



Impact of Viral Marketing and Gimmick Marketing on Transformation of Customer Behavior Mediated by Influencer Marketing

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Abstract. *The rapid advancement of digital technology has unlocked new opportunities in marketing, especially through social media platforms like TikTok. This study explores the synergy between viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and influencer marketing in driving the transformation of customer behavior from passive consumers to active participants within the digital marketing ecosystem. A quantitative approach was employed, collecting data from 200 respondents actively involved in digital marketing on TikTok as resellers, dropshippers, affiliates, and co-creators. Using the Partial Least Squares method for analysis, the findings reveal that viral marketing significantly influences the transformation of customer behavior. Similarly, gimmick marketing demonstrates a direct and significant impact on this transformation. Moreover, influencer marketing serves as a mediator, amplifying the effects of both viral and gimmick marketing on transformation of customer behavior. This behavioral shift is evident in the transition of consumers from passive roles to active contributors, taking on positions such as resellers, dropshippers, affiliates, and co-creators. At the same time, sellers are evolving from traditional marketing practices to utilizing e-commerce, social media, and live streaming to reach wider audiences. By actively engaging consumers, sellers foster a collaborative ecosystem where consumers play a pivotal role in expanding the marketing framework. To sustain long-term consumer engagement in this digital marketing ecosystem, it is essential to prioritize the selection of credible and relevant influencers while providing continuous education and support for resellers, dropshippers, and affiliates. This research strengthens the theory of planned behavior and the diffusion of innovations theory, offering fresh insights into designing marketing campaigns based on the 4Ps of digital marketing (Platform, Page, Program, and Posting) to address the needs of the digital era.*

Keywords: *viral marketing, gimmick marketing, influencer marketing, tiktok, transformation of customer behavior.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology has revolutionized how businesses interact with consumers, ushering in a new era of social media-based marketing that is both interactive and collaborative. Social media platforms like TikTok have emerged as strategic tools for influencing consumer behavior, particularly through approaches such as viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and influencer marketing. These strategies not only enhance brand awareness but also actively encourage consumers to participate in the marketing ecosystem, taking on roles such as resellers, dropshippers, affiliates, or co-creators.

While extensive research has explored the effectiveness of individual digital marketing strategies, few studies have investigated the synergy between these three approaches in the context of transforming consumer behavior. Transformation of customer behavior refers to the shift of consumers from being passive recipients of information to becoming active participants in the marketing process, whether as distribution agents or content creators. This role is increasingly significant in the age of social media, where direct consumer engagement can have a profound impact on the success of digital marketing campaigns.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, combining viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and influencer marketing within a single conceptual framework to understand the transformation of consumer behavior. This study aims to examine and analyze the impact of viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and influencer marketing on the transformation of consumer behavior, as well as the mediating role of influencer marketing in the relationship between these factors and the transformation of consumer behavior.

The primary focus of this research is on the challenges involved in the process of consumer behavior transformation, which include gaps in social media usage, issues surrounding credibility and trust, the sustainability of partner commitments, advertising oversaturation and fatigue, conflicts of interest related to brands, shifts in market dynamics due to competition, and the lack of education and support for business partners.

Utilizing a quantitative analysis approach based on Partial Least Squares, this research aims to identify the relationships between these variables and to elucidate the mediating role of influencer marketing in amplifying the effects of viral and gimmick marketing on behavioral change. This study not only offers theoretical contributions but also provides strategic insights for businesses seeking to design more effective and relevant digital marketing campaigns.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), is a conceptual framework that explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence consumer intentions and behaviors. This framework is particularly relevant in digital marketing, as perceived behavioral control reflects consumers' perceptions of ease or difficulty in performing specific actions, such as becoming resellers or dropshippers. In influencer marketing, this element plays a critical role in building consumer confidence to take on active roles within the digital marketing ecosystem (Rachmad, 2024:57). Positive attitudes toward behaviors, such as becoming affiliates or co-creators, are often shaped by perceived financial and social benefits. Subjective norms, including social pressure from family, friends, or influencers, act as catalysts for consumers to adopt active roles. TPB serves as a robust theoretical foundation for analyzing how social pressures, confidence, and perceived ease of action influence consumer responses to marketing strategies, such as viral marketing and gimmick marketing.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Developed by Rogers (1962), the Diffusion of Innovations Theory describes the adoption process of innovations through elements such as relative advantage, compatibility, and interpersonal communication. In digital marketing, influencers often act as opinion leaders who accelerate the dissemination of information via social media. The transformation of consumers from passive recipients to active participants is significantly influenced by easy access to information and influencer recommendations (Rachmad, 2024:33). Viral and gimmick marketing strategies leverage elements of this theory to expedite the adoption of new behaviors that support brand engagement.

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is a strategy designed to drive exponential message dissemination through social networks. This approach leverages strong emotions—whether positive, such as inspiration and joy, or negative, such as anger—to enhance the likelihood of message sharing. The viral marketing variable is measured using four indicators: (1) Emotion, which refers to content that evokes either positive emotions, such as admiration or surprise, or negative emotions, such as anger or anxiety, and tends to go viral more easily; (2) Valence, which indicates that content with a positive emotional valence is shared more frequently than negative content; (3) Arousal, which gauges the level of emotional activation, with content that triggers high emotional arousal being more likely to go viral; and (4) Utility, which suggests that content perceived as useful or informative has a higher likelihood of being shared. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook enable viral marketing strategies to achieve extensive exposure at minimal cost (Rachmad, 2024:7). Abbas et al., (2024) emphasize that viral communication significantly boosts brand awareness and purchase intention, while Farivar et al., (2023) highlight that informative and original content effectively influences consumer purchasing decisions.

Gimmick Marketing

Gimmick marketing employs creative and unique elements to capture consumer attention, often through surprise or humor. The gimmick marketing variable is evaluated through four indicators: (1) Thematic incongruence, which refers to the placement of an advertisement that is thematically mismatched with its surrounding content to grab attention; (2) Attention, which highlights how this incongruence draws more focus to the ad due to its distinctiveness; (3) Attitudes towards advertising, which assesses the impact of thematic incongruence on consumer attitudes, potentially positive if perceived as creative or engaging; and (4) Memory, which explores how incongruence can enhance ad recall due to its unique or

standout nature. This strategy creates memorable experiences, provided the gimmick aligns with the brand's relevance. Poorly designed gimmicks can harm brand image, whereas well-executed ones generate buzz and foster consumer engagement (Rachmad, 2024:10). Miller (2024) notes that gimmicks integrating interactive elements can strengthen emotional bonds between consumers and brands. Chen et al., (2023) underscore the importance of creative narratives in enhancing consumer engagement through gimmick marketing.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing capitalizes on individuals with high credibility on social media to promote products or services. The influencer marketing variable is measured using four indicators: (1) Attractiveness, the visual or aesthetic appeal of the influencer's content; (2) Prestige, the perceived quality of the content; (3) Expertise, the content reflecting the influencer's knowledge and experience; and (4) Information, content that is considered informative and influential, shaping the audience's views as an opinion leader. This strategy relies on the personal connections influencers have with their audiences (Rachmad, 2024:47). Shi (2024) finds that social media influencers, especially among Generation Z, wield significant influence through transparent and authentic content. Tartaraj et al., (2024) report that collaborations with TikTok influencers substantially increase brand awareness and drive consumer purchase decisions.

Transformation of Customer Behavior

Transformation of customer behavior refers to the shift from passive recipients of information to active participants in digital marketing (Rachmad, 2024:33). Transformation of customer behavior variable is measured using the following indicators: (1) Awareness, which encompasses emotions, thoughts, and behaviors shaped by both internal and external factors; (2) Conflict, which arises when individuals experience a disconnect between their needs, desires, and values; (3) Integration, which unites different aspects of the self to achieve balance; and (4) Wholeness, which is achieved through a deeper understanding of oneself, emotional balance, and living authentically in alignment with one's true self. Consumers progressively recognize their roles within the digital marketing ecosystem, navigate decision-making uncertainties, align personal values with digital marketing activities, and achieve emotional, social, and financial balance through active participation. Burlac and Frumosu (2023) identify social media's immense potential to enhance consumer awareness via sustainability-driven campaigns. Hadi et al., (2024) highlight that technologies such as data analytics and artificial intelligence play pivotal roles in altering consumer behaviors. Jun et al., (2024) emphasize the

importance of deeply understanding consumer behavior to create more personalized and effective marketing strategies.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal research design to analyze the cause-and-effect relationships among the variables: viral marketing, gimmick marketing, influencer marketing, and transformation of customer behavior. An explanatory design was chosen due to its ability to illustrate both direct and indirect effects among variables, including mediation roles, within the context of social media-based digital marketing. This approach is well-suited for testing complex hypotheses in models involving multiple latent variables.

The conceptual framework of this study outlines the relationship between viral marketing and gimmick marketing, with influencer marketing serving as a mediator, and its impact on transformation of customer behavior. This model aims to examine both the direct and indirect effects of these variables on transformation of customer behavior, offering valuable insights into the dynamics between marketing strategies and the role of influencers in shaping consumer behavior.

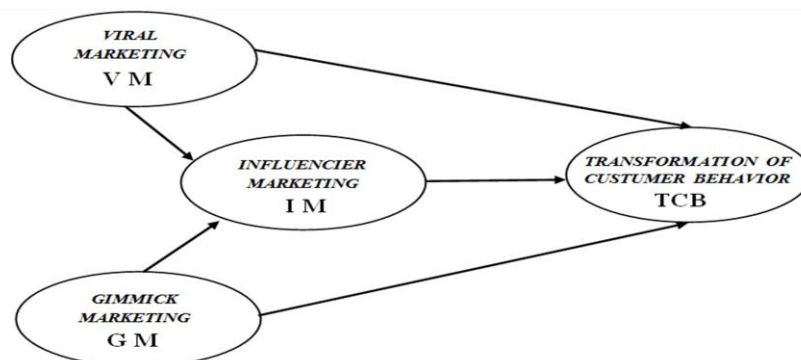


Image 1. Conceptual Framework Diagram

The population consists of active TikTok users engaged in digital marketing activities, such as resellers, dropshippers, affiliates, or co-creators. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that the respondents met the criteria relevant to the research objectives. The selected respondents had a minimum of one year of experience in TikTok-based digital marketing. This criterion ensures that the data collected is credible and represents individuals who understand the dynamics of digital marketing. A sample size of 200 respondents was deemed sufficient to meet the requirements of latent variable analysis while maintaining the reliability and validity of the research findings.

The study was conducted from August to September 2024. The questionnaire was distributed online via TikTok, leveraging the platform's popularity in Indonesia, where it boasts

over 126 million active users. TikTok was chosen for its relevance in social media-based digital marketing and its efficiency in reaching targeted respondents.

The research instrument utilized a likert-scale questionnaire to measure respondents' perceptions of the four main variables: viral marketing, gimmick marketing, influencer marketing, and transformation of customer behavior. Primary data was obtained from the online questionnaire, while secondary data was gathered from industry reports and official publications on digital marketing trends in Indonesia.

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was selected for its flexibility in handling complex relationships among latent variables and its ability to accommodate non-normally distributed data, which is common in survey-based social research. Convergent validity was assessed through outer loading values (>0.7) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (>0.5). Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, with values above 0.7 considered acceptable. Structural model evaluation included R-square values to measure the predictive power of the model for endogenous latent variables. Path coefficients and t-statistics were calculated using bootstrapping methods to test the significance of the relationships between variables.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study provides empirical evidence of the significant relationships between viral marketing, gimmick marketing, influencer marketing, and transformation of customer behavior. The analysis, conducted using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), evaluated both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model).

Outer Model Results

Table 1. Outer Loading Values Results

Variabel	Indikator	Loading ($>0,70$)	AVE ($>0,5$)
<i>Viral marketing</i> (VM)	VM.1	0,769	0,611
	VM.2	0,778	
	VM.3	0,776	
	VM.4	0,792	
<i>Gimmick Marketing</i> (GM)	GM.1	0,825	0,667
	GM.2	0,804	
	GM.3	0,819	
	GM.4	0,808	
	IM.1	0,811	

	IM.2	0,798	
<i>Influencer Marketing</i> (IM)	IM.3	0,776	0,629
	IM.4	0,775	
	TCB.1	0,795	
<i>Transformation Of</i> <i>Customer Behavior</i> (TCB)	TCB.2	0,809	0,625
	TCB.3	0,757	
	TCB.4	0,786	

The analysis of the outer model aimed to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs. The findings revealed that all indicators had outer loading values above 0,70, meeting the criteria for convergent validity. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct exceeded 0,50, indicating that the indicators effectively explained the latent variables.

Table 2. The result of the Composite Reliability score

Construct (Variable)	The value > 0,7	
	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Composite Reliability</i>
<i>Viral Marketing</i>	0,909	0,926
<i>Gimmick Marketing</i>	0,929	0,941
<i>Transformation of customer behavior</i>	0,914	0,930
<i>Influencier Marketing</i>	0,916	0,931

Reliability tests, conducted using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, yielded values above 0,70 for all constructs, demonstrating strong internal consistency.

Inner Model Results

Table 3. The R-Square Value Results

	R-Square value
<i>Influencier Marketing</i>	0,446
<i>Transformation of customer behavior</i>	0,494

The inner model evaluation tested the relationships among variables within the structural model. The R-square values indicated that viral marketing and gimmick marketing together explained 44,6% of the variance in influencer marketing, while influencer marketing accounted for 49,4% of the variance in transformation of customer behavior.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing results confirmed that all proposed hypotheses were accepted. Viral marketing and gimmick marketing had significant direct effects on influencer marketing, with path coefficients of 0,444 and 0,377, respectively. Influencer marketing acted as a

mediator, amplifying the effects of these variables on transformation of customer behavior. This mediating effect was confirmed through significant indirect effects of 0,100 for viral marketing and 0,085 for gimmick marketing.

Table 4. The Results Of the Path Coefficient and P-value

	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>t Statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P Values</i>
<i>Viral Marketing -> Transformation of Customer Behavior</i>	0,302	0,079	3,829	0,000
<i>Gimmick Marketing -> Transformation of Customer Behavior</i>	0,270	0,072	2,889	0,004
<i>Viral Marketing -> Influencier Marketing</i>	0,444	0,093	6,145	0,000
<i>Gimmick Marketing -> Influencier Marketing</i>	0,377	0,067	5,631	0,000
<i>Influencier Marketing -> Transformation of Customer Behavior</i>	0,226	0,100	2,274	0,023

The structural analysis demonstrated that viral marketing significantly influenced transformation of customer behavior, with a path coefficient of 0,302 (t-statistics = 3,829, p-value = 0,000). Viral marketing effectively fostered consumer emotional engagement through elements such as emotion, valence, arousal, and content utility. Similarly, gimmick marketing significantly impacted transformation of customer behavior, with a path coefficient of 0,270 (t-statistics = 2,889, p-value = 0,004). Creative and innovative content provided by gimmick marketing captured consumer attention and enhanced product recall.

Table 5. The Results of Path Coefficient Values and P-value of Indirect Effects

	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>t Statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P Values</i>
<i>Viral Marketing -> Transformation of Customer Behavior melalui Influencier Marketing</i>	0,100	0,048	2,101	0,036
<i>Gimmick Marketing -> Transformation of Customer Behavior melalui Influencier Marketing</i>	0,085	0,039	2,168	0,030

Influencer marketing served as a critical mediator, strengthening the relationships between viral marketing and gimmick marketing with transformation of customer behavior.

The total influence of viral marketing on transformation of customer behavior through influencer marketing was 0,402, while gimmick marketing's total effect was 0,355 via the same mediation. Influencers proved essential in establishing credibility, appeal, and relevance, which bolstered consumer trust and engagement.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the critical synergy between viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and influencer marketing in driving consumer behavior transformation in the digital era. Each marketing strategy plays a unique yet complementary role in creating significant consumer engagement. The synergy among viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and influencer marketing proves to be more impactful than implementing these strategies individually. This research reinforces theories such as the theory of planned behavior and the diffusion of innovations theory, illustrating how these digital marketing elements influence consumer intentions and behaviors.

Viral marketing effectively builds initial emotional engagement through elements such as emotion, valence, arousal, and content utility. This strategy captures consumers' attention by delivering relevant emotional experiences and motivating them to participate further in the marketing ecosystem. These findings support the theory that viral marketing not only generates brand awareness but also enhances consumers' intentions to take a more active role in marketing.

Gimmick marketing, with its visual appeal and creative content, plays a pivotal role in attracting consumer attention and reinforcing long-term memory of products or brands. Creative and unexpected content creates unique experiences that elevate consumer engagement. When combined with influencer marketing, gimmick marketing amplifies its impact by leveraging influencers' credibility and appeal to establish more personal connections with the audience.

Influencer marketing serves as a crucial mediator in the relationship between viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and transformation of customer behavior. Influencers with high credibility, appeal, and expertise enhance the influence of other marketing strategies by fostering trust and creating social pressure that encourages consumer participation. This demonstrates that influencers' expertise and reputation are key elements in building deep emotional connections with consumers.

Transformation of Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is evolving from passive to active involvement, where consumers take part in promoting and distributing products. They rely on social media for recommendations and make purchases based on real-time interactions, such as live streaming. This transformation comprises several stages, from awareness to wholeness. Awareness is triggered by viral content that introduces new opportunities, while conflicts in decision-making are resolved through social support from influencers. In the final stage, consumers integrate marketing experiences into their lives, realizing balanced economic, social, and emotional benefits.

This active role is reflected in consumers participating as affiliates or co-creators, not only purchasing products but also promoting brands. Traditional consumers who depended on physical stores have transitioned into digital buyers seeking convenience and efficiency. Social media consumers are influenced by visual content and influencer recommendations, while social commerce consumers prioritize quick and seamless purchasing experiences. Live streaming drives impulsive buying through real-time interactions, and active consumers, such as affiliates or co-creators, contribute deeper engagement by promoting the brand.

Transformation of Seller Behavior

Seller behavior in the digital era reflects adaptations to market demands driven by technology. Sellers who once relied on traditional marketing methods now leverage digital platforms like TikTok Shop for direct consumer interaction. They employ collaborative models such as dropshipping and affiliate programs to expand their marketing reach. Traditional sellers have transitioned to e-commerce, social media, and live streaming to tap into wider markets. Social commerce sellers, for instance, use TikTok Shop to sell products while engaging with consumers in real time. Sellers with active consumer involvement, such as dropshippers or co-creators, play a crucial role in expanding the marketing ecosystem through collaborative models.

The 4P Concept of Digital Marketing



Image 2. The Concept of the 4Ps of Digital Marketing

In digital marketing, the 4P concept (Platform, Page, Program, Posting) is redefined to meet the needs of the digital age. This concept helps construct more relevant marketing strategies in a continuously evolving digital environment. Platforms represent primary digital mediums such as TikTok, Shopee, and Instagram, which are used as the basis for promotion and transactions. Pages serve as digital interaction hubs, including online stores, social media profiles, and product pages, designed for responsiveness and intuitive user experiences. Postings act as vehicles for delivering creative content that captures attention and builds engagement, such as short videos and live streaming. Programs encompass affiliate, reseller, or dropshipping strategies, empowering consumers to play active roles in the marketing ecosystem. This concept offers strategic guidance for companies to design integrated marketing experiences that align with modern consumer behavior.

5. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical importance of synergy among viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and influencer marketing in driving transformation of customer behavior in the digital era, particularly through social media platforms like TikTok. Each digital marketing strategy plays a significant role in fostering both emotional and cognitive consumer engagement. Viral marketing effectively evokes emotions and establishes initial awareness, while gimmick marketing enhances visual appeal and reinforces consumers' memory of products or brands. Influencer marketing amplifies the impact of both strategies by leveraging the credibility, expertise, and appeal of influencers to motivate consumers to take active roles within the marketing ecosystem.

Transformation of customer behavior is characterized by a shift from passive roles to active participation, such as becoming resellers, dropshippers, affiliates, or co-creators. This transformation is driven by emotional factors, product utility, and trust in influencers. The study demonstrates that an integrated digital marketing approach, focused on emotions, creativity, and sustainability, can effectively encourage consumers to engage more deeply with brands. By combining these strategies, businesses can create impactful marketing campaigns that not only increase awareness but also foster active consumer participation, driving long-term brand loyalty and deeper consumer relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For business practitioners, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of optimizing the synergy between viral marketing, gimmick marketing, and influencer marketing to create more personalized and meaningful consumer experiences. Selecting relevant and

credible influencers is crucial to ensure that marketing messages resonate effectively with the target audience. Additionally, businesses should provide ongoing education and support for resellers, dropshippers, and affiliates to enhance their confidence and capabilities in marketing products. Participatory programs based on incentives and community support can also foster long-term engagement and brand loyalty. For academics, this study provides a theoretical foundation for further exploration of transformation of customer behavior in the digital era. In-depth studies on the influence of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality, as well as cross-cultural research on the effectiveness of influencer marketing, can significantly contribute to the advancement of digital marketing literature. These areas of exploration can offer valuable insights into how evolving digital ecosystems shape consumer and business dynamics.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could focus on exploring the impact of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality, in enhancing consumer engagement within digital marketing ecosystems. Cross-cultural studies on the effectiveness of influencer marketing can also provide deeper insights into how this variable influences consumer behavior across different social contexts. Additionally, long-term analyses of the effects of viral marketing and gimmick marketing on consumer loyalty can further enrich the understanding of sustainable marketing strategies. These areas of investigation will contribute to a more comprehensive perspective on the evolving dynamics of digital marketing.

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