

An Analysis of the “Barbiecore” Fashion Trend from a PR Marketing Perspective

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Abstract

This research analyzes how the Barbiecore fashion trend boomed and became popular on social media in July 2023. This trend then evolved into a popular fashion style reference among women with the identity of the Barbiecore trend. On the other hand, Public Relations must be able to understand the motivations of their audience and build effective communication to create a brand image that can emotionally connect with consumers. The purpose of this research is to analyze the Barbiecore trend, specifically to examine the motivations and social behaviors behind the enthusiasm for this trend, as well as to reveal the brand attachment to the Mattel Inc brand "Barbie" in the narrative experiences of those involved in the Barbiecore fashion trend. This research uses qualitative research methods, with data analysis employing a narrative approach. The research results conclude that the Barbiecore trend went viral on TikTok social media thanks to a PR marketing campaign by Mattel, Inc., driven by the enthusiasm of women with various motivations such as nostalgia, enjoyment, creativity, self-expression, and FOMO. However, the behavior of the participants is described as social actions. The narrative experience of Barbiecore fashion trendsetters shows how Barbie's collaboration campaigns with various fashion and beauty brands can attract women's intrinsic motivation to engage with the brand, influence social actions, provide emotional experiences, and foster brand attachment for the female target market.

Keywords

Barbiecore Fashion Trend, Brand Attachment, Intrinsic Motivation, Social Action, Public Relations Marketing



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INTRODUCTION

Trend is something that is being talked about and even adopted by a large number of people in a certain period of time (Sakinah et al., 2022). In the era of increasingly advanced communication technology developments such as the internet, mass media can now make a new topic quickly spread widely and popular (Shanaz & Irwansyah, 2021) (Allifiansyah, 2017). This is what is used by Public

Relations Marketing Brand as trendsetter. Trendsetter are individuals or groups that initiate and promote new trends in various fields, such as fashion, culture, music, and technology (Craveiro & Oliveira, 2018). For trendsetter usually has a significant influence on others and can encourage Trend changes in the way people behave, dress, and think (Markwart, 2021). Social media is a communication channel that plays a role in spreading a trend. Social media enables a complex global communication network, where information and ideas can flow freely and quickly (Aichner et al., 2021)

One of the trends that had become popular through social media in July 2023 was A practice new fashion trends, namely Fashion Trends Barbiecore which is a topic that is widely discussed in cyberspace. Terms Barbiecore first appeared in early 2021 on social media Tiktok (Shepherd, 2024). Barbiecore appears in photo and video posts of someone who wears fashion with Barbie's aesthetic which is; bright colors, a style of dressing that playful, and shiny accessories (Muskett, 2024). Fashion trends Barbiecore This emerged as a trend FADS at the time of the film's release Box Office titled "Barbie" on July 19, 2020, began to decline with time, until 2023 (Shepherd, 2024).

As a trend that has experienced a period of trending In 2023, a trend is not spared from the influence of the masses of followers who popularize the trend in various communication media, both television and social media. In the Barbiecore fashion trend, Tiktok social media encourages the dissemination of information on barbiecore fashion practices which was initially an attitude of women towards various collaborations Fire Fashion and beauty with fire "Barbie" which is a marketing campaign to enliven the release of the movie "Barbie" (Havrylenko, 2023).

Barbiecore's fashion trend is triggered by women's motivation to always want to look beautiful in accordance with the beauty standards recognized by the Indonesian people (Adani et al., 2021). This motivation is the inner drive to do something for pleasure, satisfaction, and personal interest. This motivation is different from extrinsic motivation which is influenced by external factors such as rewards or recognition. According to M.R. Ryan, intrinsic motivation is driven by three basic psychological needs: autonomy (the desire to feel free and independent), competence (the desire to feel capable), and connectedness (the desire to connect with others) (Reiss, 2004) (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

To understand it more broadly, in the theory of social action, Max Weber explained that social action is human behavior that has a subjective meaning and is directed at others (Ekstrom, 1992). Weber divides social action into four categories: instrumental rational action, in which individuals choose the most efficient way to achieve goals; rational action of value, which is driven by a belief in intrinsic value; affective actions, which are influenced by spontaneous emotions; and traditional actions, which are based on habits. According to Weber, understanding social action requires an analysis of the subjective meaning that individuals give to their actions, not just external aspects (Pancari & Renggani, 2021) (Utech, 1963).

Giant corporation Mattel.Inc focuses public attention on the "Barbie" brand through its mass media marketing campaign with collaboration between fashion and beauty brands. So, the key to cyber search focuses on the vocabulary of "Barbie", which has the effect of increasing brand awareness among many audiences around the world towards the "Barbie" brand. Then the Barbiecore fashion trendsetters were also unconsciously given the experience of interacting with the "Barbie" brand through its collaboration campaign which fostered the experience of emotional attachment with the "Barbie" brand.

According to Tarkiainen et al., brand loyalty is a customer's commitment to continue to buy or use a certain product/service repeatedly, despite factors such as price or competition. (Budiman, 2021), Brand loyalty includes the emotional attachment and trust of customers to the brand. This attachment is measured through three dimensions: cognitive (trust in the brand), affective (positive feelings such as love and trust), and performer (actions such as repeat purchases and recommendations) (Li et al., 2020)(Diallo et al., 2021).

As a communicator or communication practitioner, Public Relations required to be able to communicate effectively with the public (Grunig, 2008). Understanding the psychology of audience motivation is important to determine how PR builds communication processes and how PR can be a more effective communicator. There is also PR as a practitioner Brand Communication must be able to understand how consumers form an emotional connection with the brand, so that PR can design more effective communication strategies and build a strong and sustainable brand image. (Hsieh & Li, 2008) (Keller, 2011)

Researchers believe that the Barbiecore trend shows how Mattel.Inc's creative campaigns manage to build emotional attachment with consumers. Through Barbie's iconic aesthetic and contemporary fashion trends, women feel compelled to express themselves, both through nostalgia and the need for social connection. The results of this study show that Barbiecore is not just a momentary trend, but an emotional experience that creates long-term brand loyalty. In this study, researchers not only analyzed the intrinsic motivations behind the enthusiasm of Barbiecore fashion trendsetters, but also considered how social actions affect their involvement in the trend.

Based on the Social Action Theory put forward by Max Weber (1922), human actions are not only driven by personal goals, but also by the social meaning they give to those actions (Race, 2023). In the context of Barbiecore, trendsetters engage in social actions that are influenced by their interactions with the social environment as well as the norms that apply on social media. This research will also explore the narrative experiences of trendsetters and their attachment to the Mattel Inc Brand, specifically how this emotional and social engagement creates brand loyalty. Thus, this research question focuses on how intrinsic motivation and social action are intertwined in shaping enthusiasm for Barbiecore trends, as well as how narrative experiences strengthen attachment to brands.

In this regard, researchers are interested in conducting research including: 1) What is the intrinsic motivation and how social action affects the enthusiasm of the perpetrators of the "Barbiecore" Fashion Trend, and 2) What is the narrative experience of Barbiecore trendsetters related to their attachment to the Mattel Inc Brand after following this trend.

This study takes a reference from a Research Article by Siska Armawati Sufa, et al entitled "Healthy Lifestyle Trends Communication Channels for Food Combining Diet Actors" in the Journal of Professional Communication in 2017. The researcher also took references to the collection of interview data, and the prerequisite marketing strategy of women's fashion brands from Iris Fatia Maharani's research entitled "The Application of Digital Marketing in the Context of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises of MAIMA Indonesia's Womenpreneurs." in the Journal of Communication of the University of Garut in 2021. This research focuses more on the phenomenon of Barbiecore fashion trends. The study was an analysis of individual motivation to adopt the Barbiecore style and the experience of brand attachment to the "Barbie" brand from Barbiecore fashion trendsetters.

The urgency of this research is as a reference for Public Relations practitioners to be able to understand the prospective trend actors, how intrinsic motivation can lead the public to engage with brands through social media, how brand attachment can occur through a trend, and provide insight into a trend that is the result of a PR marketing campaign communication strategy. The purpose of this study is to understand the motivations and social behaviors behind the enthusiasm for following these trends, as well as to uncover the brand's attachment to the Mattel Inc brand "Barbie" in the narrative experiences of Barbiecore fashion trendsetters.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative methodology through exploring the narrative experiences of the resource persons. In qualitative research, as stated (Moleong, 2014), the design of the research can initially be described incompletely. Once the design is implemented, it can be added and refined. In addition, the design can be continuously modified and adapted based on the new field data and knowledge gained. Creswell (2009) Elaborates that in order to gain an in-depth understanding of research phenomena, data is collected from various sources. In qualitative research, data is obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation. Next, the researcher reviewed, understood, and organized all the collected data into categories relevant to the data source. Descriptive research issues in society and the procedures applicable in particular societies and situations, including relationships, activities, attitudes, views, and ongoing processes and impacts of a phenomenon (Kamil, I, 2018).

In this study, the researcher collected two types of data, namely primary data in the form of interview and observation data with Barbiecore trend actors to collect data on the perpetrator's intrinsic motivation, and also the perpetrator's brand

attachment experience. Secondary data in this study are in the form of: literature studies such as news, internet articles, and relevant academic journals.

Data analysis takes a narrative approach, where researchers will analyze the stories and experiences shared by participants in the interview to understand the perspective and meaning they give. Denzin (2011) emphasizing the importance of narrative in understanding identity and culture. He argues that stories are the primary way individuals and groups understand and define themselves.

In this study, researchers examined the narrative experiences of resource persons using the Theory of Self-Determination to explain how communication messages stimulate the audience's intrinsic motivation and encourage the audience to engage with the brand, Social Action Theory to explain the social behavior behind the actions of trendsetters, and Brand Attachment Theory to explain how communication messages generate a strong emotional attachment to a brand.

Researchers use Triangulation Technique between Resource Persons, to improve the validity and reliability of the data. According to Miles & Huberman,(1994), triangulation between sources is a technique used to check the validity of data by asking one source to verify or comment on data obtained from other sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study was obtained through interviews with several Barbiecore fashion trend actors spread across several regions in West Java and Jakarta. These fashion trendsetters are in a circle of female friends who follow barbiecore fashion trends. They are active in the Twitter social media discussion room "space" under the name "Barbiecore Indonesia".

The researchers selected 5 adult women aged 20-40 years who had sufficient independent financial ability to support fashion freedom. The data of the informants can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Table List Key Informant

Nama	Domisili	Usia
Citra Mutiara Lestari	Jakarta Selatan	32
Elsa Aprilianti	Bandung Barat	31
Latih (Inisial)	Bekasi Utara	25
Muna (Inisial)	Bogor Tengah	21
Ratna Cahyani	Kota Bandung, Rancasari	24

The researcher sorts the interview data through several stages, namely: selecting, simplifying the data, transforming the data and verifying. For the data triangulation test, data verification of the source material was carried out.

The motivation behind the enthusiasm of the Barbiecore Fashion Trends.

The majority of Barbiecore fashion trendsetters don't suddenly become people who follow a trend for no reason. Of course, the actors have an interest and enthusiasm from within to be able to follow a new trend. The motivation is self-

motivation which is an intrinsic motivation of the individual to do an activity. For Barbiecore fashion trendsetters, self-motivation varies depending on the person.

There are three basic psychological needs, namely: 1. Autonomy Needs: The desire to feel free and independent in making one's own choices and actions, 2. Competency needs: the desire to feel capable and competent in doing tasks and achieving goals, 3. Connectivity Needs: The desire to feel connected to others and have a sense of belonging (Ryan, 2000).



Figure 1. Illustration of the Theory of Self-Determination

From the results of interviews conducted by researchers to the five key informants as Barbiecore fashion trends, each trend actor has a moment that makes them motivated to follow the Barbiecore trend. The moment started from social media Tiktok and the Barbie Movie. As expressed by Elsa below; "The moment I and my image gained interest in this fashion trend, was when I was shocked, many women in circles dressed en masse in magenta red clothes at the time of the release of the movie "Barbie". I thought I missed the news or something, or this is really the dress code for watching the Barbie movie. (Interview with Elsa Aprilianti, May 21, 2024).

As a person who was initially unfamiliar with Barbiecore, Elsa showed how the initial impression of the release of the "Barbie" movie could make her follow the enthusiasm of the people around her.

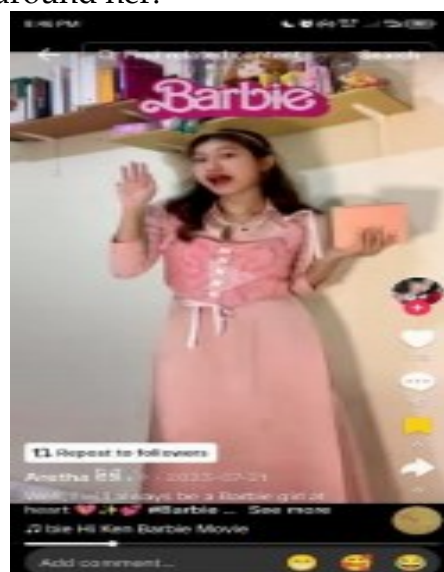


Figure 2. Social Media Screenshot of Barbiecore Fashion Trendsetters
Sumber: Tiktok "Well, I always be a barbie girl at heart." User @arechae

The content image from Ratna as a Barbiecore fashion trend actor above shows how crowded the Barbiecore Trend is on Tiktok. The enthusiasm of Barbiecore trendsetters did not happen without a profound reason. The study found that various psychological factors influence an individual's decision to follow such fashion trends. This motivation is intrinsic, where Barbiecore trendsetters engage with the trend because of the fun, self-expression, and social connection they feel.

The enthusiasm of Barbiecore trendsetters is driven by various other intrinsic motivations, such as childhood nostalgia, self-expression, and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). These motivations encourage individuals to engage in trends not only as fashion fashion, but also as an immersive emotional experience.

Nostalgia is one of the dominant factors that makes this trend attractive to many actors. As one of the informants, Latih, explained: "For me, Barbie is a fictional character who has had a huge influence on my life. I dress with the Barbiecore aesthetic not only because I follow this trend, but I get to pour out my childhood fantasies in adulthood. " (Interview Training, May 22, 2024).

Self-expression is also an important motivation. Performers see Barbiecore as a means to showcase their creativity and unique identity. Elsa, one of the informants, said: "I showed my creativity to my students and my circle, as an example of freedom of expression through fashion. " (Interview with Elsa Aprilianti, May 21, 2024).

FOMO or the fear of falling behind social trends also plays a role in the motivation of the perpetrators. Elsa added that she was driven by the social influences of her surroundings: "At first, I was influenced by Citra wearing a Barbiecore shirt when I first saw the movie 'Barbie'. Seeing many people wearing magenta red made me want to wear the same color as well. " (Interview with Elsa Aprilianti, May 21, 2024). These motivations show that the Barbiecore trend is not just a fashion trend, but also creates an emotional and social experience for the perpetrators.

Social Action of Barbiecore Fashion Trendsetters

Max Weber (1922) emphasized that every human action has a subjective meaning that can be understood by understanding the perspective of the individual who performs the action. In structuralist approaches such as Maxism, which focuses more on the influence of institutions and social structures, Weber introduced Verstehen's concept, which means understanding social action from the point of view of the individual in an empathetic way. According to Max Weber, social actions are divided into four categories, namely 1) Actions based on goals that are to be achieved efficiently (Instrumentally Rational Actions), Actions carried out due to belief in certain values (Value- Rational Actions), Actions carried out due to habits or traditions (Traditional Actions), and Actions driven by emotions such as happiness or nostalgia (Affective Actions).

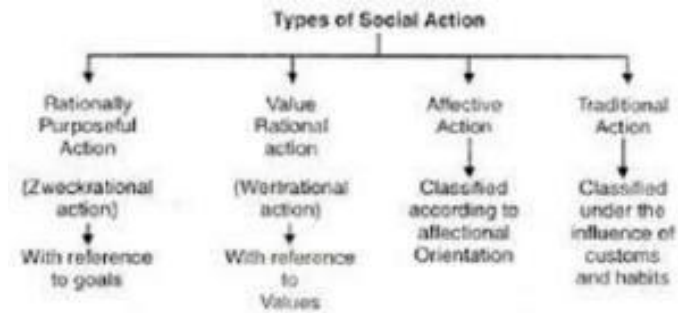


Figure 3. Illustration of the Theory of Social Action by Max Weber (1922)

In behaviors outside of the intrinsic motivation of the Barbiecore fashion trendsetters, social actions that involve interaction and exchange of meaning between individuals are the result of intersocial communication. In understanding the motivations of Barbiecore trendsetters, their social actions can be explained through a subjective understanding (*Verstehen*) of the meaning they give to those actions. Elsa, as one of the perpetrators, was affected by her environment while watching many people wear magenta red clothes during the release of the movie "Barbie." His participation in this trend was triggered by a desire to connect socially with the people around him, suggesting that his actions were a form of social action interpreted by the pressure of his social group. The image shows another example, where nostalgia plays a key role. For her, following this trend is not only a self-expression but also a manifestation of a memorable childhood with Barbie, which is in line with the concept of rational action based on values according to Weber.

For many performers, their actions follow the Barbiecore trend not only to gain personal pleasure, but also to express the values they hold, such as creativity and femininity, within a larger social sphere. Thus, this motivation can be understood through the lens of Weber's social action, where trend actors give meaning to their actions based on the interactions and social norms that prevail around them.

In addition to Elsa, other perpetrators such as Citra also provide examples of social actions that are in line with Max Weber's understanding. Citra, who has been a Barbie fan since childhood, started following the Barbiecore trend since the trailer for the Barbie movie was released. For her, this trend is not just a fashion trend, but also a form of nostalgia that fuels pride in her childhood. Citra action can be seen as a form of rational action based on values, where she gives meaning to the clothes she wears as a reflection of the values she believes in since childhood. Her decision to participate in the Barbiecore trend was not just an external impulse, but rather because of the emotional connection and personal value she gave to the Barbie character. This is in line with Weber's concept that social actions must be interpreted from the point of view of the individual who performs them.

Ratna, another perpetrator, gave an example of how the Barbiecore trend is also influenced by broader social phenomena. When she first took part in this trend, Ratna felt connected to the community she met while watching the movie "Barbie". His

experience in the circle shows how involvement in trends is triggered by the fear of missing out or FOMO, which in Weber's context can be seen as a traditional act. Ratna follows this trend because of social pressures and the desire to be accepted into a larger group, without analyzing the action rationally from the start. However, as time went by, Ratna began to internalize the meaning of the trend, and found pleasure and self-expression in following the Barbiecore style. It shows how social action can change from traditional impulses to more personally meaningful actions.

Latih, another perpetrator, explained that his involvement in the Barbiecore trend is a form of channeling childhood fantasies. For her, wearing clothes with a Barbiecore aesthetic gives her space to express childhood dreams in adult life. According to Weber, the act of Train can be seen as an affective act, driven by emotions and feelings of nostalgia. By dressing like Barbie, Train not only utilizes fashion trends as a means of self-expression, but also as a way to connect herself with a memorable past. These actions, while seemingly individual, are still influenced by the surrounding social context, where these trends provide space for individuals to engage in collective experiences through Barbie symbols.

Lastly, Muna, who was not originally a Barbie fan, also got involved in the Barbiecore trend after feeling influenced by the people around her who were wearing magenta red clothes at the time of the film's release. His decision to take part was triggered by social influences and a desire to be part of the group he met at the cinema. Muna's actions can be categorized as traditional actions in Weber's theory, as initially she only followed others without a full understanding of the meaning of the Barbiecore trend. However, as time went by, she began to understand the aesthetics of Barbiecore fashion and developed an emotional attachment to the Barbie character and brand. This process shows how the social meaning of actions can change as individual understanding and involvement increases.

Data from the perpetrators' interviews showed that their actions in following the Barbiecore trend were not only driven by psychological needs alone, but also by social interactions and the meaning they gave to those actions.

Brand Attachment with the "Barbie" Brand.

The attachment of the "Barbie" brand consists of three main dimensions: cognitive, affective, and perceived. According to Haider (2020) Brand attachment includes trust in the brand, feelings of affection, as well as tangible actions taken by consumers.

Cognitive Attachment: Barbiecore trendsetters view Barbie as an icon who teaches feminine values from childhood. Muna said: "This Barbie brand is a company that has a 'Barbie' character who is the ideal figure of a woman. It starts with the way of dressing that is applied to Barbie dolls." (Interview Muna, May 10, 2024). This belief reflects how Barbie is considered an early educational source of femininity for many women, which strengthens their cognitive attachment to the brand.

Affective Attachment. Barbiecore trendsetters also have an emotional bond with Barbie. Ratna revealed that she loves Barbie's character more than her brand, but still feels that Barbie is a symbol of female empowerment: "I love Barbie's character more than I love her brand. With this Barbiecore trend, I believe Barbie is an inspiration as well as a form of encouragement for women's empowerment. " (Ratna interview, May 17, 2024). The affection possessed by the perpetrators shows that Barbie is not just a brand, but a strong personal symbol in their lives.

Attachment of the Perpetrator. This attachment does not only stop at affection, but is also manifested in real action. The actors show a commitment to promoting the brand to others. As Muna explains: "At least the smallest thing that my Barbiecore friends and I can do with the brand name 'Barbie' is to invite people to follow the Barbiecore trend. I would also suggest buying a Barbie doll for their daughter's femininity education. " (Muna interview, May 10, 2024). This action reflects deep emotional loyalty, where the perpetrator is not only personally involved but also plays an active role in promoting the Barbie brand.

From the results of interviews with the key informant above, they realize that they have a special emotional attachment to fire Barbie. This proves that Effective communication can help brands build trust, create a sense of love and loyalty, and encourage consumers to engage with brands more deeply (Coelho et al., 2018). With the presence of a trend Barbiecore, women can express themselves through fashion freely that previously women tended to wear monotonous colors in their daily lives. Now women are more confident in bold colors thanks to the image of the Barbie character in the movie "Barbie". Now they are more positive to live their daily lives in public spaces as women with references to barbiecore fashion aesthetics in today's society.

From the increase Brand Awareness fashion trend actors Barbiecore In this study, it is one of the audiences affected by communication marketing brand through the campaign marketing massive corporate Mattel.Inc in various media, so that not only do women now know and know Fire "Barbie", the fashion trendsetters Barbiecore has stepped up to engage with brands more deeply. The use of social media is able to create effective communication in achieving marketing targets (Nurlimah & Apriani, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the Barbiecore Fashion Trend arises from women's enthusiasm with various intrinsic motivations, such as nostalgia, fun, self-expression, creativity and also FOMO. This intrinsic motivation encourages them to take social action by socializing and following trends. This fashion trend has gone viral on social media because of brand marketing communication in the form of a massive marketing campaign by Mattel.Inc which brings the "Barbie" brand to collaborate with various fashion brands and women's beauty brands to various media, especially TikTok, with the hashtag #Barbiecore. TikTok is a place for women to express themselves through

Barbie styles and images inspired by the movie "Barbie". This Barbiecore fashion trend also provides brand attachment that encourages more people to know the Barbie brand and increase the Brand Awareness of the "Barbie" brand.

The Narrative Experience of Barbiecore Fashion Trendsetters shows how the communication message in the form of Mattel.Inc's PR brand marketing campaign in the form of Barbie brand collaborations with various beauty and clothing brands through Tiktok social media and advertising can spark enthusiasm from women and stimulate the audience's intrinsic motivation to engage with brands through social behavior between trendsetters Barbiecore fashion made the enthusiasm for fashion with Barbie ethics developed into a new fashion trend that is popular in the world of social media Tiktok and the fashion world. This Barbiecore trend provides a special emotional experience for the female target market, stimulates social communication among trendsetters, and fosters the attachment of the Barbie brand brand with its customers.

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