



Impact of Viral Marketing on Boosting Brand Awareness and Shaping Consumer Brand Preferences on Social Media.

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The rise in internet usage not only influenced Generation Z but also unexpectedly affected Generation X, as they turned to social media to find information about fashion. While the use of local fashion products in Indonesia was widespread, it wasn't exclusive, presenting a challenge. The study sought to determine the relationship between Viral Marketing and Brand Awareness, as well as the connection between Brand Awareness and Brand Preferences among Generation X and Z consumers of local fashion. Viral marketing was analyzed through three aspects: informative, irritating, and entertaining. Brand awareness was divided into four categories: base of association, familiar-like, substance/commitment, and considered brand. Brand preference was evaluated based on three factors: price, quality, and packaging. The research used both descriptive and verification methods, targeting Generation X and Z local fashion consumers. A total of 170 questionnaires were distributed to each generation, and data were examined using path analysis. Hypotheses were tested using the t-test and the Whitney-Mann test to identify differences. The findings showed a strong connection between viral marketing and brand awareness, as well as between brand awareness and brand preference. Additionally, differences in behavior between Generation X and Generation Z were observed.

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Brand Preferences, Social Media, Viral Marketing

Peningkatan penggunaan internet tidak hanya memengaruhi Generasi Z tetapi juga secara tidak terduga berdampak pada Generasi X karena mereka beralih ke media sosial untuk mencari informasi tentang fashion. Meskipun penggunaan produk fashion lokal di Indonesia meluas, itu tidak eksklusif, sehingga menimbulkan tantangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan hubungan antara Viral Marketing dan Brand Awareness, serta kaitannya antara Brand Awareness dan Brand Preferences di antara konsumen fashion lokal dari Generasi X dan Z. Viral marketing dianalisis melalui tiga aspek: informatif, menjengkelkan, dan menghibur. Brand Awareness dibagi menjadi empat kategori: dasar asosiasi, familiar-like, substansi/komitmen, dan merek yang dipertimbangkan. Preferensi merek dievaluasi berdasarkan tiga faktor: harga, kualitas, dan kemasan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif dan verifikasi, dengan fokus pada konsumen fashion lokal dari Generasi X dan Z. Sebanyak 170 kuesioner didistribusikan kepada setiap generasi, dan data dianalisis menggunakan metode path analysis. Hipotesis diuji menggunakan uji-t dan uji Whitney-Mann untuk mengidentifikasi perbedaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan yang kuat antara viral marketing dan brand awareness, serta antara brand awareness dan brand preference. Selain itu, perbedaan perilaku antara Generasi X dan Generasi Z juga teridentifikasi.

Kata Kunci: Kesadaran Merek, Media Sosial, Pemasaran Viral, Preferensi Merek

INTRODUCTION

The marketing world continues to change with the presence of the internet in people's lives. APJII states that the number of Indonesia's population using the Internet has increased to 78.19% (APJII, 2023). Internal data from Hypefast as of June 2023 shows that the average gross profit for local fashion labels is around 42%, with the percentage of repeat customers each month reaching 32% (Marketeters, 2023). The majority of these purchases are made through e-commerce channels. The highest purchases are for the brands Roughneck, 3second and Jiniso on Tokopedia, Shopee and TikTok, which are the most widely used e-commerce platforms in Indonesia, where they are local fashion brands (Harianjogja, 2023). The research will focus on Generation X and Generation Z. Zap's study indicates that, despite both generations purchasing fashion and beauty products, there is a significant income-expenditure gap (Zapclinic, 2023). Generation X spends less than 5%, while Generation Z buys with a higher frequency (Rozalina & Lukman, 2022). Now, 80% of consumers make purchasing decisions based on recommendations from people they know on social media, indicating that electronic Word of Mouth has strongly formed within the community (Forbes, 2022). According to Gao et al., as cited in (Puriwat & Tripopsakul 2021), the older generation is now proficient in using social media as well. Now, 75% of Generation X is using social media (Forbes, 2022). However, there are indications that the effectiveness of viral marketing in the local fashion industry has not succeeded in optimizing brand awareness.

This is due to the lower desire to purchase among Generation X compared to Generation Z. There is an urgency to research viral marketing and brand awareness among Generation X and Generation Z in the local fashion industry in Indonesia. On the other hand, although Generation Z allocates almost their entire income to fashion products, they do not exclusively use local brands. The same applies to Generation X. Interpreting the existence of a brand preference gap, despite the high data on the usage of local brands, indicates that it does not always reflect strong brand preferences. The research is conducted to examine the comparison between generations, along with the relationships among the variables of Viral Marketing, Brand Awareness, and Brand Preference. This is because there are indications of a positive correlation among some variables, but there are also differing results. Similar to the research conducted by (Rahayu & Kusumadewi, 2023) higher viral marketing tends to strengthen consumer-perceived brand awareness. However, the study conducted by (Asrul, 2020) yielded results indicating no significant influence among the variables. An increase in brand awareness will give rise to brand preferences (Albari & Sholihah, 2019). However, another research state that the brand awareness variable does not influence the brand preference variable (Rahmaputri & Octavia, 2018). Subsequently, because no research simultaneously explains the relationships among variables and compares the two generations, there is a need for a study that can address these issues, particularly in the local fashion industry. Thus, research hypotheses are formulated, divided into four parts:

- H1=There is a relationship between Viral Marketing and Brand Awareness in Generation X and Generation Z.
- H2=There is a relationship between Brand Awareness. and Brand Preference in Generation X and Generation Z.
- H3=There is a difference in the relationship between Viral Marketing and Brand Awareness in Generation X and Generation Z.
- H4=There is a difference in the relationship between Brand Awareness and Brand Preference in Generation X and Generation Z.

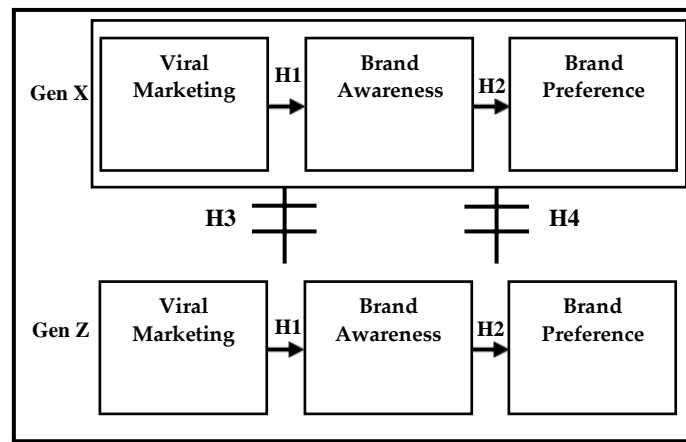


Figure 1.
Research Paradigm

METHODOLOGY

In this research, path analysis is employed, for the object which is Generation X and Generation Z consumers of local fashion brands. The study encompasses various locations where they use local fashion brands. To add specificity, the population is stratified based on the five city and regency in West Java, Indonesia. The research period spans from 2023 onward. The research instrument is a questionnaire, and the sampling method is purposive sampling. Data collection involves questionnaires, and the data analysis technique is descriptive analysis with a verification approach.

Table 1.
Respondents

Location	Gen X	Gen Z
Kota Cirebon	29	31
Kab. Majalengka	52	53
Kota Sumedang	29	28
Kab. Bandung	27	29
Kota Bandung	30	27

Source: Result of Research

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research, it was found that the role of viral marketing can enhance brand awareness and impact brand preferences.

- For Generation X, a path coefficient of 0.707 was obtained, indicating a strong relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness. Additionally, an R square value of 0.500 or 50.0% was found. Moreover, the calculated t-value exceeds the critical t-value ($13.034 > 1.974$), and the significance value is $0.000 < 0.05$, demonstrating a significant relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness in the local fashion purchasing behavior of Generation X.
- For Generation Z, a path coefficient of 0.741 was obtained, indicating a strong relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness. Additionally, an R square value of 0.550 or 55.0% was found. Moreover, the calculated t-value exceeds the critical t-value ($14.401 > 1.974$), and the significance value is $0.000 < 0.05$, demonstrating a significant relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness in the local fashion purchasing behavior of Generation Z.

The results of this study, indicating a relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness, align with the research conducted by (Gina, 2018), which reported positive and significant results regarding the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness. The widespread dissemination of information that goes viral is shown to build brand awareness in the minds of the public. Furthermore, studies by (Nugraha & Amerta, 2021) and (Rahayu & Kusumadewi, 2023) have also yielded similar results. In this research, it was also found that brand awareness has a relationship with brand preference in both Generation X and Generation Z.

- An explanation is provided, where Generation X shows a preference for the brand. It was found that the R square was 0.544, or 54.4%. Additionally, the results indicated that the t-value was greater than the t-table value ($14.234 > 1.974$), and the significance value was $0.000 < 0.05$, proving a significant relationship between brand awareness and brand preference in local fashion purchasing behavior of Generation X.
- For Generation Z, the path coefficient value was 0.759, signifying a strong relationship between brand awareness variables and brand preference. Moreover, the coefficient of determination or R square was 0.576, or 57.6%, with a t-value greater than the t-table value ($15.196 > 1.974$) and a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This indicates a significant relationship between brand awareness and brand preference in the local fashion purchasing behavior of Generation Z.

The results of this research align with the study conducted by (Kusuma & Miartana, 2018), indicating that high brand awareness contributes to an increase in brand preference. Furthermore, positive and significant results between brand awareness and brand preference were found in the research conducted by (Islamiah et al., 2016). This finding is consistent with the results obtained in the study by (Albari & Sholihah, 2019). In the relationship between these two variables, Generation Z has a higher value than Generation X, and the result also shows a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05.

This implies a significant difference in the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness between Generation X and Generation Z. In this study, Generation Z obtained a higher score due to their skills in searching for information on social media. This is not only because of their compatibility with social media platforms but also because of their entertainment preferences. These factors make it easier for them to comprehend and disseminate brand information to fellow consumers. Consequently, Generation Z is more adept at understanding and spreading viral marketing, resulting in a much higher level of brand awareness compared to Generation X. In this research, significant differences were found in the relationship between brand awareness and brand preference in Generation X and Generation Z, with a p-value of less than 0.05. This indicates a meaningful distinction between the connections of brand awareness and brand preference in the two generations. The following is a table of the differences in the Relationship between Brand Awareness and Brand Preference in Generation X and Generation Z and Research Paradigma:

Table 2
Result

Group	Mean	(-)	p-value	α	Result
Gen X	25,30	4,33	0,000	0,05	Significantly Different
Gen Z	29,63				

Source: Data processing result

Next is the explanation of the result of descriptive analysis in this research, which is, that the role of viral marketing on social media is significant for both Generation X and Generation Z. Generation X, known for its quick adaptation to digital technology, can enhance the effectiveness of viral marketing by understanding their entertainment content preferences and making adjustments to social media platforms and strategies for information filtering. Similarly, Generation Z, already experiencing a high impact, can

further optimize results by improving strategies to help consumers understand, filter, and verify information in the face of the vast amount of content on social media. For Generation X, local fashion brand awareness has reached a relatively high level, attracted by attributes like slogans and product packaging. However, to deepen this awareness, improvements are necessary as the current social media information doesn't fully capture Generation X's attention. This indicates a need for a better understanding of local fashion brands to firmly establish knowledge about these brands in their minds. Generation Z, being active on social media, actively seeks information and understands various innovations by companies. However, to achieve optimal value for Generation Z, an approach focusing on brand attributes is crucial. They are selective in determining which attributes can capture their interest and preference. Generation X shows a strong brand preference, indicating their liking for various offers. However, to achieve optimal values, improvements are needed. This includes a transparent and in-depth explanation of the company's pricing about the promised product capabilities, ensuring consistency in product quality. Generation Z exhibits high brand preference scores. With extensive information access and search skills, they have selective preferences for slogans and modern designs. On the other hand, they already understand the capabilities of local fashion in providing high-quality products.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study found that viral marketing is essential for increasing brand awareness and influencing brand preferences, particularly showing a strong connection for Generation X. The findings indicate a significant link between viral marketing and brand awareness in the local fashion purchasing habits of both Generation X and Generation Z. Moreover, the research revealed a notable connection between brand awareness and brand preference in the local fashion buying behavior of both generations, with Generation Z scoring higher. This suggests distinct differences in the relationship between brand awareness and brand preference between the two generations. Descriptive analysis indicates that viral marketing on social media has a considerable impact on both Generation X and Generation Z. Generation X, who quickly adapts to digital technology, can improve the effectiveness of viral marketing by aligning with entertainment-focused content and refining social media strategies. Similarly, Generation Z, already heavily influenced by social media, can optimize their outcomes by enhancing strategies to better understand, filter, and verify the vast amount of content available. For Generation X, awareness of local fashion brands is relatively high, but there's room for improvement in capturing their attention fully on social media. This underscores the need for better comprehension of local fashion brands to solidify this knowledge. Generation Z, being highly active on social media, values information and brand attributes, emphasizing the need for approaches tailored to their preferences. Generation X shows a strong preference for brands, indicating an affinity for various offerings, yet there's a need for improvements to achieve optimal value, such as clearer pricing and consistent product quality. Generation Z's high brand preference scores reflect their selectivity for slogans and modern designs, as well as their understanding of local fashion's capability to deliver high-quality products.

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