

Uncertainty, Perceived Value, and Blind Box Purchase Intention among Generation Z in Batam

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Abstract

Blind box products, sold in sealed packaging that hides the exact item inside, have become popular among young Indonesian consumers, yet little is known about how the uncertainty built into these products shapes buying decisions. Drawing on the theory of consumption values, this study examines the effect of uncertainty on functional, emotional, and social value, and the effect of these three value dimensions on purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Batam City. By positioning uncertainty as an antecedent of three distinct consumption-value dimensions, this study extends the application of the theory of consumption values to the experience-based context of blind-box purchasing. A quantitative design was used. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire from 350 respondents aged 17 to 30 who live in Batam and were familiar with or had bought blind box products, selected by purposive sampling. The data were analyzed with partial least squares structural equation modeling. Uncertainty had a positive and significant effect on functional value, emotional value, and social value, with the strongest effect on social value. All three value dimensions, in turn, positively and significantly influenced purchase intention and jointly explained 62.4 percent of its variance; emotional value had the largest coefficient, although the differences among the three were small. The findings suggest that, for blind box buyers, not knowing what is inside the package adds to rather than detracts from perceived value. Sellers can therefore treat the element of surprise as part of the product itself, while keeping quality consistent and supporting the collector communities in which buyers share their unboxing experiences.

Keywords: blind box, uncertainty, perceived value, purchase intention, generation z

Introduction

Blind boxes are sealed packages that hold one item from a known series, usually a figurine or collectible toy, without telling the buyer which item is inside. The buyer finds out only after opening the box. This built-in surprise, together with the curiosity and anticipation it creates, sets blind boxes apart from conventional products (Zhang et al., 2022). What began as a niche collectors' habit has grown into a sizable global business. Zion Market Research (2024) valued the global blind box market at around USD 13.5 billion in 2024 and projects it to exceed USD 25 billion by 2034. Much of this growth has come from consumer interest in collectibles, fandom culture, and social media, where unboxing videos have turned the act of opening a package into a form of entertainment. Sharing these moments online widens product exposure and creates social interaction that, in turn, encourages others to buy (Yin et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, blind boxes have caught on quickly among young people, particularly Generation Z. This cohort grew up with the internet, spends a great deal of time on social

media, and tends to favor consumption experiences that are unusual, interactive, and fun. Heavy exposure to digital content also makes them quick to follow viral trends, blind box purchases included. Their buying behavior is therefore shaped not only by functional needs but also by the emotional and social experiences attached to consumption (Lady et al., 2025).

Perceived value is one of the main concepts used to explain purchase intention. It refers to a consumer's overall judgment of what is received compared with what is given up to obtain a product. The theory of consumption values holds that purchase decisions draw on several distinct types of value, including functional, emotional, and social value (Koay & Ngang, 2026). Functional value relates to the quality and usefulness of a product (Raharja et al., 2022), emotional value to feelings such as pleasure, satisfaction, and excitement (Nasution & Nasution, 2023), and social value to social interaction and self-image (Raharja et al., 2022).

For blind boxes, all three kinds of value are closely tied to the product's defining feature: uncertainty. Buyers do not know exactly what they will get, and this is precisely what draws them in (Zhang et al., 2022). At the same time, uncertainty carries risk, because the product cannot be fully evaluated before purchase. Its effects may also differ across value dimensions. Uncertainty makes it harder to judge quality beforehand, although buyers can still assess the design, quality, and usefulness of the item once they receive it (Luo et al., 2022). On the emotional side, not knowing the outcome can heighten curiosity, excitement, and enjoyment at the moment of opening (Fan & Tham, 2025). Socially, the experience gives buyers something to share, whether through unboxing posts, conversations with other collectors, or participation in fan communities.

Purchase intention, meaning a consumer's inclination to buy, buy again, or recommend a product (Putra et al., 2025; Widodo & Maylina, 2022), has been linked to perceived value in many settings. Watanabe et al. (2020) found this link for organic food, and Luo et al. (2022) for energy-saving products. Zhang et al. (2022), working specifically on blind boxes, focused on how uncertain rewards drive impulsive purchase intention. Taken together, these studies suggest that consumers are more willing to buy when they perceive higher value. Yet research connecting uncertainty, perceived value, and purchase intention in the blind box context is still scarce, especially for Indonesian Generation Z consumers. The gap matters, because the mix of uncertainty and emotional reward that defines blind boxes may shape perceived value differently than it does for ordinary products.

This study therefore examines the effect of uncertainty on functional, emotional, and social value, and the effect of these three value dimensions on the purchase intention of blind box products among Generation Z consumers in Batam City. The findings are expected to add to the consumer behavior literature on experience-based products and to give businesses a clearer basis for designing marketing strategies for such products.

Theory of Consumption Values

The theory of consumption values (TCV), developed by Sheth et al. (1991), explains consumer choice in terms of the value consumers perceive in a product or service. According to this theory, consumers weigh not only what a product does for them functionally but also the emotional and social benefits they obtain from consuming it (Luo et al., 2022). In this study, perceived value is represented by three of these dimensions. Functional value concerns perceived quality, usefulness, and benefit; emotional value concerns the pleasure, excitement, and satisfaction felt while buying and using the product; and social value concerns benefits

such as a better self-image, social recognition, and interaction with a community (Koay & Ngang, 2026). Because blind box buyers cannot know what they are purchasing, uncertainty is likely to shape how they assess each of these benefits, and when all three are perceived as high, the tendency to buy should also rise. TCV therefore offers a suitable lens for explaining how uncertainty builds perceived value, which in turn drives purchase intention.

Uncertainty

In the blind box context, uncertainty describes a situation in which consumers cannot know the exact content or character of the product before buying it. Buyers accept that they may receive any item in a series without knowing the result in advance. This is what distinguishes blind boxes from conventional goods, and it produces curiosity, anticipation, and a distinctive consumption experience (Zhang et al., 2022). When the item received matches or exceeds expectations, the uncertainty that preceded it may improve perceptions of product quality, deepen the emotional experience, and create occasions for social interaction.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a consumer's tendency or desire to buy a product based on evaluation and prior experience (Reni et al., 2025; Yin et al., 2019). It is commonly used to predict actual buying behavior because it reflects a consumer's readiness to make a purchase decision (Wu et al., 2021). Here, it refers to the intention to buy, repurchase, or recommend blind box products. Prior research consistently ties purchase intention to perceived value. Watanabe et al. (2020) reported a positive effect of perceived value on purchase intention for organic products; Blanco-González et al. (2025) showed that perceived value raises purchase intention by strengthening legitimacy and consumer trust; and Misra (2025) found consumption value dimensions to be important drivers of intention to use e-pharmacy services. Following these studies, purchase intention is treated here as the dependent variable, explained by functional, emotional, and social value.

Uncertainty and Functional Value

Functional value concerns the benefit, quality, usefulness, and ability of a product to meet consumer needs (Raharja et al., 2022). For blind boxes, it reflects how buyers judge the quality of the item once the purchase is complete. Uncertainty is not necessarily a negative risk; it can also make the experience more interesting and add value. Lu and Chen (2021) argue that uncertainty affects product evaluation because consumers try to form value judgments from whatever information is available, and Chen et al. (2019) found that uncertainty during the purchase process influences how consumers assess product benefits and, ultimately, their intention to buy. Blind box buyers do not know the contents in advance, but they still hold expectations about quality and benefit. If the item they receive meets or exceeds those expectations, perceived functional value increases. Hence:

H1: Uncertainty has a significant effect on functional value.

Uncertainty and Emotional Value

Emotional value arises from the feelings consumers experience while buying or using a product (Nasution & Nasution, 2023), such as joy, enthusiasm, satisfaction, curiosity, or excitement. With blind boxes, uncertainty is the main source of this experience, since buyers only learn what they have when they open the package. Zhang et al. (2022) showed that the

uncertain rewards built into blind boxes heighten consumer excitement and pleasure through unpredictable surprise. Fan and Tham (2025) add that emotional value is important in forming positive attitudes toward a product. Curiosity about the outcome keeps consumers engaged in buying, and the more uncertainty they perceive, the greater the chance of a positive emotional experience. Hence:

H2: Uncertainty has a significant effect on emotional value.

Uncertainty and Social Value

Social value is the social benefit consumers gain from using a product, including more social interaction, recognition from others, and the formation of social identity (Ma et al., 2021; Raharja et al., 2022). Blind box buyers obtain social value by sharing unboxing experiences, talking with other collectors, and taking part in fan communities. Yin et al. (2019) showed that social interaction significantly influences purchasing behavior in digital environments, and Febriyanti and Irmawati (2024) found that social value can raise consumer interest in a product. Because the outcome of each purchase is unknown, buyers have a reason to tell others what they got, in person or on social media. These exchanges intensify social interaction and strengthen ties to the blind box fan community. Hence:

H3: Uncertainty has a significant effect on social value.

Functional Value and Purchase Intention

Under TCV, functional value is a primary criterion in product evaluation because it reflects the performance and benefit received relative to cost (Koay & Ngang, 2026). For blind boxes, it covers perceptions of the quality, design, uniqueness, and benefit of the item obtained. Despite the element of chance, buyers still judge what they receive, and better quality translates into higher perceived functional value. Luo et al. (2022) found that functional value positively affects purchase intention for energy-saving products, Rohman et al. (2023) reported that perceived quality and benefit raise purchase intention for organic food, and Koay and Ngang (2026) identified functional value as one of the dominant drivers of purchase intention for functional foods. Consumers who receive well-made items that meet their expectations are more likely to buy again. Hence:

H4: Functional value has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Emotional Value and Purchase Intention

Emotional value covers the pleasure, enthusiasm, satisfaction, pride, and excitement consumers feel when interacting with a product (Raharja et al., 2022). It is arguably the most visible form of value in blind boxes, which offer a combination of surprise and curiosity rarely found in conventional products. Fan and Tham (2025) found that emotional value increases purchase intention by fostering positive attitudes toward the product, and Nasution and Nasution (2023) showed that it is an important driver of purchase intention on Shopee Live. The enjoyment of opening a box and discovering what is inside can produce satisfaction that encourages repeat purchases. Hence:

H5: Emotional value has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Social Value and Purchase Intention

Social value relates to social recognition, self-image, interaction with others, and involvement in particular communities (Raharja et al., 2022). With blind boxes, it can come from sharing unboxing moments, discussing items with fellow collectors, or displaying a

collection to friends. Febriyanti and Irmawati (2024) found that social value significantly affects sustainable purchase intention, and Raharja et al. (2022) reported a positive effect of social value on the purchase intention of Tokopedia users. For Generation Z consumers, who are active on social media and in online communities, blind box collections often become part of their social identity. The more social benefit they derive from sharing and community interaction, the stronger their inclination to buy. Hence:

H6: Social value has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Research Model

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model. Uncertainty is modeled as the antecedent of functional, emotional, and social value, which are in turn expected to drive purchase intention. The three value dimensions thus sit between uncertainty and purchase intention.

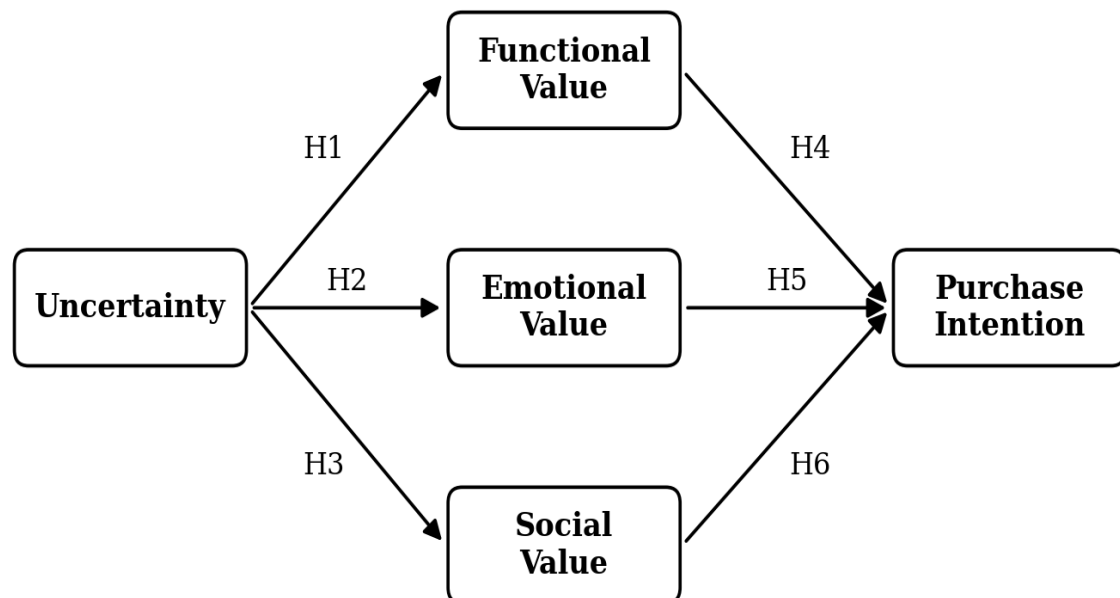


Figure 1. Conceptual model

Method

This study used a quantitative approach to examine the relationships among five variables: uncertainty, functional value, emotional value, social value, and purchase intention. The population consisted of Generation Z consumers in Batam City who knew of or had experience with blind box products. A total of 350 respondents were selected through purposive sampling using three criteria: aged 17 to 30 years, residing in Batam City, and familiar with or having previously purchased blind box products.

Data were collected with a structured questionnaire. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Uncertainty, functional value, and emotional value were each measured with three items, while social value and purchase intention were each measured with four items.

The data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS in two stages. PLS-SEM was selected because the study focuses on explaining and predicting the relationships among multiple latent constructs within a structural model. The method is also appropriate for simultaneously evaluating the measurement properties of the constructs and estimating the hypothesized relationships among uncertainty, consumption-value dimensions, and purchase intention. SmartPLS was used because it provides an integrated procedure for assessing measurement-model quality and structural-model relationships through a variance-based SEM approach and bootstrapping. The measurement (outer) model was assessed first for reliability and convergent validity using outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). The structural (inner) model was then evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2) and bootstrapping to test the hypotheses. A hypothesis was supported when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Profile

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the 350 respondents.

Table 1. Respondent profile

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	181	52%
	Female	169	48%
Age	17–22 years	294	84%
	23–30 years	56	16%
Education	Senior high/vocational school	255	73%
	Diploma	19	6%
	Bachelor's degree	73	21%
Domicile	Batam	350	100%
	Outside Batam	0	0%

The sample was fairly balanced by gender, with 181 male (52%) and 169 female (48%) respondents. Most respondents were 17 to 22 years old (294; 84%), and the remaining 56 (16%) were 23 to 30. In terms of education, 255 respondents (73%) had completed senior high or vocational school, 73 (21%) held a bachelor's degree, and 19 (6%) held a diploma. All respondents lived in Batam. The dominance of younger Generation Z consumers fits the study context, as this group actively follows trends, shows strong interest in collectibles, and is used to novel purchase experiences such as blind boxes.

Measurement Model

Figure 2 shows the outer model estimated in SmartPLS, and Table 2 reports the reliability and convergent validity results.

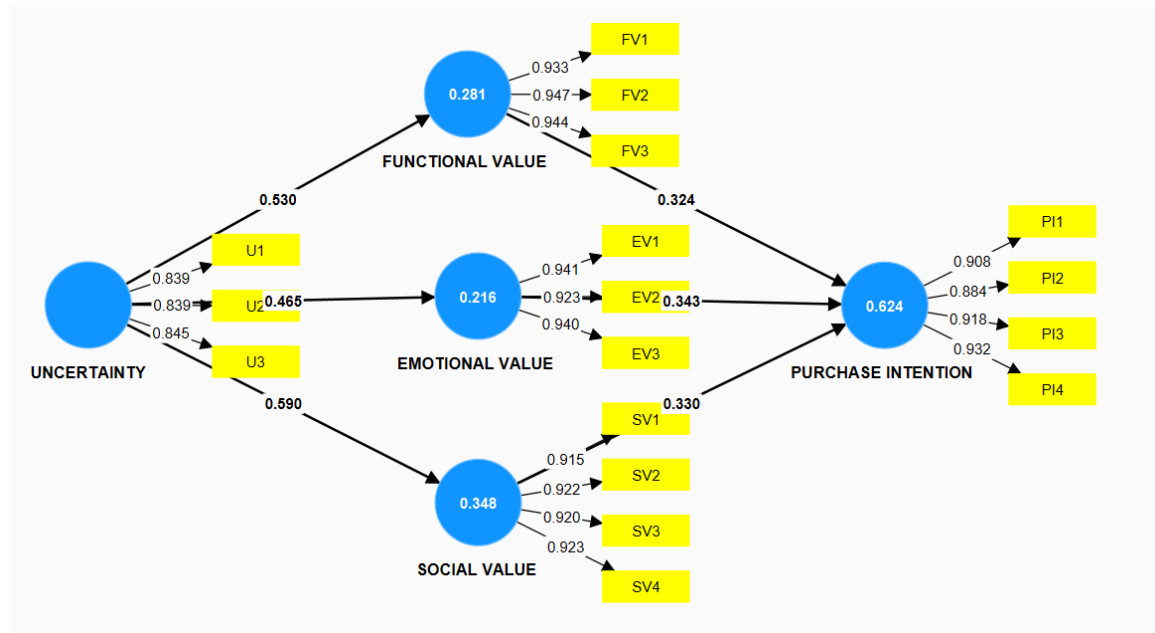


Figure 2. Outer model

Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Item	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	Composite reliability	AVE
Uncertainty	U1	0.839	0.793	0.793	0.879	0.707
	U2	0.839				
	U3	0.845				
Functional value	FV1	0.933	0.935	0.936	0.959	0.886
	FV2	0.947				
	FV3	0.944				
Emotional value	EV1	0.941	0.928	0.933	0.954	0.874
	EV2	0.923				
	EV3	0.940				
Social value	SV1	0.915	0.940	0.939	0.957	0.847
	SV2	0.922				
	SV3	0.920				
	SV4	0.923				
Purchase intention	PI1	0.908	0.932	0.934	0.951	0.830
	PI2	0.884				
	PI3	0.918				
	PI4	0.932				

All outer loadings ranged from 0.839 to 0.947, above the 0.70 threshold. Cronbach's alpha (0.793 to 0.940), rho_A (0.793 to 0.939), and composite reliability (0.879 to 0.959) all exceeded 0.70, and every AVE value (0.707 to 0.886) was above 0.50. Uncertainty had the lowest values, though still well within acceptable limits, with loadings of 0.839 to 0.845, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.793, and an AVE of 0.707. Functional value showed the strongest

measurement quality (loadings 0.933 to 0.947; composite reliability 0.959; AVE 0.886), followed closely by emotional value (loadings 0.923 to 0.941; AVE 0.874), social value (loadings 0.915 to 0.923; AVE 0.847), and purchase intention (loadings 0.884 to 0.932; AVE 0.830). The measurement model therefore meets the requirements for reliability and convergent validity.

Structural Model

Table 3. Coefficient of determination

Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Purchase intention	0.624	0.620
Functional value	0.281	0.279
Emotional value	0.216	0.214
Social value	0.348	0.346

As Table 3 shows, uncertainty explained 28.1% of the variance in functional value, 21.6% in emotional value, and 34.8% in social value. Together, the three value dimensions explained 62.4% of the variance in purchase intention, leaving 37.6% to factors outside the model.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-statistic	P-value	Decision
H1	Uncertainty → Functional value	0.530	11.654	0.000	Supported
H2	Uncertainty → Emotional value	0.465	10.087	0.000	Supported
H3	Uncertainty → Social value	0.590	17.705	0.000	Supported
H4	Functional value → Purchase intention	0.324	8.972	0.000	Supported
H5	Emotional value → Purchase intention	0.343	8.968	0.000	Supported
H6	Social value → Purchase intention	0.330	7.803	0.000	Supported

Note: β = path coefficient, taken from the SmartPLS estimates in Figure 2.

All six paths were positive and significant ($t > 1.96$; $p < 0.05$), so H1 to H6 are supported. Among the effects of uncertainty, the path to social value was the strongest ($\beta = 0.590$), followed by functional value ($\beta = 0.530$) and emotional value ($\beta = 0.465$). The three effects on purchase intention were close in size, with emotional value ($\beta = 0.343$) slightly ahead of social value ($\beta = 0.330$) and functional value ($\beta = 0.324$).

Uncertainty and Functional Value

The positive effect of uncertainty on functional value (H1) indicates that the unpredictability of blind boxes does not lower consumers' assessment of what they receive. If anything, respondents who perceived more uncertainty rated the quality, usefulness, and design of their items more favorably. One explanation is that people who choose blind boxes are, almost by definition, comfortable with not knowing the outcome, and they judge the item partly in light of the experience that came with it. This is consistent with Zhang et al. (2022), who found that uncertainty in blind boxes shapes how consumers perceive the item obtained

after purchase, and with Lu and Chen (2021), who showed that the way consumers reduce or accept uncertainty is central to how they evaluate products. Dimitralyani et al. (2025) similarly argue that in experience products, uncertainty becomes part of consumption and colors the benefits consumers perceive afterward. Blind box buyers, in other words, pay for the experience as much as for the physical object, and that experience feeds into their view of the product's functional worth.

Uncertainty and Emotional Value

Uncertainty also had a positive effect on emotional value (H2). The surprise of not knowing the content appears to be a key source of the enjoyment, curiosity, and satisfaction that buyers feel from the moment of purchase to the moment of opening (Nasution & Nasution, 2023). This matches Zhang et al. (2022), who showed that the uncertain reward mechanism of blind boxes generates surprise and anticipation that deepen emotional involvement. Fan and Tham (2025) likewise describe emotional value as a product of the consumption experience that goes on to shape attitudes and buying behavior. For Generation Z consumers in Batam, the moment of discovery seems to be much of what makes the purchase enjoyable. Even so, emotional value was the least explained of the three value dimensions ($R^2 = 0.216$), which suggests that other factors, such as character design or the rarity of particular items, may also shape how much buyers enjoy the experience.

Uncertainty and Social Value

The effect of uncertainty on social value (H3) was the strongest of the three paths from uncertainty. Because each purchase has an unknown outcome, buyers have a natural reason to share what they got, whether face to face or on social media, and these exchanges build social value. This supports Zhang et al. (2022), who noted that the distinctive experience created by uncertainty can increase the social value consumers perceive. Phangkawira (2025) found that social interaction matters for purchase decisions because it builds engagement and closer ties among consumers, and Febriyanti and Irmawati (2024) explain that social value emerges when consumption brings recognition, interaction, and relationships. Blind box buyers thus receive more than a physical item; they also gain a chance to connect with others and to build an identity within a collector community. That this path is the strongest suggests that the social side of the hobby is where uncertainty pays off most.

Functional Value and Purchase Intention

Functional value had a positive effect on purchase intention (H4). When buyers are satisfied with the quality, usefulness, and design of the items they obtain, they are more confident that the product is worth its price and more willing to buy again. The result agrees with Luo et al. (2022), who identified perceived product benefit as a major driver of purchase intention, and with Rohman et al. (2023), who found that dimensions of perceived value, including functional value, significantly affect purchase intention. Koay and Ngang (2026) likewise rank functional value among the most important dimensions for functional food purchases, and Raharja et al. (2022) report a positive effect among users of a digital platform. So even for a product built around chance, rational judgments about quality and benefit still play a part in the decision to buy.

Emotional Value and Purchase Intention

Emotional value also had a positive effect on purchase intention (H5) and showed the largest coefficient of the three value dimensions, although the margin was small. The more buyers enjoy the curiosity, excitement, and satisfaction of buying and opening a blind box, the more they intend to buy again. This suggests that blind box consumers are driven at least as much by emotional experience as by functional need. The finding is in line with Fan and Tham (2025), who showed that positive emotional experiences improve attitudes toward a product and raise purchase intention, and with Nasution and Nasution (2023), who found emotional value to be important for purchase intention in live commerce on Shopee Live. Zong and He (2022) also found that experience value that creates positive emotions increases purchase intention. The emotional payoff of opening the box is therefore a major reason why consumers come back for more.

Social Value and Purchase Intention

Social value had a positive effect on purchase intention as well (H6). Consumers who gain more social interaction, recognition, and meaningful sharing from blind boxes are more inclined to buy them, and involvement in fan communities reinforces this motivation. Febriyanti and Irmawati (2024) reported that social value raises purchase intention because its benefits are felt directly, Raharja et al. (2022) found that consumers take their social environment into account when deciding what to buy, and Ayesha et al. (2025) showed that social interaction strengthens purchase intention. For Generation Z consumers, who are highly active on social media, sharing unboxing moments, joining community discussions, and gaining recognition are strong reasons to keep buying. Social value is thus one of the channels through which social experience turns into purchase intention for blind boxes among Generation Z in Batam.

Conclusion

This study shows that uncertainty in blind box products positively affects functional, emotional, and social value, and that all three value dimensions positively affect the purchase intention of Generation Z consumers in Batam City. The uncertainty that defines blind boxes does not erode perceived value; it strengthens it, and the resulting value drives the intention to buy. These results are consistent with the theory of consumption values, which holds that purchase decisions depend on functional, emotional, and social value, and they extend its relevance to experience-based products whose content is unknown at the point of purchase. For businesses, the results suggest that the element of surprise should be treated as part of the product rather than as a risk to be minimized. Sellers can strengthen the emotional side of the purchase through series design and packaging that make opening the box enjoyable, support the social side by encouraging unboxing content and collector communities, and protect the functional side by keeping quality consistent across every item in a series, so that no draw feels like a poor return on the price paid.

This study has several limitations. First, it relied solely on a quantitative approach with PLS-SEM, so it could not explore the reasons behind respondents' answers in depth. Second, the sample was limited to Generation Z consumers in Batam City, which restricts generalization to other regions with different consumer characteristics. Third, the cross-sectional data capture conditions at a single point in time and cannot track changes in behavior. Fourth, the model covers only uncertainty, functional value, emotional value, social

value, and purchase intention, leaving out other factors that may influence purchase intention, such as price, peer influence, and distribution platforms. Future research could combine surveys with interviews to understand consumer motives, use longitudinal designs, add variables such as price and peer influence, test the indirect effects of uncertainty on purchase intention through each value dimension, and extend the sample to other Indonesian cities so that results can be compared across regions.

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