition articles in Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE), which was later amended into Law Number 19 of 2016, do not have clear benchmarks and are sometimes defined by officials or certain interested parties using subjective practical terminology according to specific intentions and purposes. The prohibited articles in the ITE Law are often referred to as 'rubber articles' because they contain criminal elements and provisions. Currently, the author's understanding and knowledge are still lacking, and sometimes they still have difficulty distinguishing between perpetrators as consumers and perpetrators as state officials.

Flexing actors are reviewed from the consumer side seeing that consumers are any individual who uses goods and/or services offered in society, either for personal interests, family, other people, or other living things, and not for trade," as stated in Article 1 Number 2 of the Consumer Protection Law. After we realized that not all branded products or local

products can reach customers directly after completing the production process. But before an item is delivered to the customer, the item goes through multiple transfers. Generally, an item will go through the following channels: Manufacturer, Distributor, Agent, Retailer, and User. In addition, there are two categories of consumers in economics referred to as end customers and intermediate consumers.

Retailers, agents, and distributors are examples of intermediate consumers, where they purchase goods for trading purposes, not for personal use. Meanwhile, according to the Consumer Protection Law, end customers are those referred to as final consumers (purchasing goods and/or services for their own use, as well as for the use of their family, other people, or other living beings, and not for resale purposes). End customers have their own rights to make purchases and also have the right to showcase the products they buy, whether local products or branded products. The act of showcasing is often done if the product is a branded product (such as designer clothes, technology, or cars) and is displayed on social media or in everyday life. Showing off can be linked to Thorstein Veblen's concept of "conspicuous consumption," which states that people buy products for social signaling rather than for functional goals.

It is evident from this study that there are differences in the protection focus and accountability of lawmakers' flexing behavior with regard to branded products. Due to dealers' dishonest and exploitative practices, members of the legislature also have the right to legal protection from the National Consumer Protection Agency (BPKN) as consumers. However, because members of the legislature are subject to scrutiny for their high social rank, including ethics and the law, their flexing behavior must also be more circumspect in order to prevent abuse of power.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of branded product flexing began with a culture of excessive consumerism and a modern lifestyle. This culture is supported and rapidly evolving through advanced technology. Initially, technology

guided communication styles, but further evolved with the emergence of social media platforms. These platforms provide a platform for public expression, transforming not only communication but also a highly sought-after new way of life. This craze is fueled by trends in content creation, resulting in FoMO.

Trending and frequently followed content, also known as FoMO, has made social media more popular as a platform for showing off. This platform begins with displaying one's income, which then becomes a factor in consuming a product after going through a consumer decision-making process. Consumers of branded products have recently shown themselves to be elites, and even legislators have been criticized for following content promoting branded products on social media. This behavior raises public doubts about their legitimacy, whether as individuals or as officials. The way legislators respond to the public does not comply with the regulations in the Official Code of Ethics, thus causing public outcry both in real life and in the mass media.

Although not always or directly, this flexing behavior is also related to the Consumer Protection Law, which forbids marketing manipulation of consumers that prevents them from doing more. Furthermore, it can deceive the general public into making purchases, even luring them in with branded goods whose legitimacy is not always assured.

Suggestion

Strengthening of MPR Decree No. IV of 2001 concerning National and State Life really needs to be re-enforced along with supervision of the legitimacy of an official also needs to be strengthened, so that it can be in accordance with moral guidelines containing the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, exemplary behavior, and responsibility in national and social life.

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