Analyzing the Influence of Viral Marketing on Increasing Purchase Intention of High-End Cosmetic Products

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the influence of viral marketing on the purchase intention of high-end cosmetic products, emphasizing the mediating role of attitude on behavior. The rapid development of the internet and social media has significantly changed marketing strategies, with viral marketing currently being executed by many cosmetic brands. Viral marketing utilizes information, entertainment, irritation and source credibility to engage consumers and drive purchase decisions. However, preliminary research suggests a gap between theoretical benefits and practical outcomes, highlighting the skepticism of consumers of high end cosmetic products towards viral marketing. This study aims to bridge this gap by identifying the dimensions of viral marketing that have the most influence on purchase intention and attitude towards behavior. Despite its potential, not all viral marketing efforts are successful in driving purchase intention, so a deeper understanding of the factors at play is needed. This study employs a quantitative approach, using structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze data collected from 100 women who have purchased high-end cosmetic products in the past six months. Findings reveal that source credibility is the most significant variable in viral marketing that influencing both purchase intention and attitude towards behavior on high end cosmetics product, Source credibility enhances trust and perceived value, leading to a stronger positive attitude towards the product and higher purchase intentions.

KEYWORDS: Consumer Behavior, High-End Cosmetics, Purchase Intention, Social Media, Source Credibility, Viral Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

n the digital era, the internet plays a pivotal role in daily life, impacting both social and economic spheres [1]. Socially, the internet fosters global connectivity and enhances social interactions, influencing social change [2][3]. Economically, digital technology driven by the internet creates new opportunities and challenges, reshaping markets and business landscapes [4][5]. The internet benefits individuals in personal and professional aspects, becoming an integral part of daily life [6]. As of 2024, the global population is approximately 8 billion, with 5.44 billion internet users and 5.07 billion social media users, indicating widespread internet and social media adoption [7]. This growth underscores the internet's revolutionary impact on communication, social interaction, and community building. The rise in internet and social media users aligns with the proliferation of social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, which serve as mediums for information exchange [8]. Businesses leverage these platforms for digital marketing, utilizing social media to interact with customers, build brand awareness, and drive sales [9]. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated social media usage, as people sought online engagement during lockdowns, boosting follower engagement and online video consumption [10][11]. The beauty industry, in particular, extensively uses social media for marketing. Beauty brands were early adopters of social influence, with content creators significantly driving product purchases [12]. This industry's stability during the pandemic attracted new market entrants, intensifying competition [13]. According to Deloitte, in the cosmetics industry, there are many cosmetic brands in beauty industry spread around and they can be classified into 3 categories, namely high-end, mid-end and low-end brands categories [14]. Given this competitive landscape, brands increasingly adopt viral marketing strategies to create buzz and differentiate themselves. Viral marketing leverages the power of social media to amplify marketing messages, engage consumers, and drive product sales at a relatively low cost [15]. This strategy is particularly effective in the beauty industry, where visual appeal and social influence play critical roles in consumer decision-making [16]. Despite the effectiveness of viral marketing in various studies [17][18], preliminary research indicates consumer skepticism towards viral marketing in the beauty industry. A survey of 30 women revealed that 76.67% were hesitant to share or purchase viral products. This discrepancy highlights a theoretical gap, necessitating further investigation.

BUSINESS ISSUES

Viral marketing aims to inspire individuals to share marketing messages with their networks, creating exponential growth in the number of recipients at minimal cost [19]. This strategy leverages social proof, compelling consumers to purchase products endorsed or used by their peers [20]. Many cosmetic brands, including those in Indonesia, have adopted viral marketing to boost brand awareness and increase sales. However, preliminary research indicates a significant challenge: consumers are often skeptical of products marketed through viral strategies. In a survey of respondents, many expressed disinterest in purchasing products that went viral, suspecting them to be mere marketing tactics. This skepticism aligns with findings from other studies, suggesting that viral marketing can have negative impacts on brands. For instance, the repetitive nature of viral marketing can lead to consumer fatigue, where audiences become tired of seeing similar content repeatedly, diminishing campaign effectiveness and reducing engagement over time [21]. While viral marketing offers significant opportunities for cosmetic brands to engage with a broad audience, it also presents substantial risks. The success of viral marketing depends on the careful balancing of engaging content, authenticity, and strategic execution. This study aims to provide insights into the most influential factors in viral marketing and offer practical recommendations for high-end cosmetic brands to enhance their marketing effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

iral marketing, as defined by Helm, is a communication and distribution concept relying on customers to share digital products via email with their social circles, encouraging further dissemination [22]. Mohr describes it as a marketing technique utilizing the Internet, social networks, and technologies to foster word-of-mouth engagement, potentially leading to exponential growth in message exposure and influence [23]. Essentially, viral marketing functions as an electronic word-of-mouth mechanism, where messages about a business, brand, or product spread rapidly, often through social media [24]. Viral marketing encompasses various communication forms, including social media, email, forums, blogs, and websites [25]. Hasan describes it as spreading information to promote a product through internet-based word of mouth, akin to the spread of a virus [26]. Rukuni et al. categorize viral marketing into four dimensions: informativeness, entertainment, irritation, and source credibility [27]. Informativeness, measures how well the content educates or provides valuable information to the audience. High-quality, well-researched information can enhance understanding and problem-solving capabilities. Entertainment, refers to the content's ability to amuse, engage, or delight the audience. Entertaining content, often humorous or creatively presented, tends to be more memorable and shareable. Irritation, captures the negative feelings that arise when content annoys or frustrates the audience. Overly frequent or aggressive messages can provoke negative reactions and reduce engagement. Source Credibility, pertains to the trustworthiness and expertise of the content source. Credible sources, perceived as knowledgeable and reliable, can significantly influence audience perceptions and acceptance. In psychology, attitude is defined as a favorable or unfavorable evaluation towards a person, group, object, or event, shaped by past and present experiences [28]. Attitude towards behavior specifically refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular behavior [29]. This evaluation influences emotional responses, feelings of like or dislike [30], and ultimately affects decision-making [31]. In marketing, attitudes towards behavior are crucial in the pre-purchase phase of consumer decisionmaking. These attitudes encompass cognitive (informative), affective (entertainment/hedonic pleasure), and behavioral (response tendencies) aspects [32]. Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters argue that before making a purchase, consumers engage in extensive cognitive processing, evaluating potential outcomes and benefits [33]. Positive evaluative beliefs about a product contribute to a favorable attitude towards purchasing it. The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that attitudes towards behavior, along with subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, predict an individual's intentions and actions [34].

METHODOLOGY

To analyze the data and evaluate the hypothesis, researchers will use the SmartPLS 4 software and the Partial Least Squares approach through Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is structural equation modeling based on variance, a method used to describe latent variables method used to describe latent variables, especially composites, and their relationships with each other to each other. Primary data will be collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The questionnaire will be distributed to 100 respondents, serving as the study's sample. A sampling unit is a research object with certain characteristics that reflect elements to be used as samples in the research. Non-probability sampling was employed, meaning not everyone had the opportunity to be selected as a sample; instead, respondents were chosen by the authors based on certain considerations to determine sample

members who represent the population and also in order to make conclusions for high-end cosmetics category the authors use samples with the conditions for selecting samples for this study, such as: women who actively use and buy High-end cosmetics brand over the past 6 months, using social media and have seen viral marketing content related to high end cosmetic products during the last 6 months. The questionnaire will utilize a five-level Likert scale with an interval scale. As the questionnaire will be distributed online, it will be referred to as an online survey.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS
A. SEMPLS Result
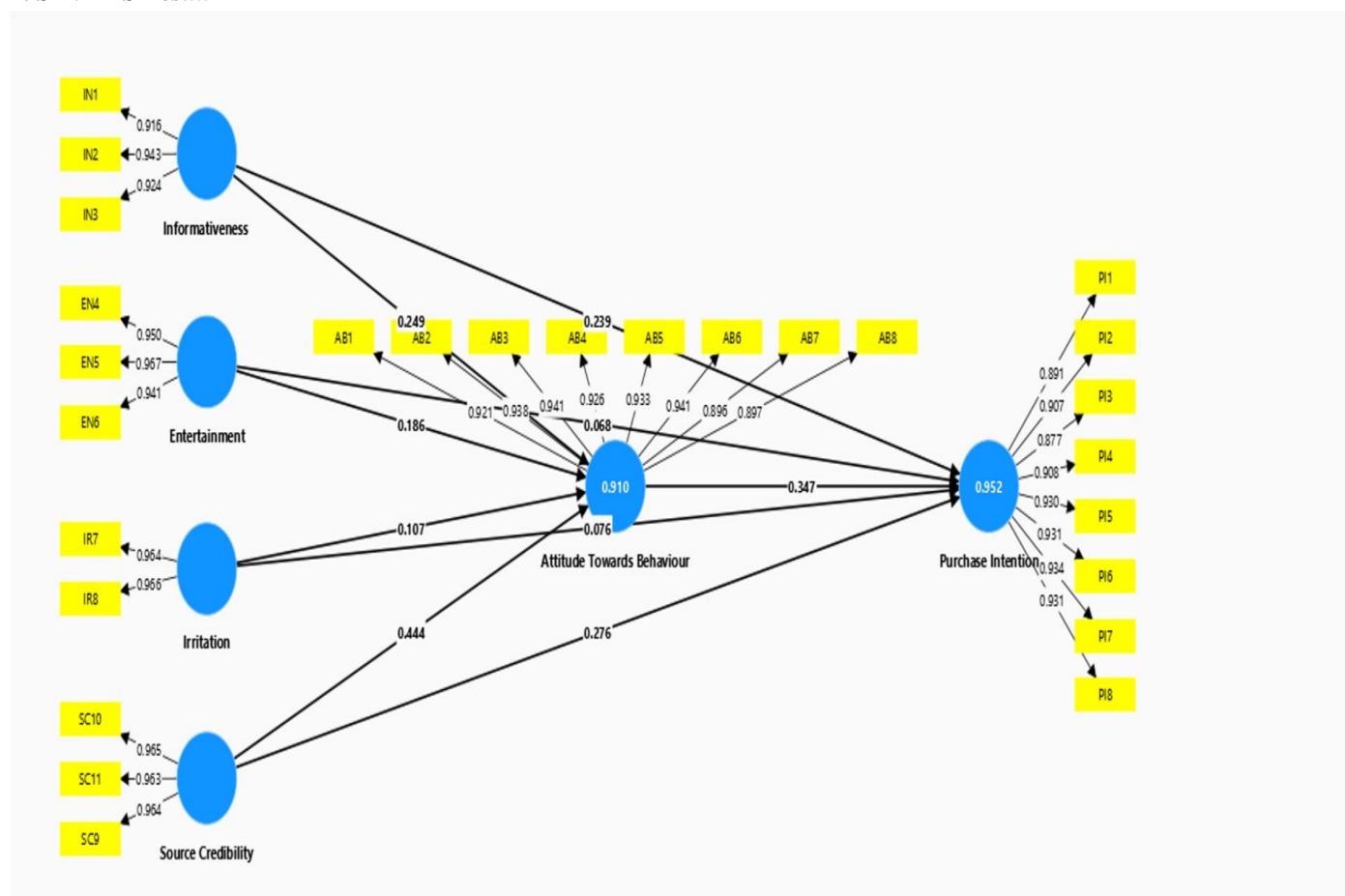
Outer Model (Measurement Model) Evaluation
Validity and Reliability

HIGH END				
Variabel	Indicators	Loading Factors	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Status
Informativeness (IN)	IN1	0.916	0.861	Valid
	IN2	0.943		Valid
	IN3	0.924		Valid
Entertainment (EN)	EN4	0.95	0.908	Valid
	EN5	0.967		Valid
	EN6	0.941		Valid
Irritation (IR)	IR7	0.964	0.932	Valid
	IR8	0.966		Valid
Source Credibility (SC)	SC9	0.964	0.929	Valid
	SC10	0.965		Valid
	SC11	0.963		Valid
Attitude Towards Behaviour (AB)	AB1	0.921	0.855	Valid
	AB2	0.938		Valid
	AB3	0.941		Valid
	AB4	0.926		Valid
	AB5	0.933		Valid
	AB6	0.941		Valid
	AB7	0.896		Valid
	AB8	0.897		Valid
Purchase Intentions (PI)	PI1	0.891	0.835	Valid
	PI2	0.907		Valid
	PI3	0.877		Valid
	PI4	0.908		Valid
	PI5	0.93		Valid
	PI6	0.931		Valid
	PI7	0.934		Valid
	PI8	0.931		Valid

The results of data processing using SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares) for the high-end market segment show strong construct validity for the variables studied. Each variable is measured using specific indicators with loading factors and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) as a measure of validity. The criteria are the data si valid if the value of Loading Factors is > 0.7 and if the value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is > 0.5. Overall, the results of the validity test with SEMPLS show that all constructs in this research for the high-end market segment have valid indicators. High factor loadings and AVE values that exceed the threshold of 0.5 indicate that each construct effectively explains the variance of its indicators, ensuring the validity of the measurement model used in this research.

HIGH END			
Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Status
Informativeness	0.919	0.949	Reliable
Entertainment	0.949	0.967	Reliable
Irritation	0.927	0.965	Reliable
Source Credibility	0.962	0.975	Reliable
Attitude Towards Behaviour	0.976	0.979	Reliable
Purchase Intentions	0.972	0.976	Reliable

The results of reliability testing using SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares) for the high-end market segment show that all constructs in this research have very good reliability. Reliability is measured using two main indicators, namely Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. The criteria are if Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7 indicate high internal consistency among the indicators measuring this construct, while Composite Reliability values above 0.7 confirm the overall reliability of this construct in measuring the variable in question. Overall, the results of the reliability test with SEM-PLS show that all constructs in this research for the high-end market segment have very reliable indicators. High Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values confirm that each construct in this model has strong and reliable internal consistency, ensuring that the data obtained from this measurement can be trusted and used for further analysis.

Inner Model (Structured Model) Evaluation
Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

HIGH END		
Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Attitude Towards Behaviour	0.910	0.906
Purchase Intention	0.952	0.949

R square = 0.910 The first model (XI Informativeness, X2 Entertainment, X3 Irritation, X4 Source Credibility and Z Attitude Towards Behaviour) can only explain 91% of the phenomenon. The remaining 9% is unrepresentable

R square = 0.952. The first model (XI Informativeness, X2 Entertainment, X3 Irritation, X4 Source Credibility and Y Purchase Intention) can only explain 95% of the phenomenon. The remaining 5% is unrepresentable.

Path Coefficient and P Value

The P value can also be used to determine significance. The criterion is significant if the P value less than 0.005

HIGH END		
Variable	Path Coefficients	P Value
Attitude Towards Behaviour → Purchase Intention	0.347	0.000
Informativeness → Attitude Towards Behaviour	0.249	0.002
Informativeness → Purchase Intention	0.239	0.000
Entertainment → Attitude Towards Behaviour	0.186	0.017
Entertainment → Purchase Intention	0.068	0.165
Irritation → Attitude Towards Behaviour	0.107	0.095
Irritation → Purchase Intention	0.076	0.128
Source Credibility → Attitude Towards Behaviour	0.444	0.000
Source Credibility → Purchase Intention	0.276	0.001

Based on the result above, The path coefficient of 0.444 (p-value 0.000) indicates that Source Credibility has the most significant positive effect on Attitude Towards Behavior and Purchase Intention with Path Coefficients 0.276 (p-value 0.001), suggesting that attitudes significantly increase the intention to purchase high-end cosmetics.

Based on the table above, it can be conclude that all variables have a significant relationship except for irritation variable that shown in table below:

Hypothesis	P Value	Conclusion
Informativeness significantly influence on attitudes towards social media user behaviour	0.002	Informativeness in Viral Marketing has significant influence on Attitudes Towards social media user behaviour
Entertainment significantly influence on attitudes towards social media user behaviour	0.017	Entertainment in Viral Marketing does not have a significant influence on attitudes towards social media user behaviour
Irritation significantly influence on attitudes towards social media user behaviour	0.095	Irritation in Viral Marketing does not have a significant influence on attitudes towards social media user behaviour
Source Credibility significantly influence on attitudes towards social media user behaviour	0.000	Source Credibility in Viral Marketing has significant influence on Attitudes Towards social media user behaviour
Attitude towards behaviour significantly influence purchase intentions of social media user	0.000	Attitude Towards Behaviour has significant influence on purchase intentions of social media user
Informativeness in Viral Marketing significantly influence on Purchase Intention of social media user	0.000	Informativeness in Viral Marketing has a significant influence on on Purchase Intention of social media user behaviour
Entertainment in Viral Marketing significantly influence on Purchase Intention of social media user	0.165	Entertainment in Viral Marketing does not have a significant influence on Purchase Intention of social media user behaviour
Irritation in viral marketing significantly influence on Purchase Intention of social media user	0.128	Irritation in Viral Marketing does not have a significant influence on Purchase Intention of social media user behaviour
Source Credibility in viral marketing significantly influence on Purchase Intention of social media user	0.001	Source Credibility in Viral Marketing has significant influence on Purchase Intention of social media user

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the critical role of viral marketing dimensions in shaping consumer behavior and purchase intentions for highend cosmetics. The findings indicate that Attitude Towards Behavior, Informativeness, and Source Credibility significantly influence Purchase Intention. Specifically, the path coefficient of 0.347 (p-value 0.000) confirms that positive attitudes towards purchasing behavior markedly increase the likelihood of purchasing high-end cosmetics. This aligns with the theoretical foundation that attitudes drive behavior, as posited by the Theory of Planned Behavior [34]. Informativeness has a substantial impact on both Attitude Towards Behavior (path coefficient: 0.249, p-value: 0.002) and Purchase Intention (path coefficient: 0.239, p-value: 0.000). This underscores the importance of providing high-quality, relevant information to consumers, enhancing their understanding and confidence in the products. As discussed in the literature review, informativeness helps consumers make informed decisions, thereby increasing their purchase intentions [27]. Source Credibility emerged as the most influential factor, with a path coefficient of 0.444 (p-value: 0.000) on Attitude Towards Behavior and 0.276 (p-value: 0.001) on Purchase Intention. This finding highlights the necessity for brands to establish trust and reliability through credible sources. Consumers are more likely to be influenced by messages from trusted and expert sources, which reinforces their purchase intentions [35][36].

On the other hand, Entertainment and Irritation showed different dynamics. While Entertainment positively affects Attitude Towards Behavior (path coefficient: 0.186, p-value: 0.017), it does not significantly influence Purchase Intention directly (path coefficient: 0.068, p-value: 0.165). This suggests that while engaging and enjoyable content can improve attitudes, it may not directly drive purchasing behavior. Similarly, Irritation does not have a significant effect on Attitude Towards Behavior (path coefficient: 0.107, p-value: 0.095) or Purchase Intention (path coefficient: 0.076, p-value: 0.128), highlighting the potential negative impact of annoying or disruptive marketing messages [21].

From the business perspective, these results are crucial for marketing strategies. The background information highlighted the rapid growth of internet and social media users, making digital platforms essential for marketing activities. Given the competitive nature of the beauty industry, brands must leverage effective viral marketing strategies to stand out [12][13]. The business issue discussed the need to address consumer skepticism towards viral marketing, which is confirmed by the findings showing the significant influence of informativeness and source credibility. In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights for high-end cosmetic brands on optimizing their viral marketing strategies. By focusing on delivering informative content and establishing source credibility, brands can significantly enhance consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. While entertainment can enhance engagement, it should be strategically balanced to avoid irritation and maintain effectiveness. These findings offer a roadmap for marketers to design impactful viral marketing campaigns that resonate with consumers and drive sales in a highly competitive market.

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