

Effect of Viral and Contra Marketing on Online Decision Making in Gen Z Via Product Attractiveness in Influencer Moderation on E-Commerce in South Kalimantan

Apippudin Adnan¹, Ujianto², Abdul Halik³

^{1,2,3} Economics and Business Doctoral Program, Faculty of Economics, University of 17 August 1945 Surabaya

eybel.adnan@gmail.com¹, ujianto@untag-sby.ac.id², halik@untag-sby.ac.id³

Correspondence : Faculty of Economics, University of 17 August 1945 Surabaya, Doctoral Program in Economics and Business, ujianto@untag-sby.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Received: 30 Dec 2024

Revised: 05 Feb 2025

Accepted: 25 Feb 2025

Introduction: As one of the world's most populated nations, Indonesia has seen a sharp increase in the use of digital technologies. Internet usage is expected to reach 215 million users by the end of 2024, according to Data Reportal's "Digital 2024 Indonesia" research. There are 139 million active social media users (49.9%), 185.3 million internet users (66.5%), and 353.3 million mobile devices (128% of the population) out of a total population of 278.7 million.

Objectives: To analyze the effect of viral marketing on product attractiveness, To analyze the effect of contra marketing on product attractiveness, To analyze the effect of product attractiveness on online decision making, To analyze the moderating role of influencers in the relationship between product attractiveness and online decision making

Methods: This study employs a quantitative approach with the type of research known as causal explanatory research. The aim of this study is to examine the effects of independent and dependent variables (viral and anti-marketing), intervening variables (product attractiveness), and moderating variables (influencers) on the online purchasing behavior of Generation Z in Kalimantan Selatan.

Results: This study employs a quantitative approach with the type of research known as causal explanatory research. The aim of this study is to examine the effects of independent and dependent variables (viral and anti-marketing), intervening variables (product attractiveness), and moderating variables (influencers) on the online purchasing behavior of Generation Z in Kalimantan Selatan.

Conclusions: According to this study, product attractiveness serves as a major mediating factor in the enormous influence that viral and counter marketing have on Generation Z's online buying decisions in South Kalimantan. The effectiveness of interesting and shareable material in grabbing Gen Z's attention is demonstrated by viral marketing's greater impact when compared to counter marketing. Due to Gen Z consumers' strong sensitivity to aesthetic appeal, useful features, and emotional value, product beauty itself is a major factor in influencing online buying habits.

Keywords: Product attractiveness, influencers, online decision-making, Gen Z, e-commerce, viral marketing, contramarketing, and SEM-PLS

INTRODUCTION

As one of the world's most populated nations, Indonesia has seen a sharp increase in the use of digital technologies. Internet usage is expected to reach 215 million users by the end of 2024, according to Data Reportal's "Digital 2024 Indonesia" research. There are 139 million active social media users (49.9%), 185.3 million internet users (66.5%), and 353.3 million mobile devices (128% of the population) out of a total population of 278.7 million. Because Generation Z (ages 12–27) is so accustomed to using mobile devices and the internet, this digital revolution has had a major impact on consumer behavior. Gen Z shops online in addition to using the internet for communication. 99%

of Indonesia's Gen Z population uses social media regularly, according to studies, making these channels ideal for marketing.

Viral marketing and counter marketing are two important tactics in the field of digital marketing. While contra marketing consists of initiatives that question or contrast with competitor marketing, frequently to reposition consumer perception, viral marketing uses captivating, shareable material to boost brand visibility and emotional connection with customers. Purchase decisions are heavily influenced by product attractiveness, particularly for Gen Z consumers who are drawn to things that are both aesthetically pleasing and functionally useful. Product attractiveness is influenced by a number of factors, including visual appearance, usefulness, and how well a product fits with the values and lifestyle of the consumer.

The process customers go through while choosing products using digital platforms is referred to as "online decision-making." Numerous elements, including user experience, reviews, convenience of use, and social influences—particularly from influencers—have an impact on this process. Influencers are dependable individuals who have the power to affect the opinions and choices of consumers. Because of their apparent relatability and genuineness, influencers have a particularly strong effect on Generation Z.

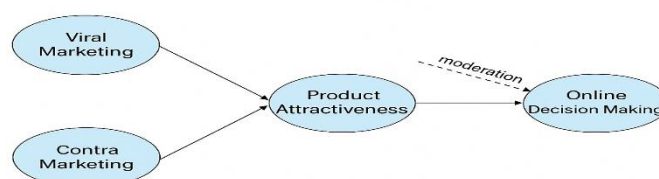
Knowing how viral and counter marketing affect online decision-making is becoming more and more crucial in the context of South Kalimantan's e-commerce, where the digital economy is expanding quickly. This study examines the effects of various marketing tactics on Gen Z's online buying habits, using influencers as a moderating factor and product attractiveness as a mediating variable.

This study is interesting since it looks at product attractiveness and anti-marketing as independent variables that influence online decision-making, regulated by influencers. It is anticipated that the study would provide organizations looking to better engage Gen Z customers in Indonesia's changing digital marketplace with strategic insights.

OBJECTIVES

The following can be summarized as the goal of the study "The Effect of Viral and Contra Marketing on Online Decision Making in Gen Z through Product Attractiveness in Influencer Moderation on E-Commerce in South Kalimantan" to examine how viral and contramarketing affect Generation Z's online buying choices in South Kalimantan, using influencer presence as a moderating factor and product attractiveness as a mediating factor. Model explanation: The independent variables X1 (Viral Marketing) and X2 (Contra Marketing) affect Z (Product Attractiveness).

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Model explanation:

1. The intervening variable Z (Product Attractiveness) mediates the effects of X1 and X2 on Y (Online Decision Making).
2. Y (Online Decision Making) is a dependent variable.
3. The moderator variable M (Influencer) modifies the relationship between Z and Y.

1. Viral Marketing

By generating buzz on sites that Gen Z frequently uses, viral marketing can successfully draw their attention in the context of South Kalimantan e-commerce. Message reach can be increased by working with regional influencers that have sizable fan bases. Creating a successful marketing plan requires a thorough understanding of the target market

and the local environment. Viral marketing is a tactic used to quickly disseminate information about a good or service using digital platforms and social media. It entails using social networks to disseminate content in a manner that resembles viral spread, claim Kaplan and Haenlein (2011). Instead than depending on conventional advertising, it promotes sharing through social interaction and interesting information.

2. Contra Marketing

In contemporary marketing, contra marketing is becoming more and more relevant, particularly in light of rising social consciousness. In contrast to conventional marketing, it seeks to increase consumer awareness by highlighting the drawbacks of particular goods or services. Smith and Zook (2016) assert that it makes a significant contribution to society in addition to enhancing a company's reputation.

But as Rosenberg (2015) points out, if contramarketing is not done appropriately, there are serious risks involved, such as:

1. Backlash: if the message is perceived as deceptive or manipulative.
2. Defamation claims: if competitors are the object of inaccurate or unfounded information.
3. Damage to one's reputation if the tactic is thought to be unethical.

3. Product Attractiveness

The ability of a product to pique consumer interest through its attributes, worth, and perceived advantages is referred to as product attractiveness. This idea, which is particularly significant for Generation Z, encompasses both practical and sentimental factors that affect purchasing choices in the current information-rich digital age.

Kotler and Keller state that the following are the main components of product attractiveness:

a. Core Benefit

the core value that satisfies the primary requirement of the customer (for example, a smartphone that provides entertainment and information access in addition to communication).

b. Qualities

Features that are either practical or physical, like:

1. Quality
2. Design
3. Innovation

c. Value Perception

The perception of the consumer that the goods is more valuable than its price (emotional, symbolic, or functional).

6. Online Decision Making

From problem identification to post-purchase assessment, the online consumer decision-making process entails multiple steps and is impacted by both emotional and rational elements. Solomon (2018) asserts that prior experiences, recommendations from others, and the facts at hand all influence the choices made by consumers. The procedure is made more difficult by the wealth of information available online.

Important elements influencing online decision-making are highlighted by Kotler and Keller (2016):

- a. Access to Information
- b. Credibility and Trust
- c. Social Proof and Influencers
- d. Usability
- e. Rewards and Promotions

METHODS

In order to elucidate the causal relationship between variables, this study used a quantitative methodology and a causal explanatory research design. With the use of SmartPLS 4.0 software, the analysis technique employed is Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS).

This study combines causal explanatory research with a quantitative methodology. The study's target audience consists of South Kalimantan's Generation Z customers, who are 13 to 28 years old and were born between 1997 and 2012. The distinctive online buying habits of Generation Z include a strong dependence on social media and a need for face-to-face communication with brands. The predicted 1.2 million Gen Zers in South Kalimantan represent a sizable market niche for e-commerce marketing techniques, according to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2024). Proportional random sampling is the sample technique employed in this investigation (Sugiyono, 2012).

Respondents will be chosen proportionately from the two cities and eleven districts that make up South Kalimantan. Hulu Sungai Utara, Hulu Sungai Tengah, Hulu Sungai Selatan, Kotabaru, Tanah Laut, Tabalong, Barito Timur, Banjar, Tanah Bumbu, Banjarmasin, and Banjarbaru are among the districts that were chosen. People between the ages of 13 and 28 who have access to social media and shop online at least once a month are included in the sample criteria. 164 respondents are needed for the sample size, which is calculated using the Slovin formula with a 7% margin of error.

RESULTS

Understanding and analyzing respondent characteristics is made easier with the help of the respondent profile. These characteristics in SMEs include age, gender, and educational attainment, according to this study.

Table 1: Description of Respondent

Profile Description	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
23-28 years old	32	16,4
Education Level		
Junior High School (SMP)	0	0
Senior High School/Vocational School (SMA/SMK)	62	31,7
Diploma	1	0,5
Bachelor's Degree (S1)	132	68
Master (S2)	0	0
Docotoral (S3)	0	0

Source: Output data processing SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

With 143 female respondents (73.3%) and 52 male respondents (26.7%), Table 1's survey results indicate that the majority of Gen Z respondents are female. The age distribution of Gen Z respondents is displayed in Table 5.2: 5 respondents (2.6%) are between the ages of 13 and 17, 158 respondents (81%) are between the ages of 18 and 22, and 32 respondents (16.4%) are between the ages of 23 and 28. This suggests that the majority of respondents are in the 18–22 age range. displays the respondents' educational backgrounds: One respondent (0.5%) has a diploma, 132 respondents (68%) have a bachelor's degree (S1), 0 respondents (0%) have a master's degree (S2) or doctorate (S3),

62 respondents (31.7%) have completed senior high school (SLTA), and 0 respondents (0%) have completed junior high school (SLTP). This indicates that bachelor's degrees are held by the majority of responders (S1).

The Partial Least Square (PLS) approach is used in this study's quantitative analysis. The outcomes of the study are shown in two phases: the measurement model (outer model) evaluation and the structural model (inner model) evaluation.

A. Results of the Outer Model Test

The following are included in this study's outer model assessment:

1. Convergent Validity, first

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Variabel	Item	Loading Value	Validity
X1	1	0.842	Valid
	2	0.815	Valid
	3	0.801	Valid
	4	0.880	Valid
	5	0.751	Valid
X2	1	0.823	Valid
	2	0.729	Valid
	3	0.927	Valid
	4	0.855	Valid
	5	0.903	Valid
Y	1	0.778	Valid
	2	0.813	Valid
	3	0.812	Valid
Z	1	0.936	Valid
	2	0.891	Valid
	3	0.734	Valid
M	1	0.861	Valid
	2	0.860	Valid

Source: Output data processed with SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Table 3 shows that all of the indicators for every variable in this study have values more than 0.7, which means they meet the requirements for convergent validity and are thus deemed legitimate.

2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Tabel 3. 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 using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Table 3 shows that every variable in this study has an AVE value greater than 0.5, indicating that all of the variables are genuine and satisfy the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) requirements.

3. Composite Reliability

Tabel 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 using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Table 4 indicates that the composite dependability value for all variable in this investigation is higher than 0.7. As a result, all variables satisfy the requirements for composite dependability and can be deemed trustworthy.

4. Cronbach's Alpha

Tabel 5. Cronbach's Alpha

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

Source: Output data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

All of the study's variables, as shown in Table 7, have Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.7, proving their dependability and compliance with the necessary reliability requirements.

B. Inner Model Test Results

Ghozali (2015) asserts that the inner model is employed to investigate the connection between independent and dependent latent variables. Another name for this structural model is a hypothesis or effect test. The R-Square (coefficient of determination) and Q-Square tests are used in this study to evaluate the inner model.

1. R-Square

Table 5. R Square

Variabel	R Square
Y	0.942
Z	0.789

Source: Output data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Approximately 98.5% of the variation in Online Decision Making can be explained by the model, according to the Online Decision Making (Y) variable's R² value of 0.985. This indicates that the independent and moderator factors in the model account for the majority of the variation in online decision making, with other variables not included in the study accounting for around 1.5%. The model's great predictive ability for the dependent variable is indicated by the high R² value.

With an R² value of 0.735, the model accounts for roughly 73.5% of the variation in the Product Attractiveness (Z) variable. This suggests that the majority of the variation in the intervening variable, Product Attractiveness, can be explained by the independent and moderator variables in the model. However, factors not included in the model may account for about 26.5% of the variation. This number indicates that the model's predictive power for this variable is strong.

2. Good of Fitness

Table 6. Good of Fitness

Variabel	GOF
Y	0.512
Z	0.537

Source: Output data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

How well the model fits the observed data is indicated by the goodness of fit numbers (0.821 for Product Attractiveness and 0.824 for Online Decision Making). The high GOF values demonstrate how well the model fits the data. A GOF value of 0.5 or greater indicates that the model accurately depicts the connections between the variables under study. In the context of e-commerce in South Kalimantan, the high GOF values also suggest that the model employed in this study is a trustworthy resource for comprehending the elements impacting Gen Z's online decision-making and product attractiveness. Thus, this model can be used as a basis for strategic choices about digital marketing and the employment of influencers as a moderating element to improve the attractiveness of products and online buying decisions.

3. Investigating Hypotheses

By using bootstrapping for hypothesis testing, the SmartPLS 4.0 application makes it possible to determine how the independent and dependent variables relate to one another. If the t-statistic value is more than the t-table value (1.96) and the P-value is less than 0.5, the hypothesis is deemed significant and accepted. The following are the outcomes of the hypothesis testing and direct or indirect effects:

Table 7. Effects, Direct and Indirect

Variable	T-Statistic	P-Value	Conclusion
X1 → Z	4,200	0,000	Significant

$X_2 \rightarrow Z$	3,943	0,003	Significant
$Z \rightarrow Y$	4,372	0,005	Significant
$M^*Z \rightarrow Y$	3,691	0,556	Not Significant

Source: Output data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

The following are the outcomes of the hypothesis testing using bootstrapping, as shown in Table 7:

1. Product Attractiveness -> Viral Marketing

Product attractiveness is positively and statistically significantly impacted by viral marketing (p-value = 0.000). This indicates that a rise in viral marketing tends to make products more appealing to Gen Z in South Kalimantan e-commerce sites. Good viral marketing increases product appeal in the eyes of Gen Z customers by generating widespread exposure via social media and word-of-mouth advertising. Consumer interest and desire to investigate and buy a product are increased when it is promoted through interesting information that is extensively shared. Thus, in South Kalimantan's e-commerce industry, putting the appropriate viral marketing strategy into practice can be crucial to increasing product desirability. Furthermore, digital platform algorithms that favor content with high interaction rates frequently encourage viral marketing in the context of e-commerce. Put another way, the likelihood that a product will show up in the feeds of prospective customers increases with the number of times a piece of information is shared on social media. As a result, more people get interested in and persuaded to try the product, creating a snowball effect.

2. Contra Marketing -> Product Attractiveness

Contra marketing also has a positive and statistically significant effect on product attractiveness (p-value = 0.003). This implies that an increase in contra marketing tends to boost product attractiveness among Gen Z on e-commerce platforms in South Kalimantan. Contra marketing has a significant impact on how consumers view the appeal of a product. This tactic can have a big impact on how Gen Z assesses a product before deciding to buy it in the context of South Kalimantan e-commerce. By candidly pointing up a product's flaws while maintaining its distinctive value and benefits over rivals, contra marketing is sometimes employed to create a more transparent image. This tactic works especially well for drawing in Gen Z customers, who are renowned for being picky shoppers who like to research products thoroughly before making a purchase. The study's findings show a strong and favorable correlation between product attractiveness and contramarketing. The influence is deemed strong with a t-statistic value of 2.987 and a path coefficient of 0.312. Contra marketing does, in fact, have a substantial impact on increasing product appeal among Gen Z, as indicated by the significance value of 0.004, which is below the 0.05 criterion. Furthermore, younger customers place a great importance on authentic and truthful information in the current digital world.

3. Product Appeal -> Internet-Based Decision Making

Online decision-making is positively and statistically significantly impacted by product attractiveness (p-value = 0.005). This suggests that Gen Z's online buying decisions in South Kalimantan e-commerce platforms are influenced by a rise in product attractiveness. Consumers' perceptions of a product's attractiveness are influenced by its visual appeal, innovative features, unique selling points, and emotional appeal. When it comes to online product selection, Gen Z is renowned for being a very visual and picky consumer group. Strong branding, distinctive packaging, and appealing product design are some of the key elements that influence their purchasing decisions.

4. Influencer as a Moderator for Product Attractiveness -> Online Decision Making

The association between product attractiveness and online decision-making was found to be moderated by influencers in this study. Although product attractiveness has a direct impact on decisions to buy, the presence of influencers can either amplify or diminish this relationship. Through persuasive reviews and captivating content,

influencers with a high level of reputation and audience involvement can increase the desirability of products. But the study also showed that influencers' moderating effect isn't always statistically significant. This could be caused by a number of things, including the degree of consumer trust in the influencer, how relevant the product is to the intended market, and the brand's marketing tactics.

Therefore, even while influencers can be useful tools for increasing online purchase decisions, in order to maximize impact, businesses must make sure that the influencers they choose complement their target demographic and entire marketing plan. The association between product attractiveness and online decision-making is moderated by influencers, however the effect is not statistically significant ($p\text{-value} = 0.558$). This indicates that in the e-commerce industry of South Kalimantan, influencers do not considerably increase the influence of product attractiveness on Gen Z's online buying decisions.

DISCUSSION

The following is a summary of the research findings:

1. Gen Z consumers in South Kalimantan are greatly influenced by viral marketing when making online purchases.
2. Online purchasing decisions are significantly impacted by contramarketing as well.
3. Gen Z's online purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by product attractiveness.
4. Influencers have a major moderating effect on how strongly viral and contramarketing influence consumer choices.

REFERENCES

- [1] D. Chaffey (2020). *Digital Marketing: Planning, Execution, and Application*. Pearson.
- [2] E. Delgado-Ballester and colleagues (2019). To what extent do online firestorms hurt brands? a participant-level approach to the phenomenon.
- [3] Freberg, K., McGaughey, K., Freberg, L., & Graham, K. (2011). Who Are the Influencers on Social Media? An investigation into the knowledge and connections of public relations students with social media influencers. *Journal of Public Relations*, 5(2), 1–13.
- [4] Haenlein, M., and A. M. Kaplan (2011). How to waltz the social media/viral marketing dance: two hearts in three quarters. 54(3), "Business Horizons," 253-263.
- [5] Ibáñez-Sánchez, S., Flavián, M., and Belanche, D. (2020). Reactions of followers to influencers' Instagram posts: Followers' responses to influencers' Instagram publications.
- [6] Keller, K. L., and P. Kotler (2016). "Management of Marketing." Pearson Education.
- [7] Moses, A., Sinaga, R., Ginting, Y. M., & Nainggolan, R. D. (2022). Analyze how the millennial generation's purchasing decisions and intentions to repurchase are influenced by digital marketing, product differentiation, customer value, and service quality at Shopee Online. 134–153 in *SEIKO: Journal of Management & Business*, 4(3). 10.37531/sejaman.v4i3.2527 <https://doi.org>
- [8] Mustikowati, R. I., and Arief, M. (2023). Why do consumers purchase goods online? the results of online consumer reviews, influencer marketing, and attractive advertising.
- [9] Rosenberg, M. (2015) Contra marketing in competitive settings is one example of a strategic marketing technique. *Marketing Strategies Journal*, 12(3), 45–60.
- [10] Smith, A., and Zook, Z. (2016). "A Brand Narrative Approach to Marketing Communications." Publications by Sage.
- [11] Solomon, M. R. (2018). "Purchasing, Possessing, and Existing as Consumers." Pearson.
- [12] Zhang, Y., and Chen, L. (2022). A study of Generation Z consumers examines product accessibility and how it affects their decisions to make online purchases. *Journal of E-Commerce Research*, 9(1), 99-115.