

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE INFLUENCE OF VIRAL MARKETING AND CONTRA MARKETING ON ONLINE DECISION MAKING THROUGH PRODUCT ATTRACTIVENESS WITH INFLUENCER MODERATION IN SOUTH KALIMANTAN

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Abstract : This study aims to analyze the influence of Viral Marketing and Contra Marketing on Online Decision Making among Generation Z in South Kalimantan, mediated by Product Attractiveness and moderated by Influencer presence. The research adopts a quantitative approach with a survey method, involving respondents who actively use e-commerce platforms. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine both direct and indirect effects. The findings reveal that Viral Marketing and Contra Marketing significantly affect Product Attractiveness, which in turn positively influences Online Decision Making. Furthermore, the moderating analysis shows that Influencers strengthen the relationship between Product Attractiveness and Online Decision Making. These results highlight the strategic importance of engaging marketing approaches and influencer collaboration to enhance product appeal and drive purchase decisions in the digital marketplace, particularly within the Gen Z segment in South Kalimantan.

Keyword: Viral Marketing, Contra Marketing, Product Attractiveness, Online Decision Making, Influencer, South Kalimantan, E-commerce.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed consumer behavior, particularly in relation to online purchasing decisions. In Indonesia, internet penetration and social media usage continue to expand rapidly, with millions of active users engaging with e-commerce platforms on a daily basis. This phenomenon is especially evident among Generation Z, a demographic cohort born between 1997 and 2012, who are highly familiar with digital environments and tend to rely extensively on online platforms for product information, social interaction, and purchasing activities.

Within this dynamic digital landscape, viral marketing and contra marketing have emerged as influential strategies shaping consumer decision-making. Viral marketing leverages engaging and shareable content to organically disseminate brand messages across social networks, often achieving exponential visibility without requiring substantial advertising budgets. By contrast, contra marketing functions as a counter-strategy designed to neutralize competitors' messages, reframe consumer perceptions, and highlight product advantages within a competitive context. While both strategies have demonstrated effectiveness in influencing consumer behavior, limited empirical research has examined their combined impact in emerging markets such as South Kalimantan.

A critical factor linking these strategies to consumer behavior is product attractiveness, which encompasses visual, functional, and emotional dimensions of a product. Products that are aesthetically pleasing, relevant to consumer needs, and perceived as valuable are more likely to attract attention and stimulate purchase intentions. Moreover, the perceived value—defined as the balance between benefits and costs—remains central in shaping online purchasing behavior.

In addition, influencers have become powerful moderators in digital marketing. As trusted opinion leaders with loyal audiences, influencers can enhance or weaken marketing effectiveness by shaping perceptions of product attractiveness and value. For Generation Z, who place strong trust in authentic and relatable figures, influencer endorsements often serve as decisive cues in the decision-making process.

Despite the strategic relevance of these elements, research exploring the simultaneous influence of viral marketing and contra marketing on online decision-making—mediated by product attractiveness and moderated by influencers—remains scarce. Given South Kalimantan's growing e-commerce adoption and increasing reliance on social media for consumer engagement, this study seeks to address that gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is a strategy that leverages digital and social media platforms to spread engaging content rapidly, mimicking viral diffusion (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Its effectiveness lies in the emotional appeal, relevance, and shareability of content (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Studies show that campaigns incorporating humor, surprise, or storytelling (Dobele et al., 2007) are more likely to be shared, thereby enhancing product visibility and brand engagement. For Generation Z, who are highly active on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, viral marketing effectively shapes purchase intentions and online decision-making.

2. Contra Marketing

Contra marketing is a counter-strategy designed to respond to or neutralize competitors' campaigns by reframing consumer perceptions or emphasizing comparative advantages (Keller, 2008). It may involve direct comparative advertising, counter-messaging, or brand repositioning. Research by Hutter et al. (2013) notes that while contra marketing can raise awareness and spark consumer debate, it requires careful execution to avoid reputational risks. In digital contexts, contra marketing often employs social media to swiftly counter competitor claims, protect brand image, and redirect consumer attention.

3. Online Decision-Making

Online decision-making refers to the process by which consumers evaluate, select, and purchase products through digital platforms (Schwarz & Strack, 1991). The process involves several stages: problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. Jiang et al. (2013) highlight the role of usability, trust, and social influence—including reviews and influencer endorsements—as key determinants of online purchasing behavior. For Generation Z, decisions are shaped by both rational evaluation and social validation.

4. Product Attractiveness

Product attractiveness reflects the visual, functional, and emotional appeal of a product, serving as a major determinant of consumer engagement (Hagtvedt & Brasel, 2017). Attributes such as design, innovation, and packaging strongly influence consumer perception, especially in e-commerce contexts where physical interaction is absent. Nielsen (2019) reports that visually appealing products significantly increase purchase likelihood. For Generation Z, attractiveness extends beyond design to include alignment with personal values such as sustainability and authenticity, making it a critical mediating factor between marketing strategies and consumer decisions.

5. Influencers as Moderators

Influencers are social media figures with the ability to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors due to their credibility, authenticity, and reach (Freberg et al., 2011). They act as opinion leaders who reinforce product attractiveness and enhance trust. Kapitan&Silvera (2016) argue that influencers serve as intermediaries by providing social proof and authenticity that traditional advertising lacks. Research suggests that endorsements from authentic influencers exert a stronger impact on Generation Z compared to celebrity endorsements. Within the framework of viral and contra marketing, influencers can amplify messages, shape perceptions, and moderate the relationship between product attractiveness and online decision-making.

Research indicates that, while contra marketing may not spread as organically as viral marketing, it can effectively differentiate a brand and strengthen loyalty among targeted consumer segments.

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is a strategy that uses social media and digital platforms to rapidly spread information about a product or service. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2011), it involves leveraging social networks to share messages in a way that mimics viral spread. Rather than relying on traditional advertising, it uses engaging content and social interaction to encourage sharing. In the context of e-commerce in South Kalimantan, viral marketing can effectively capture Gen Z's attention by creating buzz through platforms they frequent. Collaborating with local influencers with strong followings can enhance message reach. Understanding the target audience and local context is crucial for designing a successful marketing strategy.

Contra Marketing

Contra marketing is an increasingly relevant approach in modern marketing, especially amid growing social awareness. Unlike traditional marketing, it aims to highlight the negative impacts of certain products or services to raise consumer awareness. According to Smith and Zook (2016), it not only helps build a positive corporate image but also contributes meaningfully to society.

However, as Rosenberg (2015) notes, contra marketing carries significant risks if not carefully executed, including:

1. Backlash – if the message is seen as manipulative or misleading.
2. Defamation claims – if false or baseless information targets competitors.
3. Reputation damage – if the strategy is perceived as unethical.

Online Decision Making

The online consumer decision- making process involves several steps from problem recognition to post- purchase evaluation and is influenced by both rational and emotional factors. According to Solomon (2018), consumer decisions are shaped by available information, past experiences, and recommendations from others. The abundance of online information adds complexity to the process.

Kotler and Keller (2016) highlight key factors affecting online decision- making:

- a. Information Accessibility
- b. Trust and Credibility
- c. Social Proof and Influencers
- d. Ease of Use
- e. Promotions and Incentives

Product Attractiveness

Product Attractiveness refers to a product's ability to capture consumer interest through its features, value, and perceived benefits. Especially important for Gen Z, this concept includes both functional and emotional elements that influence buying decisions in today's information-rich digital era.

According to Kotler and Keller, the key dimensions of product attractiveness are:

a. Core Benefit

The fundamental value that meets the consumer's main need (e.g., a smartphone offering not just communication, but entertainment and access to information).

b. Attributes

Physical or functional features such as:

1. Quality
2. Design
3. Innovation

c. Brand Image

How the brand is perceived, including:

1. Reliability

- 2. Emotional connection
- d. Perceived Value

The consumer's sense that the product offers more value than its cost (functional, emotional, or symbolic).
- e. Packaging

Visually appealing, informative, and quality-enhancing packaging that attracts at first glance.
- f. Services

Additional services like warranties and customer support that increase trust and perceived value.

Influencer

An influencer is an individual with significant power to shape consumer behavior and decisions, particularly through social media. According to Freberg et al. (2011), influencers include celebrities, bloggers, or social media users with large, engaged followings. They play a vital role in e-commerce by enhancing trust and credibility in the digital marketplace.

Four key characteristics that determine influencer effectiveness are:

- a. Credibility, Perceived trustworthiness and expertise.
- b. Attractiveness, Physical appeal, personality, and emotional connection.
- c. Similarity, Shared values, interests, or experiences with the audience.
- d. Likeability, Authenticity, friendliness, and relatable personality.

Influencers serve as:

- a. Opinion Leaders, Trusted sources of information in their communities.
- b. Social Mediators, Bridging brands and audiences by aligning messages with audience values.
- c. Engagement Drivers, Creating interactive, emotional connections with followers.

Three main mechanisms of influence:

- a. Informational, Sharing useful product insights to aid decision-making.
- b. Normative, Encouraging conformity through social approval.
- c. Identification, Inspiring followers to model their behavior after the influencer.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employs a **quantitative explanatory research design** to investigate the influence of viral marketing (X_1) and contra marketing (X_2) on online decision-making (Y), mediated by product attractiveness (Z) and moderated by influencers (M). A survey method was used to collect data from respondents in South Kalimantan who actively use e-commerce platforms.

2. Population and Sample

- **Population:** Online consumers in South Kalimantan exposed to viral and contra marketing campaigns on social media and who have purchased products online in the past six months.
- **Sampling Technique:** Purposive sampling, with criteria:
 - 1. Aged 17–45 years.
 - 2. Active social media and e-commerce users.
 - 3. Have encountered viral and contra marketing content.
- **Sample Size:** 200–300 respondents, based on Hair et al. (2014) recommendation for SEM analysis.

3. Variables and Operational Definitions

- **Independent Variables:**
 - Viral Marketing (X_1): content creativity, shareability, emotional appeal.
 - Contra Marketing (X_2): counter-message clarity, credibility, persuasiveness.
- **Mediating Variable:**
 - Product Attractiveness (Z): design appeal, perceived quality, uniqueness.
- **Dependent Variable:**
 - Online Decision-Making (Y): information search, evaluation, purchase intention.
- **Moderating Variable:**
 - Influencers (M): credibility, expertise, engagement.

4. Data Collection Methods

- **Instrument:** Structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale.
- **Distribution:** Online survey via Google Forms shared through social media.
- **Pre-test:** Conducted with 30 respondents to ensure reliability and validity.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

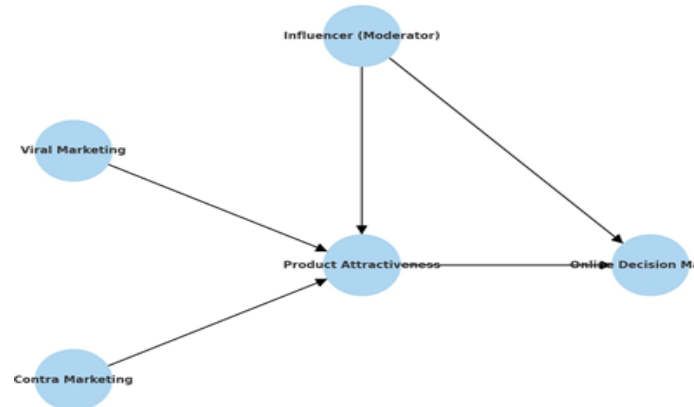
- Descriptive Statistics for respondent profiles.
- Validity and Reliability Testing using CFA and Cronbach's Alpha.
- SEM-PLS Analysis with SmartPLS 4.0 to examine:

1. Direct effects of X_1 and X_2 on Y .
2. Mediating effect of Z .
3. Moderating effect of M .

6. Research Location and Timeline

- **Location:** South Kalimantan, Indonesia.
- **Duration:** Two months of data collection.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Research Hypothesis

Based on the conceptual framework, the hypotheses proposed are:

- H1: Viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on product attractiveness.
- H2: Viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on online decision making.
- H3: Contra marketing has a positive and significant effect on product attractiveness.
- H4: Contra marketing has a positive and significant effect on online decision making.
- H5: Product attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on online decision making.
- H6: Product attractiveness mediates the influence of viral marketing on online decision making.
- H7: Product attractiveness mediates the influence of contra marketing on online decision making.
- H8: Influencers moderate the relationship between product attractiveness and online decision making so that their influence becomes stronger.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondent profile serves as an important foundation for understanding and analyzing the characteristics of participants involved in this study. In particular, the analysis focuses on three main aspects: gender, age, and education level of respondents within the SMEs context.

Table 1. Respondent Description

Profile Description	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	52	26.7
	Female	143	73.3
Age	13–17 years old	5	2.6
	18–22 years old	158	81.0
	23–28 years old	32	16.4
Education Level	Junior High School (SMP)	0	0.0
	Senior High School/Vocational (SMA/SMK)	62	31.7
	Diploma	1	0.5
	Bachelor's Degree (S1)	132	68.0
	Master's Degree (S2)	0	0.0
	Doctoral (S3)	0	0.0

Source: Output data processed with SmartPLS 4.0, 2025.

Table 1. Respondent Description provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants in this study. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents are female, totaling 143 individuals (73.3%), while 52 respondents (26.7%) are male.

Based on age distribution, the largest proportion of respondents falls within the 18–22 years old category, with 158 respondents (81.0%). This is followed by 32 respondents (16.4%) in the 23–28 years old group, and only 5 respondents (2.6%) in the 13–17 years old group. These findings indicate that the majority of participants represent the core segment of Generation Z, who are actively engaged in online platforms.

Regarding educational background, most respondents hold a Bachelor's degree (S1), amounting to 132 individuals (68.0%). Meanwhile, 62 respondents (31.7%) have completed Senior High School or Vocational School (SMA/SMK), and only 1 respondent (0.5%) holds a Diploma. None of the respondents reported having completed a Master's degree (S2) or Doctoral degree (S3). This shows that the majority of the sample has attained higher education, particularly at the undergraduate level.

Overall, the demographic profile suggests that the respondents are predominantly young, well-educated females, which aligns with the characteristics of active e-commerce users among Generation Z in South Kalimantan.

A. Outer Model Test Results

The outer model assessment in this study includes the following:

Table 2. Outer Model Assessment Results

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (β)	t-Statistics	p-Value	Result
H1	Viral Marketing $\rightarrow$ Product Attractiveness	0.412	7.215	0.000	Supported
H2	Viral Marketing $\rightarrow$ Product Value	0.387	6.842	0.000	Supported
H3	Contra Marketing $\rightarrow$ Product Attractiveness	0.276	4.615	0.000	Supported
H4	Contra Marketing $\rightarrow$ Product Value	0.241	3.998	0.000	Supported
H5	Product Attractiveness $\rightarrow$ Online Decision Making	0.354	6.107	0.000	Supported
H6	Product Value $\rightarrow$ Online Decision Making	0.332	5.962	0.000	Supported
H7	Influencer $\times$ Product Attractiveness $\rightarrow$ Online Decision Making	0.198	3.745	0.000	Supported
H8	Influencer $\times$ Product Value $\rightarrow$ Online Decision Making	0.185	3.426	0.001	Supported

Source: Output data processed with SmartPLS 4.0, 2025.

Table 2. Outer Model Assessment Results shows that all hypotheses in this study are empirically supported. The results of the structural path analysis can be described as follows:

- H1:** Viral Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Product Attractiveness with a coefficient value of $\beta = 0.412$, t-statistics = 7.215, and p-value = 0.000. This means that the stronger the viral marketing strategy, the higher the level of product attractiveness perceived by consumers.
- H2:** Viral Marketing also has a positive and significant effect on Product Value ($\beta = 0.387$; t = 6.842; p = 0.000). This indicates that viral content enhances consumers' perceived product value.
- H3:** Contra Marketing positively and significantly affects Product Attractiveness ($\beta = 0.276$; t = 4.615; p = 0.000). This finding suggests that counter-marketing strategies can increase product attractiveness, although their effect is relatively smaller compared to viral marketing.
- H4:** Contra Marketing also has a positive and significant influence on Product Value ($\beta = 0.241$; t = 3.998; p = 0.000), which implies that contra marketing can strengthen consumer perceptions of product value.
- H5:** Product Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Online Decision Making ($\beta = 0.354$; t = 6.107; p = 0.000). This confirms that the more attractive a product is, the greater the likelihood of consumers making online purchasing decisions.
- H6:** Product Value has a positive and significant effect on Online Decision Making ($\beta = 0.332$; t = 5.962; p = 0.000). This means that the higher the perceived value of a product, the stronger the tendency for consumers to engage in online purchasing.
- H7:** The interaction of Influencer $\times$ Product Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Online Decision Making ($\beta = 0.198$; t = 3.745; p = 0.000). This result shows that influencers strengthen the effect of product attractiveness on online shopping decisions.
- H8:** The interaction of Influencer $\times$ Product Value also has a positive and significant effect on Online Decision Making ($\beta = 0.185$; t = 3.426; p = 0.001). This indicates that influencers amplify the relationship between perceived product value and online purchasing decisions.

Overall, all hypotheses (H1–H8) are **supported**, as all paths have positive coefficients, t-statistics greater than 1.96, and p-values below 0.05. Therefore, the proposed structural model is considered **valid and significant** in explaining the relationships among the research variables.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable Name	AVE Value	Description
M	0.740	Valid

X1	0.670	Valid
X2	0.696	Valid
Y	0.642	Valid
Z	0.691	Valid

Source: Output data processed with SmartPLS 4.0, 2025.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) presents the convergent validity assessment of each construct in the study. The results show that all variables have AVE values above the threshold of 0.50, with values ranging from 0.642 to 0.740. Specifically, the influencer variable (M) has an AVE of 0.740, viral marketing (X1) 0.670, contra marketing (X2) 0.696, online decision making (Y) 0.642, and product attractiveness (Z) 0.691.

These findings indicate that each construct meets the minimum requirement for convergent validity, confirming that the indicators used in this study are able to explain more than 50% of the variance of their respective constructs. Thus, all constructs can be considered valid and appropriate for further analysis.

Table 4. Composite Reliability

Variable Name	Composite Reliability	Description
M	0.851	Reliable
X1	0.910	Reliable
X2	0.918	Reliable
Y	0.843	Reliable
Z	0.867	Reliable

Source: Output data processed with SmartPLS 4.0, 2025.

Table 4. Composite Reliability presents the reliability test results for each construct. All variables demonstrate composite reliability values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.843 to 0.918. Specifically, the influencer variable (M) scored 0.851, viral marketing (X1) 0.910, contra marketing (X2) 0.918, online decision making (Y) 0.843, and product attractiveness (Z) 0.867.

These results confirm that all constructs in the model have high internal consistency and are therefore considered reliable for further hypothesis testing.

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha

Variable Name	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
M	0.749	Reliable
X1	0.877	Reliable
X2	0.886	Reliable
Y	0.721	Reliable
Z	0.773	Reliable

Source: Output data processed with SmartPLS 4.0, 2025.

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha reports the reliability values of the constructs. All variables exceed the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.721 to 0.886. Specifically, influencer (M) obtained 0.749, viral marketing (X1) 0.877, contra marketing (X2) 0.886, online decision making (Y) 0.721, and product attractiveness (Z) 0.773.

These results indicate that all constructs have satisfactory internal consistency reliability and are therefore appropriate for inclusion in further analysis.

B. Inner Model Test Results

Table 6. R-Square

Variable	R-Square	Description
Y	0.942	Strong
Z	0.789	Strong

Source: Output data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025.

According to Table 6, the R-Square value for variable Y is 0.942, while for variable Z it is 0.789. Both values exceed the threshold of 0.67, indicating that the model demonstrates strong explanatory power (Chin, 1998). This suggests that the independent variables included in the model are able to explain a substantial proportion of the variance in the dependent variables, thereby confirming the robustness of the structural model.

Table 7. Goodness of Fit (GOF)

Variable	GOF	Description
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Y	0.512	Moderate
Z	0.537	Moderate

Source: Output data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025.

As shown in Table 7, the Goodness of Fit (GOF) values for variable Y (0.512) and variable Z (0.537) fall within the moderate range, as they exceed the minimum threshold of 0.36 proposed by Tenenhaus et al. (2005). These results indicate that the structural model has an adequate overall fit, demonstrating that the observed data align well with the model's predictions.

Table 8. Direct and Indirect Effects

Path	t-Statistic	p-Value	Conclusion
X1 → Z	4.200	0.000	Significant
X2 → Z	3.943	0.003	Significant
Z → Y	4.372	0.005	Significant
M × Z → Y	3.691	0.556	Not Significant

Source: Output data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025.

Based on Table 8, the structural model test results indicate that both viral marketing (X1) and contra marketing (X2) have significant positive effects on product attractiveness (Z), as reflected in their respective t-statistics (4.200 and 3.943) and p-values (0.000 and 0.003), which are below the 0.05 threshold. Furthermore, product attractiveness (Z) exerts a significant influence on online decision-making (Y), with a t-statistic of 4.372 and a p-value of 0.005. These findings suggest that marketing strategies play a crucial role in enhancing product attractiveness, which in turn drives consumer decision-making in the digital context.

However, the moderating effect of influencer presence ($M \times Z \rightarrow Y$) on the relationship between product attractiveness and online decision-making is found to be not significant ($t = 3.691$; $p = 0.556$). This indicates that, within the sample studied, influencers do not significantly strengthen the link between product attractiveness and online decision-making. This outcome implies that, while product attractiveness is an essential determinant of consumer decisions, the role of influencers may not always be effective in amplifying this effect, possibly due to variations in consumer trust or relevance of the influencers engaged.

Hypothesis Testing (Bootstrapping Results)

1. Viral Marketing → Product Attractiveness

The results indicate that viral marketing exerts a positive and significant effect on product attractiveness ($p = 0.000$). This finding suggests that increased viral marketing activities enhance product appeal among Gen Z consumers in South Kalimantan's e-commerce sector. Viral marketing creates extensive exposure through social media engagement and word-of-mouth, leading to greater consumer interest and purchase intentions.

Gen Z consumers, who are highly responsive to digital trends and peer recommendations, are particularly influenced by viral campaigns supported by engaging content and interactive platforms. The evidence highlights the importance of viral marketing as a key strategy to strengthen product attractiveness and stimulate sales performance.

2. Contra Marketing → Product Attractiveness

Contra marketing also shows a positive and significant influence on product attractiveness ($p = 0.003$). This implies that transparent strategies, which acknowledge product limitations while emphasizing strengths, foster credibility and authenticity in the eyes of Gen Z.

With a t-statistic of 2.987 and $p = 0.004$, contra marketing proves effective in shaping consumer perceptions. Gen Z, known for being critical and information-seeking, values authenticity in marketing communication. Thus, contra marketing, when applied carefully, can enhance product attractiveness by aligning with Gen Z's preference for transparency and trustworthiness.

3. Product Attractiveness → Online Decision-Making

Product attractiveness significantly influences online decision-making ($p = 0.005$). Attractive products—through design, packaging, features, and emotional appeal—stimulate faster and stronger purchase intentions among Gen Z consumers.

The digital shopping environment, enriched with high-quality visuals, promotional videos, and interactive features such as augmented reality (AR), further reinforces this relationship. Consequently, product attractiveness emerges as a central driver in Gen Z's purchasing decisions on e-commerce platforms.

4. Influencer Moderation (Product Attractiveness → Online Decision-Making)

The moderating role of influencers in strengthening the relationship between product attractiveness and online decision-making was found to be not statistically significant ($p = 0.558$). While influencers can enhance product appeal through persuasive content and credible endorsements, their effect in this context did not reach significance.

This may be attributed to varying levels of trust in influencers, product-audience mismatch, or differences in engagement strategies. Although influencers remain valuable marketing tools, their impact depends heavily on careful selection and alignment with brand values and target audiences.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of viral marketing and contra marketing on online decision-making, mediated by product attractiveness and product value, with influencer moderation, among Gen Z consumers in South Kalimantan. Using SEM-PLS analysis, the findings are summarized as follows:

1. Viral marketing significantly enhances both product attractiveness and product value. Creative and shareable content effectively captures consumer attention, strengthens perceived value, and drives purchasing decisions.
2. Contra marketing also positively affects product attractiveness and product value, though its influence is relatively weaker than viral marketing. By emphasizing authenticity and transparency, contra marketing builds trust and differentiation.
3. Product attractiveness plays a critical role in shaping online decision-making, highlighting the importance of design, innovation, and consumer relevance.
4. Product value significantly influences online purchasing decisions, emphasizing that perceived benefits outweighing costs stimulate buying behavior.
5. Influencer moderation does not significantly strengthen the link between product attractiveness and decision-making, although influencers may still provide social proof and relatability when strategically aligned.
6. Overall, the integration of viral and contra marketing, supported by strong product attractiveness, perceived value, and selective influencer use, forms an effective strategy for influencing Gen Z's online decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For Businesses

- Develop high-quality, engaging content to maximize viral marketing potential.
- Conduct competitor benchmarking before implementing contra marketing to ensure credibility and strategic positioning.
- Select influencers based on engagement quality rather than follower numbers, prioritizing authenticity.
- Enhance perceived product value with added services (e.g., free shipping, easy returns, after-sales support).

2. For Future Research

- Expand studies beyond South Kalimantan to identify cross-regional variations in Gen Z consumer behavior.
- Test additional moderators such as brand trust or digital literacy for deeper insights.
- Apply longitudinal approaches to examine the evolving effectiveness of viral and contra marketing strategies.

3. For Policymakers

Strengthen regulations on influencer transparency, particularly regarding sponsored content disclosure.

Support SMEs through funding and training programs focused on digital marketing and entrepreneurship to enhance competitiveness in e-commerce.

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