The Effect of Viral Marketing and Online Customer Reviews on Instagram on Purchase Decisions for Mixue Ice Cream in Surabaya

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ABSTRACT

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The existence of social media as an online gathering place makes it easier for information to spread widely in a short time. A new ice cream brand from China called “Mixue” appeared in Indonesia recently. The ice cream’s large portions and affordable price quickly captured the attention and made people queue to taste the ice cream product, even though findings in the field show that Mixue is not the first-choice ice cream brand in Indonesia. The research aims to analyze the impact of viral marketing and online customer reviews on Instagram on the purchase decision of Mixue ice cream in Surabaya. This study used quantitative methods, with the research subjects being Mixue ice cream consumers in Surabaya and Instagram users. This study involved the participation of 98 people using the non-probability sampling method and purposive sampling as the technique. The results showed that viral marketing and online customer reviews had a large impact on Mixue ice cream purchase decisions in Surabaya.

Introduction

Digital marketing is often adopted by companies competing to grow their business in the digital era (Pandey et al., 2020). Digital marketing is divided into online, social media, and mobile marketing. Social media marketing is the fastest-growing and is widely used in direct marketing in product marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). The growth of internet technology related to the growth of the business world has led to the widespread use of social media marketing for entrepreneurs (Adistia & Sanaji, 2022). Mixue is one of the brands that is active on social networks to market its products, particularly on Instagram.

Mixue is a brand that distributes low-cost ice cream and tea drinks. Mixue ice cream is well-known among the general public as an ice cream that offers generous amounts at reasonable rates (Oswaldo, 2023). Mixue began to penetrate and open its first outlet in Indonesia in 2020, before exploding and becoming a trending subject in 2022 (Arsyantie, 2022). Mixue is praised not only for its eye-catching items but also for
its rapid growth rate, as evidenced by the number of Mixue locations across Indonesia. As shown in a Salatiga Terkini article (Pianto, 2023), it is said that Mixue has many stores in Indonesia and is always crowded with customers who want to buy Mixue products. Through careful and planned use of social media, Mixue has managed to attract public attention through viral social media content marketing.

Something positive that goes viral can have an impact on the product market (Nggilu et al., 2019). Viral marketing is a promotional activity carried out by a company, product, or service in the form of a persuasive message and designed in such a way that it spreads online from one person to another (Kirby & Marsden, 2006). In the context of online marketing, viral marketing is considered capable of delivering better results than traditional marketing by creating high levels of brand awareness and purchase intent, which can lead to higher sales levels (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021).

Instagram social media has received great attention for viral content marketing which can be seen from the number of views and audience interactions. Some of Mixue's viral marketing content from the Instagram account @mixue.antasari managed to attract public attention with a total of 2.9 million views, 68,000 likes, and 930 comments. However, this does not create a perspective that suits people's tastes. This can be seen when people are asked about their favorite soft ice cream brand, their answers do not lead to Mixue, but to other brands such as Mcd, KFC, Ikea, and many more, sourced from the Instagram account @endeus.tv on "Recommendation Message "Favorite Soft Ice Cream".

In addition to implementing viral social media marketing tactics, having clear information about items or services also takes the customer into account. One way to access information about products or services is to use social media comments to collect feedback from consumers about the products or services displayed. The feedback provided by consumers is an opinion about a product or service that has been purchased before. Online customer reviews are part of electronic word of mouth (eWOM), which is any statement visible to the public over the Internet about a product or brand, positive or negative, created by potential, actual, and purchased customers. Previously (Nam et al., 2020). Previous research by (H. Li et al., 2020) confirmed that after consumption and purchase, consumers will form a post-consumption evaluation of the product or service, after which consumers may be faced with a certain level of uncertainty when comparing pre-purchase perceived expectations and pre-purchase perceived expectations. Post-consumer evaluation.

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Reviews about Mixue cream were found in the Instagram comments of several accounts that created content about Mixue, such as @voilajogja, @cicibuncits, @katadata, @molita_lin, @brosispku, @sultaneceh, @mixuepalumbon, @mixue.antasari, and @mixuejuandacikampek. Comments on posts from these accounts get support from Instagram users through likes. Most of the comments still question the halal nature of Mixue products. The portion of Mixue ice cream is smaller compared to the photos and videos on social networks, and the quality of Mixue ice cream should be better, melting quickly and tasting like Dancow milk. It is also the poor quality of Mixue cream. It is too sweet which makes people feel nauseous. However, there are also other opinions saying that Mixue ice cream is very delicious and has many kinds of toppings at a reasonable price and portion. Reviews given by customers can either encourage their desire to buy or change their purchase decision, depending on whether the review is positive or negative.

The number of companies that sell the same product and use social media in their marketing can be a factor to consider when making a purchase decision. A purchase decision is defined as a process that includes a sequence of choices made by customers after they have expressed a desire to fulfill their needs and begins before the purchase process begins (Hanaysha, 2018). A purchase decision is a situation where consumers intend to buy the desired item (Aji et al., 2019).

The popularity of Mixue cream has led to high Mixue sales, but it would be even better if it had good customer reviews. Maintaining high sales can be achieved by considering the factors that influence purchase decisions, creating the right marketing strategy according to Mixue's characteristics, and remaining consistent in producing products. Quality products.

The novelty of this research with previous research is the development of Fajriyah & Karnowati (2022) shows that online viral marketing does not affect purchasing decisions. Other research regarding the influence of Online Customer Reviews on Instagram conducted by G & Riptiono (2019) shows that the Online customer review variable does not influence purchasing decisions. Based on the background of the problem and the results of previous research, this research is intended to determine the influence of viral marketing and online customer reviews on Instagram on the decision to purchase Mixue ice cream in Surabaya.

Literature Review

Purchase Decision
The purchase decision is a process by which buyers choose the brand they want. At the evaluation stage, consumers will assess several brands and form a purchase intention for the most preferred brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Over time, social trends have also changed which affects consumer purchasing behavior. Today’s consumers will question a brand and its quality before making a purchase decision. Therefore, social media vlogger reviews are often used as a reference to offer products that match the purchasing decisions they will make (Ansari et al., 2019). Consumer-driven decision-making has implications for companies in designing products, understanding messages, allocating promotional budget costs, and creating marketing programs that are relevant to the company’s target market Harahap & Amanah (2020). Companies must consider purchasing decision factors beyond products and promotions, such as price, location, design, atmosphere, and service, to grow their business (Herawati et al., 2019).

**Viral Marketing**

Viral marketing, according to Kotler & Armstrong (2018), is a version of word-of-mouth marketing or WOM on the internet that involves creating a message in an email or other marketing activity that causes consumers to want to spread the message to their friends. Viral marketing is created by companies to promote their products, with the hope that people who see the content created by the company will be impressed and spread the message about the content to their friends or family (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020). Liu & Wang (2019) also shared their opinion about viral marketing is very effective in reaching large social media groups. Businesses that implement viral marketing strategies in their social media marketing activities must pay attention to how they convey their messages, whether through text, images, or videos to make them look attractive. Social networks are often used as a platform for users to communicate widely with others, and send and receive digital content or information through several types of online social networks (Appel et al., 2020). It is important to use social media strategies for businesses in this era to achieve competitive advantage and excellent performance (F. Li et al., 2021). Another benefit of using viral social media marketing strategies for businesses is that businesses can advertise and promote products through interactive social networks to increase awareness of their brand (Tricahyono et al., 2019).

**Online Customer Reviews**

Online customer reviews are written reviews, comments, or ratings that generate electronic word of mouth (eWOM) that can influence future consumer demand. Therefore, this can provide significant business value for the company Xie et
Nowadays, online reviews are a very important source of information for customers, consumers are not geographically limited in sharing their honest opinions about products or services, which is very important. Helps in making good purchasing decisions (Thomas et al., 2019). In line with O'Neil and Eisenmann (2017), consumers feel the highest level of trust through reviews written by consumers online on social media (Ventre & Kolbe, 2020). Even today, many consumers feel they have a higher level of trust in consumer reviews provided online or on social media to solicit opinions and recommendations from other consumers in evaluating brand performance (Chakraborty, 2019). It should be noted that the information obtained from consumer reviews contains relevant and honest product information that is useful for understanding and evaluating product quality (Guo et al., 2020).

**Relationship between Variables**

Using the Internet in business assists businesses in remaining competitive. Entrepreneurs should use social networking technologies in their marketing efforts.

According to (Prasad et al., 2019), social media is a platform with many features that users can use. Users can actively contribute, share, watch, find interesting content, and play or work on social media platforms.

Viral marketing in the context of word of mouth influences the customers’ choices, purchase decisions, and aspects such as attitudes, expectations, and perceptions after using a product or service (Fard & Marvi, 2020). Customers in this era often use viral social media content to make purchasing decisions. Tendean & Mananeke (2020), Septhi & Hidayat (2021), and Fathurrahman et al. (2021) show that viral marketing has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions.

**H1:** Viral marketing on Instagram has a positive effect on purchasing decisions for Mixue ice cream in Surabaya.

Online customer reviews can influence purchase decisions. The higher the quality of information provided in online customer reviews, the more convincing it is for readers. This will have the effect of generating information about consumer confidence, interest in the product, and confidence to make satisfactory purchasing decisions (Zhao et al., 2020). Consumers who make purchasing decisions based on a good online review process will achieve a high level of satisfaction with the products they have purchased. It is important to create a product or service that can give a positive impression to consumers. Because this can trigger online reviews which ultimately lead to purchasing decisions.
This shows that there is a relationship between online customer reviews and purchasing decisions, as revealed by Ardianti & Widiartanto (2019), Sholichin & Wisnalmawati (2021), and Martini et al. (2022) that online customer reviews have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions.

**H2:** Online customer reviews on Instagram have a positive effect on purchase decisions for Mixue ice cream in Surabaya.

**Method**

This type of quantitative research aims to examine the effect of viral marketing and online customer reviews on Instagram on purchase decisions for Mixue ice cream in Surabaya. This study was conducted in Surabaya, the second-largest metropolitan city with a population of 3,157,126 in 2020, citing data from the Population and Civil Registration Office Surabaya. Mixue in Surabaya is very popular, as evidenced by the number of Mixue outlets listed on Google, a total of 54 outlets in Surabaya as of January 2023, always crowded especially on weekends. The research respondents were Mixue consumers who live in Surabaya and have purchased Mixue ice cream. Meanwhile, the research sample was taken using non-probability and purposive sampling techniques. The sample size of 98 people was obtained from the numerical norm multiplied by parameters 5 to 10 (Ferdinand Augusty, 2014), in this case, $14 \times 7 = 98$ respondents. The criteria are at least 17 years old, have an Instagram account, and have bought Mixue ice cream in Surabaya. When collecting research data, questionnaires using Google Forms were distributed through social networks.

The variables were measured using a Likert scale, covering a range of scores from 1, meaning Strongly Disagree, to 5, meaning Strongly Agree. In this study, validity and reliability tests were used. Testing the validity and accuracy of a measuring instrument when performing its measuring function (Ghozali, 2021). A tool will be valuable if the tool is a measuring tool for collecting valuable data. What is meant by validity is that the measuring instrument can measure what should be measured. In real-world testing, an instrument is said to be reliable if measuring the same subject repeatedly will always produce the same, consistent, and accurate data (Sugiyono, 2022). The purpose of reliability testing was to determine the consistency of an instrument as a measuring instrument. It was to get reliable measurement results.

The analysis technique used structural equation modeling (SEM) which was based on the components of the partial least squares (PLS) analysis tool. PLS was considered a more suitable approach used in research to help obtain latent variable
values for prediction purposes. PLS was chosen as a research analysis tool because it requires a small sample (<100) and does not use many assumptions. PLS-SEM testing using SmartPLS includes two types of causal models, namely structural models and measurement models. In PLS, variables influenced by indices are often called formative indices. While the reflective indicator is the result of the reflective indicator of the latent variable.

Results and Discussion

Respondent profile

The number of respondents who met the sample criteria and were eligible to participate in this study was 98 people. Based on the data, most of the respondents are between 17 to 23 years old, which is about 88% of the total respondents. The age of 24 to 30 years old is 10%, and the remaining 2% are in the age group of 31 to 37 years old. Meanwhile, in terms of gender, women completely dominate with a total of 74 or 74.5% of the total respondents, while the number of men surveyed is 24 people or around 24.5%. Thus, Mixue's target consumers are mostly people aged 17 to 23 and women.

Table 1. Respondents’ Characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Profile</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 – 23</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 – 30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
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Source: data processed, 2023

From the data obtained in the questionnaire, it can be seen that the first indicator of viral marketing, namely emotional altruism, obtained the highest result with a score of 4, which means that 36 people or 37% of survey respondents agreed with the statement given; the second curiosity index obtained the highest result with a score of 4, meaning that 39 people or about 40% of the total respondents agreed; the third indicator of content consumption, which obtained the highest result with a score
of 4, as many as 41 people or 42% of respondents agreed; the fourth indicator is content delivery, the highest result obtained is a score of 4 with an agreement of 38 people or 39 people.

In the online customer reviews variable, the first indicator is the quality of the argument, the highest answer score was 4, meaning that 38 or 39% of the total respondents agreed with the statement; the second index was speed, achieving the highest result with a score of 4, meaning that 44 people or equivalent to 45% of the total respondents surveyed agreed; The third index was volume, achieving the highest results at points 4 and 5, meaning that 42 people or 43% answered agree and 42 people or 43% answered strongly agree; The fourth contour index achieved the highest result with a score of 5, meaning that 45 people or 46% of respondents strongly agreed; The fifth indicator is source credibility, getting the highest score of 4, meaning that 42 people or 43% answered agree.

On changes in purchase decisions, the first indicator is product selection, reaching the highest result with a score of 3, which can be understood as 44 or 45% of respondents giving a neutral response; The second index on the selection of purchase channels reached the highest result with a score of 5, strongly agreeing with 45 or 46% of respondents; The third indicator, namely the number of purchases, reached the highest result at level 2, meaning that 27 or 28% of the people surveyed answered disagree; The fourth indicator of purchase time reached the highest result with a score of 3, meaning 29 or 30% of people gave a neutral response; The fifth indicator of the payment method statement received the highest result with a score of 5, meaning 51 or 52% of respondents strongly agreed.

Data Analysis, and Measurement Model (Outer Model)
Figure 1. Outer Model of SmartPLS Output

Source: data processed, 2023

Based on this figure, the factor loading value of each indicator can be seen from the large value of the path coefficient located above the arrow line between the two exogenous and endogenous variables. Factor loading is considered valid enough if it meets the conditions, the value is greater than 0.5 or the T-statistic value obtained is greater than 1.96, meaning it reaches the level of significance. In addition, we can see from the amount of R-Square in the endogenous variable circle (purchasing decision variable) which results in $R^2 = 0.340050$, so we can explain that the model can solve the problem. the phenomenon of purchasing decision preference (Y) is influenced by the existence of independent variables including viral marketing (X1) and online customer reviews (X2) with a variance of 34%. While the remaining 66% is explained by variables other than research (other than viral marketing and online customer reviews).

Hypothesis Testing and Structural Measurement Model (Inner Model)

Table 2. Path Coefficients (Mean< STDEV, T-Values, P-Values)

| Path Coefficients (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (|O/STERR|) | P Values |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Viral Marketing (X1) -> Purchase Decision (Y) | 0.357961 | 0.378770 | 0.086405 | 4.142829 | 0.000 |
| Online Customer Review (X2) -> Purchase Decision (Y) | 0.307902 | 0.297980 | 0.086635 | 3.554012 | 0.001 |

Source: data processed, 2023
The Influence of Viral Marketing on Instagram on Purchase Decisions for Mixue Ice Cream in Surabaya

Based on the research conducted, it was found that viral marketing on Instagram had an effect on purchase decisions for Mixue ice cream in Surabaya. This is supported by the results of SmartPLS data processing which showed that hypothesis 1 of the study can be accepted with significant results. According to the factor loading data, the viral marketing index that had the greatest influence on Mixue ice cream purchase decisions is content forwarding. Diverse consumers, especially women between the ages of 17 and 23, often enjoy using social networks and following current trends. By receiving information on social networks presented in the form of content, social network users who were Mixue consumers will send information that they find interesting. In content forwarding, it is stated to estimate how often information is forwarded, consumers will voluntarily share content information with friends or family members who also have the same interest in the information sent (Widjaja & Alexandra, 2019). Finally, by creating creative viral marketing content on Instagram and relevant to consumer interests, it can stimulate consumers’ desire to convey information which leads to the decision to purchase Mixue ice cream. The results are supported by Kholiq & Sari (2021) and Zahra & Idris (2019) stating that viral marketing significantly affects purchase decisions.

The Effect of Online Customer Reviews on Instagram on Purchasing Decisions for Mixue Ice Cream in Surabaya

Based on the research conducted, the results indicated that online customer reviews had an effect on purchase decisions for Mixue Ice Cream in Surabaya. This is in line with the results of SmartPLS data processing which showed that research hypothesis 2 can be accepted with significant results. The factor loading results showed that the online customer review indicator’s source credibility was the indicator that had the most influence on the Mixue ice cream purchase decision variable. Based on the characteristics of respondents who represent the Mixue ice cream consumer group in Surabaya, it showed that Mixue ice cream consumers were mostly between 17 and 23 years old, mostly female, and active users on internet social networks. As a young, tech-savvy generation, Mixue consumers often utilize the role of social media as an online community where they can discuss various topics, including the products they like. Instagram is one of the social networks with the largest number of users in Indonesia and is also a forum that welcomes opinions in the comment section provided on each post. In their findings, Thomas et al. (2019) said that information such as online consumer reviews is more persuasive because...
consumers have no interest. Hence, the information conveyed comes from independent and credible sources. Reviews that are honestly written by someone on a social network, based on their personal experience, and do not contain promotional material will attract readers because they are perceived as coming from a reputable source. So, the process of assessing and evaluating a brand's products and services could be done quickly, which will affect the purchase decision made. This opinion is supported by previous research conducted by Rahayu et al. (2021), and Adistia & Sanaji (2022) which states that online customer reviews positively impact purchasing decisions.

Conclusion

Viral marketing had a positive influence on purchase decisions for Mixue ice cream in Surabaya. When something goes viral, it can make people interested in helping spread it. The virality of a product can affect the increase in product sales to a higher level, due to the curiosity of consumers who do not want to be left behind with something that is trending in society. Mixue applies a viral strategy to market its products on Instagram by presenting interesting content. As a result, consumers may be more engaged in consuming the content developed, which may lead to a desire to purchase products that are frequently featured in the video, particularly Mixue cream. Online customer reviews had a positive influence on purchase decisions for Mixue ice cream in Surabaya. Reviews written by Mixue consumers on Instagram that are relevant, in line with the reality lived, and do not intend to promote related products or services, can strengthen the credibility of the supply that provides the review. Reviews that are supported by the credibility of the author's source will be more appealing to consumers, who will use the review as a basis for their purchase decisions about Cream Mixue.

This research has several limitations, including only focusing on Mixue ice cream products. So, Mixue products like tea drinks, smoothies, and lemonade, which also have a great demand, were not included in the research. The sample used in the study was also quite limited to 98 respondents from the entire population of Surabaya who were Mixue customers and Instagram users. The study used only two independent and one dependent variable and did not use mediating variables. Future research can add other variables, such as product quality, with competitors with similar products to get consumers' perspectives on the brand. The large number of competitors selling similar products is a challenge for every entrepreneur, so the right strategy is needed to maintain the business to remain the first choice for customers.
Social media has various platforms that can be used for business purposes. Choosing the right platform and determining the right approach can bring success to entrepreneurs. Recently, various business people have widely implemented viral marketing using Instagram and TikTok. That makes products appear everywhere as if they are selling well and being bought by many people, which can trigger curiosity and the desire to do the same thing. Apart from that, having reviews from customers who have tried the products helps to attract prospective customers' interest after seeing reviews from reliable sources. Viral marketing can generate high revenues if it is implemented correctly and supported by exemplary customer reviews.

In the field of viral marketing, we hope that in the future Mixue will continue to create quality content on social networks actively and always keep up with trends so that the brand and its products continue to grow and remain in the minds of consumers. On the online customer review variable, customer opinions can be a source of improvement for Mixue's products and services. We expect that feedback from customers in the future will help improve existing shortcomings, especially in product quality, product presentation, service, and store cleanliness.

References


