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Brand Image, e-WoM, and Hedonic Motivation in GTA V Purchase Decisions among Indonesian Generation Z

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Abstract

Background: Grand Theft Auto V (GTA V) remains commercially relevant more than a decade after its initial release, making it a useful legacy-game context for examining how brand perceptions, consumer-generated digital information, and enjoyment-related motives are associated with purchase decisions among Indonesian Generation Z consumers.
Objective: This study examines the associations of brand image, electronic word of mouth (e-WoM), and hedonic motivation with GTA V purchase decisions among Generation Z in Indonesia.
Methods: A cross-sectional quantitative survey was administered online to 250 respondents recruited through purposive sampling. The four constructs were measured with 16 indicators on a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using multiple linear regression in SPSS 26.
Results: Brand image (B = 0.285, t = 4.215, p < 0.001), e-WoM (B = 0.312, t = 4.682, p < 0.001), and hedonic motivation (B = 0.364, t = 5.841, p < 0.001) were each positively associated with purchase decision. The model was significant (F = 130.421, p < 0.001) and explained 61.4% of the variance based on adjusted R^2.
Conclusion: Purchase decisions for this legacy video game are statistically associated with brand-related perceptions, digital consumer communication, and hedonic motives. Because the reported coefficients are unstandardized and the design is cross-sectional, the findings do not establish relative dominance or causality.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital entertainment industry, particularly the video game industry, has undergone rapid growth and transformation over the past decade. It has developed from a leisure-oriented sector into a major global economic market. In Indonesia, expanding internet access and a large young consumer base support video game consumption. Grand Theft Auto V (GTA V), produced by Rockstar Games and first released in Games (2013), provides a notable case because it continues to attract purchasers more than a decade after launch, beyond the typical short commercial cycle of many digital entertainment products.

GTA V's continuing appeal among Generation Z in Indonesia raises questions about the consumer perceptions and motivations associated with purchase decisions. Members of Generation Z have grown up with extensive access to digital media; however, their behavior should not be treated as uniform. Prior research suggests that online interaction, peer reviews, and experience-oriented considerations can influence the online purchasing behavior of younger consumers. These tendencies make Indonesian Generation Z a relevant population for examining purchase decisions in the digital entertainment market, while recognizing variation within the generation.

The significance of this study is further reinforced by Indonesia's digital landscape. According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association APJII (2024), the number of internet users in Indonesia has surpassed 221 million people, with Generation Z contributing substantially to activity on digital entertainment and social media platforms. This connectivity facilitates consumer-to-consumer product information, including discussion of established video games such as GTA V, and supports examining purchase decisions among consumers who have grown up in a digital environment.

In consumer behavior literature, brand image represents consumers' perceptions and associations concerning a brand and may be associated with purchase decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the GTA V context, Rockstar Games' reputation and consumers' perceptions of the game provide relevant brand-related considerations. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM) communicated through YouTube, TikTok, Discord, and other digital communities may also provide information used by consumers when evaluating the product (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In addition, hedonic motivation reflects the enjoyment, escapism, and experiential value sought from digital entertainment consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). These three constructs were therefore examined as potential predictors of GTA V Purchase Decision.

Conceptually, Keller (2003) defines brand image as consumer perceptions of a brand reflected in associations stored in memory, including functional and symbolic associations. Kotler and Kotler & Keller (2016) argue that a strong and consistent brand image can reduce perceived risk during purchase decision-making, especially for products with long lifecycles. In the GTA V context, Rockstar Games' developer reputation, together with associations attached to the game, provides the brand-related basis tested against Purchase Decision in this study.

The concept of Word of Mouth (WoM) was first academically formulated by Arndt (1967), who showed that conversations between consumers about a product have a significant influence on the diffusion and adoption of new products. Along with the development of digital technology, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) expanded this concept into Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), which is positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product or company, available to many people via the internet. Furthermore, Brodie et al. (2013) showed that consumer engagement in virtual brand communities also strengthens the intensity and credibility of circulating e-WoM. This finding is relevant to the context of this research, given that the Indonesian GTA V Roleplay community on platforms such as Discord and YouTube is essentially a form of virtual brand community that actively produces and distributes e-WoM about the game.

The relevance of e-WoM to purchase decisions for digital entertainment products is also confirmed by a number of recent studies. Makmun Riyanto et al. (2023) found that e-WoM and consumer psychology significantly influence the purchase decisions for the Elden Ring video game on the Steam platform in Indonesia, affirming that the influence pattern of e-WoM is not limited to mobile-based games alone but also applies to premium paid games. Similar findings were presented by Gultom et al. (2022), revealing that e-WoM together with Brand Image significantly influences the purchase decision for Netflix subscriptions, a digital entertainment product that, like GTA V, relies on long-term reputation and sustained online discourse to maintain its user base.

From the perspective of consumer motivation, Hirschman & Holbrook (1982) pioneered the concept of hedonic consumption, which describes dimensions of consumption related to multisensory, fantasy, and emotional aspects of the product experience, differing from a utilitarian approach oriented solely toward function. The concept of hedonic motivation was later adapted into the context of technology adoption by Venkatesh et al. (2012) through the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model, which positions hedonic motivation (the pleasure or enjoyment derived from using a technology) as a significant determinant of consumer technology use intention, including digital entertainment products such as video games. Westbrook & Oliver (1991) added that emotional patterns emerging during the consumption process also shape overall consumer satisfaction. These three perspectives together build the argument that the fulfillment of emotional and hedonic needs is an important determinant of purchase decisions for digital entertainment products like GTA V.

Research on the role of hedonic motivation in Generation Z purchasing behavior within the gaming ecosystem has also developed rapidly in recent years. Hedonic motivation significantly

drives impulse purchases of virtual skins in the Mobile Legends game among Generation Z, indicating that pleasure-driven impulses are strong determinants in digital entertainment product transactions. Artadita & Firmialy (2024) reinforced this finding by showing that shopping enjoyment significantly influences impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z online game players, while Arthur & Abiyasa (2025) identified that digital consumer behavior and fear of missing out (FOMO) are the main driving factors for microtransactions among Generation Z in Indonesia. These three studies consistently affirm that hedonic psychological dimensions are increasingly dominant determinants in the digital game consumption ecosystem of the younger generation.

Ultimately, these three factors culminate in the purchase decision, which Schiffman & Wisenblit (2019) define as the process of selecting one of several alternative actions involving the stages of need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Younus et al. (2015) identified that product quality, price, and social influence are the main determinants of consumer purchase intention. In the context of the online gaming industry, e-WoM and hedonic motivation jointly have a positive effect on purchase decisions for virtual items in online games, reinforcing the relevance of both variables in the gaming ecosystem. Dynamics of the Indonesian GTA V Roleplay community as a virtual interaction space and found its influence on Generation Z player loyalty. Social media marketing affects brand equity, brand attitude, and consumer purchase intention, a finding that strengthens the argument for the connection between digital activity and purchase decisions in this study (Heidari et al., 2023; Huo & Filieri, 2025; Majeed et al., 2021; Sağtaş, 2022).

Brand Image, e-WoM, and Hedonic Motivation were positioned as separate predictors of Purchase Decision. Previous research indicates that engagement in virtual brand communities may contribute to the dissemination of e-WoM and the formation of brand-related perceptions (Brodie et al., 2013). Hedonic Motivation was included to represent the enjoyment and experiential value associated with entertainment technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). However, the present study did not examine mediation, moderation, or interaction among the three predictors. The regression model was limited to estimating their separate and joint statistical associations with Purchase Decision.

The Indonesian video game market provides a relevant setting because social media use, local-language content, community activity, and price sensitivity can shape how consumers assess established game titles. GTA V is not a product that has persisted without developer activity: Rockstar Games has continued to support GTA Online and release the title on newer platforms. At the same time, Indonesian roleplay communities and other user-generated content provide a distinct local communication setting. In this study, roleplay is therefore treated as contextual evidence of community-based e-WoM rather than as the primary object of analysis.

Previous Indonesian studies have largely examined mobile or free-to-play games, whereas less is known about purchase decisions for an established premium title more than a decade after release. The academic problem is therefore not simply GTA V's popularity, but whether brand image, e-WoM, and hedonic motivation are statistically associated with the decision to purchase a legacy premium game among Indonesian Generation Z consumers.

Studies of Indonesian GTA roleplay communities have emphasized consumptive behavior, virtual identity, or community loyalty, while related gaming studies have examined e-WoM or hedonic motives in other products (Adiyatma, 2023; Hidayat et al., 2024). These studies do not directly test the three predictors together against the purchase decision for the GTA V game unit. The novelty of the present study is its integrated examination of brand image, e-WoM, and hedonic motivation within the legacy-product context; Indonesian roleplay content serves only as part of the local e-WoM environment.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the partial and joint associations of Brand Image, e-WoM, and Hedonic Motivation with GTA V Purchase Decision among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. The findings are expected to extend digital consumer-behavior research concerning legacy premium games and provide considerations for developers, publishers, and distributors when designing brand-positioning and digital communication strategies.

Based on the theoretical synthesis, this study positions Brand Image, Electronic Word of Mouth, and Hedonic Motivation as independent variables and Purchase Decision as the dependent variable. Four hypotheses are proposed: (H1) Brand Image is positively and significantly

associated with Purchase Decision; (H2) Electronic Word of Mouth is positively and significantly associated with Purchase Decision; (H3) Hedonic Motivation is positively and significantly associated with Purchase Decision; and (H4) Brand Image, Electronic Word of Mouth, and Hedonic Motivation are jointly and significantly associated with Purchase Decision.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative associative design to examine the relationships between the independent variables and Purchase Decision. The population comprised Indonesian Generation Z individuals, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, who knew or consumed content related to GTA V. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling Sugiyono (2013) based on the following criteria: (1) aged 14–29 years at the time of the research, (2) residing in Indonesia, and (3) having purchased the GTA V game unit on PC, PlayStation, or Xbox within the previous 24 months. The study included 250 respondents who met these inclusion criteria.

Primary data were collected online through a structured questionnaire administered using Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed through game communities on Discord, Facebook groups, and X (Twitter). Variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The research instrument was adopted and adapted from relevant previous studies.

Brand Image (X_1) was operationalized through four perceived associations: producer reputation, perceived graphic/story quality, product uniqueness, and brand loyalty. Because two indicators also capture product-level evaluation, the construct is interpreted as a broad brand-and-product image measure rather than a purely corporate brand image measure.

Electronic Word of Mouth (X_2) was measured through 4 indicators (intensity of reading reviews, content creators, community discussions, social media recommendations). Hedonic Motivation (X_3) was measured through 4 indicators (escapism, enjoyment of playing, stress relief, fantasy fulfillment). Purchase Decision (Y) was measured through 4 indicators (purchase certainty, recommendation to others, price-value suitability, purchase time intensity).

Before the main analysis, item validity was assessed using Pearson's product-moment correlation. With n = 250, the critical value was r = 0.124 (df = 248, $\alpha = 0.05$, two-tailed); an item was considered valid when r-calculated > r-critical. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients above 0.60 treated as acceptable under the criterion applied in this study. Multiple linear regression analysis Hair et al. (2019) was preceded by normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests (Ghozali, 2005). All analyses were performed in SPSS 26.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Characteristics

Based on demographic data from 250 valid respondents, 72% were male (180 respondents), while 28% were female (70 respondents). Regarding age, respondents aged 18–22 years accounted for 64%, while those aged 23–26 years accounted for 22%. The remaining 14% were respondents from other age categories included in the study; however, the original data did not provide a separate distribution for each of these categories. The main platforms used to play GTA V were PC/Steam (58%), PlayStation 4/5 (34%), and Xbox (8%).

The dominance of PC/Steam platform users in this research sample is consistent with the distribution characteristics of GTA V, which has been available across platforms since its initial launch in 2013, while the proportion of respondents in the digital productive age range (18–26 years) reflects the majority of the research population included in the Generation Z category as specified in the sample criteria.

Validity and Reliability Testing

The item-validity results showed that every statement item for X_1, X_2, X_3, and Y had an r-calculated value greater than the critical value of 0.124 (df = 248, $\alpha = 0.05$, two-tailed); therefore, all indicators met the study's validity criterion. Cronbach's alpha was 0.812 for Brand Image, 0.845 for e-WoM, 0.876 for Hedonic Motivation, and 0.831 for Purchase Decision. All coefficients exceeded the 0.60 threshold applied in this study (Ghozali, 2005).

All four Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded 0.80, indicating strong internal

consistency in this sample. Reliability does not by itself establish construct validity; it indicates that the items within each operationalized variable produced consistent responses for the present analysis.

Classical Assumption Tests

1) Normality Test: The One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test produced an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.089 (> 0.05). Thus, there was insufficient evidence to reject the normality assumption for the tested residual distribution.
2) Multicollinearity Test: The *Tolerance* values for all three independent variables are > 0.10 and *VIF* values < 10.0 (Variable X_1: 1.421; X_2: 1.510; X_3: 1.335). Thus, there are no symptoms of multicollinearity. These threshold criteria refer to the multivariate analysis guidelines proposed by (Hair et al., 2019).
3) Heteroscedasticity Test: The Glejser test produced significance values above 0.05 for X_1 (0.214), X_2 (0.431), and X_3 (0.119). These results provide insufficient evidence of heteroscedasticity under the applied test.

Overall, the diagnostic results did not indicate violations of the tested normality, multicollinearity, or heteroscedasticity criteria. The multiple linear regression estimates were therefore interpreted within the scope of these diagnostics and the cross-sectional design.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The estimation results of the multiple linear regression model presented in the table 1.

Table 1
Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient (B)	t-count	Significance (Sig.)	Conclusion
(Constant)	3.142	2.451	0.015	-
Brand Image (X_1)	0.285	4.215	< 0.001	Significant
Electronic Word of Mouth (X_2)	0.312	4.682	< 0.001	Significant
Hedonic Motivation (X_3)	0.364	5.841	< 0.001	Significant

1) Regression Equation: $Y = 3.142 + 0.285X_1 + 0.312X_2 + 0.364X_3 + e$
2) F-Test (Simultaneous): The model produced F = 130.421 with p < 0.001, indicating that Brand Image, e-WoM, and Hedonic Motivation jointly provided a statistically significant explanation of Purchase Decision.
3) Coefficient of Determination: The adjusted R^2 value was 0.614. Thus, after adjustment for the number of predictors, the model explained 61.4% of the observed variance in Purchase Decision in this sample; 38.6% remained unexplained by the model and should not be assigned to specific omitted variables without further testing.

The coefficients reported in the table are unstandardized B coefficients used in the regression equation. They should not be used to identify the most dominant predictor because the variables may differ in scale or variance. A relative-strength claim would require standardized beta coefficients, which were not reported in the available output.

Discussion

The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

Brand Image was positively associated with GTA V purchase decision (B = 0.285, t = 4.215, p < 0.001). Within the broad operationalization used here, favorable perceptions of Rockstar Games and GTA V were associated with higher purchase-decision scores. The result is compatible with the view that established brand associations can reduce uncertainty during consumer evaluation Kotler and Keller (2016), but the cross-sectional evidence does not establish that brand image guarantees quality, accelerates decisions, or causes market retention.

Brand-community engagement and player loyalty, whereas the present study examined purchase decision. The studies therefore address different outcomes: the former concerns post-purchase community attachment, while the present result concerns the statistical association between broad brand/product image perceptions and purchase decision. This distinction prevents loyalty or retention from being inferred from the current model.

The international perspective also reinforces this finding. Burgess and Jones (2023) in

their study of The Sims 4 consumers found that video game media brand authenticity (the consistency of features and core values expected by consumers over time) is an important determinant of consumer engagement and trust in the brand. This principle is relevant to GTA V, where the consistency of narrative and production quality from Rockstar Games over time helps maintain perceptions of brand authenticity in the eyes of Generation Z. In the domestic context, Alfian et al. (2024) also found that brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand reputation significantly influence the purchase decision for merchandise of the Rex Regum Qeon (RRQ) esports team in Indonesia, affirming that the pattern of brand reputation influence on purchase decisions is consistently found across various segments of the gaming industry in Indonesia, both for the game products themselves and their derivatives.

The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decision

e-WoM was positively associated with Purchase Decision ($B = 0.312$, $t = 4.682$, $p < 0.001$). YouTube, TikTok, Discord, and Indonesian GTA V roleplay content provide plausible channels through which consumers encounter reviews and recommendations, but the present questionnaire did not trace a temporal conversion from passive interest to purchase action.

Makmun et al. (2023) also reported an e-WoM relationship with purchase decisions for a premium Steam game, whereas Gultom et al. (2022) examined Netflix subscriptions. The recurring association across these settings suggests that online consumer information may be relevant to digital-entertainment decisions, although differences in product type, sampling, and measurement preclude a claim that e-WoM operates identically across categories. In the current study, roleplay content is treated as one part of the e-WoM environment, not as a complete measure of all community narratives.

The Influence of Hedonic Motivation on Purchase Decision

Hedonic Motivation was positively associated with Purchase Decision ($B = 0.364$, $t = 5.841$, $p < 0.001$). The items capture enjoyment, escapism, stress relief, and fantasy fulfillment, so the result indicates that higher hedonic-motivation scores were associated with higher purchase-decision scores in this sample. The unstandardized B value must not be interpreted as evidence that hedonic motivation was the most dominant predictor. The finding is compatible with consumption-emotion theory Westbrook and Oliver (1991) and the entertainment-oriented role of hedonic motivation in UTAUT2 Venkatesh et al. (2012), without implying absolute freedom, unmet real-world needs, or improved emotional well-being.

Recent Indonesian gaming studies provide related but not identical evidence. Artadita and Firmialy (2024) examined shopping enjoyment and impulsive buying, and Arthur and Abiyasa (2025) examined microtransactions and FOMO. In contrast, the present study concerns the purchase decision for a premium game unit. The comparison supports the relevance of hedonic motives across several gaming contexts while preserving differences in outcomes and product formats.

Implications and Limitations

Theoretically, this study applies hedonic motivation alongside brand image and e-WoM in a legacy premium-game setting. Practically, the results suggest that developers and marketers may consider brand positioning, community-based information exchange, and enjoyable product experiences when communicating established game titles. The analysis did not measure retention, loyalty, risk perception, emotional well-being, or purchase sustainability; therefore, no implication is asserted for those outcomes.

Relationship between community engagement and loyalty, an outcome not tested here. That study nevertheless highlights community activity as a relevant context for future models that extend beyond purchase decision. For GTA V, official support for GTA Online and releases on newer platforms should be considered alongside user-generated content; the title's continued relevance should not be attributed to community activity alone.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional and self-reported design, which prevents temporal or causal inference and may be affected by common-method and recall bias. Purposive online recruitment may overrepresent highly engaged GTA V community members, while the focus on one game and the requirement of having purchased the game within the previous 24

months restrict the generalizability of the findings to non-purchasers, other game categories, and the wider Generation Z population. The geographic distribution was concentrated in major cities with high-speed internet access, and the original demographic data did not provide a detailed distribution for all age categories. In addition, the broad Brand Image measure includes product-level quality associations, while standardized beta coefficients were unavailable for comparing predictor strength.

CONCLUSION

Among the 250 respondents, Brand Image, Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), and Hedonic Motivation were each positively associated with GTA V Purchase Decision, and the regression model was jointly significant. The adjusted R^2 of 0.614 indicates that the three predictors explained 61.4% of the observed variance in Purchase Decision in this sample. Because only unstandardized B coefficients were available, the study does not identify a most dominant predictor. The cross-sectional findings indicate statistical associations rather than demonstrating that the three factors caused GTA V's continuing market relevance.

The results suggest that developers and marketers of established digital games may consider brand and product associations, consumer-generated digital information, and enjoyment-related motives when designing communication strategies. Interpretation remains limited by self-reporting, purposive online sampling, urban concentration, the GTA V-specific context, the recent-purchaser criterion, the broad operationalization of Brand Image, and the limited demographic details available for several age categories. Future studies should use more diverse samples, provide more detailed demographic reporting, report standardized coefficients, and examine additional constructs without treating loyalty, retention, or purchase sustainability as outcomes of the present model.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Radityo Suksmaneng Daru: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, and writing—original draft. Sugiarto: conceptualization, supervision, validation, interpretation of findings, and manuscript editing. Both authors approved the final manuscript.

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