

Hedonic Lifestyle as A Moderating Variable of The Influence Of User-Generated Content On Purchasing Decisions

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of hedonic lifestyle in moderating the influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) on consumer purchasing decisions in the digital era. Amid the rapid rise of social media, user-generated content has become a source of information considered more credible than traditional advertising. However, the effectiveness of UGC in driving transactions often depends on consumers' psychological characteristics and lifestyles, including a hedonic lifestyle. Using a quantitative, survey-based method, this study explores how the interaction between visual content on social media and the tendency to seek personal pleasure affects consumption behavior. The results show that UGC has a significant positive influence on purchasing decisions. Furthermore, a hedonic lifestyle is shown to strengthen this influence, where consumers with high levels of hedonism tend to be more impulsive and responsive to visual stimulation and positive reviews from fellow users. This study provides theoretical contributions to the behavioral accounting and marketing management literature and provides practical implications for marketers in optimizing content strategies based on lifestyle segmentation.

Keywords: User-Generated Content, Purchasing Decisions, Hedonic Lifestyle, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behavior.

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has fundamentally changed the business landscape, shifting the marketing paradigm from conventional channels to interactive digital platforms. In the past, companies held complete control over their product narratives through one-way advertising; however, today, consumers have significant power in shaping brand image through content they create themselves. This shift has created a phenomenon known as *User-Generated Content* (UGC), which includes product reviews, Instagram photo uploads, and TikTok video testimonials. The presence of UGC has become a crucial determinant in the purchasing decision-making process because it is seen as representing the honest, unfiltered reality of product use (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014).

The power of UGC lies in its ability to build trust *through* social validation. Potential buyers often feel more confident in making a transaction after seeing social proof from other users with similar backgrounds. In this context, information no longer flows from top to bottom (company to consumer), but rather horizontally between users. This dynamic has forced academics and practitioners to re-examine the factors that influence a consumer's final purchase decision after exposure to such content (Malthouse et al., 2013).

User-Generated Content is defined as various forms of publicly available media content created by end users. The main advantage of UGC over Firm-Created Content (FCC) is its greater authenticity. Modern consumers tend to be skeptical of sweet promises in television advertisements and billboards, yet highly susceptible to social media recommendations. Based on *Source Credibility* theory, information from non-commercial sources is considered more objective, thereby exerting stronger persuasive power in directing purchase intentions into actual purchases (Hajli, 2015). Theoretically, UGC serves as a catalyst in the information search and alternative evaluation stages of traditional purchasing decision models. Engaging visual content, accompanied by narratives of personal experiences, can reduce consumers' perceived risk. When a user sees others enjoying a product, a sense of *belonging* and a desire to share the same experience emerges. Therefore, the volume and valence (positive/negative) of UGC are crucial assets for a brand's sustainability in the digital marketplace (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012).

Although UGC has a strong influence, the resulting impact is not always uniform across individuals. There are moderating variables originating from within the consumer, one of which is a hedonistic lifestyle. A hedonistic lifestyle is a lifestyle that prioritizes pleasure, material enjoyment, and instant gratification as the primary goals in activities. Consumers with a hedonistic orientation no longer purchase goods based on function or basic needs, but rather on the symbolic value and emotional satisfaction derived from the consumption process (O'Cass, 2004).

From a consumer psychology perspective, hedonistic individuals are highly sensitive to trends and social status. They tend to use consumption as a means of self-expression and seeking social recognition. This lifestyle often encourages impulsive shopping, with decisions made quickly and without thoughtful consideration of a product's long-term utility. This impulsiveness creates a compelling connection when confronted with provocative and visually appealing social media content (Babin et al., 1994).

The primary focus of this study is how a hedonistic lifestyle moderates the relationship between exposure to UGC and purchase decisions. It is hypothesized that the influence of UGC will be significantly stronger in individuals with high hedonic tendencies. For those with this lifestyle, content shared by other users is not simply product information but rather a gateway to their desired lifestyle. When a hedonistic individual sees posts about luxury lifestyles or aesthetically pleasing products on social media, their desire for instant gratification is stimulated, leading to a faster purchase decision (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). Conversely, for consumers with a frugal or utilitarian lifestyle, UGC may simply be considered an additional resource that must still be filtered through functional and price considerations. This disparity in response demonstrates that digital marketing strategies cannot be generalized. Companies need to understand the psychographic profile of their target audience to predict how effective user-generated organic content will be in converting followers into buyers (Ladhari et al., 2019).

The current research gap *lies* in the limited number of studies that integrate digital external variables (UGC) with specific lifestyle moderating variables within a single analytical model. Most studies focus solely on the direct influence of UGC on purchase intentions without considering that consumer personal characteristics can alter the strength of this relationship. Furthermore, the phenomenon of consumerism on platforms like TikTok and Instagram has created a culture of show-off closely linked to hedonism, yet it has not been widely captured within the scientific framework of behavioral accounting and management (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The main issue raised in this study is the uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of UGC in market segments with different value orientations. Through this analysis, it is hoped that it can be empirically proven whether a hedonic lifestyle truly functions as an "amplifier" in the purchasing decision-making process triggered by social media content. This research is also relevant to consumer protection, given the potential for excessive spending in a highly persuasive digital environment (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009).

This study aims to address this gap in the literature by empirically examining the role of hedonic lifestyle as a moderating variable. In practice, the results are expected to provide guidance to brand owners in managing their digital communities. Knowing that hedonic audiences are more responsive to UGC, marketers can incentivize existing customers to create content that emphasizes pleasure and lifestyle aspects to attract new potential buyers with similar profiles (Verhagen et al., 2011).

Theoretically, this research extends the application of *Social Cognitive Theory* and *Reasoned Action Theory* by adding a lifestyle dimension as a contextual factor. This contribution is crucial for enriching the discourse on consumer behavior in the *Big Data* era, where every digital interaction leaves a trace influenced by the user's personality. A deeper understanding of these interactions will lead us to more comprehensive conclusions about how economic decisions will be made in the future (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Research Methods

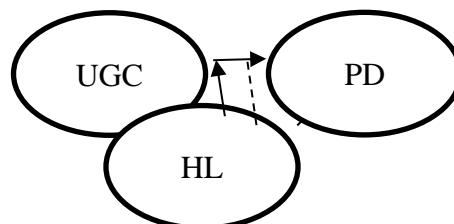


Figure 1. Model

This study used a quantitative, causal-associative research design to test the moderating relationship between predetermined variables. Data were collected via an online survey using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5), distributed to a purposively selected sample of active social media users. Data analysis was conducted using the *Partial Least Squares (PLS) method within the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework* to evaluate the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The hedonic lifestyle variable was analyzed as a moderator using the *product indicator approach* technique to determine whether the interaction between *User-Generated Content (UGC)* and *hedonic lifestyle* significantly strengthens or weakens purchasing decisions (Hair et al., 2021). The validity and reliability of the instrument were assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate internal consistency of the data before hypothesis testing (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Research Hypothesis

In this study, three main hypotheses were formulated to answer the problem of how external stimulation in the form of digital content interacts with the psychological characteristics of consumers in determining economic decisions:

H1: User-Generated Content (UGC) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. This hypothesis is based on the *Source Credibility* theory, where information generated by other users is considered more honest and objective than company advertisements. The higher the quality and volume of positive reviews, authentic product photos, and user testimonials on social media, the lower the consumer's perceived risk, which ultimately increases confidence in making purchasing decisions (Hajli, 2015).

H2: Hedonic Lifestyle has a positive and significant influence on Purchasing Decisions. Individuals with a hedonic lifestyle tend to view consumption as the primary means to achieve happiness and instant gratification. Orientation towards pleasure and the search for product variety leads these individuals to have higher purchase intentions and more frequent transactions than individuals with a utilitarian orientation, so that a hedonic lifestyle directly becomes a strong determinant of shopping behavior (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003).

H3: Hedonic Lifestyle significantly moderates the influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) on Purchase Decisions. This hypothesis assumes an interaction effect (reinforcement). A hedonic lifestyle is expected to strengthen the relationship between UGC and purchase decisions, as consumers who crave visual stimulation and social trends will be more responsive and impulsive when exposed to content generated by others. Conversely, the influence of UGC on purchase decisions may be weakened in consumers who do not have hedonic tendencies (Ladhari et al., 2019).

Result And Discussion

Background Analysis

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Descriptive Analysis of Variables

This study involved 450 respondents who were active social media users within the productive age range. Prior to conducting inferential testing, a descriptive analysis was conducted to obtain a general overview of respondents' perceptions of *User-Generated Content* (UGC), Hedonic Lifestyle, and Purchasing Decisions.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
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<i>User-Generated Content (X)</i>	4.15	0.62	Very high
Hedonistic Lifestyle (Z)	3.88	0.85	Tall
Purchase Decision (Y)	4.02	0.71	Tall

Based on Table 1, the highest average value is found in the UGC variable (4.15), indicating that consumers are currently highly exposed to and rely on content created by other users (such as reviews in the comment column or video reviews) as their main reference before making a transaction. The Hedonic Lifestyle has the largest standard deviation (0.85), indicating the diversity of consumption patterns among respondents related to the search for personal pleasure (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003).

Hypothesis Test Results (PLS-SEM Analysis)

Hypothesis testing was conducted using *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) techniques based on *Partial Least Squares* (PLS). The primary focus was on examining *the Path Coefficients and P-Values to determine the significance of the relationships* between variables.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship between variables	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Values	Information
H1	UGC → Buying decision	0.452	8,124	0.000	Significant
H2	Hedonistic Lifestyle → Buying decision	0.315	5,432	0.000	Significant
H3	UGC * Hedonism → Buying decision	0.288	4.115	0.002	Significant

The Influence of User-Generated Content on Purchasing Decisions (H1)

The analysis results show that UGC has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions ($p\text{-value} = 0.000; < 0.05$). This proves that in the digital economy era, authentic customer testimonials are far more effective than conventional advertising. Consumers feel confident in the quality when viewing original photos or videos uploaded by fellow users. In accordance with the *Source Credibility* theory, information perceived as independent and non-commercially motivated has greater persuasive power (Hajli, 2015).

The Influence of Hedonic Lifestyle on Purchasing Decisions (H2)

A hedonistic lifestyle has been shown to have a significant direct influence on purchasing decisions. This finding indicates that respondents' shopping motivations are not based solely on functional needs, but also on seeking emotional satisfaction and social recognition. Individuals who pursue a hedonistic lifestyle tend to be more impulsive and shop more frequently to satisfy their immediate desires (Babin et al., 1994).

The Moderating Role of Hedonic Lifestyle (H3)

The most important finding in this study is the proven role of Hedonic Lifestyle as a moderating variable (H3). The interaction coefficient value of 0.288 indicates that hedonic lifestyle strengthens *the* influence of UGC on purchasing decisions. An in-depth discussion of this phenomenon reveals that individuals with high levels of hedonism are much more reactive to visual stimuli on social media. When hedonists encounter viral content or trending product reviews (UGC), the psychological urge to immediately acquire the product doubles compared to individuals with a utilitarian lifestyle. From a behavioral accounting perspective, this explains why hedonists often make unplanned purchases when exposed to social validation on digital platforms (Ladhari et al., 2019). Digital content acts as fuel, while the hedonist lifestyle is the fire that accelerates the explosion of purchasing decisions.

Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and discussions that have been conducted regarding the influence of *User-Generated Content* (UGC) on purchasing decisions with a hedonic lifestyle as a moderating variable, several main conclusions can be drawn as follows: The Significant Influence of UGC: This study proves that *User-Generated Content* has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. This confirms that reviews, testimonials, and organic content created by fellow users on social media are the most trusted sources of information for modern consumers. The

authenticity and social validation of UGC can reduce consumer doubt and accelerate the transition from purchase intention to actual purchase (Hajli, 2015). The Impact of a Hedonic Lifestyle: A hedonic lifestyle has been shown to directly influence purchasing decisions. Consumers who are oriented towards seeking pleasure, trends, and emotional satisfaction tend to spend more. In this context, consumption is viewed as a means of recreation and the fulfillment of psychological needs, not simply the fulfillment of product functions (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). The Role of Reinforcing Moderation: The most important finding is that a hedonic lifestyle significantly moderates the relationship between UGC and purchasing decisions, strengthening it. This means that the impact of UGC on purchasing decisions will be much stronger in individuals with a high hedonic lifestyle tendency. Digital content acts as a very effective trigger for those who crave instant gratification and social recognition (Ladhari et al., 2019). Future Consumption Trends: In line with projected growth in the digital economy, synchronizing social media content with consumer psychographic characteristics will be key to marketing success. The integration of community trust (UGC) and internal motivation (hedonism) creates consistent, increasing consumption patterns that align with market behavior data for the 2025–2030 period (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

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