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**A QUANTITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO THE INFLUENCE OF
USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON GEN Z CONSUMERS' PURCHASING
BEHAVIOR ON SHOPEE AND LAZADA**

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12 August 2024

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Preciosa Christine C. Guevarra, 22 August 2024
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Acceptance Page

This paper prepared by **PRECIOSA CHRISTINE C. GUEVARRA** with the title: “**A QUANTITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO THE INFLUENCE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON GEN Z CONSUMERS’ PURCHASING BEHAVIOR ON SHOPEE AND LAZADA**” is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Course.


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Biographical Sketch

Preciosa Christine C. Guevarra was born on September 24, 1998 in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, Philippines. She was the third among the three siblings. Currently, she lives in Los Baños, Laguna.

She graduated from elementary school at Maquiling School Incorporated (MSI). She finished her junior high school at the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA) majoring in Visual Arts. During her four years at PHSA, she participated in several competitions, group exhibitions, and even shadowplay collectives. Some of her artworks have been showcased at various venues, including the Cultural Center of the Philippines, GSIS Manila, Museo Pambata, Fernandez Honrado Gallery, Sining Makiling Gallery, Haraya Bar and Art Space, and SM Calamba. She transferred and finished her senior high school at AMA Computer College under the Information and Communication Technology - Animation. In 2019, she took a Bachelor of Fine Arts major in Visual Communication for one year at Philippine Women's University (PWU). Lastly, she transferred to the University of the Philippines - Open University (UPOU) in 2020 under a Bachelor of Arts in Multimedia Studies to finish her college.

One of her recent achievements was her first solo exhibit in her parents' hometown in 2018, entitled "*Banaag*." It was displayed at Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School and Ginhawa Arts Cafe. Moreover, she collaborated with UPOU in designing instructional video materials for the Philippine Science High School (PSHS) in 2020.

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Definition of Terms

User-Generated Content - refers to the testimonial experiences of a user on a particular product or service shared on different online platforms

E-commerce - refers to a way of selling products and services through the internet

Brand - refers to the known or registered name of a product or service

Consumer - refers to the individual that buy products or services

User - refers to the individual who use or consume a product or service

Gen Z - refers to the individuals who grew up or born between 1995 and 2010

Digital Natives - refers to the individuals who grew up in the information age and are expose and use digital technology most often

Purchasing Decision - refers to the process of deciding whether to buy or not a product or service

Impulsive Purchase - refers to the indication to buy or use a product or service without any thorough understanding of the quality or usefulness of a product or service

Rational Purchase - refers to informed and well-thought purchases of the consumers based on the quality and usefulness of a product or service

Word-of-Mouth - refers to the face-to-face verbal action spread by a user to tell what they know or experience about a particular product or service

Social Proof - refers to the collective positive or negative testimony of a user regarding a particular product or service

Content - refers to any created text, image, or video by a user regarding a product or service to inform and influence other potential consumers

Staged Content - refers to any text, image, or video that is planned, organized, or scripted by a brand itself or by a paid influencer, which mostly intended to increase sale

I. INTRODUCTION

The integration of user-generated content (UGC) in many e-commerce platforms, including Shopee and Lazada, has become increasingly popular in recent years as it is often considered a modern version of word-of-mouth (WOM). According to Duke (2023), "UGC is original content related to a product or service that is created by consumers and not by the brand itself." It comes in various forms such as images, videos, reviews, comments, ratings, and testimonials. With this, consumers, especially Gen Zs who are first digital natives, are no longer passive consumers of products or services because they now participate in creating and sharing their positive or negative experiences and opinions online about the products or services they have personally purchased and used without any financial incentives or compensation from the brands themselves.

According to the study conducted by Hansen, Jin, and Lee (2016), "consumers prefer UGC over traditional promotional methods because it provides users' honest opinions." This opinion can give insights into the performance, quality, durability, suitability, and more of the products or services based on the users' experiences in using them. "Consumers are more likely to make a purchase after reading a positive review, whereas bad evaluations have the opposite effect" (Allen & Fjermestad, 2001). Therefore, many consumers often prefer and rely heavily on UGC as a valuable source of social proof to quickly assist and persuade them to make either an impulsive or rational purchase or not to purchase the products or services.

However, despite its advantages, some still argue that its significant disadvantage is the potential to unknowingly encounter or be exposed to false or inaccurate content, especially given the overwhelming amount of UGC available and the prevalence of staged content. Are the individuals or users engaged in creating UGC with the intention of sharing genuine experiences and opinions about the products or services or rather as a means to pursue personal gain or fame? As Radzicki (2021, as cited in Carufel, 2021) said, "people are being exposed to higher volumes of inappropriate and misleading user-generated content as more of their daily lives have moved online since the start of the pandemic."

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does the user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada influence the purchasing decisions of selected Gen Z consumers, specifically those aged 18 to 26, in Los Baños, Laguna?
2. To what extent do selected Gen Z consumers rely on and trust the authenticity of user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada?
3. How do selected Gen Z consumers critically review user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada to make informed purchasing decisions?

Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine how user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada influences the purchasing decisions of selected Gen Z consumers, specifically those aged 18 to 26, in Los Baños, Laguna.

2. To evaluate the extent to which selected Gen Z consumers rely on and trust the authenticity of user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada.
3. To analyze how selected Gen Z consumers critically review user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada to make informed purchasing decisions.

Significance of the Study

This study will be beneficial:

To the **Gen Z consumers**. It will help them gain more knowledge and become aware of user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada and the need to evaluate such content critically before making purchasing decisions.

To the **businesses and marketers**. It will help them gain insights about the power of user-generated content in influencing consumers' purchasing behavior and preferences, specifically those Gen Zs, and the importance of incorporating authentic UGC into their marketing strategies.

To the **multimedia artists**. It will help them understand the role of user-generated content and acknowledge the need to create and design authentic and relatable content about the products or services online to build trust with the audience.

To the **future researcher**. It will serve as their reference or guide for their further research studies on user-generated content as well as a point of comparison to the different age groups or generations in distinct settings and locations regarding how they perceive and engage with UGC in making purchasing decisions.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses mainly on the influence of user-generated content, specifically in the two popular e-commerce platforms, Shopee and Lazada, on the purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna. It also further explores how these Gen Z consumers rely on and trust UGC and critically review such content before deciding to purchase.

Moreover, the sample size of respondents in this study is relatively small, as it is limited only to 100 and mainly Gen Z consumers of Shopee and Lazada who are 18 to 26 years old and live in Los Baños, Laguna. It will not cover or compare to the other generations and other e-commerce or social media platforms that have adopted the use of UGC.

Lastly, the results or findings are limited only based on the information and insights provided by the respondents from the survey questionnaires as well as existing related literature and studies from various online sources.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The rapid technological advancement paved the way and led to a new horizon for users to browse, explore, use, and gather ideas and information on different digital platforms. This innovation completely changed and created a new way of life. Social media has become a vital community that links and connects people around the world through various platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and more. The popularity of these platforms initiated the wide use of what we now call 'e-commerce' platforms. Many different companies, brands, and sellers now use various e-commerce platforms to promote and sell a variety of products or services they offer online. Therefore, today, "consumptions and buying activities can be done on-the-go, no matter where and when as long as consumers are connected to the internet, especially when the mobile internet is available now" (Muslim, Rezaei, & Abolghasemi, 2014) and "with the creation of user-friendly gadgets and smartphones, conducting online transactions now are effortless" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, 2012, as cited in Bahtara & Mudab, 2015). Things that have to be done in person or physically, particularly in terms of shopping and buying, are now convenient and time-saving, replacing and getting rid of the traditional way of selling and buying products or services, as well as adapting to the consumption style of the new generation, including the Generation Z.

Generation Z, also called Gen Z or Zoomers, are "the people born between 1995 and 2010; they are the most technologically adept generation and are highly connected to the social media web" (Mahapatra et al., 2022). Generally, "according to the Global Web Index, in fact, Generation Z-ers spend an average of three hours per day on social media" (Myers, 2024). They often prefer to spend their time

reading, watching, creating, and engaging with various content online through their devices. "Their lives are basically unimaginable without the existence of smartphones and other digital platforms" (Prensky, 2004; Williams & Page, 2011, as cited in Bindu, 2024). "Gen Z is a generation of Internet natives who grew up under the influence of Internet products and is gradually becoming the dominant consumer market" (Hu, 2023). Therefore, as a result of growing up in the digital age, Gen Z-ers have a strong ability and capability to use and gather any relevant information online. Moreover, they are also the generation who grew up with freedom given by their own families regarding choosing products or services they need or want based on their own will or wish. Thus, given this, their purchasing power has increased.

"Authenticity is a core value that is highly valued by Gen Z" (Trecartin, 2023). In addition, "Gen Z were the only generation to rank quality as more important than price" (Noenickx, 2023). Although Gen Z-ers have excessive spending habits online, they are generally characterized as the generation who mostly value or focus on authenticity and quality rather than the price of the products or services. Before purchasing, Gen Z-ers often do research and seek information online to review particular products or services as they want a seamless and straightforward purchasing experience. If a brand or a seller does not respond immediately to their query or breaks their trust, they usually abruptly switch to other brands or sellers. Moreover, Gen Z-ers often prefer social proof or evidence, including from their close friends, families, or influencers they look up to, regarding the value and quality of particular products or services and if they find brands trustworthy. They also adhere to brand loyalty to ensure that they always purchase real and good quality products or services. Lastly, Gen Z-ers are cautious, skeptical, and practical, especially in

terms of their purchasing decisions. They do not also hesitate to share what is in their mind, either positive or negative, ideas, opinions, or experiences regarding their online purchases, aiming to enlighten other potential consumers.

E-commerce is "an act of conducting business transactions electronically using the Internet as the main communication medium" (Sadewo et al., 2020). Many e-commerce platforms today have gained immense popularity for online shopping. "The ability to shop and purchase goods and services online has revolutionized the way we do business, making shopping more convenient and accessible" (Gupta et al., 2023). In the last decade, "e-commerce platforms have emerged and improved from the beginning until now" (BigCommerce, 2021). "According to a market research report, the Philippines is a fast-growing e-commerce market in Southeast Asia; revenue from online retail is expected to show an annual growth rate of 12.93% (CAGR between 2023 to 2027), which is expected to project a market volume of US\$29.54 billion by 2027" (Menezes, 2023).

Presently, the two most popular and leading e-commerce platforms in Southeast Asia countries, including the Philippines, are Shopee and Lazada. According to Statista Research Department (2023), "as per second quarter of 2022, Shopee was the most popular B2C e-commerce site in the Philippines with around 72 million monthly web visitors. Coming in second was Lazada with about 37 million monthly web visitors." This indicates that Shopee and Lazada have become the go-to online shopping destinations for millions of Filipino consumers in the Philippines. Filipino consumers, including those Gen Zs, continuously browse and explore these two e-commerce platforms to purchase due to their monthly

mega-sales, which offer a variety of products that are both good quality and affordable.

Lazada was officially launched in 2012 and is now the leading e-commerce platform in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The company links these countries through technologies, logistics, and easy payment capabilities. Moreover, they also boast about the array of impressive and huge selection of products as well as sellers. Shopee, on the other hand, was later launched in 2015 and is also now the leading e-commerce platform in several Southeast Asia countries, including the Philippines. The company adheres to providing its customers with fast delivery, guaranteed protection, and convenient and easy online shopping experiences. Lastly, the company has a huge selection of merchandise, a social community for exploration, and seamless customer fulfillment guarantee services. Therefore, given these, many consumers, including those Gen Zs, prefer to shop online on these two popular e-commerce platforms to purchase products.

However, many consumers, including those Gen Zs, face several challenges when doing online shopping, especially on Shopee and Lazada, including the inability to physically assess products, difficulty in determining product legitimacy, hassle-filled return processes, unresponsive sellers, and more. Therefore, "consumers have become highly selective in their buying decisions and look for content that delivers necessary information, trust signals, and authenticity" (Agarwal, 2023). Given this, the integration of user-generated content on e-commerce platforms, especially on Shopee and Lazada, has become increasingly popular in

recent years. User-generated content, or also known as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), "works exactly like common word-of-mouth" (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013). UGC "refers to any own created material uploaded to the internet by non-media and it has a greater influence on people's consumption" (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Dijck, 2009; Jonas, 2010; Krishnamurthy & Dou, 2010; Presi, Saridakis, & Hartmans, 2014, as cited in Bahtara & Mudab, 2015). UGC can be any content in the form of text, image, video, or audio, such as unboxing, comments, ratings, reviews, and testimonials.

For many years, one-way communication from a brand or a seller to the consumers was the primary means to promote products or services. But now, with the introduction of UGC, consumers, including those Gen Zs, are no longer mere passive consumers of products or services as they can participate in creating and sharing their either positive or negative experiences and opinions online about particular products or services they have personally purchased and used, which adds authenticity to the content and makes it more relatable for other potential consumers. Generally, consumers or users who create and share such content are not employees of a brand or affiliate influencers. The authenticity and relatability of UGC are highly acclaimed and esteemed because it comes directly from real consumers or users who already used and tried particular products or services. "Potential consumers trust content generated by other users in regard to brand and product mainly because they perceive the user do not have any commercial interest" (Mir & Rehman, 2013). Their motivation is to share and enlighten other potential consumers regarding the good or bad features and benefits of particular products or services as well as brands, making them more or less appealing choices. According

to Dulay et al. (2022), "whether the review/feedback is positive or negative can influence the consumer's buying decision, according to Dong, Li, and Sivakumar (2018), not all reviews would generate a similar impact on consumers."

Furthermore, "user-generated content is recognized as a highly credible source of information provided by other users to be 'user-friendly'; meaning that the content or all of the information they need is easier and consumes less time to understand regardless of its length" (Racherla & Friske, 2012) "compared to producer-generated content (PGC) that usually hired endorsers and celebrities to speak the advantages and benefits of the products" (Verhellen, Dens, & Pelsmacker, 2013). Therefore, "consumers always rely on the content generated by other users to assist them in making a purchase decision" (Bae & Lee, 2011).

The main issue that emerges when discussing the effectiveness of UGC is the source credibility. "Consumers perceive and believe that content generated by other users as more credible from the content provided by the seller" (Jonas, 2010). Although the content generated by users is trusted more often than brands or sellers, potential consumers will not automatically trust it simply because it is generated directly from real users. If the potential consumers perceive the content they are consuming is not credible, regardless of who the sources are, they most likely cannot easily be persuaded to purchase products or services. However, according to Wilson and Sherrell (1993, as cited in Thompson & Malaviya, 2013), "sources who are known to, liked by, or similar to consumers are attractive, and consequently, persuasive." In addition, "if the consumers positively support and trust the information regardless of who the sources are, the consumers can easily be

persuaded to purchase the products" (Waldt, Loggerenberg & Wehmeyer, 2009, as cited in Bahtara & Mudab, 2015).

With the overwhelming amount of UGC online, it poses a risk to its authenticity, relatability, and truthfulness. As "risk is an uncertainty that normally unavoidable unless online consumers have prior knowledge and experiences to enable them for not making a poor decision" (Dai, Forsythe, & Kwon, 2014). The reliability of UGC and the credibility of the source itself are difficult to determine and examine, especially given the fact that users who generate content can also be paid actors, actresses, or influencers. Moreover, negative or poor reviews and exaggerated or misleading testimonials can be done intentionally to discredit particular brands and their products or services. In addition, positive or good reviews and testimonials can also be used to promote and increase sales merely for personal interest or gain of brands or sellers.

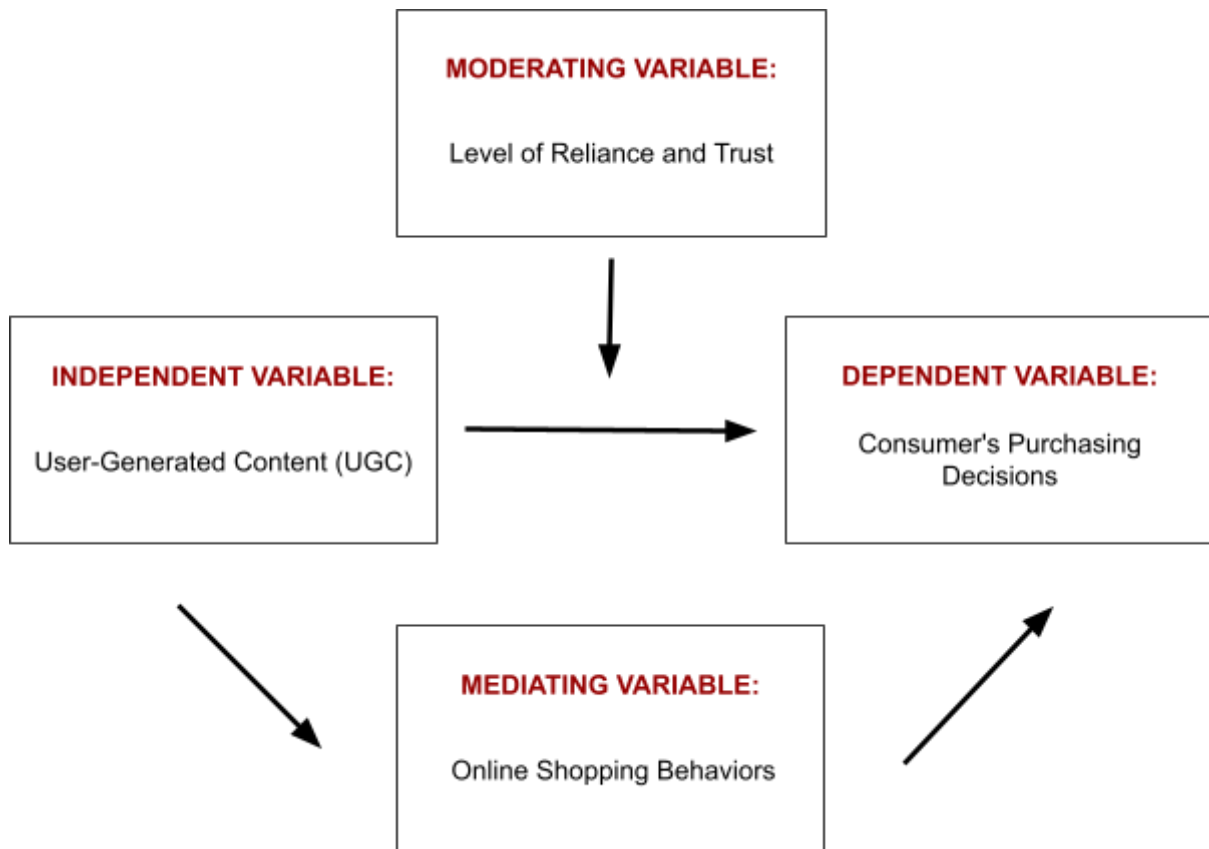
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study revolves around the *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)*, which, according to Ajzen (1991), "behaviors are influenced by intentions, which are determined by three (3) factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control." Furthermore, he explained that other external factors can directly push or prevent a behavior in spite of the intentions based on the behavioral control of an individual or on how a perceived behavioral control is accurately measured by an individual. Typically, "consumers today would usually log on to social media to seek for product information and previous customers' feedbacks before they decide the purchasing as they rely more

on the content generated by other users, especially on Instagram" (Brown et al., 2003, Horst et al., 2007; Harris, 2012; Racherla & Friske, 2012, as cited by Bahtara & Mudab, 2015). These consumers consist of Generation Z, also known as digital natives, who can obtain a variety of current and relevant information easily and quickly through the use of gadgets and the Internet. Gen Z consumers value and tend to trust the authenticity of user-generated content, conducting pre-shopping research about particular products or services before deciding to purchase. They believe that users who generate content will not only speak about the positive sides of particular products or services but the negative sides as well. Through online platforms, Gen Z consumers interact and build a community of users who share both positive and negative opinions or experiences about particular products or services they have personally purchased and used. With this, they can decide whether to make either an impulsive or rational purchase or not to purchase.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study



SOURCE: Swaen, B. & George, T. (2022, August 2). *What Is a Conceptual Framework? | Tips & Examples*. Scribbr.

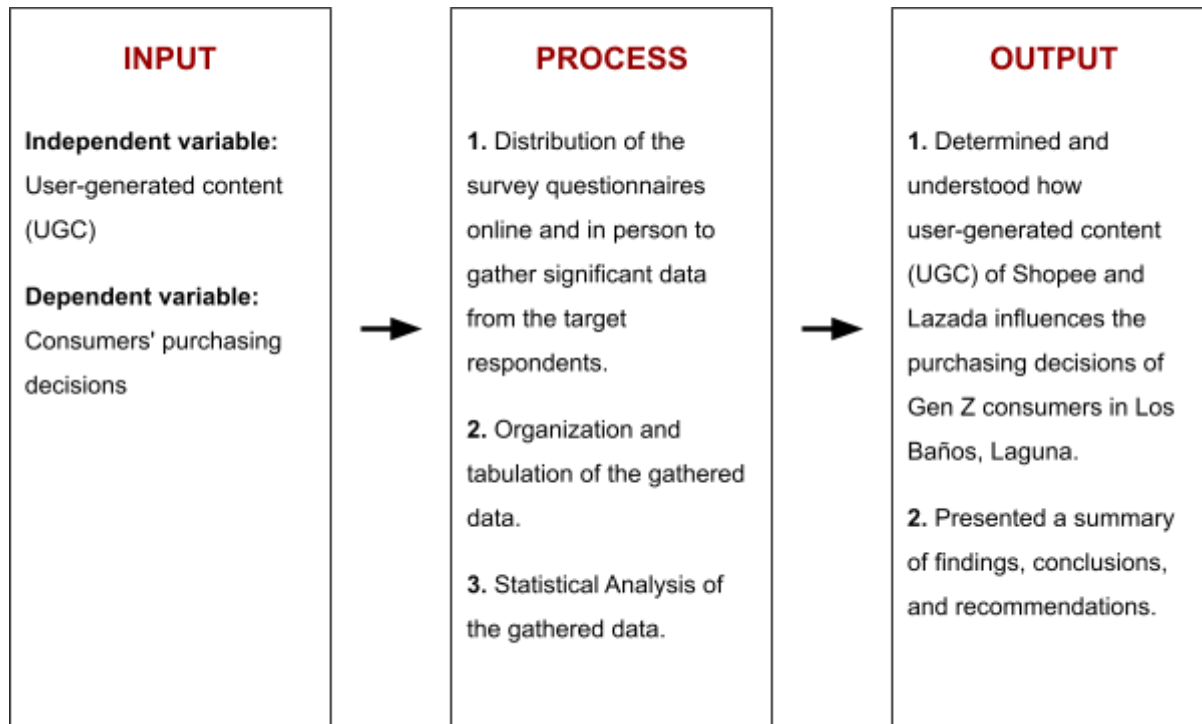
<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/conceptual-framework/>

The conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 1, includes two main variables, independent and dependent, and other two variables, mediating and moderating, to illustrate the expected relationship between these variables. User-generated content is the **independent variable**, which has an influence on the **dependent variable**, the consumer's purchasing decision. Moreover, the **mediating variable** is online shopping behavior that can act as a mechanism to explain how UGC influences the consumer's purchasing decision. Lastly, the **moderating**

variable is the level of reliance and trust. It shows how the consumers' differences in reliance and trust can affect the relationship between two main variables.

Research Paradigm

Figure 2. Input-Process-Output (IPO) Model



SOURCE: Studylib. (2023, April 9). *Conceptual Framework Template - IPO model*.

<https://studylib.net/doc/26131867/conceptual-framework-template-ipo-model>

The Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, as shown in Figure 2, provides an overall structure or guide for the direction of this study at a glance. The **Input** includes independent and dependent variables that will be studied to determine and understand how user-generated content, specifically in the two popular e-commerce platforms, Shopee and Lazada, influences the purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna. Moreover, the **Process** contains step-by-step procedures for obtaining the results of the gathered data from the respondents.

Lastly, the **Output** consists of the expected actions to be done to achieve the main objective of this study.

Hypotheses

Based on the gathered existing related literature and studies, there will be a strong correlation or relationship between the two variables, wherein the user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada has a significant influence on the purchasing decisions of selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quantitative descriptive research design was used in this study to quantify the collected data and to generalize findings from a sample population used in this study, aiming to determine and understand how user-generated content, specifically in the two popular e-commerce platforms, Shopee and Lazada, influences the purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna.

Locale of the Study

The municipality of Los Baños in the province of Laguna was the locale of this study for implementation. Los Baños, or simply 'elbi' or LB, is known as a "university town" with a diverse student population, which are the target respondents of this study.

Figure 3. Map of Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines



SOURCE: Wikimedia Commons. (2019, January 2). *Ph Locator Laguna Los Baños*.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ph_locator_laguna_los_banos.svg

Respondents of the Study

Gen Z consumers who are 18 to 26 years old and live in Los Baños, Laguna are the respondents of this study. Their everyday lives, specifically their online shopping behaviors, were influenced by heavily relying upon technologies, such as computers and smartphones, and even various digital platforms found on the Internet as it is fundamental to their existence.

Sampling Procedure

Convenience sampling was used in this study to select 100 respondents who are 18 to 26 years old and live in Los Baños, Laguna. This method has no identified pattern in selecting the respondents as they were only recruited in person and asked to answer the questionnaire in the street, public buildings, and school grounds. Moreover, some respondents were invited online to participate and answer the survey questionnaire through the popular social media platform 'Facebook.' These respondents are those who are present, available, and willing to answer it without offering rewards or other incentives.

Data Gathering Procedure

For a primary data source, the survey questionnaire was formulated through Google Form based on the statement of the problem. It was divided into four parts and contains demographic profiles, such as name (optional), age, and gender; eight questions with a predefined option of "Yes" or "No" regarding user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada and how it influences purchasing decisions; and lastly, two short essay questions to encourage respondents to share their thoughts further

regarding how they critically review the credibility of UGC before deciding to purchase.

After the research adviser reviewed and approved the survey questionnaire, it was then distributed to the 100 target respondents both online and in person to gather significant insights. These respondents were informed about the importance of their participation in this study and asked to answer the questions honestly. All the gathered primary data from the respondents were organized and tabulated for analysis and interpretation and treated with utmost confidentiality.

Along with a primary data source, the existing related literature and studies from various online sources were gathered as a secondary data source to support and validate the primary data source.

Data Analysis

A quantitative data analysis was used in this study to analyze and interpret the data. The primary data, which are measurable and verifiable, are collected and evaluated using statistical methods to determine and analyze the patterns, relationships, and trends within the gathered primary data.

To elaborate, the answers of the respondents within each question were counted or tallied to determine the frequency or to indicate the number of times these appear in the data. Additionally, each frequency was then divided by the total number of respondents and multiplied by 100 in order to get the percentage. With

this, the mode of the data was easy to find since it is the value that has a higher frequency or percentage.

Formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

where:

P = Percentage

f = Frequency

N = Total Number of Respondents

Ethical Consideration

The survey questionnaire provides a clear and concise explanation of the purpose of the study on the first page which helps the selected respondents be informed and understand the significance of their participation before they begin answering it. Additionally, it allows the selected respondents to remain anonymous to protect their identity by not requiring them to provide their names.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As stated in the previous chapter, the results of the gathered data from a total of 100 selected respondents, who are Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna, were determined using descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, and mode, to easily analyze and understand their socio-demographic profile, their perceptions regarding user-generated content and its influence on their purchasing decisions, their way of critically reviewing the credibility of UGC, and the importance of UGC in their purchasing decisions, which will help answer and address the main problems of this study.

A. Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1.1

Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	22	22%
Female	78	78%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 1.1, the majority of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna are female, with a percentage of 78%, whereas 22% are male.

Table 1.2

Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 years old	44	44%
19 years old	14	14%
20 years old	15	15%
21 years old	11	11%
22 years old	8	8%
23 years old	2	2%
24 years old	3	3%
25 years old	2	2%
26 years old	1	1%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 1.2, the majority of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna are 18 years old with a percentage of 44%, whereas 14% are 19 years old, 15% are 20 years old, 11% are 21 years old, 8% are 22 years old, 2% are 23 years old, 3% are 24 years old, 2% are 25 years old, and lastly 1% are 26 years old.

Table 2.1

Internet Accessibility of the Respondents

Do you have access to the Internet?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	95	95%
No	5	5%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 2.1, the majority of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna have access to the Internet, with a percentage of 95%, whereas 5% do not have access.

Table 2.2

E-commerce Platforms Used by the Respondents

Which e-commerce platforms do you use to purchase products?	Frequency	Percentage
Shopee	45	45%
Lazada	9	9%
Both	46	46%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 2.2, the majority of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna purchase products on both e-commerce platforms, Shopee and Lazada, with a percentage of 46%. Additionally, 45% of the selected Gen Z consumers purchase products on Shopee, whereas 9% preferred Lazada.

B. Perceptions of the Respondents regarding User-Generated Content on Shopee and Lazada and Its Influences on Purchasing Decisions

Table 3.1

Regularity of Purchases of the Respondents

Do you regularly purchase products from Shopee and/or Lazada?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	64	64%
No	36	36%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 3.1, 64% of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna purchase products on Shopee and/or Lazada regularly, whereas 36% are not regular buyers.

Table 3.2

Reliance of the Respondents on User-Generated Content

Do you solely rely on user-generated content	Frequency	Percentage
--	-----------	------------

when making purchasing decisions on Shopee and/or Lazada?		
Yes	55	55%
No	45	45%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 3.2, 55% of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna depend entirely on UGC when it comes to deciding whether to purchase or not particular products on Shopee and/or Lazada, whereas 45% do not rely solely on UGC.

Table 3.3

Trustworthiness of the User-Generated Content

Is the user-generated content on Shopee and/or Lazada trustworthy?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	64	64%
No	36	36%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 3.3, 64% of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna trusted UGC on Shopee and/or Lazada, whereas 36% find it untrustworthy or are skeptical about it.

Table 3.4

Reliability of the User-Generated Content vs. Traditional Advertising

Is user-generated content more reliable than traditional advertising on Shopee and/or Lazada?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	72%
No	28	28%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 3.4, 72% of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna perceive UGC on Shopee and/or Lazada as more reliable than those traditional advertising created by brands, whereas 28% do not perceive UGC as reliable.

Table 3.5

Influence of Positive User-Generated Content

Did the ' <i>positive</i> ' user-generated content influence your decision to purchase a product on Shopee and/or Lazada?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	91	91%

No	9	9%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 3.5, 91% of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna are influenced to purchase particular products on Shopee and/or Lazada after reading '*positive*' UGC, whereas 9% are not influenced by '*positive*' UGC.

Table 3.6

Influence of Negative User-Generated Content

Did the ' <i>negative</i> ' user-generated content influence your decision not to purchase a product on Shopee and/or Lazada?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	83	83%
No	17	17%
Total	100	100%

As shown in Table 3.6, 83% of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna are influenced not to purchase particular products on Shopee and/or Lazada after reading '*negative*' UGC, whereas 17% are not influenced by '*negative*' UGC.

C. Critical Review of the Credibility of User-Generated Content

The majority of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna point out that the factors they consider when critically reviewing the credibility of

user-generated content on Shopee and/or Lazada are: users review particular products honestly; users not only speak the good sides of products but the bad sides as well, if any; multiple users share the same opinions or experiences regarding particular products; users provide proof or evidence, such as images or videos of the products they purchased and used; and lastly, users are not bots and are verified.

Here are the most commonly expressed insights by the respondents in general:

- *"when they show pros and cons, proofs that the products actually work without edits/filters, and if the account of users seems legit or verified"*
- *"consistency of the reviews and multiple customers sharing the same sentiments of shipping and product experiences"*
- *"I check if their rating is high and also to look at comments if the person is real and also verified"*
- *"the honesty of how they review products"*
- *"proof like pictures or videos of the product"*

D. Importance of User-Generated Content in Purchasing Decisions

The majority of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna point out that the user-generated content on Shopee and/or Lazada is very important in influencing their purchasing decisions because it serves as a basis or a source of social proof to assist them in deciding whether to purchase or not the particular products. It provides them with personal opinions or experiences of real users who have already used and tried the products regarding, for instance, its quality, durability, suitability, and more, especially as some respondents said that the product

information or description provided by brands or sellers are most likely biased and untrustworthy. Moreover, a few Gen Z consumers expressed that UGC is not that important because they do not rely solely on it for their purchasing decisions, as well as they believe that some users who generate content are paid by brands or sellers merely to promote their products.

Here are the most commonly expressed insights by the respondents in general:

- *"UGC basically is my only basis for knowing the actual quality of the product. I find it very important for me as it dictates my decision whether or not will I purchase the products"*
- *"very very important as the description of the seller will most likely be biased"*
- *"I think it is a very crucial factor because it provides basis and trust on the product that I will be purchasing"*
- *"it is crucial because they test first the product I like to purchase"*
- *"it helps in giving additional experiences and information regarding the product, especially about its quality and characteristics"*
- *"I do not solely rely on them but they offer personalized recommendation which are highly beneficial"*
- *"about 7 in a scale of 10 because some account seems like alts or bought/paid to endorse certain products"*

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

The main problems of this study which aim to be analyzed and answered are as follows: How does the user-generated content on Shopee and Lazada influence the purchasing decisions of selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna? To what extent do they rely on and trust the authenticity of UGC on Shopee and Lazada? How do they critically review UGC on Shopee and Lazada to make informed purchasing decisions?

Summary

A survey questionnaire was distributed to the 100 selected respondents, who are Gen Z consumers between the ages of 18 and 26, in Los Baños, Laguna. Its results were determined and analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, and mode, and compared and contrasted to the existing related literature and studies.

Based on the analysis of results or findings, the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Baños, Laguna are mostly 18 years old, and primarily females. The majority of them have access to the Internet as well as used and shopped on both Shopee and Lazada to purchase products. Gen Z consumers have been using the Internet from a young age as a part of their daily lives, and thereby it is no surprise that they use and navigate e-commerce platforms with ease to purchase products they see online.

Moreover, most of the selected Gen Z consumers rely solely on user-generated content when making purchasing decisions on Shopee and/or Lazada as they believe and find it trustworthy and more reliable than traditional

advertising. UGC is recognized as a credible source as it comes directly from real users whose motivation is to share and enlighten others about their either positive or negative personal opinions and experiences on particular products or services, adding authenticity to the content and making it more relatable for the potential consumers, rather than traditional advertising where it only stated the positive advantages and benefits of particular products or services. However, some of them do not rely solely on and trust UGC, and they believe that traditional advertising is more reliable. Gen Z consumers are typically more cautious and skeptical, especially in terms of the credibility of the source of UGC, given the prevalence of paid users who generate content about products or services merely for the sake of brands.

Additionally, most of the selected Gen Z consumers are influenced to purchase particular products after reading '*positive*' UGC, whereas if it is '*negative*,' they are influenced not to purchase. UGC is often considered a valuable tool to help consumers decide on whether to purchase or not to reduce anticipated risk and improve perceived trust in particular products and brands. However, some are not influenced to purchase even after reading '*positive*' UGC, whereas if it is '*negative*,' they are still influenced to purchase. UGC, whether positive or negative, can significantly influence the purchasing decisions of consumers as it is often perceived to be persuasive, but not all UGCs have the same influence.

Furthermore, the majority of the selected Gen Z consumers consider factors such as whether users are verified, honest, provide both good and bad sides of the products, proof or evidence of the products, as well as if multiple users share the same information about the products when critically reviewing the credibility of UGC.

Gen Z consumers often prioritize authenticity and quality before purchasing. They are more likely to trust and purchase when the content generated by users about particular products is authentic, useful, reliable, and relevant to ensure that they make informed purchasing decisions.

Lastly, the majority of the selected Gen Z consumers believe that UGC is very important in their purchasing decisions as it serves as their basis or source of social proof, providing additional information or opinions from users aside from the product description provided by brands or sellers. UGC is often perceived to be a credible and user-friendly source as the information it provides is authentic, easier, and consumes less time to review and understand particular products regardless of its length.

Conclusions

Based on the study, the factors of user-generated content, specifically in the two popular e-commerce platforms, Shopee and Lazada, that significantly influence the purchasing decisions of the selected Gen Z consumers in Los Banos, Laguna are its authenticity and relatability. Moreover, UGC offers personal opinions and experiences of real users regarding the products, which is why the selected Gen Z consumers rely heavily on and trust UGC when reviewing particular products to assist them in deciding whether to purchase or not. However, some of them are skeptical about it. Lastly, the selected Gen Z consumers critically review the credibility of UGC by considering the factors, such as users' identity verification, users' honesty, and multiple users sharing the same information, both good and bad sides of the products, as well as providing proof or evidence, such as images or

videos, to make informed purchasing decisions as they value authenticity and quality.

This also shows the implications of the need for multimedia artists to create and design real and honest content as well as for businesses and marketers to include trustworthy UGC into their marketing strategies and avoid staged or paid content in order to build and increase trust and connection with potential digitally native consumers. In addition, it also emphasizes the need for consumers to critically evaluate UGC and identify which content is credible to maximize its effectiveness in helping their purchasing decisions. Lastly, the sample size of the respondents is relatively small and the results or findings are solely based on their answers in the survey questionnaires. Therefore, these limitations can be considered and improved by future researchers to further obtain a more concise and comprehensive understanding of how consumers, especially in different age ranges or groups, perceive and engage with UGC in making informed purchasing decisions.

Recommendations

User-generated content is indeed critical for understanding to ensure its full benefits in purchasing decisions and prevent potential risks, such as being exposed unknowingly to fake or misleading content, especially given the enormous amount of UGC available and the widespread presence of staged or paid content that is easy to trust and fall to. Therefore, the following recommendations are as follows:

- Gen Z consumers should check and verify the credibility of the source of UGC first, such as who created it, when, where, and why the content was created. Various tools, such as reverse image or video search, Geolocation, metadata,

social media profiles, and online databases, can be used in order to counter-check the sources.

- Gen Z consumers should examine the authenticity and quality of UGC. It can be done by verifying the reliability, relevance, and clarity of the content. Various techniques, such as fast-checking, cross-referencing, context clues, and logical reasoning, can be applied to evaluate the content.
- Gen Z consumers should consider the proper use of ethics in producing the content, such as if the users who generate the content follow the codes of conducted guidelines, principles, or standards. In addition, they should check if there are any signs of exploitation, sensationalism, or even violation.
- Gen Z consumers should review the feedback, satisfaction ratings, and trust and loyalty of other consumers to see if there are praise or negative complaints, as well as controversy about the creator of the content.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Research Ethics Certificate

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS <small>Navigating the ethics of human research</small>	TCPS 2: CORE 2022	
<h1><i>Certificate of Completion</i></h1>		
<p><i>This document certifies that</i></p>		
<p>Preciosa Christine Guevarra</p>		
<p><i>successfully completed the Course on Research Ethics based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2: CORE 2022)</i></p>		
Certificate # 0001251272	6 December, 2023	

APPENDIX B

Link to Survey Questionnaire

<https://forms.gle/SakQpEMfaqSPb7Wx9>