

**REPRESENTATION OF THE HEDONISM OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN  
THE CHINESE NOVEL RICH GIRLFRIEND BY KEVIN KWAN****Titiani Intan Firdaus**

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***Abstract***

*This study aims to describe the depiction of hedonism performed by the main character in Kevin Kwan's novel China Rich Girlfriend. The method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques using observation and note-taking techniques. Data analysis techniques include six stages, namely, problem identification, problem formulation, conceptual or theoretical framework development, hypothesis formulation, research methods which include methods of data collection and analysis, and conclusion of research results. The results of this study indicate that of the five kinds of lifestyles that influence the development of culture in society, namely entertainment, food, fashion, music and famous places, only three are found, namely entertainment, fashion and famous places. The hedonic lifestyle in this novel is dominated by famous places, many of the places mentioned are the most expensive and most luxurious places in the world.*

*Keywords: lifestyle, hedonism, novel*

**INTRODUCTION**

The lifestyle of the elite occurs in various places in any part of the world, usually always carried out by people who have assets and wealth above the average or you could say only the rich and wealthy twist who can apply the hedonistic view. As stated by Kotler in Man (2018) lifestyle is a way for someone who is shown through the activities carried out and hobbies that describe the whole of each individual who is connected with the surrounding environment.

Hedonism is an ethos that considers that all things related to pleasure and material enjoyment are the primary goal in one's life. As stated by Suprana in Purnamasari (2019) that the hedonistic lifestyle is a way for a person to enjoy his life through fun activities. Like; play and spend more time being in a place you like and don't feel uncomfortable in a crowded place, instead wanting to be the center of attention. The most important thing is to always buy expensive things so that the desire, satisfaction and pleasure can be channeled.

Hedonism is the opposite of a simple lifestyle, because when a person has an image of hedonism, he will think that his money will never run out, as a result he will splurge

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by buying branded goods, throwing large parties, buying a private island, and so on . . . The impact of hedonism makes a person selfish and has individualism, he will think that he has a higher degree than other people because he has money to waste in vain. Another impact is that it makes someone with this view of life become a consumptive, arrogant person, unable to respect the time or money he has. The hedonism lifestyle is like a disease, if a person has been exposed to and trapped in the hedonistic lifestyle then he will continue to carry out this lifestyle in the future like someone who is addicted to something.

People who have a hedonistic view usually focus on enjoying the money they have by wasting money so they can enjoy life with full of pleasure and enjoyment without thinking about the implications in the future, the important thing is that pleasure and satisfaction within themselves can be channeled. Hedonism is an ethos that considers that all things related to pleasure and material enjoyment are the primary goal in one's life. As stated by Suprana in Purnamasari (2019) that the hedonistic lifestyle is a way for a person to enjoy his life through fun activities. Like; play and spend more time being in a place you like and don't feel uncomfortable in a crowded place, instead wanting to be the center of attention. The most important thing is to always buy expensive things so that the desire, satisfaction and pleasure can be channeled.

Hedonism will become a boomerang and become a negative thing if a person cannot control his ego just to have fun by buying whatever he wants with the money he has. Safitri (Hisabah, 2018) explains various lifestyles that influence cultural development in society, namely entertainment, food, fashion, music, and famous places.

Kevin Kwan's novel entitled *China Rich Girlfriend* is the second sequel of the three novels. The first novel, entitled *Crazy Rich Asians* , was a bestseller in the market and was adapted into a film which became a huge success for Kevin Kwan. His second novel entitled *China Rich Girlfriend* is the second sequel and a continuation of the first novel, this novel which will be the material for my thorough study as well as the third novel entitled *Rich People Problem* . The Chinese novel *Rich Girlfriend* is not about an ordinary woman who can make a handsome conglomerate boy fall in love with her. The story in the Chinese novel *Rich Girlfriend* by Kevin Kwan is further developed for other characters, be it old characters or new characters who of course have no less interesting storylines. There are more conflicts in this novel than in the first novel, the most interesting and entertaining in the novel *China Rich Girlfriend* is about *Social Climber* or having a term for people who have a desire to be accepted by the super-rich is the most entertaining part in this novel.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The method that the writer uses is descriptive qualitative method. As stated by (Moleong, 2004) qualitative methods have provisions that create data in the form of written sentences or utterances from observable behavior in a person. The author uses an objective approach for this research, an objective approach is an approach that prioritizes research on literary works based on the authenticity of the literary text itself. As stated by

Yudiono in (Cerpen et al., 2022) the objective approach is one of the approaches in literature which has a focus on examining literary works according to intrinsic elements. The author uses an objective approach in this study because the object the writer uses is the luxurious lifestyle practiced by the characters in the novel *China Rich Girlfriend* by Kevin Kwan.

The author uses the observation and note-taking data collection technique in this study. The analytical technique used by the author as revealed by Faruk (2017: 13) reveals that in outline the actions and significant steps in the scientific research process include six stages, namely, (1) problem identification, (2) problem formulation, (3) preparation of a conceptual or theoretical framework, (4) formulation of hypotheses, (5) research methods which include methods of collecting and analyzing data, and (6) drawing conclusions on research results.

The object of this research is the novel *China Rich Girlfriend* by Kevin Kwan, with a focus on studying the hedonic lifestyle of the characters in the novel. The first research finding is research on Hedonistic Behavior in Characters in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians Novel*. This research was conducted by (Sukmawan et al., 2022) who is a student majoring in English literature at the Muhammadiyah University of Sukabumi. The similarities between the previous research and the research that the author is researching are that both use a qualitative descriptive research method approach and in terms of discussion both examine hedonism but with different objects.

The second previous research is, *Social Class Reflected In Characterization In Kevin Kwan's China Rich Girlfriend*. This research was conducted by (Ramadanayoga, 2021) who is a student majoring in English Education at Ganesha University of Education. The similarities between the previous research and the research that the author is researching are using the same object, namely the novel *China Rich Girlfriend* and both using a qualitative descriptive research method approach. However, in terms of discussion, there are differences, this study discusses social class which is reflected in characterizations, while the author discusses the representation of hedonism in the main character.

The third previous research is research on *the Hedonic Lifestyle of Characters in the Anthology of Rasa Novel* by Ika Natassa. This research was conducted by Khoiriyah (Khoiriyah, 2020) who is a student majoring in Indonesian Language and Literature, Semarang State University. The similarity of the previous research with the research that the author is researching is that it almost has the same title, namely discussing hedonism but with a different object. As well as having similarities using the type of approach to qualitative descriptive research methods.

Based on the three studies above, there are similarities and differences between the previous research and the one the author examined. The first previous research has similarities in terms of title and discussion both examine hedonism, the difference lies in the object and formulation of the problem. The second previous research has similarities with what the author examined, such as the object and type of approach. Whereas the discussion has differences, previous research discussed social class which is reflected in characterizations while the author discusses the representation of hedonism of the main

character. The third previous research, in terms of title and discussion, both examined hedonism, the difference lies in the object and formulation of the problem.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This Chinese novel *Rich Girlfriend* is the second novel after *Crazy Rich Asian* which was produced by Kevin Kwan in his trilogy. After Nick Young's feud with his mother (in the first sequel, *Crazy Rich Asians*), Nick chooses not to contact his mother for two years. Nick prefers Rachel Chu and spends time with his girlfriend in the United States. Nick proposed to Rachel and asked Rachel to be his wife without involving the approval of Nick's extended family in Singapore, especially his mother Eleanor.

Nick tried hard to hide the news about his marriage to Rachel, but the news spread and was not easily covered up by Nick so his mother found out about his son's marriage to Rachel. Nick and Rachel finally get married, Eleanor attends her son's wedding. He supports Nick's marriage to Rachel, but behind the support for his son's marriage he has other intentions and goals. A few months before Nick and Rachel's wedding, Eleanor learns important information about the whereabouts of Rachel's father, which can change her opinion and view of Nick's lover. that was the reason why Eleanor gave her blessing for Nick and Rachel's marriage, because she knew that Rachel's father was an important and influential person and Rachel's father was an important person or respected representative of the people.

After Nick married Rachel, the two met Carlton and Collette. Nick and Rachel spend time and have fun with Carlton and Collete in the sparkling and luxurious life of Shanghai which is not inferior to the life of Nick's family in Singapore. Carlton and Collete kept asking Nick and Rachel for vacations and taking private planes to Paris without any planning, inviting them to parties and taking them to various events for the Shang-hai jet set.

Based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out by the author with reference to the Safitri theory which explains various lifestyles that influence cultural development in society, namely entertainment, food, fashion, music, and famous places, in this study the authors only found entertainment, fashion, and famous place. The following is a discussion of the hedonic lifestyle according to Safitri:

### a. Entertainment

#### Data 1

*“ He climbed up the gangway and entered the grand foyer of the yacht, a soaring atrium with a circular glass elevator in the middle that looked like it could have been stolen from an Apple store. The blondes escorted Nick into the elevator, which rose just one floor before opening up again. ”*(Kwan, 2015, p.75)

The quote above is data from a hedonic lifestyle which can be seen in the sentence " *He climbed up the gangway and entered the grand foyer of the yacht* ",

which shows that Nick was on vacation on a *yacht* or cruise ship. Not everyone can enjoy what it's like to vacation on a *yacht* .

### Data 2

*“Twenty-three-year-old Carlton Bao was supposed to be at Cambridge finishing his master's dissertation, but had instead spent the previous evening doing his best Prince Harry impersonation—running up a £38,000 bar tab at half a dozen London nightspots, wrecking his brand-new Ferrari, destroying public property, and almost getting himself killed”*. (Lemire et al., 2015)

This data quote tells how Carlton Bao's hedonic lifestyle. It can be seen in the sentence *“but had instead spent the previous evening doing his best Prince Harry impersonation—running up a £38,000 bar tab at half a dozen London nightspots, wrecking his brand-new Ferrari, destroying public property”* . Carlton Bao, a member of China's notoriously wealthy Bao family, was finishing his master's degree at Cambridge University, but the day before his graduation exams he spent the night partying impersonated Prince Harry, running a 38,000 Euro bar tab in half a dozen nightspots. in London and wrecked his new Ferrari he had just bought, destroyed public property, and nearly got himself killed.

This shows a very hedonic lifestyle, where a rich person spends 38,000 euros just for things that he thinks are fun but are actually very detrimental to himself.

## b. Fashion

### Data 3

*“No, no, that's fine.” Eddie tossed his ostrich leather briefcase onto the seat like a petulant schoolboy. Fucky fuck—the sacrifices I have to make for the bank today!”*. (Kwan, 2015, p.11)

The data above shows the kinds of hedonic fashion lifestyles contained in the sentence *“Eddie tossed his ostrich leather briefcase”* . In that sentence, Eddison Cheng was on a British Airways plane. Eddie complained to the flight attendant that he took a seat in first class, which he knew first class seats were cabin seats, whereas British Airways planes did not provide first class seats. Eddie, who is used to costs that are more expensive than the cost of plane tickets with luxurious facilities, is disappointed with this . This clearly shows Eddison Cheng's hedonistic lifestyle, because he complains only because of the difference in first-class seat facilities on the plane.

#### Data 4

*“ Edison Cheng, the pampered “Prince of Private Bankers”—famous in Hong Kong society pages for his bon vivant lifestyle, his dapper wardrobe, his elegant wife (Fiona), his photogenic children, and his superb lineage (his mother is Alexandra Young , of the Singapore Youngs)—was unaccustomed to such inconveniences.. ”.* (Kwan, 2015, p.12)

The hedonic lifestyle in the data above is clearly shown in the sentence "*society pages for his bon vivant lifestyle, his dapper wardrobe, his elegant wife*". Edison Cheng, who got the nickname "*Prince of Private Bankers*" because of his enormous wealth. Because of his wealth, he has a lifestyle that can enter and mingle with anyone, looks dapper and has an elegant wife, and photogenic children.

#### Data 5

*“ The women nodded politely at the newcomer. Nadine immediately noted that she was wearing a Loro Piana cashmere cardigan, a beautifully cut pencil skirt from Céline, sensible low-heel pumps from Robert Clergerie, and a pretty patent leather handbag of an indistinguishable brand. Verdict: Boring, but unexpectedly classy for a Mainlander .”*(Kwan, 2015, p.24)

The data above shows how the type of clothes Mrs. Bao Shaoyen wearing a cashmere cardigan and tight skirt made by famous fashion stylist Celine. This is a form of hedonic lifestyle of fashion. Where, in this data it is explained that Mrs. Bao Shaoyen was dressed in luxurious clothes made by famous fashion designers.

#### Data 6

*“Lorena zeroed in on her diamond ring. That rock was between 8 and 8.5 carats, D color, VVS1 or VVS2 grade, radiant cut, flanked by two triangular yellow diamonds of 3 carats a piece, set in platinum. Only Ronald Abram in Hong Kong had that particular setting ”* (Kwan, 2015, p.24)

The fashion type lifestyle is shown by the sentence "*Lorena zeroed in on her diamond ring. That rock was between 8 and 8.5 carats, D color, VVS1 or VVS2 grade, radiant cut, flanked by two triangular yellow diamonds of 3 carats a piece, set in platinum*". Lorena fixed her eyes on the ring Mrs. Bao Shaoyen. Where the ring has a diamond stone 8-8.5 carats. This shows how Mrs. Bao Shaoyen who is a woman from the family dresses up with accessories which are of course very expensive and rare.

**Data 7**

*“Su Yi, responding in a high-necked turquoise silk charmeuse dress and a single opera length strand of cultured pearls, sat on a cushioned wicker chair by the French doors with her trusty Thai lady's maids standing solemnly behind her, while three of her middle -aged children stood in a row before her like school kids waiting to turn in their homework.” (Kwan, 2015, p.62)*

In the quote above, the hedonistic lifestyle is shown in the sentence " *Su Yi, responding in a high-necked turquoise silk charmeuse dress and a single opera length strand of cultured pearls* ". In this excerpt, the character Su Yi is described as wearing a high-necked turquoise silk *charmeuse dress and a string of cultured pearls*. Of course this cannot be done by everyone.

**c. Famous place**

**Data 8**

*" Since moving into 2 Hyde Park, the obscenely expensive luxury condominium is backed by the Qatari royal family , she is finally on speaking terms with her mother again . "* (Kwan, 2015, p.18)

In the data above, the hedonic lifestyle is shown in the sentence " *Since moving into 2 Hyde Park, the obscenely expensive luxury condominium backed by the Qatari royal family* ". Hyde Park is a very iconic place in London, England, and of course anyone who has a place to live there is not an ordinary person. In this case, Francesa moved from China to London and married a Qatari man and bought a Hyde Park residence with very expensive luxury condos.

**Data 9**

*" We decided to spend a few extra nights at Ojai Valley Inn and Spa , "* bragged Auntie Belinda, looking around the table to make sure all the family had heard her ". (Kwan, 2015, p.43)

The well-known place-type hedonic lifestyle can be seen in the sentence " *We decided to spend a few extra nights at Ojai Valley Inn and Spa* ". This shows the lifestyle of Belinda's character who is very hedonistic. It is known that the Ojai Valley Inn and Spa is one of the best 5-star hotels in the United States, which of course is not just anyone who stays and uses the facilities at the hotel.

**Data 10**

*" Daisy Foo had done what she considered to be a special favor for the Baos, and using her family connections had secured them a Valley Wing suite at the Shangri-La at a very discounted rate—but Carlton had for some reason been dissatisfied with one of Singapore's top hotels. The Baos soon moved into a furnished apartment at Hilltops, the luxurious high-rise on Leonie Hill, and a month later they switched again to an even swankier pad off Grange Road. And now here they were in this building with the ridiculous car elevator "*. (Kwan, 2015, p.47)

This quote tells how the hedonic lifestyle practiced by the Bao family. It can be seen from the above excerpt that the Bao family moved into a furnished apartment at Hilltops, a luxurious high-rise building on Leonie Hill, and a month later they moved again to a more palatial place on Grange Road by car lift. This of course really



shows the hedonism of the Bao family who always want to get a luxurious and magnificent place to live. Moreover, these places are apartments that are famous for being expensive with all the luxurious facilities in Singapore.

#### **Data 11**

*“ Last night, a star-studded crowd lit up the Fifteenth Annual Ming Foundation Pinnacle Ball. The event is a labor of love for Connie Ming, the first wife of Hong Kong's second richest man Ming Ka-Ching, and the HK\$25,000-per-seat tickets to this year's soiree sold fast when word got out that the Duchess of Oxbridge, a cousin of HM Queen Elizabeth II, would attend, and that the Four Heavenly Kings would reunite to perform a tribute to legendary songstress Tracy Kuan, the recipient of this year's Lifetime Pinnacle Award. (Kwan, 2015, p. 91)*

This quote tells about the hedonic lifestyle contained in the *Chinese novel Rich Girlfriend*. The famous place in this quote basically does not refer to a really famous area. It's the place where *the Ming Foundation Pinnacle Ball's birthday event* is held. The event is an annual event that is very grand and luxurious, where to be able to attend the event costs 25,000 Hong Kong dollars. The nominal is not a small number. Moreover, it was attended by the Duchess of Oxbridge, cousin of Queen Elizabeth II.

#### **Data 12**

*“ Three Mercedes S-Class sedans in the identical shade of iridium silver bearing license plate numbers TAN01, TAN02, and TAN03 idled in the morning traffic on their way to Tyersall Park. In the lead car, Lillian May Tan, matriarch of the family with the surname so unabashedly flaunted on its vehicles, peered out at the red-and-gold Chinese New Year decorations that assaulted every façade along Orchard Road. ”. (Kwan, 2015, p.60)*

The quote above tells about the hedonism of the Tan family. It can be seen in the sentence *“ Three Mercedes S-Class sedans in the identical shade of iridium silver bearing license plate numbers TAN01, TAN02, and TAN03 ”*, which can be understood that the Tan family owns three Mercedes Benz S-Class cars with iridium silver license plates and the numbers are sequential. This famous inner place is located on Orchard Road which is a famous shopping center in Singapore.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the analysis of the discussion of the hedonic lifestyle that has been carried out, in this study the authors found that of the five types of lifestyles that influence cultural development in society according to Safitri (in hisabah, 2018, p.25),

namely entertainment, food, fashion , music, and famous places, the writer only found three, namely entertainment, fashion, and famous places. The hedonic lifestyle is shown through fashion and famous places. The hedonic fashion lifestyle is presented in many ways by showing off the best clothes made by the best known fashion stylists with materials that are certainly not cheap. While the hedonic lifestyle of famous places, the writer finds that the places mentioned are the most expensive and most luxurious places in the world.

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