



## The Role of Viral Marketing in Mediating the Relationship between Brand Awareness and Product Quality on Purchase Decisions

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the impact of brand awareness and product quality on purchasing decisions, with viral marketing as a mediating variable for Mixue products in Pontianak. The method used is quantitative, with random sampling. The sample consists of 100 respondents. Secondary data collection was conducted through websites such as [www.MomentumWorks.com](http://www.MomentumWorks.com), [portaltebo.id](http://portaltebo.id), and [Pergikuliner.com](http://Pergikuliner.com). Data analysis includes descriptive statistics, outer model, inner model, and specific indirect effects. The tool used is SmartPLS 3. The results of the study show that brand awareness has a positive but not significant effect on purchasing decisions, while product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on viral marketing, product quality has a positive and significant effect on viral marketing, and viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions, with viral marketing acting as a mediating variable, and product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions, with viral marketing acting as a mediating variable.*

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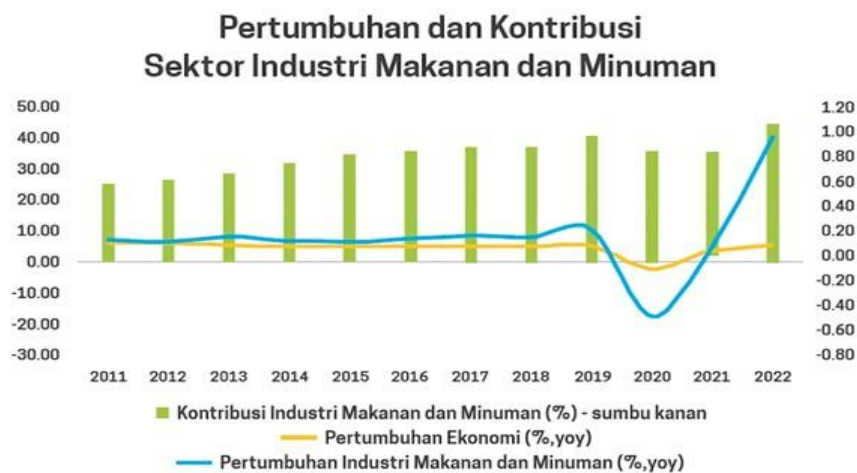


## INTRODUCTION

Competition in today's business environment continues to evolve rapidly in line with increasingly sophisticated technological advancements. This has led to various changes in business systems such as trade, marketing, transactions, and information communication. Companies that have the ability to cope with competition will have long-term sustainability. One of the companies currently present in the business environment is in the food and beverage industry. Today, the food and beverage industry is experiencing significant growth, prompting entrepreneurs in this sector to create innovative products to meet the changing needs of society. Innovation will not stagnate but will continue to evolve alongside the development of human thought (Firmansyah, 2019).

According to Ofeser et al. (2021), after experiencing a decline in performance in 2020, the food and beverage industry quickly recovered, growing by 5.03% in the following year. Even in 2022, the food and beverage industry recorded an extraordinary growth of 40.54%, reaching the highest level in the past decade. As shown in Figure 1.1 below, the data illustrates the growth and contribution of the food and beverage industry sector from 2011 to 2022.

Figure 1. Growth of the Food and Beverage Industry Sector



Source: BPS Datanesia

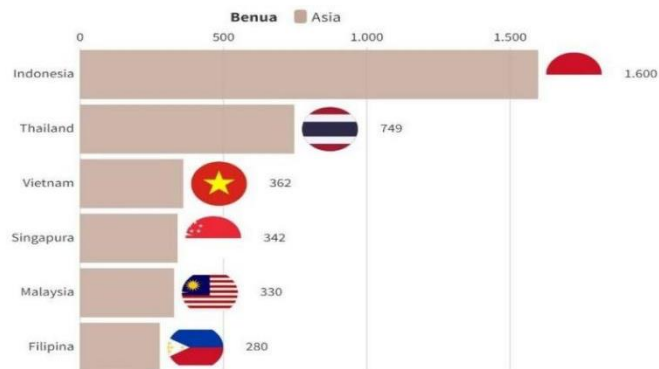
The growth rate, which reached the highest level in a decade, can be interpreted as a positive indicator for the economy as a whole, considering the importance of the food and beverage industry in its contribution to the national economy. The food and beverage industry was also affected by the pandemic. In 2020, its performance contracted by 17.51%, deeper than the national economic growth, which was minus 2.07%. The projected growth for the coming years, around 5-7% according to GAPMMI (2020), shows that this sector continues to grow and contribute more significantly to national economic growth. This creates opportunities for companies to innovate and select products to market.

Nursalim (2023) stated that one example of this innovation is tea-based drinks known as "Milk Tea" or "Bubble Tea" and "Ice Cream," which are produced by Indonesians. "Milk Tea" or "Bubble Tea" drinks have become a favorite choice for many,



especially the younger generation, due to the unique combination of tea, milk, and sweetness served with chewy boba. This trend has grown rapidly, with various innovations and flavor variations continually emerging, such as "Brown Sugar Boba," "Fruit Tea," and "Cheese Tea." These drinks are not just refreshing beverages but also part of a lifestyle and popular pop culture trends in various parts of the world. According to GoodStats, a research body focused on providing quality information through data and numbers, in 2021, Indonesia was the largest boba drink market in Southeast Asia. Its annual revenue exceeds 1.6 billion USD, or approximately IDR 23.74 trillion. Similarly, the boba drink market value in Indonesia now accounts for 43.7% of the total boba drink market in Southeast Asia (Rizki, 2022). The large market share that Indonesia holds for boba drinks has led entrepreneurs in Indonesia to compete in establishing businesses in the food and beverage sector, as shown in Figure 1.2 below.

**Figure 2.** Market Value of Boba Drinks in Southeast Asia



*Source: Momentum Works & Club*

Based on the figures above, it is evident that Indonesians tend to spend a significant amount of their money on boba drinks. This can be seen from the fact that Indonesia holds the largest market share for boba drinks in Southeast Asia, with annual revenue reaching a substantial figure. The large amount of this data is certainly linked to the presence of franchises like Mixue, which is currently expanding its reach in Indonesia (Larasati, 2023). According to a report by Euromonitor recorded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), ice cream sales in Indonesia increased during the 2020-2021 pandemic. In 2021, sales reached USD 425 million, or approximately IDR 6 trillion, based on the 2021 exchange rate of IDR 14,260 per USD, marking a record high as shown in the graph.

According to a report by Momentum Works, the Chinese ice cream and beverage company Mixue had 21,582 franchise outlets spread across various countries by 2021. The brand Mixue Ice Cream and Tea is one of the franchise companies offering soft-serve ice cream and tea drinks. This Chinese ice cream brand was founded in 1997 by Zhang Hongchao. Mixue's flavors are very well-suited to Indonesian consumers, who tend to favor sweet and affordable products. Mixue decided to expand into Indonesia to increase the company's profits. Mixue is highly popular among the public due to its unique taste and highly attractive marketing strategies that encourage potential customers to buy their products (Suryati, 2022).

The outlets that began to spread in 2021 made Mixue the fifth-largest food and beverage (F&B) franchise company in the world. The number of Mixue outlets even surpassed those of Burger King and Domino's Pizza. The American F&B companies had



19,247 and 18,848 outlets respectively last year. Zhang Hongchao's company first appeared in Indonesia in 2020, specifically at Cihampelas Walk, Bandung City (Rahman & Satiti 2023). The number of outlets continued to grow, reaching 300 outlets spread across various regions of Indonesia, from malls and traditional markets to street corners. In addition to China and Indonesia, Mixue outlets are also found in Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia.

According to [osc.medcom.id](http://osc.medcom.id), Mixue implements seven marketing strategies, including penetration pricing, diverse products, store placement, social media promotions, supply chain management, targeting the middle-to-lower market, and product innovation and promotion. Research on the Mixue brand highlights the advantages of choosing brand awareness and product quality over the marketing mix as research variables. This study emphasizes that these two variables specifically address key aspects of purchasing decisions, namely awareness and positive perceptions of the brand (Rizky & Yasin, 2021). The importance of brand awareness as a key driver for consumers to try a product is also emphasized, supported by Mixue's consistent product quality, which can strengthen purchase decisions and stimulate repeat purchases (Novia & Lia, 2021). Therefore, brand awareness and product quality are considered the most relevant variables and have a direct impact on purchasing decisions for Mixue.

The people of Pontianak have a tendency to follow viral trends, based on their behavior of following popular currents in terms of products, lifestyle, or entertainment. This tendency to follow trends or "herd behavior" appears to be an integral part of consumption patterns in this region. According to Hamdani et al. (2022), the "bandwagon effect" is a psychological phenomenon where someone does something simply because others are doing it, without considering their own beliefs. The "bandwagon effect" can also be interpreted as someone's tendency to follow or join something because many others are doing it, not because of rational considerations or personal decisions. This occurs when the popularity or adoption of an idea, product, or behavior creates momentum, and people tend to join in just because many others are doing the same. Many consumers in Pontianak tend to choose products or activities that are trending due to the urge to blend in with the group or follow the majority trend.

This increasingly dynamic market shows that companies must be able to identify local consumers' preferences, needs, and desires. Understanding the social, cultural, and economic context of Pontianak is crucial in designing effective marketing strategies. This enables companies to respond more accurately to consumer expectations and provide solutions that fit local conditions. Pontianak, as one of the major cities in Indonesia, has a unique market character, with the city's economic growth creating its own opportunities and challenges for businesses operating there. According to Kalbar Antar News in 2021, the phenomenon of viral boba drinks entering Pontianak has led many people to buy these beverages.

Purchasing decisions are choices made by consumers to buy a product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). According to Faith (2018), purchasing decisions play a crucial role as they can enhance profits for companies by improving the marketed products. Typically, consumers need to consider and evaluate alternatives for a product before making a purchasing decision. Brand awareness creates an essential foundation in the purchasing decision process. The level of brand awareness influences consumers' perceptions of the credibility and trustworthiness of the product.

Brand awareness refers to consumers' ability to identify a brand in various ways, reflected in their level of awareness or knowledge about that brand (Bilgin, 2016).



Ridhwan et al. (2021) indicates that the higher the brand awareness possessed by consumers, the greater their opportunity to make decisions in the purchasing process. Consumers also consider product quality as an important factor before deciding to purchase goods or services. The quality of drinks produced by Mixue is a primary focus, as this quality is closely related to consumer satisfaction. This is evident from the unique and distinctive flavors found in various Mixue ice cream menu items, such as red bean ice cream, boba ice cream, matcha ice cream, Oreo ice cream, and milk tea (Kasih et al., 2023). Wahyuni (2022) states in her research that product quality can influence purchasing decisions.

Mixue employs marketing strategies through social media, especially on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and several other platforms. This approach is consistently executed with the aim of capturing the attention of social media users by continuously presenting content across various platforms and actively engaging with its followers, thereby embedding itself in the minds of the Indonesian public. This strategy is not only to reach a wider audience but also to ensure that the Mixue brand is easily remembered and recognized by consumers, stimulating brand awareness and encouraging purchasing decisions. At this stage, Mixue is already known among the people of Pontianak, even though it has not yet established a presence there.

According to Amelfdi & Ardyan (2021) brand awareness does not significantly affect purchasing decisions. The strategy of viral marketing influences purchasing decisions, as consumers exposed to viral content from a brand they are already familiar with may be more likely to consider that product when making purchasing decisions. The influence of viral marketing as a mediating variable is expected to impact purchasing decisions based on brand awareness, as stated by Liow et al. (2023), who assert that viral marketing positively and significantly affects purchasing decisions.

Rahayu & Kusumadewi (2023) state that viral marketing positively and significantly affects purchasing decisions. Strong brand awareness can accelerate the spread of viral content and act as a natural driver of virality, expanding the reach of messages and increasing their potential impact. Ridhwan et al. (2021) also posits that consumers who are well-acquainted with a brand tend to be more active in sharing content with their friends. Consumers also tend to choose products that are perceived to have high quality and can meet or exceed their expectations. However, according to Sari & Harti (2021), product quality does not influence purchasing decisions. The influence of viral marketing as a mediating variable is expected to affect purchasing decisions based on product quality, as stated by Rahayu & Kusumadewi (2023), who assert that viral marketing positively and significantly affects purchasing decisions.

The emergence of various empirical phenomena, along with inconsistencies in several previous study results, motivates researchers to investigate the influence of Brand Awareness and Product Quality on Purchase Decisions with Viral Marketing as a Mediating Variable for Mixue products in Pontianak.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative research method. It collects data with specific objectives and produces findings that can be statistically measured, providing the necessary figures to achieve the desired research outcomes (Sugiyono, 2013). The type of research conducted is descriptive research, which describes the current state of the subjects or objects based on existing facts and situations, without comparing or relating one variable to another (Sugiyono, 2013). In this study, the author uses a survey method,



which involves collecting data through questionnaires to obtain information from both large and small populations. According to Sugiyono (2016), the survey method allows for the investigation of knowledge, beliefs, preferences, and public satisfaction, as well as measuring various social and psychological variables. The data collected through the questionnaires will be analyzed descriptively, with the results presented in percentage form to provide a clear picture of the research findings.

The population, as defined by Sugiyono (2019), consists of subjects or objects with specific characteristics. It can be finite, with countable members, or infinite, with unknown membership. This study targets all users of Mixue products in Pontianak, considered an infinite population. The sample is a subset of the population, and when studying a large population is impractical, researchers can use random sampling (Sugiyono, 2017). For this study, the Lemeshow formula was applied to determine the sample size, resulting in 100 individuals.

Descriptive statistics are used to describe respondents' responses to questionnaires and explain research variables. According to Sugiyono (2018), this statistics analyzes collected data without drawing general conclusions. In this study, a Likert scale is used to measure responses with scores ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the results are grouped for quantitative analysis and qualitative description. The research also employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with a Partial Least Square (PLS) approach to test the relationships between variables. Validity and reliability are measured using convergent validity, discriminant validity, and Cronbach's alpha, along with R-square values and path coefficients for structural analysis.

This study assesses the significant effects of various factors on purchasing decisions based on the following hypotheses: H1 indicates that brand awareness does not significantly influence purchasing decisions, as evidenced by a t-statistic of 1.088 and a p-value of 0.277. H2 shows that product quality significantly affects purchasing decisions. H3 confirms that brand awareness has a significant impact on viral marketing, while H4 demonstrates that product quality also significantly influences viral marketing. H5 indicates that viral marketing significantly affects purchasing decisions. Additionally, H6 reveals that brand awareness significantly impacts purchasing decisions with the mediating variable of viral marketing, and H7 shows that product quality also influences purchasing decisions through viral marketing, all supported by statistically significant results.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Result**

The characteristics of the respondents in this study include gender and age, based on data from 100 Mixue consumers in Pontianak collected through a questionnaire. Out of the total respondents, 46 respondents (46%) are male, while 54 respondents (54%) are female. Regarding age, 87 respondents (87%) are between 17-27 years old, while 13 respondents (13%) are between 28-38 years old, with no respondents aged 39 and above.

The descriptive analysis of the variables in this study aims to explain the responses from Mixue consumers who purchased Mixue products and filled out the distributed questionnaires. This analysis illustrates the research variables, including brand awareness (X1), product quality (X2), and viral marketing (Z) in relation to purchase decisions (Y). These variables were measured using a Likert scale, with the



lowest score being 1 (strongly disagree) and the highest score being 5 (strongly agree). The interval calculation for this scale range is as  $(5 - 1) / 5 = 0.8$ .

The results indicated that the average brand awareness reached 4.253 (very high), with the highest item being the statement that Mixue is easy to find on social media (4.370). The average product quality was 4.347 (very high), with the highest rating for the statement about the variety of delicious menu options (4.430). The average viral marketing score was 4.275 (very high), with the top item being the impact of packaging design (4.420). Purchasing decisions had an average score of 4.306 (very high), influenced by satisfaction with products and services (4.420), although the variability in payment methods did not significantly affect purchasing decisions (4.180). All variables demonstrated very positive results regarding consumer purchasing decisions at Mixue.

**Table 1.** Statistical Analysis Results

Aspect	Data	Description
Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )	Viral Marketing	0.779
	Purchasing Decisions	0.690
Path Coefficients	Brand Awareness Effect on Purchase Decisions	Not Significant
	Product Quality Effect on Purchase Decisions	Significant
	Brand Awareness Effect on Viral Marketing	Significant
	Product Quality Effect on Viral Marketing	Significant
Effect Size ( $f^2$ )	Brand Awareness	0,45 (Strong)
	Product Quality	0,28 (Moderate)
Variance Accounted for (VAF)	Brand Awareness	3,57% (Weak Mediation)
	Product Quality	2,54% (Weak Mediation)

The coefficient of determination, or  $R^2$ , measures the predictive accuracy of the model by representing the squared correlation between actual and predicted values of a specific endogenous construct. It reflects the combined influence of exogenous latent variables on endogenous latent variables (Marliana, 2019). Based on Table 4.13, the  $R^2$  value for viral marketing is 0.779, indicating that brand awareness and product quality account for 77.9% of the variance in viral marketing, while they explain 69% of the variance in purchasing decisions. Additionally, the path coefficients demonstrate positive relationships among the variables, with significant impacts from brand awareness and product quality on both viral marketing and purchasing decisions.

This research also conducted bootstrapping with more than 300 iterations and used standardized data to measure the significance among paths. The analysis results showed that brand awareness (X1) did not have a significant effect on purchase decisions (Y), while product quality (X2) had a significant effect. Furthermore, both brand awareness and product quality had significant effects on viral marketing (Z), and viral marketing also had a significant effect on purchase decisions. This influence was strengthened through the mediation path of viral marketing. The Effect Size ( $f^2$ ) indicated a strong influence for brand awareness (0.45) and a moderate influence for product quality (0.28). The VAF values for brand awareness and product quality were 3.57% and 2.54%, respectively, indicating a weak mediation effect.



## **Discussion**

Zhang Hongchao founded Mixue in 1997, a beverage and ice cream stall in China, to support his family's finances by selling shaved ice through a simple kiosk. With capital from a part-time job and a 4,000 RMB loan from his grandmother, he started his business with makeshift equipment. Despite facing challenges in winter, his business thrived, and he renamed it Mixue Bingcheng. With prices lower than competitors, Mixue became the best-selling bubble tea brand in China and expanded its franchise in 2010. In Indonesia, Mixue began mass opening branches in 2020, with around 300 branches currently. Adhering to the principles of quality, service, and cleanliness (QSC), Mixue continues to expand into various regions, including Sumatra and Kalimantan, committed to becoming a reputable business thriving for over 100 years while offering high-quality, affordable products for everyone.

### *The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Decisions*

The results of the study on the influence of brand awareness on purchase decisions indicate that brand awareness has a positive but not significant effect on purchase decisions. Although there is an influence of brand awareness on purchase decisions, the difference does not reach statistical significance. This study aligns with the findings of Amelfdi & Ardyan (2021), which suggest that the lack of significance in brand awareness may be related to the majority of respondents being young, reaching 87%. It can be concluded that the results of this study reflect the tendency of the younger generation in Pontianak to prefer innovative and new things, and that the level of brand awareness may not be a primary consideration in their purchase decisions.

Competition in the market may also be a major factor explaining why Mixue's brand awareness tends to be low. Competing products that already have a high level of brand awareness in the minds of consumers may pose a challenge for Mixue in capturing consumer attention. The presence of established competing brands may hinder Mixue from entering consumer awareness and becoming their primary choice. This differs from previous research where brand awareness had a positive and significant effect on purchase decision levels (Amron, 2018).

### *The Influence of Product Quality on Purchase Decisions*

The results of the study on the influence of product quality on purchase decisions indicate that the product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions for Mixue products in Pontianak. This study aligns with the findings of Rundh (2016), which indicate that attractive selling points for consumers can be found in the uniqueness of flavors, high-quality raw materials, innovative flavor variations, appealing packaging, and marketing messages that build a positive image. By focusing on these aspects, Mixue Ice Cream can create a strong appeal in the ice cream market and encourage consumer interest in making purchases. This contrasts with previous research, which found that brand awareness had a negative and insignificant effect on purchase decision levels (Beneke et al., 2022).

### *The Influence of Brand Awareness on Viral Marketing*

The results of the study on the influence of brand awareness on viral marketing indicate that the brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on viral marketing for Mixue products in Pontianak. This study aligns with the findings of Permadi & Putri (2022), which suggest that high brand awareness provides a strong





foundation for achieving success in viral marketing strategies. Consumers who are familiar with the brand tend to be more trusting, actively participate in viral campaigns, and easily spread information through their social networks. As a result, a high level of brand recognition opens up opportunities to achieve a greater impact through viral campaigns, expanding brand reach and enhancing consumer engagement. Previous research supports or shares similar results, reinforcing the validity of hypothesis H3 in this study.

#### *The Influence of Product Quality on Viral Marketing*

The results of the study on the influence of product quality on viral marketing indicate that the product quality has a positive and significant effect on the success of viral marketing campaigns for Mixue products in Pontianak. This study aligns with the findings of Andriyanti & Farida (2022), which show that high product quality positively impacts viral marketing. Positive reviews, consumer satisfaction, and a good reputation resulting from product quality tend to encourage consumers to actively share information, provide recommendations, and engage in viral marketing campaigns. Satisfactory product quality creates a strong foundation for building trust, emotional attachment, and consumer participation in spreading positive messages, thereby expanding brand reach and strengthening the effects of viral campaigns. Therefore, hypothesis H4 is consistent with this research.

#### *The Influence of Viral Marketing on Purchasing Decisions*

The results of the study on the influence of viral marketing on purchasing decisions indicate that the viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for Mixue products in Pontianak. This study aligns with the findings of Razali et al. (2016), which show that success in enhancing purchasing decisions can be achieved through effective viral marketing campaigns. Engaging product introductions, clear information provision, and the creation of positive conversations about the product are essential. By focusing efforts on these elements, Mixue can create a positive perception among consumers, enhance brand awareness, and stimulate interactions that encourage purchases. A well-executed viral campaign can be a strategic tool to enhance consumer appeal and purchasing decisions regarding Mixue products. Previous research supporting or yielding similar findings, such as that by Khoiro et al. (2022), states that viral marketing has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions; therefore, hypothesis H5 is consistent with this research.

#### *The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchasing Decisions with Viral Marketing as a Mediating Variable*

The results of the study on the influence of brand awareness on purchasing decisions with viral marketing as a mediating variable indicate that the t-statistic value is 2.107, which is greater than 1.96, and the significance level p-value is 0.036, which is less than 0.05. There is an effect size of 0.45 and a VAF value of 3.57%. Although the VAF is low and the effect size is high, this indicates that despite the small proportion of the indirect effect, the relationships among these variables are quite strong. This can occur if the total effect overall (both direct and indirect effects) is sufficiently large, even though the contribution of the indirect effect is small. These results may suggest the presence of other non-mediated factors that also contribute to the total effect, providing



a basis for further investigation into other factors or variables that may influence the relationship among these variables.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions, with viral marketing acting as a mediating variable for Mixue products in Pontianak. This study aligns with the findings of Beneke et al. (2023) and Khoiro et al. (2022), which demonstrate that high brand awareness builds a positive perception, enhances consumer engagement, and serves as a key driver in the success of viral marketing campaigns. Through rapid information dissemination and positive conversations, viral marketing campaigns link brand awareness to consumer purchasing decisions. Understanding and leveraging the interaction between brand awareness and viral marketing can be an effective strategy in influencing consumer behavior in the context of purchasing decisions. Previous research supporting or yielding similar findings, such as that by Khoiro et al. (2022), indicates that viral marketing has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions, while the research by Zhao et al. (2017) states that brand awareness positively and significantly influences purchasing decisions; therefore, hypothesis H6 is consistent with this research.

#### *The Influence of Product Quality on Purchasing Decisions with Viral Marketing as a Mediating Variable*

The results of the study on the influence of product quality on purchasing decisions with viral marketing as a mediating variable indicate that the t-statistic value is 2.101, which is greater than 1.96, and the significance level p-value is 0.036, which is less than 0.05. There is an effect size of 0.28 and a VAF value of 2.54%. Although the effect size indicates a significant influence, the contribution of the indirect effect (VAF) to the total effect is very low, indicating that most of the influence comes from the direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The emphasis on the direct influence suggests that the mediating variable has a limited role in connecting these variables. Despite the moderate relationship, the complexity of the relationships among variables may require further consideration. Other factors or additional variables could influence the dynamics of this relationship.

This study aligns with the findings of Sari & Harti (2021) and Najwan et al. (2023), which indicate that high-quality ice cream not only contributes directly to purchasing decisions but also triggers positive viral marketing campaigns. These marketing efforts, such as consumer reviews and engaging content, serve as intermediaries that strengthen the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions. Marketing strategies that integrate product quality and viral marketing campaigns can be an effective approach to enhance consumer preferences for the Mixue brand. Therefore, hypothesis H7 is consistent with this research.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study concluded that brand awareness has a positive but insignificant effect on the purchasing decisions of Mixue products. This indicates that the younger generation in Pontianak may prioritize other factors in their decision-making process. In contrast, product quality has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions, where the high quality of the ice cream, including unique flavors and attractive packaging, enhances consumer appeal. Additionally, brand awareness positively and significantly affects viral marketing, which impacts consumer



engagement. Product quality also influences the success of viral marketing campaigns, indicating that viral marketing significantly affects purchasing decisions and emphasizing the importance of the relationship between these three factors in influencing consumer behavior.

To strengthen its market position, Mixue is advised to optimize the use of influencers and improve customer satisfaction. For future researchers, it is recommended to select a larger sample size and use more complex data analysis while considering additional variables to yield more varied findings regarding the purchasing decisions of Mixue products.

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