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User-Generated Content and Influencer Marketing in Fashion Retail: How User Engagement Mediates Purchase Intention on Shopee

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Abstract: The rapid expansion of e-commerce, particularly in the fashion retail sector, has emphasized the importance of digital marketing strategies such as user-generated content (UGC) and influencer marketing. This study investigates how UGC and influencer marketing influence consumers' purchase intention on Shopee, with user engagement as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through online surveys from 150 Shopee users who had encountered fashion-related content either from users or influencers. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the relationships between variables. The findings reveal that both UGC and influencer marketing significantly enhance user engagement. However, neither UGC nor influencer marketing directly influences purchase intention without user engagement. User engagement fully mediates the effect of both variables on consumers' intention to purchase. This implies that engaging users emotionally and interactively is crucial for converting digital exposure into buying decisions. The study underscores the importance of fostering authentic engagement through personalized content and strategic influencer partnerships. These insights offer practical implications for fashion brands and marketers in optimizing their social media strategies to drive online sales effectively.

Keywords: User-Generated Content, Influencer Marketing, User Engagement, Purchase Intention, Shopee, Fashion Retail.

INTRODUCTION

The continuous advancement of technology over the years has had a significant impact on the increasing use of the internet. Today, internet usage is no longer limited to adults but has also become a part of children's daily lives. Developments in communication technology, media, and informatics have transformed the methods and operational patterns of business in the trade sector. One of the most widely utilized technological innovations by individuals, organizations, and companies is the internet (Makhdum & Aminah, 2022).

A survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) recorded that the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 215.63 million people in the 2022–2023 period. This figure shows an increase of 2.67% compared to the previous period,

which recorded 210.03 million users. This number represents approximately 78.19% of Indonesia's total population of 275.77 million. These data indicate that the development of internet technology is strongly correlated with the growth of internet users in Indonesia. This condition presents a substantial business opportunity for online shop entrepreneurs as part of the electronic commerce (e-commerce) ecosystem.

Consumer behavior in purchase intention is strongly influenced by the information presented to them. Studies have demonstrated that information credibility plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' intention to make purchasing decisions (Kao, 2022). User-Generated Content (UGC) refers to social media content created by users or the general public based on their personal experiences with products or services, rather than by professionals hired by companies to promote their products (Li et al., 2020). This content may include personal web pages, blogs, forums, videos on social media platforms, and entries on collaborative sources like Wikipedia (Zhu & Zhang, 2022).

UGC has been shown to significantly influence purchase intention, as evidenced by various studies. Research indicates that UGC plays a vital role in shaping consumer decision-making, especially among Generation Z consumers (Panopoulos et al., 2023; Puspitasari & Aruan, 2023). UGC is often perceived as more credible and trustworthy, which in turn enhances brand trust and consumer purchase decisions (Israfilzade & Baghirova, 2022). Furthermore, the rise of digital platforms has amplified the impact of UGC on consumer decisions, where UGC is seen as more objective and influential in driving purchasing trends (Demba et al., 2019).

On digital platforms such as *Shopee*, customer engagement frequently occurs through direct interactions during livestreaming sessions, consumer collaborations with influencers, product reviews, comments, and emotional connections with the brand. These interactions break down traditional communication barriers and create a more personalized and engaging experience for customers (Verleye et al., 2014).. Research by Hu & Chaudhry (2020) highlights that social bonds formed through interpersonal interactions positively influence customer engagement, which subsequently increases purchase intention. User engagement on platforms like Shopee not only fosters emotional connections but also promotes sustainable business growth by enhancing brand awareness and customer loyalty.

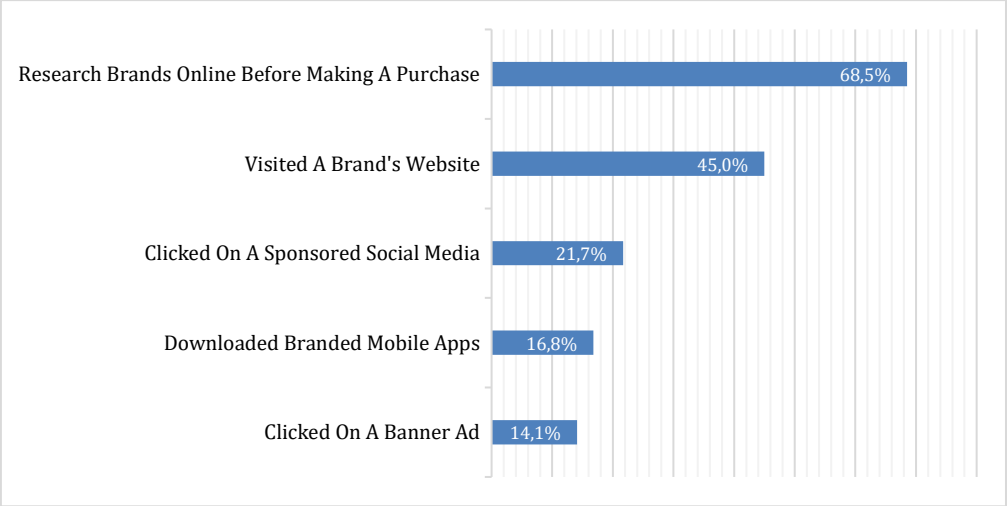


Figure 1. Engagement With Digital Marketing

Figure 1. illustrates that 68.5% of consumers conduct online research on brands or products before making a purchase. This finding underscores the importance of User-Generated Content (UGC) and influencer marketing in shaping purchasing decisions. UGC—such as product reviews, recommendations, or testimonials from other users—is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy, aiding consumers in evaluating products prior to purchase. Moreover, influencer marketing shapes consumer perceptions, as content shared by influencers

often serves as a primary reference during the online research process. The combination of UGC and influencer marketing creates an information-rich digital environment, enabling consumers to make more informed and confident purchasing decisions.

Most existing studies on UGC and influencer marketing have focused on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook (Kao, 2022; Selezneva, 2024), while Shopee—with its unique content format and predominantly young user base—remains relatively underexplored. A study by . Zahrah et al. (2024) examined customer engagement as a mediating variable between UGC and purchase intention, but the study was conducted among consumers in Malaysia. Similarly, Faritzal & Perkasa (2022) investigated customer engagement as a mediator between social media marketing and purchase intention, yet their research did not specifically focus on the role of influencers. In contrast, the present study includes the role of influencers as a key factor influencing consumer perception and intention to purchase.

Literature Review

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Based on Payne et al. (1988), an individual's decision to use a system is influenced by the perceived benefits compared to the effort and cost involved. This trade-off perspective suggests that the adoption of information systems depends on the evaluation of advantages versus drawbacks (Davis, 1989).. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which a technology improves performance and is rooted in Bandura's (1982)concept of expected positive outcomes. Meanwhile, perceived ease of use is defined as the belief that a system is easy to operate, which stems from self-efficacy—one's confidence in performing tasks effectively (Hill et al., 1987; Robey, 1979). Together, these perceptions influence behavioral intention toward system usage.

The model suggests that user behavior is influenced by their perceptions of a technology's ease of use and usefulness, which shape their intention to adopt it. When individuals perceive a technology as easy and beneficial, they tend to form positive expectations and believe it will simplify their tasks (Davis, 1989). Additionally, attitude toward a behavior can substitute for intention (Davis, 1993), as it reflects an emotional response to the expected outcomes of that behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). The stronger the emotional response, the more likely individuals are to act in line with their beliefs.

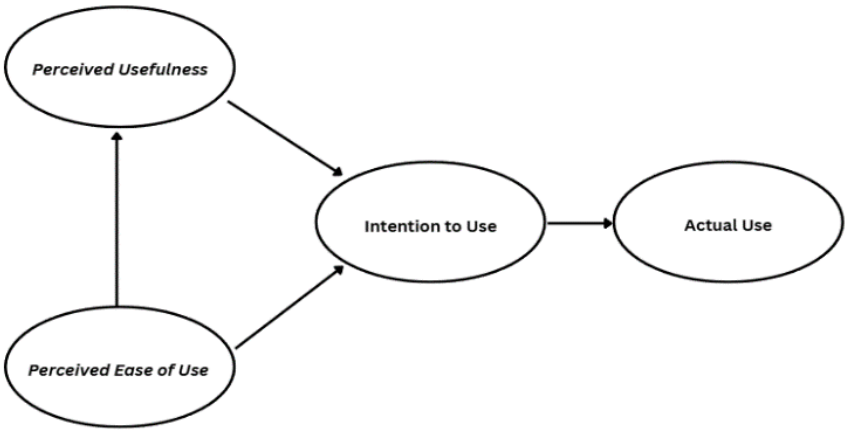


Figure 2. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), technology acceptance occurs in three stages. First, users respond cognitively by evaluating the perceived ease of use and usefulness of the technology, which are influenced by external factors such as system design. This is followed by an emotional response, reflected in the user's attitude toward using the

technology or their intention to use it. The final stage involves actual behavior in utilizing the technology (Davis, 1989).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined by Mulyati & Gesitera (2020) as a consumer's desire to engage in online purchasing activities, and is seen as a key driver in consumer decision-making regarding a product. Alfionita & Hayati (2023) describe it as an individual's willingness to choose a particular brand or carry out transaction-related actions, representing consumer preferences before an actual purchase occurs. Grewal (2019) links purchase intention to a combination of belief in product quality and the consumer's financial ability, while external influences such as trusted recommendations also play a role. Gunanjaya (2020) emphasizes that consumer distrust in product attributes can significantly reduce buying interest, reinforcing the idea that purchase intention arises from both individual judgment and social interaction.

User Generated Content

User-Generated Content (UGC) refers to digital content created by end-users to share their personal experiences, opinions, or information about a brand, product, or service, distinguishing it from professionally produced marketing content. UGC can take various forms—text (reviews, comments), visuals (photos, infographics), audio (podcasts), or videos (tutorials, unboxings)—and is disseminated through social media platforms, blogs, forums, and review sites (Kao, 2022). It is considered organic in nature, as it arises spontaneously from the public rather than as part of a corporate strategy Daugherty et al. (2010). Characterized by authenticity and emotional engagement, UGC is perceived as more trustworthy and objective due to the absence of direct commercial influence (Mathur & Singh, 2021). This aligns with the concept of social proof, where consumers are more inclined to trust the honest experiences of peers, enhancing confidence in their purchasing decisions.

User-Generated Content (UGC) plays a critical role in enhancing brand interest, fostering purchase intention, and strengthening consumer–brand relationships (Malthouse et al., 2021). By disseminating opinions, reviews, and experiences—such as testimonials, photos, and videos—UGC provides authentic and trustworthy information derived from real user interactions, thereby increasing consumer trust and influencing purchasing decisions Demba et al. (2019). The interactive nature of UGC, reflected through likes, comments, shares, and discussions, deepens user engagement, allowing consumers to process information more thoroughly and build stronger emotional connections with the brand (Zahrah et al., 2024). Thus, UGC not only delivers relevant content but also creates an interactive experience that effectively drives purchase intention.

H1: User-Generated Content has a positive influence on purchase intention.

H2: User engagement mediates the effect of User-Generated Content (UGC) on purchase intention.

Influencer Marketing

According to Agustini et al. (2022), influencer marketing is considered an effective strategy for generating participatory content that spreads virally across social media platforms. Martínez-López et al. (2020) emphasize that influencers are not merely figures with access to target audiences, but individuals who hold credibility as celebrities, experts, or authorities in specific fields. Defined by Handayani & Usman (2021) as a contemporary marketing tactic, influencer marketing leverages influential public figures to stimulate consumer purchase intention through creative social media content, differing from traditional advertising by fostering more personal engagement. De Veirman et al. (2017) further explain that influencers not only promote products but also educate consumers on their benefits and usage, acting as opinion leaders who build strong emotional connections with followers. Through authentic

personal experiences and detailed reviews, influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions within digital networks.

Nugroho et al. (2020) assert that influencer credibility enhances consumer trust, particularly on e-commerce platforms, encouraging purchase decisions. Martiningsih & Setyawan (2022) found that influencer appeal and expertise on platforms like Shopee positively affect purchase intentions. Influencers' content often generates engagement, such as likes, comments, and shares, reflecting strong user involvement. Jayasingh & Sivakumar (2025) emphasize that user engagement strengthens the impact of influencer marketing, as it fosters deeper interactions that drive consumer interest in purchasing.

H3: Influencer marketing has a positive effect on purchase intention.

H4: User engagement mediates the effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention.

User Engagement

User engagement involves marketing activities that create intense interactions between customers and companies, including emotional, cognitive, and physical aspects through the products or services offered (Sharma, 2022). Chen et al. (2020), describe it as an interaction-based strategy, both offline and online, aimed at strengthening customer relationships. These interactions foster trust and commitment, with actively engaged customers having higher brand confidence. In business practice, many companies use User-Generated Content (UGC) to attract more traffic and increase customer interaction. Algharabat & Rana (2021) emphasize that in dynamic business environments, customer engagement is a strategic factor in enhancing company performance, including sales growth, competitive advantage, and profitability. Customer engagement behaviors have been identified as key drivers of success in online shopping environments and brand communities.

H5: User engagement positively influences purchase intention.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach aimed at confirming causal relationships between variables through hypothesis testing derived from a theoretical framework. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The sample criteria include Shopee users who have purchased clothing or fashion products through Shopee at least twice. A total of 150 Shopee fashion product consumers who have engaged with content created by other users and influencers will participate as respondents. Data related to the variables under study will be gathered through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, which will then be processed and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The data analysis will employ Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS 3 to evaluate the relationships between the identified variables.

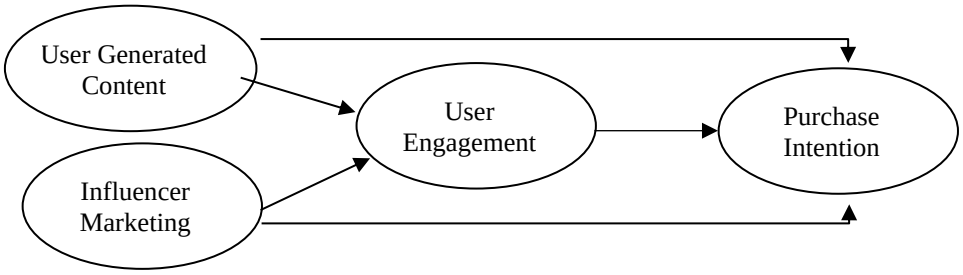


Figure 3. Research Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondent characteristics examined in this study include gender, age, frequency of purchasing products on Shopee, and whether the respondent has ever created review content on

Shopee. A total of 150 respondents were selected for the sample, with all questionnaires returned, resulting in a 100% response rate. The data collected met the necessary criteria for further analysis in the research study.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Charasteristics		Total	Percentage
Age	20-30	96	64%
	31-40	44	29,3%
	41-50	10	6.7%
Gender	Men	46	30,6%
	Women	104	69,4%
Purchase Frequency	1 time	33	22%
	2-3 times	73	48,7%
	4-5 times	26	17,3%
	>5 times	18	12%

The respondent characteristics are as follows: 64% are aged between 20-30 years, 29,3% are aged between 31-40 years, and 6.7% are aged between 41-50 years. In terms of gender, 30.6% are male and 69.4% are female. Regarding purchase frequency, 22% have made one purchase, 48,7% have made 2-3 purchases, 17,3% have made 4-5 purchases, and 12% have made more than 5 purchases.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping feature in PLS, which is used to identify the relationships that arise between constructs and the significance values generated in the path coefficients table, as presented in the following table.

Table 2. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Result

Variables	*Path Coefficient*	*T Statistic*	*P Values*	Hypothesis
User Generated Content -> Purchase Intention	0.240	4.678	0.000	Accepted
Influencer Marketing -> Purchase Intention	0.294	3.899	0.000	Accepted
User Engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.414	5.445	0.000	Accepted
User Generated Content -> User Engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.069	2.171	0.030	Accepted
Influencer Marketing -> User Engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.275	4.869	0.000	Accepted

Based on the updated data, all proposed hypotheses are supported by statistically significant results. Hypothesis 1 shows that user-generated content (UGC) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, with a path coefficient of 0.240, a t-statistic of 4.678, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating strong evidence for acceptance. Similarly, Hypothesis 2 confirms that influencer marketing significantly influences purchase intention, with a coefficient of 0.294, a t-statistic of 3.899, and a p-value of 0.000, validating its positive effect.

Furthermore, Hypothesis 3 reveals that user engagement directly and positively affects purchase intention, supported by a high path coefficient of 0.414, a t-statistic of 5.445, and a p-value of 0.000. Hypothesis 4 identifies a significant mediating role of user engagement in the relationship between UGC and purchase intention, as shown by a path coefficient of 0.069, a t-statistic of 2.171, and a p-value of 0.030. Lastly, Hypothesis 5 demonstrates that user engagement also significantly mediates the effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention, with a coefficient of 0.275, a t-statistic of 4.869, and a p-value of 0.000. These

findings suggest that both UGC and influencer marketing not only have direct impacts but also influence purchase intention indirectly through user engagement.

This study found that Shopee users perceive user-generated content (UGC) as a credible and influential factor in shaping purchase intentions. Respondents showed high trust in authentic, unsponsored content shared by fellow users on Shopee, especially when it reflects honest personal experiences. UGC builds consumer trust and perceived value by providing realistic product insights, which reduces uncertainty and strengthens buying confidence. These findings align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), as UGC is seen as useful, accessible, and able to meet consumers' informational needs. Prior studies (Zakaria et al. 2024; Sadiyyah et al. 2025); Zhang et al. 2021) also confirm the positive influence of UGC on purchase intention through trust and emotional engagement.

The findings indicate that most Shopee users positively perceive the role of influencers in shaping their intention to purchase fashion products promoted on Shopee. The high average score for influencer marketing suggests that respondents find influencer content both engaging and persuasive in influencing perception, interest, and purchase desire. Influencers, especially those deemed credible and audience-relevant, effectively build emotional connections and trust with followers. From a consumer behavior perspective, influencers act as trusted reference sources by creating informative and compelling content that evokes curiosity and emotional motivation to try the product. Moreover, promotional strategies such as exclusive discounts enhance their persuasive power. According to Putri & Dermawan (2023), influencer credibility and attractiveness significantly impact consumer purchase intention on social media. Ashraf et al. (2023) further assert that personalized and interactive promotional content by influencers can drive purchasing decisions. Additionally, Moumtaza (2022) highlights that trust in influencers serves as a crucial mediator linking product perception with purchase intention.

High user engagement has been proven to positively correlate with increased purchase intention, as demonstrated by bootstrapping analysis. When users recommend products or share positive experiences on Shopee, they indirectly create social endorsements that enhance perceptions of product quality and credibility, triggering a viral effect that influences broader purchasing decisions. Personal experiences shared through comments, videos, or brief reviews function as powerful social validation, shaping purchase intentions both psychologically and emotionally. This is consistent with Lusiana (2023), who found that emotionally and cognitively engaged consumers in digital communities tend to show higher buying intentions, and with Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut (2020), who confirmed that affective and behavioral digital engagement strengthens trust and social ties, ultimately encouraging purchase behavior.

UGC does not only influence purchase intention directly but also strengthens it through users' active involvement—such as reviewing, rating, or sharing personal product experiences—which transforms passive content consumption into emotional and social interaction that fosters stronger buying tendencies. Similarly, influencer marketing becomes more persuasive when users actively engage with content by reacting to influencer reviews, commenting on product pages, or sharing similar content across Shopee's integrated platforms, thereby amplifying emotional resonance and social validation. This mediating mechanism aligns with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, where UGC and influencer content act as external stimuli (S), user engagement as the internal psychological process (O), and purchase intention as the final response (R). Prior research supports these findings: Zahrah et al. (2024) indicate that customer engagement enhances the effect of informal communication like UGC on purchase behavior, while Niken (2025) finds that emotional digital engagement increases the persuasive power of user content. Additionally, Jayasingh and Sivakumar (2025) assert that influencer content exposure leads to purchase intention primarily when mediated by high levels of user participation, emphasizing that engagement is a critical factor in the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns on e-commerce platforms like Shopee.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study demonstrate that both User-Generated Content (UGC) and Influencer Marketing significantly influence purchase intention on Shopee. Additionally, user engagement plays a crucial role in enhancing this relationship, serving as a mediator that strengthens the impact of both UGC and influencer marketing on consumers' buying decisions. The findings underscore the importance of active user participation, as it amplifies the effectiveness of both UGC and influencer marketing strategies. Overall, the study highlights the pivotal role of user engagement in driving purchase intention, suggesting that brands should focus on fostering interactive and authentic content creation to boost consumer engagement and influence purchasing behavior.

User-Generated Content (UGC) positively affects purchase intention, particularly when consumers perceive it as authentic and based on real experiences. Fashion brands on Shopee can benefit from encouraging users to create personal content like testimonials and product reviews, which serve as social proof. The influence of influencer marketing is also significant, with brands needing to prioritize influencers who foster high engagement, not just large followings. Emotional and narrative-driven content is more effective than direct advertising. Additionally, user engagement acts as a key mediator, enhancing the impact of both UGC and influencer marketing on purchase intentions. This suggests that active user participation in content creation and community building is crucial for strengthening brand connections and driving sales. The findings align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), emphasizing the role of engagement in shaping consumer behavior on digital platforms like Shopee.

This study has limitations, including a narrow focus on fashion consumers on Shopee, with a sample of 150 respondents, limiting generalizability. The sample is predominantly young (20-30 years old), which may not reflect older consumer behaviors. Additionally, the use of PLS-SEM provides associative insights but cannot confirm causal relationships, and unobserved variables may influence the findings.

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