
The Influence of Brand Image and Viral Marketing on Students Purchasing Decisions Mediated by Price

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Abstract:

This study looks into and assesses how viral marketing and brand image affect price-mediated purchasing decisions. There are all 2023 Semarang University Faculty of Economics students. By using the Slovin formula on the data, 59 research samples were generated. SPSS is used as part of the data analysis procedure. The results of the study are shown in the SPSS output, and they show that viral marketing significantly affects expenses. Price is significantly impacted by brand image. Viral marketing has a big impact on what consumers decide to buy. Brand perception has a big impact on consumer purchase decisions. Price has a major role in determining what purchases are made. Pricing is a key mediating factor in the relationship between viral marketing and purchase decisions. Furthermore, pricing has a major mediating role in the link between brand perception and purchase behavior.

Keywords: *Purchase Decisions, Viral Marketing, Brand Image*

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1. Introduction

Today's social life cannot be separated from the use of technology as one of the most important tools in carrying out activities. The role of internet technology can make people's lives easier, including buying and selling activities which can be done anywhere and anytime. Seeing the current situation, many companies are required to switch to using digitalization to gain a wider market share. E-commerce, or electronic commerce, is an electronic trading activity whose buying and selling transactions involve the internet, web, and mobile applications (Tresnawati & Prasetyo, 2018). According to Tresnawati & Prasetyo (2022), technological advancements, particularly with regard to smartphones, have created new avenues for online commerce, or e-commerce. Naturally, as online commerce grows in popularity, rivalry amongst online businesses will intensify (Octavia et al., 2024). Because of this, online retailers need to be aware of the elements that will enable online fashion retailers to thrive. Online retailers must thus closely monitor customer behavior and the variables influencing their decisions to buy.

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When making a purchase, consumers have two options: either they need the product or they are only fulfilling their want. This makes the decision to buy a product crucial for them to consider (Al Karimah et al., 2022). Beauty, health, and cosmetic products rank second in online shopping in Indonesia, accounting for 74% of purchases in 2023. Indonesia is one of the many target markets for cosmetics due to the rapidly growing trend of body care and make-up. Business development in the skin care and beauty sector has increased 20% since 2021 and previously experienced a four-fold increase since 2019. This is also true for purchasing Wardah products. Consumers want to buy products because they need to beautify themselves; they also look at the reviews about the Wardah product they want to buy (Kuspriyono et al., 2024).

One prominent cosmetic brand in Indonesia is Wardah. PT Paragon Technology and Innovation first introduced hair care products in 1987 under the Ega brand, which involved personal marketing efforts. Over time, Putri products were developed and are still produced today. Wardah cosmetics has been around for 23 years and always innovates and varies products according to consumer needs, prioritizing halal and safety for consumers. Wardah cosmetics offers 13 different cosmetic makeup products, each with unique uses and packaging.

According to pre-survey data, 59 Semarang University economics faculty members utilized Wardah skin care products. The survey indicated that social media marketing was the primary way they discovered current products (Ekasari et al., 2023). This is referred to as public relations or network marketing in the context of traditional marketing and involves using groups, communities, or friend networks to disseminate marketing messages about the company's operations. Viral marketing has the advantage of being able to replicate marketing communication efforts over the internet (Pratama et al., 2022).

Due to the internet network's ability to transcend time zones and geographic boundaries, marketing communications can reach any internet user worldwide, inevitably influencing consumer purchase decisions. With the presence of social media, people are trying to become someone who quickly spreads new information, including new products (Gede et al., 2024). The term "viral" appears when internet and social media user activity increases. Therefore, viral marketing is considered by several business actors as the right means to introduce a product. Viral marketing starts from daily life habits. If we feel something positive or negative, we will pass it on (tell the story) to other people. The reason is so that at least other people also feel it (Wahyuni & Saifudin, 2023).

The research gap in this context lies in understanding how brand image and viral marketing influence purchasing decisions, particularly when mediated by price. Most studies have examined these factors in isolation, but there is a need to understand their combined influence on student purchasing behavior. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how brand image and viral marketing jointly influence students' purchasing decisions at Semarang University when mediated by price.

The urgency of this research stems from the increasing reliance on digital and social media platforms for marketing to younger demographics. Understanding how these factors influence student purchasing decisions can help businesses tailor their marketing strategies more effectively to this target audience.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of brand image and viral marketing on purchasing decisions among students, with price as a mediating factor. By exploring this relationship, the study aims to provide insights that can help marketers better understand and target the student market. This understanding could lead to more effective marketing strategies and improved business outcomes in the student market segment.

2. Theoretical Background

The integration of technology into daily life has revolutionized consumer behavior, particularly in the realm of e-commerce. E-commerce, characterized by online transactions facilitated through the internet, web, and mobile applications, has become increasingly prevalent (Tresnawati & Prasetyo, 2018). Advancements in technology, especially in smartphones, have expanded the reach and accessibility of online commerce, intensifying competition among online retailers (Octavia et al., 2024). To thrive in this competitive landscape, understanding the factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions is crucial for online fashion retailers.

Consumer purchasing decisions are driven by a complex interplay of factors, including functional needs and psychological desires (Al Karimah et al., 2022). In Indonesia, beauty, health, and cosmetic products have emerged as significant categories in online shopping, reflecting a growing trend towards personal care and grooming (Kuspriyono et al., 2024). The appeal of cosmetic brands like Wardah lies not only in their functional benefits but also in their perceived quality and reputation, shaped in part by consumer reviews and social media presence.

Wardah, a prominent Indonesian cosmetic brand, has established itself over 23 years by consistently innovating products aligned with consumer preferences for halal and safe cosmetics (Tresnawati & Prasetyo, 2022). The brand's success is further amplified through strategic marketing efforts, including social media campaigns that leverage viral marketing strategies (Ekasari et al., 2023). Viral marketing, characterized by the rapid spread of marketing messages through online networks, plays a pivotal role in enhancing brand visibility and influencing consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions (Pratama et al., 2022).

The concept of viral marketing extends beyond traditional advertising methods, relying on social networks and user-generated content to create buzz and engagement (Wahyuni & Saifudin, 2023). As digital platforms transcend geographical boundaries, marketing communications can reach a global audience, influencing consumer behavior across diverse demographics (Gede et al., 2024). This phenomenon underscores the importance of understanding how brand image and viral marketing interact to shape consumer preferences and behaviors, particularly among university students.

Despite the growing body of research on brand image and viral marketing, there remains a gap in understanding their combined impact on consumer purchasing decisions, specifically in educational settings like Semarang University. Existing

studies have primarily examined these factors independently, necessitating a comprehensive analysis of their synergistic effects on student consumer behavior. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating how brand image and viral marketing collectively influence purchasing decisions among Semarang University students, with a focus on the mediating role of price sensitivity.

Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms for marketing, particularly among younger demographics, the urgency of this research lies in its potential to inform targeted marketing strategies that resonate with student preferences and behaviors. By elucidating these dynamics, the study aims to provide actionable insights for marketers aiming to optimize their engagement strategies and enhance business outcomes in the competitive student market segment.

3. Methodology

This research employs a quantitative research methodology, characterized by the predominance of numerical data and statistical analysis to evaluate hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2019). Specifically, the study adopts a field research approach, involving direct interaction with respondents to gather primary data.

Respondents were selected from the 2023 cohort of Semarang University Faculty of Economics students. A sample of 59 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula to ensure statistical reliability. The researchers conducted direct interviews to maximize the utilization of primary data.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The analytical procedures included initial tests such as validity and reliability tests to ensure the robustness of measurement instruments (Arikunto, 2006). Subsequently, regression analysis was employed to examine the relationships between viral marketing, brand image, price sensitivity, and purchasing decisions. The goodness of fit test, coefficient of determination, and tests for classical assumptions including heteroscedasticity, multicollinearity, and normality were also conducted to validate the regression model.

4. Empirical Findings/Result and Discussion

Instrument Test

Validity test

(Ghozali, 2018), in the event that the esteem $r_{count} > r_{table}$ is come to, the instrument thing is respected as true blue. The table of item minute basic values with $N = 59$ and a noteworthiness level of 5% appears that the r_{table} esteem is 0.2564.

Reliability Test

An instrument that's great sufficient and dependable sufficient to be utilized as a information gathering instrument is called reliable (Arikunto, 2006b). An instrument is considered tried and true when it reliably yields the same comes about whereas

measuring the same protest different times. The unwavering quality test utilized in this consider was the Cronbach's Alpha formula, which encompasses a standard esteem of 0.6. The instrument unwavering quality test discoveries were found out by applying Cronbach's Alpha to the unwavering quality test.

Table 2. Results of the Reliability Test

Variable	Reliability Value	Standard	Conclusion
Viral Marketing (X1)	0,903	0,6	Reliable
Brand Image (X2)	0,933		Reliable
Price (Y1)	0,956		Reliable
Purchase Decision (Y2)	0,966		Reliable

Source: 2024 processed original data

Unwavering quality calculations, all factors in this ponder have values of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients that are higher than the fundamental esteem of 0.6, demonstrating their unwavering quality.

Classic assumption test

Normality test

Usually regularly seen by the colossal, ordinarily scattered unpredictable bumble (e) regard inside the straight backslide approach. A frequently passed on or around frequently scattered backslide appear is idealize for ensuring that the data is reasonable for real testing. There are various ways to do the conventionality test in backslide, one of which is the probability plot approach, which incorporates comparing the total scattering with the commonplace dispersal.

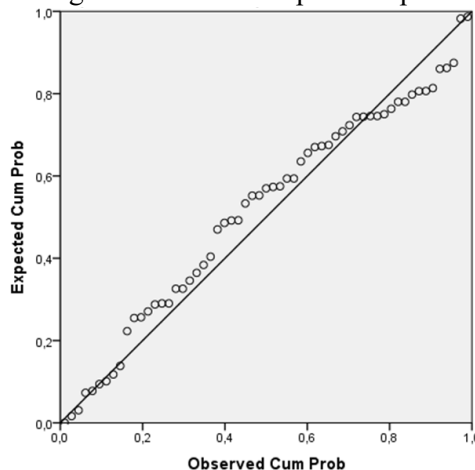


Figure 1. Results of the Normality Test

Source: 2024 processed original data

The residuals are ordinarily dispersed in the event that the information spreads around the corner to corner line and takes after the inclining course. This can be the establishment for decision-making when identifying ordinarieness. Alternately, the residuals are not ordinarily conveyed on the off chance that the information amplifies broadly absent from the corner to corner line or does not take after the inclining

course. The information is spread out along the diagonal line and takes after its course within the result over, showing that the leftover information is routinely disseminated.

Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test looks for prove of a interface between autonomous factors in a relapse demonstrate. There shouldn't be any relationship between the autonomous factors in a conventional relapse demonstrate. The free factors are not orthogonal in the event that there's a relationship between them. According to (Ghozali, 2019), orthogonal factors are autonomous elements that have a relationship esteem of zero between them

Table 3. Results of the Multicollinearity Test

Coefficients ^a		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	Viral Marketing	,887	1,128
	Brand Image	,826	1,210
	Price	,776	1,288

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source: 2024 processed original data

On the off chance that versatility is more than 0.10 and VIF is less than 10, multicollinearity does not exist, concurring to the decision-making technique. The computation comes approximately inside the over table illustrate that there's no relationship between the free components. It in addition outlines that each free variable's VIF esteem is much less than 10 which the resistance regard is more prominent than 0.10. In this way, it may be concluded that there's no multicollinearity among the free components inside the backslide appear.

Heteroscedasticity Test

The reason of the heteroscedasticity test is to choose whether the extra of one discernment isn't additionally scattered with respect to a settled discernment inside the backslide appear. In case this will be the case, the test is implied to as homoscedasticity; in case not, it is insinuated to as heteroscedasticity or heteroscedasticity happens. An effective backslide appear requires the require of heteroscedasticity issues. Heteroscedasticity doubts can be assessed by the utilize of scatterplots test.

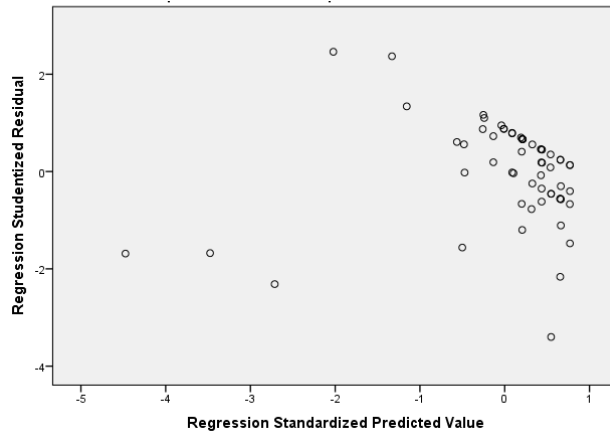


Figure 2. Heteroscedasticity Test in

Source: 2024 processed original data

The establishment for recognizing heteroscedasticity is based on the thought that on the off chance that the information dissemination is standard and shapes a specific design, at that point heteroscedasticity has happened; on the other hand, in case the design dispersion is sporadic and does not shape a specific design, at that point there's no heteroscedasticity issue.

Regression Analysis

It is conceivable to utilize backslide to foresee results or to form a appear, like a backslide condition. Finding the degree to which one variable impacts one or more other components is the reason of the backslide examination approach itself. The taking after is an clarification of the diverse backslide condition, the fetched (Y1) is unequivocally influenced by the viral advancing (X1) and brand picture (X2) variables, as appeared by their positive backslide coefficients. In this way, an increase in either of these explore components will result in an increase in taken a toll (Y1).

- 14.959 is the steady (α). There will be a 14.959 percent rise in work fulfillment in the event that viral showcasing and brand picture are zero or canceled.
- The esteem of b_1 is 0.438, there's a positive relationship between rising costs and the viral showcasing variable.
- The b_2 esteem is 0.476, cost rises are emphatically affected by the brand picture variable. Accepting the viral showcasing variable remains steady, costs will rise by 47.6 percent for each 1% increment within the brand picture variable.
- After that, the relapse condition has the taking after conceivable frame:

Y1 is break even with to $14.959 + 0.438 X_1 + 0.476 X_2 + e$.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Results 2 The Influence of Viral Marketing, Brand Image and Price on Purchasing Decisions

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	,101	4,176		,024	,981
Viral Marketing	,411	,196	,215	2,090	,041
Brand Image	,788	,170	,495	4,639	,000
Price	,404	,145	,307	2,785	,007

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source: 2024 processed original data

The taking after is an clarification of the diverse backslide conditio, the three explore components, taken a toll (Y1), brand picture (X2), and viral advancing (X1), have positive backslide coefficients, which illustrates that they decidedly impact obtaining choices (Y2). As a result, an increase in any one of these components will result in an increase in Y2 buys.

The reliable (α) is break indeed with to 0.101. Buying choices will rise by 0.101 percent within the occasion that pleasing fetched, brand picture, and viral advancing are all zero or cleared. The esteem of b1 is 0.411, the viral showcasing variable features a positive impact on expanding acquiring choices (Hapy Linawati et al., 2023). Acquiring choices will rise by 41.1 percent on the off chance that the viral promoting variable increments by 1% whereas keeping up consistent brand picture and estimating levels.

The esteem of b2 is 0.788. Acquiring choices are emphatically affected by the brand picture variable. (Luh Putu Gangga Rahayu & Made Wulandari Kusumadewi, 2023). Acquiring choices will rise by 78.8% in the event that the estimating and viral showcasing variables stay consistent and there's a 1% increment within the brand picture variable.

The esteem of b3 is 0.404. Acquiring choices are emphatically affected by the cost variable. Expecting viral showcasing and brand image remain unaltered, a 1 percent rise within the cost variable will result in a 40.4 percent increment in obtaining choices. Following, the taking after frame of the relapse condition can be utilized:

$$Y2 = 0.401 Y1 + e + 0.411 X1 + 0.788 X2$$

Godness Of Fit Test

Partial Parameter Significance Test (T Statistical Test)

When looking at components that have an person (individual) impact on the subordinate variable as the independent variable, the t test is utilized. Utilizing the equation $t_{table} = 59 - 2 = 57$, the t table regard is decided to be 1.67203. This will moreover be spoken to as the number of respondents brief two.

Table 5. t Test Results I The Influence of Viral Marketing and Brand Image on Prices

Coefficients ^a			
Model			
1	(Constant)	4,555	,000
	Viral Marketing	2,558	,013
	Brand Image	3,334	,002

a. Dependent Variable: Price

Source: 2024 processed original data

✓ Examination of Viral Promoting Variable (X1):

The calculated t esteem for the viral showcasing variable is 2.558, with a importance level of 0.013. Given that the t esteem is more noteworthy than the t table 1.67203 which the importance esteem (Sig.) , H2 hence endorsed.

Table 6. T 2 Test Results The Influence of Viral Marketing, Brand Image and Price on Purchasing Decisions

Coefficients ^a		
Model	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	,024	,981
Viral Marketing	2,090	,041
Brand Image	4,639	,000
Price	2,785	,007

a. Dependent Variable: Purchasing Decision

Source: 2024 processed original data

✓ Investigation of Viral Promoting Variable (X1):

The calculated t esteem for the viral showcasing variable is 2.090, with a importance level of 0.041. Given that the t esteem is more noteworthy than the t table 1.67203 which the importance esteem (Sig.) , H5 is subsequently endorsed.

Coefficient of Determination (R Square)

When the dependent variables nearly totally clarify the changes within the subordinate variable, the esteem is near to one. The investigation of the coefficient of assurance result 1 in numerous straight relapse yielded a R² (Balanced R Square) esteem of 0.196. This shows that the free factors of brand picture and viral promoting have a 19.6% impact on cost, with the remaining parcel being impacted by unstudied variables. The investigation of the coefficient of assurance result 2 in numerous straight relapse yielded a R² (Balanced R Square) esteem of 0.196. This shows that the free factors of brand picture and viral promoting have a 19.6% impact on cost, with the remaining parcel being impacted by unstudied variables.

Path Analysis

Path Interpretation

The purpose of this path interpretation is to ascertain whether the mediation (intervening) factor in this study paradigm has any bearing. The following outcomes are derived from the t test that was performed:

Step 1 of Regression:

1. P1: The viral marketing variable's (X1) unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.438.
2. P2: The brand image variable's (X2) unstandardized coefficients beta are 0.476.

Step 2 of Regression:

1. P3: The viral marketing variable (X1) has an unstandardized coefficient of beta of 0.411
2. P4: The brand image variable's (X2) unstandardized coefficients beta are 0.788.
3. P5: The pricing variable's (Y1) unstandardized coefficient beta is 0.404.

Based on the R square determination value, the following values are obtained (Ghozali, 2016)

Value of $e_1 = \sqrt{(1-R^2)} = \sqrt{(1-0.196)} = -0.804 = 0.897$ from Regression 1

Here is the structural equation:

Y_1 is equal to $14.959 + 0.438 X_1 + 0.476 X_2 + 0.897$.

2. Value of $e_2 = \sqrt{(1-R^2)} = \sqrt{(1-0.454)} = -0.546 = 0.739$ from Regression 2

Here is the structural equation:

$Y_2 = 0.401 Y_1 + 0.739 + 0.411 X_1 + 0.788 X_2$

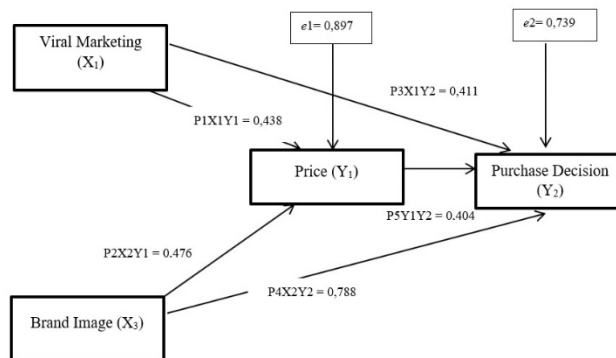


Figure 3. Path Interpretation

- a. The Impact of Viral Marketing Factors (X_1) on Consumer Decisions to Buy (Y_2) via Price's mediation (Y_1)

$$(X_1Y_2) = 0.411; (X_1 * Y_2) = (0.438) * (0.404) = 0.177; (\text{total indirect effect}) = 0.411 + 0.177 = 0.588$$

It is evident from the computation results above that the indirect influence value ($0.588 > 0.411$) is higher than the direct influence value. These computations' findings suggest that pricing may act as a moderating factor in the relationship between viral marketing and purchase decisions. H_6 is therefore approved.

- b. How Brand Image Factors (X_2) Affect Consumer Decisions to Buy (Y_2) via Price's mediation (Y_1)

The indirect effect ($X_2 * Y_2$) = $(0.476) * (0.404) = 0.192$; the direct effect (X_2Y_2) = 0.788 ; and the overall indirect effect ($0.788 + 0.192 = 0.980$). It is evident from the computation results above that the indirect influence value ($0.980 > 0.788$) is higher than the direct influence value. These calculations' findings suggest that price may act as a mediating factor between brand perception and consumer choice. H_7 is therefore approved.

5. Conclusions

Seven conclusions emerge from this research, each reinforcing existing concepts and providing significant and insightful findings. Firstly, pricing has a direct impact on costs. Secondly, brand image directly influences costs. Thirdly, the relationship between viral marketing and purchasing decisions is largely mediated by price, which also influences how brand image and pricing affect decision-making regarding what

to purchase. Additionally, the link between brand image and purchasing decisions is mediated by price.

Future research could explore several avenues to deepen our understanding of these dynamics. Firstly, investigating the specific mechanisms through which pricing strategies impact consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior could provide clearer insights. Secondly, exploring how different elements of brand image (e.g., trust, reliability) interact with varying price points to influence consumer decision-making would enrich our understanding. Additionally, examining the effectiveness of different viral marketing strategies across diverse consumer segments and product categories could offer practical implications for marketers. Finally, longitudinal studies could track changes in consumer preferences and behaviors over time in response to evolving pricing and branding strategies in the digital age.

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