

The Influence of Behavioral Theory of Electronic Cigarette Use and Perception on Gen-Z

Golan Hasan¹, Pandapotan Rafli Armando², Nahrudien Akbar M³

^{1,2}Faculty of Economics and Business University Internasional Batam, Indonesia

³Faculty of Economics and Business University Pancasila Jakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the effect of Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle, and on Behavior to Smoke with Purchase Intention as a mediating variable for Gen Z. Data was collected through a survey involving 250 respondents who are active users of Gen Z in Batam. The data analysis method used is SmartPLS analysis to test direct and indirect relationships between variables. The results showed that Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle have a positive and significant influence on Smoke with Purchase. Meanwhile, Purchase Intention is proven to mediate the influence of Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle on Smoke with Purchase has positive significant results. This study confirms the importance of the influence of Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle on Smoke with Purchase with Purchase Intention as a mediating variable for Gen Z in Batam. The findings provide practical implications for Gen Z in Batam to further focus their efforts on strengthening Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle.

KEYWORDS: Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle, Behavior to Smoke

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of e-cigarettes among Gen Z is currently increasing. Many consider them a safer alternative to conventional cigarettes. This was revealed in a study conducted by Barnes et al. (2022) that e-cigarettes are now increasingly used by adults and adolescents worldwide, with 17.2% of children and adolescents having tried e-cigarettes. Interestingly, many adolescents use e-cigarettes even though they have never smoked tobacco. Factors such as low perception of danger, peer influence, easy access and advertising of e-cigarettes contribute to this increase in use. However, despite being considered "lighter," e-cigarette use raises concerns, particularly regarding its long-term health impacts. Many adolescents begin using e-cigarettes without fully understanding the risks, and some even switch to conventional cigarettes after becoming accustomed to e-cigarettes. The phenomenon of smoking among adolescents is concerning, considering that it not only increases the risk of disease but also damages adolescents' emotions and behavior, even leading to criminal behavior. (Havizoh & Widyatuti, 2020)

The use of e-cigarettes is increasing rapidly, especially among young people (Abo-Elkheir & Sobh, 2016). However, despite the increasing use of e-cigarettes, there has been a decline in the number of conventional smokers among young people. On the one hand, this indicates a change in habits, but on the other hand, there are also concerns that the use of e-cigarettes could pave the way for adolescents to start smoking regular cigarettes. This raises an important question: what factors encourage young people to start vaping? Identifying the underlying causes is crucial to address this problem more effectively.

Based on the data above, it can be said that the high prospect of e-commerce has caused many entrepreneurs to be interested in opening e-commerce stores. Over time, many competitors will emerge and competition between entrepreneurs will intensify. Therefore, it is necessary to apply an attractive method of delivery or communication between potential customers with the aim of arousing customer interest in making or maximizing purchase intentions. Entrepreneurs must be able to pay attention to several things such as brand image, promotion, sales, product quality, services and social media marketing as one of the mediations of purchase intention.

Although several studies have examined e-cigarette use among adolescents, few have addressed the factors influencing their decision to start smoking. Most previous research has focused on traditional cigarettes and paid little attention to e-cigarettes, a rapidly growing phenomenon. Factors such as perceived knowledge, social norms, habits, and lifestyle have often been underexplored in depth in relation to adolescent smoking behavior. However, while numerous studies have examined e-cigarette purchase intentions, few have examined how these purchase intentions directly relate to smoking behavior, both for e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes.

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Therefore, this study aims to address this knowledge gap and provide insight into the underlying factors influencing adolescent smoking behavior. With a deeper understanding, it is hoped that more effective preventative measures can be implemented. Thus, this research is novel because it considers the influence of perceived knowledge, subjective norms, habits, and lifestyle on smoking behavior, which are investigated in other contexts with purchase intention as a mediator. I will be able to uncover how all factors—perceived knowledge about the dangers of smoking, accumulated norms and habits, and lifestyle—interact with each other, leading Gen Z in Batam to decide to smoke. By understanding the role of purchase intention, this study aims to provide deeper insight into the decision-making process of Gen Z choosing to smoke, whether through e-cigarettes or conventional cigarettes. This study is also expected to make an important contribution to the development of more effective intervention strategies to reduce smoking serotypes among Gen Z. With these novelties, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to existing literature and help in formulating more effective prevention strategies to reduce the use of e-cigarettes and conventional cigarettes among young people.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived knowledge significantly influences purchase intentions because consumers' perceived level of knowledge about a product or service can increase their confidence in making purchasing decisions. Research (Yoon & Kim, 2016) found that the more knowledge a person feels about a problem, the more motivated they are to take action. When consumers feel sufficiently knowledgeable, they are able to evaluate available options wholeheartedly, reducing uncertainty and choosing the product's value proposition. This not only strengthens consumers' confidence in the product's quality and usefulness but also creates a stronger sacred bond, increasing their willingness to purchase. This is further evidenced by research showing that perceived knowledge positively influences attitudes and trust. Therefore, to increase purchase intention, perceived knowledge must be preceded by trust, as consumer trust plays a crucial role in this relationship (Roh et al., 2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that perceived knowledge positively influences purchase intention and plays a crucial role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions.

H1: Perceived Knowledge Has a Significant Influence on Purchase Intention

Subjective norm in the Theory of Planned Behavior refers to an individual's perception of social pressure from significant others to perform or not perform a particular behavior, including social expectations and motivation to conform to that reference group. The influence of subjective norm on purchase intention has shown an insignificant relationship in various cross-cultural and product-context studies. Research by Shuja and Rizwan Naqvi (2023) found that neither subjective norm nor PIIT showed a significant influence on online purchase intention in either sample. Cross-cultural studies showed that social pressure does not consistently influence online purchase intention. Fook and Dastane (2021) (Jasfar & Hasan, 2025) investigated the determinants of purchase intention regarding environmentally friendly sustainable products that lead to purchase behavior and found that subjective norm (measured by four prompt questions) was not significantly related to purchase intention. This means that even in the context of green products, where social norms are supposed to play a significant role, this relationship remains insignificant. Subjective norm is a significant antecedent of attitudes and behavioral intentions to use mobile data services for American consumers, but this was not observed for Korean consumers (Yang & Jolly, 2009), confirming that the influence of subjective norm varies culturally and is not universal. This insignificance can be explained by several factors: first, individualization in modern society leads consumers to rely more on personal evaluations than on social pressures. Second, purchase intentions are more influenced by utilitarian factors such as perceived value and product quality than by normative pressures. Third, cultural differences in collectivism versus individualism influence the role of subjective norm in decision-making. Fourth, in the digital era, social references have become more diverse and fragmented, reducing the consistency of the influence of subjective norm on purchase intentions.

H2. Subjective norm has no significant effect on purchase intention.

Habit is often used colloquially to refer to behaviors that seem to have an inescapable pull on us (Watson et al., n.d.). Habits are behaviors performed automatically and repeatedly in certain situations. The effect of habits on purchase intentions has shown an insignificant relationship in some studies, which may be explained by fundamental differences between the mechanisms of habitual behavior and deliberate intention formation. Habitual purchasing involves decisions made with minimal consumer involvement and little perceived difference between product options. These decisions are typically driven by convenience or routine rather than brand loyalty or performance evaluation (Acar et al., 2024), suggesting that habits operate at a level that bypasses the conscious and deliberate processes of forming intentions. Purchasing and consumption behaviors in everyday life are often repetitive and occur in familiar settings, leading consumers to develop habits (Dwikesumasari & Ervianty, 2017), suggesting that habitual purchasing behavior tends to be automatic and does not require the cognitive processes involved in forming purchase intentions. There is a distinction between attitude and purchase intention (ability to purchase) (Zakaria et al., 2014), which confirms a clear gap between habitual attitudes and actual purchase intentions. A significant percentage of purchasing decisions are made unconsciously, driven by ingrained routines (Bae & Kim, 2023a), explaining that habit-based purchasing decisions occur at a subconscious level, bypassing the intention formation stage. This meaninglessness occurs because habits operate through automatic processing systems that directly influence behavior without conscious intention, while purchase intentions require conscious consideration and evaluation.

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Therefore, these two constructions operate along different pathways in the dual-process theory model, where habits are more dominant in System 1 (automatic) while purchase intentions are more dominant in System 2 (controlled processing).

H3. Habit has no significant effect on Purchase Intention

Lifestyle is a subset of consumer behavior that, to some extent, influences the actions consumers take when making actual purchases (Rosif et al., 2015). A person with a modern lifestyle tends to purchase the latest, branded, and expensive products, and appearance is important to them. Lifestyle has a significant influence on consumer purchase intention because it reflects the values, interests, and daily habits adopted by an individual. When consumers identify with a particular lifestyle, they tend to choose products and brands that align with that lifestyle's image and aspirations. For example, consumers who adopt a healthy lifestyle may be more likely to purchase organic products or low-calorie foods because these choices align with their health values. Furthermore, lifestyle also influences how consumers interact with brands, including preferences for specific marketing channels and responses to relevant advertising campaigns. Therefore, marketers need to understand the lifestyles of their target markets to design strategies that can increase purchase intention by tailoring products and marketing messages to suit consumers' aspirations and needs, influenced by their lifestyle.

H4. Lifestyle has a significant influence on Purchase Intention

Purchase intentions significantly influence smoking behavior, particularly among adolescents. Research shows that individuals with high purchase intentions for tobacco products are more likely to purchase and consume cigarettes. Several factors influencing this purchase intention include positive attitudes toward smoking, where adolescents who view cigarettes as a status symbol or lifestyle tend to have higher purchase intentions. Furthermore, social norms play a significant role; if a person's social environment, such as peers, supports or views smoking as normal, their purchase intention will increase. The easy availability of cigarette products, both in stores and online, also contributes to high purchase intentions, thus increasing the likelihood of smoking.

To address the negative influence of purchase intentions on smoking behavior, effective interventions are essential. Awareness campaigns that emphasize the health dangers of smoking, as well as its social and economic impacts, can help reduce purchase intentions among adolescents. Furthermore, stricter sales regulations, such as restrictions on cigarette advertising, bans on sales to adolescents, and increased cigarette taxes, can reduce the accessibility of tobacco products. By reducing purchase intentions, it is hoped that smoking behavior among adolescents can be minimized. Further research is needed to explore the most effective strategies for changing attitudes and social norms regarding smoking, thereby creating a healthier environment for future generations.

H5. Purchase Intention has a significant effect on Behavior to Smoke

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to (Sugiyono, 2018), a population is a set of units to be measured and units to be studied. The population in this study was young people aged 18–30 who use e-cigarettes in Indonesia, particularly those living in urban areas. This age group was chosen because they are vulnerable to the influence of lifestyle and habits that influence e-cigarette smoking behavior. The sample size was determined based on the approach (Sugiyono, 2018), which recommends a minimum sample size of 10 times the number of indicators in the questionnaire. In this study, the questionnaire consisted of 22 statements, so the sample calculation was: Therefore, the minimum sample size was 220 respondents. To increase the validity and reliability of the results, the research target was to collect 250 respondents.

The sampling technique used purposive sampling. The respondent criteria were:

1. Aged 18–30 years.
2. Experience using e-cigarettes for at least the past month.
3. Residing in an urban area in Indonesia.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire designed with a 5-point Likert scale to measure respondents' level of agreement with each statement. This Likert scale has the following categories:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

The questionnaire was distributed through social media and online discussion groups to efficiently reach the target population.

IV. ANALYSIS RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on gender, most respondents were male, comprising 76% of the total sample, while only 24% were female. In terms of education, most respondents had a high school education (76%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree (17.67%), and a small number with a doctoral or elementary school education. In terms of occupation, the majority of respondents were students (57%),

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with a small proportion working as private employees (31.33%) or entrepreneurs (4%). Frequency of e-cigarette use showed that many respondents used e-cigarettes approximately 1-3 times per week (43.67%), and 28.67% used e-cigarettes 1-3 times per month. Only 16.67% used e-cigarettes daily, while a small proportion used e-cigarettes 2-3 times per day (11%). Overall, these demographics reflect that most respondents were young women with a high school education, who tended to use e-cigarettes on a weekly or monthly basis.

Based on the results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion analysis, it can be concluded that the model has adequate discriminant validity. This can be seen from the square root value of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal value) which is higher than the correlation between other constructs (values below the diagonal in the same row). For example, the Behavior to Smoke construct has an AVE value of $\sqrt{0.592} = 0.769$ which is greater than its correlation with other constructs such as Habit (0.591) and Lifestyle (0.652). Likewise, the Subjective Norm construct has a value of 0.871 which is greater than its highest correlation with Habit (0.744). This indicates that each construct in the model is better able to explain its own indicators compared to indicators belonging to other constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that discriminant validity based on the Fornell-Larcker criteria has been met, and each construct has a fairly good uniqueness in measuring its respective concept.

Based on the results of the outer loadings analysis, all indicators in this study showed values above the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating that each indicator has good convergent validity for its construct. In the Behavior to Smoke (BS) construct, four indicators (BS1–BS4) have loading values between 0.731 and 0.808, indicating that all indicators are valid in representing smoking behavior. The Habit (H) construct even showed very high values, namely 0.935 and 0.952, reflecting a very strong measurement of smoking habits. Similarly, the Lifestyle (L) construct with five indicators showed good consistency, with loading values ranging from 0.726 to 0.813. For the Perceived Knowledge (PK) construct, although one indicator (PK4) has a slightly lower value (0.651), it is still acceptable because the other indicators support the overall construct validity. Meanwhile, the Purchase Intention (PI) and Subjective Norm (SN) constructs also showed highly valid indicators, with consistently high loading values, ranging from 0.717 to 0.841 for PI and 0.855 to 0.883 for SN, respectively. Overall, these results indicate that the measurement model in this study has met the requirements for convergent validity, so it can be used for further analysis in the structural model.

Based on the results of the R-Square analysis, the Behavior to Smoke variable has a value of 0.463, which indicates that 46.3% of the variation in smoking behavior can be explained by independent variables in the model such as habit, lifestyle, perceived knowledge, and subjective norm. Meanwhile, the Purchase Intention variable has a higher R-Square value of 0.610, which means that 61% of the variation in purchase intention is influenced by the constructs contained in the model. The T-statistic value for both is quite high (10.347 and 14.788, respectively) with a P-value of 0.000, which indicates that this model is statistically significant. Thus, it can be concluded that this model has good predictive ability, especially for purchase intention, and is quite good in explaining smoking behavior. The R-Square value indicates that the model used is appropriate to explain the relationship between the variables in this study.

The path coefficient for the relationship between Habit and Purchase Intention is 0.078 with a p-value of 0.167. Because the p-value is greater than the significance threshold of 0.05, the relationship between Habit and Purchase Intention is not significant. The t-statistic of 1.382 also indicates a weak relationship. Research by Jin et al. (2020) shows that habits can influence purchase intentions, but with lesser strength in some contexts. Therefore, these results align with research that suggests the influence of habits on purchase intentions can vary depending on the product type and consumption context (Jin, Z., & Zhang, P. (2020)).

For the relationship between Lifestyle and Purchase Intention, the path coefficient is 0.497 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant effect. The t-statistic of 6.702 indicates a very strong effect. Research by Yang et al. (2021) stated that lifestyle has a significant influence on purchase intention, as consumers with certain lifestyle patterns are more likely to choose products that align with their lifestyle (Yang, L., Li, Q., & Zhang, H. (2021)).

The effect of Perceived Knowledge on Purchase Intention has a path coefficient of 0.422 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant effect. The t-statistic of 9.193 confirms that consumers' perceived knowledge of a product has a significant impact on their purchase intention. Consistent with these findings, Wang et al. (2020) stated that consumers' product knowledge is often a crucial factor motivating them to make purchasing decisions (Wang, H., Yu, J., & Wei, L. (2020)).

The relationship between Purchase Intention and Smoking Behavior has a path coefficient of 0.680, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a highly significant relationship. The t-statistic of 20.664 indicates a very strong influence of purchase intention on smoking behavior. Research by Abdul Razak et al. (2022) shows that strong purchase intention can influence consumer behavior in the context of risky products, such as cigarettes, which require more informed purchasing decisions (Abdul Razak, M., Lim, J., & Wong, H. (2022)).

For the relationship between Subjective Norm and Purchase Intention, the path coefficient is -0.127 with a p-value of 0.070, indicating a negative but insignificant effect at the 0.05 level. The t-statistic of 1.812 indicates that, although there is an effect, it is not strong enough to be considered significant. Although subjective normative influence can influence purchase intention, this influence is stronger in certain social situations (Ajzen, I. (2020)), but it was not significant in this study.

V. CONCLUSION

This study found that Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle, and on Behavior to Smoke with Purchase Intention as a mediating variable for Gen Z. Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle have a significant influence on Smoke with Purchase. Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle is the most important factors in influencing purchase intention, followed by product and service quality. Social media can be an effective channel for increasing sales and building Perceived Knowledge, Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle g a positive brand image through various marketing strategies, improving the quality of their products and services, and using Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle Gen Z. Thus, it can be concluded that Perceived Knowledge, Subjective Norm, Habit, Lifestyle, all play an important role in increasing purchase intention, both through direct and indirect influences through Gen Z.

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