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Understanding Purchase Intention toward iPhone among Generation Z: The Role of Content Marketing and Lifestyle

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon indicates that although the iPhone has high popularity on social media, students' purchase intention remains relatively varied due to considerations of price, the availability of numerous alternative smartphone brands, and comparison content involving brands such as Samsung that influences consumer preferences. In addition, the relatively rational lifestyle of Generation Z may also contribute to variations in their intention to purchase an iPhone. This study aims to analyze the effects of content marketing and lifestyle on iPhone purchase intention among Generation Z students in Medan Kota District. This study employed a quantitative approach involving 110 Generation Z respondents in Medan Kota District who were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4.0. The results show that content marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, while lifestyle has a positive and more dominant effect on purchase intention. The model explains 55.4% of the variance in purchase intention. These findings indicate that the compatibility of the iPhone with Generation Z's lifestyle plays a stronger role than content marketing in shaping purchase intention.

Keywords: Content Marketing, Lifestyle, Generation Z, iPhone, Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

The development of the smartphone market in Indonesia has shown significant growth, with shipments reaching nearly 40 million units in 2024, representing a 15.5% increase compared with the previous year. However, this growth was not evenly distributed, as the premium smartphone segment, with prices above US$600, experienced a 9.2% decline, partly due to limited sales of the iPhone 16 toward the end of 2024. On the other hand, Apple continued to dominate the premium segment, with a market share of approximately 40% in the second quarter of 2024, although it was not among the top five smartphone vendors overall because its products are relatively more expensive than Android smartphones. This condition indicates that overall market growth and the strong position of the iPhone in the premium segment do not necessarily translate into high purchase intention among all consumers, particularly Generation Z students who consider their financial capacity before making a purchase (Communicatiostoday.co.in, 2025). This phenomenon is further supported by the smartphone market share data in Indonesia presented in Figure 1.

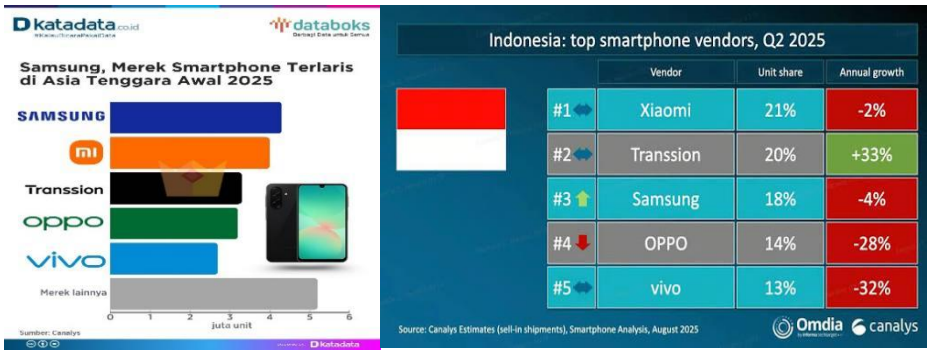


Figure 1. Smartphone Vendor Market Share in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, 2025
Source: Compiled from Databoks (2025) and Canalys (2025)

Based on Figure 1, Indonesia's smartphone market in Q2 2025 was dominated by Android brands, led by Xiaomi (21%), Transsion (20%), and Samsung (18%), while Apple was absent from the top five vendors. Despite the iPhone's strong premium positioning, Generation Z students' purchase intention is influenced by Content Marketing and Lifestyle. As young consumers actively use social media to seek product information, iPhone reviews, unboxing videos, and brand comparisons can shape their purchase decisions (DataReportal, 2025).

The purchase intention toward iPhones among Generation Z students in Medan Kota District remains relatively low despite the brand's popularity on social media. High prices, competitive alternatives, and limited financial capacity may influence students' purchase decisions. A preliminary survey of 30 students found that 70% disagreed with intending to purchase an iPhone soon, 63.3% considered its social media marketing content insufficiently persuasive, and 66.7% did not view iPhone ownership as necessary to support their lifestyle. These findings indicate a gap between the iPhone's popularity and students' purchase intention, highlighting the need to examine the influence of content marketing and lifestyle on iPhone purchase intention among Generation Z students in Medan Kota District.

According to Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory, Content Marketing is an external stimulus that can influence consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and intentions toward a product (Misdar et al., 2026). iPhone Content Marketing through social media, including reviews, unboxing videos, and product comparisons, does not always translate into purchase intention, as some students consume such content for information or entertainment only. Meanwhile, based on Self-Congruity Theory and Symbolic Consumption Theory, Lifestyle may influence purchase intention because the iPhone is associated with modernity, prestige, and social status. However, some students prioritize practical needs, features, and affordability over symbolic value, potentially reducing their intention to purchase an iPhone (Das & Indibara, 2025; Wang et al., 2022). The lifestyle of Generation Z students also does not fully encourage purchase intention toward the iPhone. Although some students follow premium smartphone trends as part of a modern lifestyle, many continue to prioritize functional considerations and financial capability over prestige or social image. Some students do not consider owning an iPhone to be a primary necessity and therefore prefer other smartphones that are perceived to fulfill their needs at a more affordable price. This condition indicates that the lifestyle developing among Generation Z students does not always directly translate into increased purchase intention toward the iPhone.

Previous studies have shown that Content Marketing has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intention (Iriani et al., 2022; Shiddiqy et al., 2025), while

Lifestyle has also been found to influence purchase intention toward smartphone products (Rakib et al., 2022; Nugroho & Soebiantoro, 2025). Nevertheless, several research gaps remain. In terms of the context gap, most studies on purchase intention have been conducted across various product categories, such as fashion, cosmetics, marketplaces, and smartphones in general. However, studies specifically examining purchase intention toward the iPhone among Generation Z in Medan Kota District remain very limited. This is particularly relevant because Generation Z, as digital natives who are highly exposed to Content Marketing and have dynamic lifestyles, may exhibit purchasing behavior that differs from that of other consumer groups.

Previous studies have generally examined Content Marketing and Lifestyle separately, while research integrating both variables within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory framework, particularly regarding iPhone purchase intention, remains limited. Therefore, this study examines the simultaneous effects of Content Marketing and Lifestyle on iPhone purchase intention among Generation Z students in Medan Kota District. The findings are expected to contribute to consumer behavior and digital marketing literature and provide practical insights for developing marketing strategies that align with Generation Z's lifestyle.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to consumers' tendency or intention to purchase a product after evaluating its information, quality, benefits, and brand. It is considered an important predictor of future purchasing behavior and is influenced by both external marketing stimuli and internal factors such as perceptions, preferences, and lifestyle (Gunawan, 2022; Hartanto, 2023; Astuti et al., 2023; Ekasari et al., 2025). In this study, purchase intention refers to consumers' intention to purchase an iPhone, influenced by Content Marketing and Lifestyle among Generation Z students. According to Rosmegawati (2022), purchase intention is reflected through four indicators: transactional intention, the desire to purchase; referential intention, the willingness to recommend the product; preferential intention, the preference for a particular product; and explorative intention, the tendency to seek information about the product.

Content Marketing

Content Marketing is a digital marketing strategy that creates and distributes relevant, informative, and valuable content to build consumer engagement, trust, and purchase intention (Saragih et al., 2025; Alimudin & Purwantoro, 2022). Its effectiveness depends not only on content quality but also on its ability to fulfill consumers' information needs and support purchasing decisions (Erwin et al., 2024; Nugroho & Suryadi, 2023). In this study, Content Marketing is viewed as an external factor influencing purchase intention toward the iPhone among Generation Z students who rely heavily on social media for product information. According to Sagala et al. (2025), Content Marketing is measured through four indicators: relevance, reliability, value, and attractiveness.

Lifestyle

Lifestyle is an internal factor that reflects individuals' patterns of living through their activities, interests, opinions, habits, and consumption patterns, influencing preferences and purchasing decisions (Lomboan et al., 2022; Sitepu et al., 2022). It also reflects identity and self-expression and is shaped by social environment, experiences, habits, and socioeconomic conditions (Gea et al., 2025; Fitriani & Tesniyadi, 2023; Bahari & Sutono, 2025). In this study, Lifestyle is viewed as an internal factor influencing purchase intention toward the iPhone among Generation Z students, who may perceive premium smartphones as part of their identity and self-expression. According to Arofah

(2026), Lifestyle is measured through psychographics using three AIO indicators: Activities, Interests, and Opinions.

Relationships Among Variables

Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory provides a conceptual foundation for this study by explaining how external stimuli can influence consumer responses. In this research, content marketing serves as an external stimulus that provides information and promotional messages about the iPhone, while lifestyle represents an individual characteristic that may shape consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. Purchase intention is positioned as the response variable, reflecting Generation Z students' willingness to purchase an iPhone. However, since this study does not examine the organism component as a mediating variable, SOR Theory is used as a conceptual reference rather than a fully tested process model.

In this study, Content Marketing acts as an external stimulus that provides informative, relevant, attractive, and valuable content, shaping consumers' attention, trust, and positive perceptions, which may increase Purchase Intention (Rini, 2022; Iriani et al., 2022; Shiddiqy et al., 2025). Lifestyle represents an internal characteristic reflected in Activities, Interests, and Opinions (AIO), influencing product preferences and perceived compatibility with consumers' identities and needs. Greater compatibility between Lifestyle and the iPhone may strengthen Purchase Intention (Sunarya et al., 2025; Rakib et al., 2022; Nugroho & Soebiantoro, 2025). Therefore, Content Marketing and Lifestyle are expected to jointly influence Purchase Intention toward the iPhone among Generation Z in Medan Kota District.

H_1: Content Marketing has an effect on Purchase Intention toward the iPhone among Generation Z in Medan Kota District.

H_2: Lifestyle has an effect on Purchase Intention toward the iPhone among Generation Z in Medan Kota District.

H

Thus, the conceptual framework used in this study can be presented in the following figure:

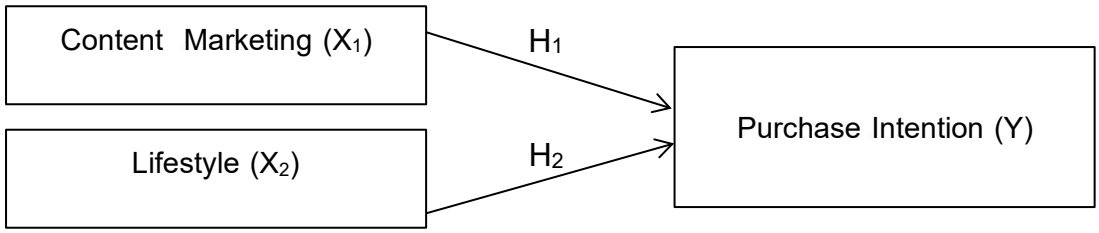


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach to analyze the effects of Content Marketing and Lifestyle on Purchase Intention toward the iPhone among Generation Z in Medan Kota District. The population consists of Generation Z residents aged 12–27 years who are interested in purchasing or switching to an iPhone, with an unknown population size. The sample was determined using the Hair et al. formula, based on 11 indicators multiplied by 10, resulting in 110 respondents. Purposive sampling was applied with criteria that respondents are Generation Z, reside in Medan Kota District, have no intention to purchase or switch to an iPhone, and have accessed iPhone Content Marketing through social media.

The study includes Content Marketing (X1) and Lifestyle (X2) as independent variables and Purchase Intention (Y) as the dependent variable. Data were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and supported by primary and secondary data. Content Marketing was measured through relevance, reliability, value, and attractiveness; Lifestyle through activities, interests, and opinions; and Purchase Intention through product interest, purchase desire, product preference, and future purchase intention. Instrument quality was assessed through validity and reliability tests. Data analysis used Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS. PLS-SEM was selected because it allows the researcher to assess both the measurement model, including validity and reliability, and the structural relationships between content marketing, lifestyle, and purchase intention. Although the study examines only two direct relationships, PLS-SEM is suitable for analyzing latent constructs measured by multiple indicators. The analysis consisted of outer and inner model evaluations. The outer model was assessed using outer loading ≥ 0.70, AVE ≥ 0.50, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70, and HTMT < 0.90. The inner model was evaluated using VIF < 5, SRMR ≤ 0.08, R^2, f^2, and $Q^2 > 0$. Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples based on path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and confidence intervals. Hypotheses were supported when t-statistic > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05. This analysis was used to examine the partial and simultaneous effects of Content Marketing and Lifestyle on Purchase Intention.

RESULTS

Outer Model

Convergent Validity Test

Convergent validity is used to determine the extent to which indicators measuring the same construct have a strong and consistent relationship. In this study, convergent validity was assessed using SmartPLS 4.0 through outer loading values, which indicate the ability of indicators to represent latent constructs. An indicator is considered to meet the criteria for convergent validity if its outer loading value exceeds 0.70. Thus, the higher the value, the better the indicator's ability to represent the construct being measured. The results of the outer loading test are presented below.

Table 1.
Outer Loading Test

	Content Marketing	Lifestyle	Purchase Intention
X1.1	0.774		
X1.2	0.753		
X1.3	0.784		
X1.4	0.784		
X1.5	0.789		
X1.6	0.755		
X1.7	0.754		
X1.8	0.771		
X2.1		0.828	
X2.2		0.858	
X2.3		0.778	
X2.4		0.866	
X2.5		0.762	
X2.6		0.828	
Y.1			0.781
Y.2			0.821

	Content Marketing	Lifestyle	Purchase Intention
Y.3			0.846
Y.4			0.880
Y.5			0.809
Y.6			0.839
Y.7			0.747
Y.8			0.837

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

All indicators have outer loading values ranging from 0.747 to 0.880, thereby meeting the minimum threshold of 0.70. Thus, all indicators are able to adequately reflect the Content Marketing, Lifestyle, and Purchase Intention constructs.

Table 2.
Construct Validity Test

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Content Marketing	0.594
Lifestyle	0.674
Purchase Intention	0.674

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

The AVE value for Content Marketing is 0.594, Lifestyle is 0.674, and Purchase Intention is 0.674. All of these values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.50. Thus, each construct is able to explain more than 50% of the variance in its indicators and meets the criteria for convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity Test

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). This test aims to ensure that each construct has sufficient empirical distinctiveness from the other constructs.

Table 3.
Fornell Larcker

	Content Marketing	**Lifestyle**	**Purchase Intention**
Content Marketing	0.771		
Lifestyle	0.758	0.821	
Purchase Intention	0.649	0.729	0.821

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

Based on the table above, the results of the Fornell-Larcker test show that the square root of the AVE for each construct is higher than the correlations between constructs. The square root of the AVE is 0.771 for Content Marketing, 0.821 for Lifestyle, and 0.821 for Purchase Intention. Meanwhile, the correlations between constructs range from 0.649 to 0.758. Thus, all constructs in this study meet the criteria for discriminant validity, as the square root of the AVE for each construct is higher than its correlations with the other constructs.

Table 4.
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

	Content Marketing	Lifestyle
Content Marketing		
Lifestyle	0.836	
Purchase Intention	0.692	0.792

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

Based on the table above, the results of the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) test show that all HTMT values between constructs are below the recommended threshold of 0.90. The HTMT value between Content Marketing and Lifestyle is 0.836, while the HTMT value between Content Marketing and Purchase Intention is 0.692, and that between Lifestyle and Purchase Intention is 0.792. All of these values remain below the threshold of 0.90. Therefore, it can be concluded that the constructs in this study meet the criteria for discriminant validity. This indicates that each construct has sufficient distinctiveness and that the indicators used are capable of measuring their respective intended constructs.

Table 5.
Construct Reliability Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Content Marketing	0.903	0.909	0.921
Lifestyle	0.903	0.905	0.925
Purchase Intention	0.930	0.932	0.943

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

The test results show that Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.903 to 0.930, rho_A values range from 0.905 to 0.932, and composite reliability values range from 0.921 to 0.943. All values are above 0.70 and remain below 0.95. Therefore, Content Marketing, Lifestyle, and Purchase Intention meet the criteria for internal consistency and construct reliability.

Table 6.
Variance Inflation Factor

	Purchase Intention
Content Marketing	2.352
Lifestyle	2.352

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

The inner VIF values for Content Marketing and Lifestyle in relation to Purchase Intention are below 5. Thus, no collinearity problems were identified that could interfere with the estimation of structural relationships in the model.

Inner Model
R-Square
R-squared (R^2) is a statistical measure used to determine the extent to which the variance of a dependent latent construct can be explained by independent latent constructs in a research model. A higher R^2 value indicates a greater ability of the independent constructs to explain the variance of the dependent construct. Therefore, the R^2 value can be used to assess the model's ability to explain and predict changes in the dependent construct.

Table 7.
R-Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Purchase Intention	0.554	0.545

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

The R-square value for Purchase Intention is 0.554, while the adjusted R-square value is 0.545. These results indicate that Content Marketing and Lifestyle are able to explain 55.4% of the variance in Purchase Intention, while the remaining 44.6% is explained by other variables not included in the research model. Based on the PLS-SEM evaluation criteria, an R^2 value of 0.554 indicates that the model has moderate explanatory power.

Hypothesis Testing
Hypothesis testing is a statistical procedure used to examine the validity of a statement and determine whether the statement should be accepted or rejected. Through hypothesis testing, researchers collect and analyze data as a basis for making decisions regarding the acceptance or rejection of previously formulated assumptions or hypotheses.

Table 8.
Hypothesis Testing

	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	2.5%	97.5%	Conclusion
Content Marketing -> Purchase Intention	0.225	0.101	2.239	0.026	0.027	0.427	Hypothesis Supported
Lifestyle -> Purchase Intention	0.559	0.106	5.253	<0.001	0.314	0.726	Hypothesis Supported

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

The bootstrapping results show that Content Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, with a path coefficient of 0.225, a t-statistic of 2.239, and a p-value of 0.026. Thus, H1 is supported. Lifestyle also has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, with a path coefficient of 0.559, a t-statistic of 5.253, and a p-value of < 0.001. Thus, H2 is supported. Lifestyle has a stronger effect on Purchase Intention than Content Marketing.

Table 9.
Effect Size (f^2)

	Purchase Intention
Content Marketing	0.048
Lifestyle	0.297
Purchase Intention	

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

The effect size results show that Content Marketing has a small effect on Purchase Intention, with an f^2 value of 0.048. Lifestyle has a moderate effect, with an f^2 value of 0.297. Thus, Lifestyle contributes more substantially to Purchase Intention than Content Marketing.

Predictive Relevance and Model Fit

Predictive relevance and model fit are used to evaluate the model's ability to predict endogenous variables and assess the extent to which the research model fits the empirical data. In Partial Least Squares (PLS)-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), predictive relevance can be evaluated using the Q^2 value, while model fit can be assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). A Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates predictive relevance, whereas an SRMR value below 0.08 indicates an acceptable level of model fit. The results of these tests are presented below:

Table 10.
Q Square

	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
Content Marketing	880.000	880.000	
Lifestyle	660.000	660.000	
Purchase Intention	880.000	559.219	0.365

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

The Q^2 value for Purchase Intention is 0.365, which is greater than zero. This result indicates that the model has predictive relevance for Purchase Intention. The Content Marketing and Lifestyle constructs do not have Q^2 values because both are exogenous constructs that are not predicted by other constructs in the model.

Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is an indicator used to evaluate model fit in PLS-SEM by examining the discrepancy between the empirical correlation matrix and the correlation matrix implied by the model. A lower SRMR value indicates better model fit. In general, an SRMR value of ≤ 0.08 indicates good model fit, while a value between 0.08 and 0.10 is still considered acceptable.

Table 11.
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.061	0.061

Source: Author's Own Analysis, SmartPLS Version 4.0 Output (2026)

The SRMR values for the saturated model and estimated model are both 0.061. These values are below the threshold of 0.08, indicating an adequate level of model fit.

DISCUSSION

Content Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, with a path coefficient of 0.225, a t-statistic of 2.239, and a p-value of 0.026. Within the framework of Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory, informative, relevant, reliable, and attractive content about the iPhone serves as an external stimulus that helps Generation Z develop attention, knowledge, and positive evaluations of the product. This process subsequently encourages a response in the form of increased Purchase Intention. This finding supports the studies by (Rini, 2022; Iriani et al. 2022; Shiddiqy et al. 2025), which show that Content Marketing can increase consumer interest and Purchase Intention. Although significant, Content Marketing has an effect size of only 0.048, which falls into the small-effect category. This result indicates that high exposure to iPhone content does not necessarily directly lead to strong Purchase Intention. For Generation Z students, digital content can increase knowledge and interest, but the decision to develop an intention to purchase a premium smartphone remains

constrained by considerations of price, financial capacity, functional needs, and the availability of alternative smartphones.

Lifestyle has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, with a path coefficient of 0.559, a t-statistic of 5.253, and a p-value of < 0.001. The effect size of 0.297 indicates that Lifestyle has a moderate effect and is more dominant than Content Marketing. Within the framework of SOR Theory, Lifestyle represents an internal characteristic that influences how consumers process information and evaluate a product's compatibility with their activities, interests, opinions, identity, and needs. For Generation Z, the iPhone is perceived not only as a communication device but also as a product associated with digital productivity, trends, identity, and self-expression. When the image and benefits of the iPhone are perceived as compatible with consumers' lifestyles, their Purchase Intention becomes stronger. This finding supports (Rakib et al., 2022; Nugroho & Soebiantoro, 2025; Sunarya et al. 2025), who demonstrate that product compatibility with consumers' lifestyles can increase purchase intention and purchasing tendencies.

Content Marketing and Lifestyle are able to explain 55.4% of the variance in Purchase Intention, indicating that the model has moderate explanatory power. The Q^2 value of 0.365 also indicates that the model has predictive relevance. However, 44.6% of the variance in Purchase Intention remains explained by other factors, such as price, product quality, brand image, brand trust, perceived value, and financial capacity. These findings demonstrate that iPhone Purchase Intention among Generation Z students cannot be sufficiently shaped through exposure to digital content alone. Content Marketing strategies are likely to be more effective when aligned with the lifestyle, needs, preferences, and economic conditions of the target group.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Content Marketing has a positive and significant effect on iPhone Purchase Intention among Generation Z in Medan Kota District, with a path coefficient of 0.225, a t-statistic of 2.239, and a p-value of 0.026. Lifestyle also has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, with a path coefficient of 0.559, a t-statistic of 5.253, and a p-value of < 0.001. Lifestyle was found to have a more dominant effect than Content Marketing, as indicated by an effect size of 0.297, whereas Content Marketing has an effect size of 0.048. The R^2 value of 0.554 indicates that Content Marketing and Lifestyle are able to explain 55.4% of the variance in Purchase Intention, while the remaining 44.6% is explained by other factors outside the model. These findings support SOR Theory by demonstrating that Generation Z's Purchase Intention is formed through an external stimulus in the form of Content Marketing and an internal characteristic in the form of Lifestyle. However, this study is limited to Generation Z respondents in Medan Kota District; therefore, the generalizability of the findings should be considered with caution.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, Apple, authorized distributors, and digital iPhone marketers are advised to develop marketing strategies that are more closely aligned with the Lifestyle of Generation Z. Marketing messages should connect the benefits of the iPhone with digital activities, productivity, creativity, academic needs, entertainment, and self-expression among young consumers. Because Content Marketing has a relatively small effect size, content should not focus solely on premium positioning but should also provide relevant information regarding functional benefits, feature comparisons, security, durability, device ecosystem, and purchasing options that are appropriate for students'

financial capacity. Future studies may incorporate additional variables such as price, perceived value, financial capacity, brand image, brand trust, product quality, and social influence. The research area may also be expanded beyond Medan Kota District, and probability sampling techniques may be employed to achieve broader generalizability of the findings.

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