

THE ROLE OF BRAND AWARENESS IN MEDIATING THE EFFECT OF VIRAL MARKETING ON PURCHASE DECISIONS (A Study on Consumers of Tukies Coconut Products in Gianyar Regency)

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Abstract: The rapid development of the digital era has driven substantial transformations in marketing practices. Many businesses now compete to design creative and interactive marketing strategies. Amid increasingly intense competition, Tukies Coconut an ice cream brand has implemented viral marketing strategies by utilizing social media platforms to enhance consumer engagement and expand market reach. This study aims to explain the mediating role of brand awareness in the influence of viral marketing on purchase decisions. The research was conducted in Gianyar Regency with a sample of 110 respondents selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using path analysis with SPSS 25.0. The findings reveal that viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Viral marketing also has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness. Furthermore, brand awareness significantly influences purchase decisions and is able to mediate the relationship between viral marketing and purchase decisions.

Keywords: viral marketing, brand awareness, purchase decisions

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of the digital era has significantly transformed the landscape of modern marketing. Digitalization has enabled brands to reach consumers more broadly, personally, and interactively. Social media, e-commerce platforms, and various other digital technologies have now become the backbone of contemporary marketing strategies. Digital marketing provides substantial opportunities for brands to expand their reach to wider audiences. With creative visual content and interactive campaigns, brands can easily become viral on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. According to the 2024 report by Hootsuite and We Are Social, social media users in Indonesia reached 212.9 million people, with an average usage time of 3 hours and 18 minutes per day. These data indicate that social media is a highly promising medium for introducing and promoting products.

Technological developments have penetrated virtually all sectors, including the culinary industry. The rapid growth of the culinary business in Indonesia has positioned it as one of the main pillars supporting the nation's economic development. Ice cream is among the most popular culinary products across different consumer groups. According to Statista (2023), revenue from the ice cream and frozen dessert segment in Indonesia is projected to reach USD 1.5 billion, with an annual growth rate of 5.6% for the 2023–2027

period. This trend shows that increasing consumer demand has intensified competition within Indonesia's ice cream industry.

Tukies Coconut is a frozen dessert outlet featuring coconut ice cream as its signature product. The brand gained popularity following its online marketing campaign in 2018. Tukies Coconut's popularity has continued to rise due to its unique product innovation and its ability to leverage digital platforms to reach broader audiences. Various Tukies Coconut products have circulated widely on social media, generating new consumption trends that further strengthen its market position.

Based on interviews with the On-Duty Manager of Tukies Coconut, social media marketing strategies have been implemented since 2018. During this period, platforms such as Instagram and Facebook began to be utilized to enhance brand exposure through engaging visual content and interactive communication with customers. As digital popularity increased, Tukies Coconut products became widely recognized through viral marketing, evidenced by the growing number of customer-generated posts, positive reviews, and coverage by influencers and food bloggers.

Public awareness of local products has also grown, as reflected in the popularity of Tukies Coconut on social media. The official Instagram account, @tukiescoconutshop, has more than 12.3 thousand followers, with several Reels posts reaching tens of thousands of views. On TikTok, the hashtag #tukiescoconutshop has been used hundreds of times by users—ranging from local tourists to international visitors—sharing their experiences of enjoying the product. These activities demonstrate strong brand awareness supported by high consumer engagement and organic content distribution.

In 2019, the effects of viral marketing began to materialize, with sales increasing by approximately 25% compared to the previous year. This upward trend continued in 2020 with a 35% increase, driven by the growing number of social media users sharing their experiences with Tukies Coconut products. Significant growth occurred in 2021 and 2022, with sales rising by 50% and 70%, respectively, prompted by major media coverage and the increasing popularity of culinary tourism in Bali. The year 2023 marked the peak success of the viral marketing strategy, with sales reaching their highest level—an 85% increase compared to 2018. This surge was attributed to the snowball effect of viral marketing, where widespread recommendations on social media attracted even more potential customers. However, by mid-2024, a significant decline occurred, with sales dropping by an estimated 30% compared to 2023. This decline was partly due to the inherently short-lived nature of viral marketing and the emergence of negative consumer reviews on TikTok and Google Review. These reviews indicated that customer experiences did not fully align with expectations formed by promotional content, with some comments noting that the product's taste did not match what was portrayed on social media.

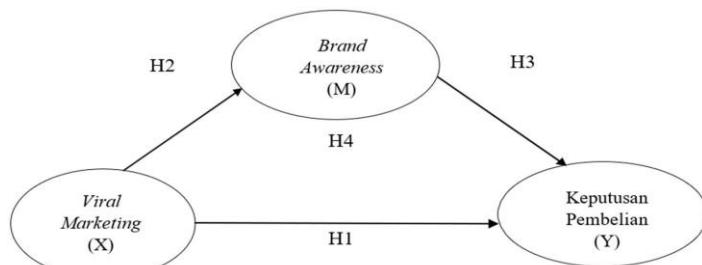
Purchase decision refers to the stage in the decision-making process when consumers actually make a purchase of a product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). During this process, consumers pass through several stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. One of the key factors influencing this process is viral marketing, which Tukies Coconut has implemented since its 2018 campaign.

Viral marketing is a promotional strategy designed to spread rapidly—like a virus—allowing messages to reach wide networks and generate substantial influence (Prabowo & Haryoso, 2023). Studies by Rahayu & Kusumadewi (2023) indicate that viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Similar findings were reported

by Nggilu et al. (2019) and Holwati et al. (2021). However, research by Kuhu et al. (2019) concluded that viral marketing does not significantly influence purchase decisions, as viral information circulating on social media is not always related to the marketed product and thus may fail to influence consumers' purchasing behavior.

The inconsistency in previous research findings highlights the need for a mediating variable in this study. Brand awareness is selected as the mediating variable. Numerous studies have demonstrated that brand awareness can mediate the relationship between viral marketing and purchase decisions. Amperiyanto & Nurul (2021) found that viral marketing positively affects brand awareness—meaning that stronger viral marketing campaigns lead to higher brand awareness. Furthermore, research by Jayadi et al. (2021) revealed a positive and significant effect of brand awareness on purchase decisions. This aligns with findings by Upadana & Pramudana (2020), which reported that brand awareness positively influences purchasing decisions.

The relationship among the three variables discussed above can be illustrated in the following conceptual framework.



Source: Rahayu & Kusumadewi (2023)

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework presented, the research hypotheses and supporting prior findings are formulated as follows:

H1: Viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions (Susilowati et al., 2019; Nggilu et al., 2019; Holwati et al., 2021).

H2: Viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness (Amperiyanto & Nurul, 2021; Yanuar et al., 2021; Prakorsi & Magnadi, 2016).

H3: Brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions (Kholid & Sari, 2021; Jayadi et al., 2021; Upadana et al., 2020; Gina, 2021).

H4: Brand awareness mediates the effect of viral marketing on purchase decisions (Rahayu et al., 2023; Irawan & Irwan, Hanif, 2016).

METHOD

This study employs an associative research design to examine the relationships among viral marketing, brand awareness, and purchase decisions of Tukies Coconut consumers in Gianyar. Data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires distributed to consumers who had purchased the product at least once. The variables examined include viral marketing as the exogenous variable, brand awareness as the mediating variable, and purchase decisions as the endogenous variable, with indicators adapted from previous relevant studies. Validity and reliability tests confirm that all research instruments are valid and reliable. References: Sugiyono (2019); Rahayu & Kesumadewi (2023); Aaker (2020).

The study population consists of Tukies Coconut consumers in Gianyar, with an infinite population size. Therefore, purposive sampling was used, resulting in 110 respondents selected based on criteria such as Gianyar residency, active social media use, and exposure to viral content related to Tukies Coconut. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires, while secondary data came from institutional publications. Descriptive statistics were used to describe respondent characteristics and research variables, while inferential statistics including classical assumption tests and path analysis were used to test the hypotheses. References: Sugiyono (2019); Utama (2016); Riduwan & Kuncoro (2011).

Mediation analysis was conducted using the Sobel Test and the Variance Accounted For (VAF) value to determine the strength of brand awareness in mediating the relationship between viral marketing and purchase decisions. The Sobel Test identifies the significance of the indirect effect, while VAF determines the type of mediation (partial or full). A Z-value greater than 1.96 and VAF above 20% indicate effective mediation. References: Sobel (1982); Hair et al. (2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Company Overview

Tukies Coconut is an innovative culinary brand specializing in premium coconut-based ice cream, aesthetically presented in coconut shells to enhance brand identity and reflect sustainability values. Established in 2018, the business has grown rapidly and now operates four outlets across Bali—three in Ubud and one in Beachwalk Kuta—thereby increasing brand accessibility and visibility among both tourists and local consumers. The brand's popularity continues to expand through viral content on Instagram and TikTok, where customers voluntarily share their experiences, generating substantial digital exposure. Combining product innovation, tropical-themed dining experiences, and strong social media engagement, Tukies Coconut has become one of Bali's leading dessert destinations.

Characteristics of Research Respondents

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

No	Characteristics	Classification	Respondents (Person)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Man	31	28.2
		Woman	79	71.8
Amount			110	100
2	Age	17 – 21 Years	49	44.5
		22 – 26 Years	39	35.5
		27 – 31 Years	22	20
		> 31 Years	0	0
Amount			110	100

3	Last education	High		
		School/Vocational	49	44.5
		School/Equivalent		
		Diploma	6	5.5
4	Work	Bachelor	53	48.2
		Postgraduate	2	1.8
		Amount	110	100
		Students	34	30.9
5	Income	Civil Servants (PNS)	12	10.9
		Private		
		Employee/Self-Employed	43	39.1
		Retired	0	0
5	Income	Another	21	19.1
		Amount	110	100
		Less than Rp. 500,000.00	37	33.6
		IDR 500,000.00 – IDR 3,000,000.00	21	19.1
5	Income	IDR 3,000,000.00 – IDR 5,000,000.00	27	24.5
		More than Rp. 5,000,000,000	25	22.7
		Amount	110	100

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

Table 1 shows that most Tukies Coconut consumers, when viewed from gender, are dominated by women, which in this study amounted to 79 people or 71.8 percent. Viewed from age, respondents aged 17-21 years dominated among other ages, namely 49 people or 44.5 percent, while respondents aged > 31 years were the least, namely 0 people or 0 percent. Viewed from the last education, respondents with a Bachelor's degree dominated as many as 53 people or 48.2 percent, compared to postgraduate education levels which only amounted to 2 people or 1.8 percent. Viewed from occupation, respondents with jobs as Private Employees/Entrepreneurs dominated with a total of 43 people or 39.1 percent. In terms of income, respondents with an income of less than IDR 500,000.00 were the highest number, namely 37 or 33.6 percent, and the smallest number were respondents with an income of IDR 500,000.00 – IDR 3,000,000.00, namely 21 people or 19.1 percent.

Description of Research Variables

The description of the research variables was carried out by grouping the average score of respondents' answers into five categories based on a class interval of 0.8. The purchasing decision variable obtained an average score of 3.72 with high criteria, which indicates that Tukies Coconut consumers in Gianyar Regency have a strong purchasing

decision, with the highest score in the statement deciding Tukies Coconut as a hangout place (3.81) and the lowest score in the statement prioritizing the product over other brands (3.66). The viral marketing variable also obtained an average score of 3.72 with high criteria, which describes the respondents' positive perception of the viral marketing strategy, indicated by the highest score in the statement sharing information with others (3.79) and the lowest score in the assessment of the attractiveness of promotional content on social media (3.65). The brand awareness variable showed an average score of 3.38 with sufficient criteria, which indicates that respondents recognize Tukies Coconut but are not yet fully able to differentiate its products from other brands, as seen from the highest score in the statement that the brand is familiar (3.44) and the lowest score in the ability to differentiate products between brands (3.33).

Inferential Analysis of Research Data

Classical assumption test

1) Normality Test

Table 2. Normality Test (One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov)

Substructural 1	0.200
Substructural 2	0.200

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Table 2 shows that the normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov has an Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed) value for both substructures greater than the alpha value of 0.05 ($0.200 > 0.05$), which indicates that the data used in this study are normally distributed. Therefore, it can be implemented that this model meets the assumption of normality.

2) Multicollinearity Test

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test (Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor)

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Substructure 2	Viral Marketing(X)	0.725
	Brand Awareness(M)	1,380

Source : Primary data processed, 2025

Table 3 shows that the tolerance and VIF values of the viral marketing and brand awareness variables are 0.725 and 1.380, respectively. This indicates that the tolerance value for each variable is greater than 0.10 and the VIF value is less than 10. Thus, it can be implemented that the regression model is free from multicollinearity symptoms.

3) Heteroscedasticity Test

Table 4. Results of Heteroscedasticity Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

Sub-structure I						0.52
Viral Marketing	-0.031	0.049		-0.061	-0.631	9
Sub-structural II	0.008	0.055		0.016	0.139	0.89
Viral Marketing	-0.031	0.049		-0.072	-0.634	0
Brand Awareness						0.52
						8

Source:Primary data processed, 2025

Table 4 shows that the significance results of sub-structural models I and II have a significance value greater than 0.05. This indicates that both regression models do not exhibit symptoms of heteroscedasticity.

Path analysis

In this study, path analysis techniques were used to see the influence of causal relationships on each independent variable consisting of viral marketing as an independent variable, brand awareness as a mediator, and purchasing decisions as dependent variables. The results of hypothesis testing using path analysis techniques are presented as follows:

- 1) Formulating hypotheses and structural equations
 - (a) The viral marketing variable (X) has a significant influence on the purchasing decision variable (Y).
 - (b) The viral marketing variable (X) has a significant influence on the brand awareness variable (M).
 - (c) The brand awareness variable (M) has a significant influence on the purchasing decision variable (Y).
 - (d) The viral marketing variable (X) influences purchasing decisions (Y) through brand awareness (M).

1) Sub-Structural Equation 1

2) Sub-Structural Equation 2

Information:

X =Viral Marketing

Y = Purchase Decision

M =Brand Awareness

$\beta_1 \beta_2 \beta_3$ = Variab

e = error
This study calculated the effect of viral marketing on brand awareness using SPSS 25.0

Table 5. Results of Path Analysis on Substructure I

Model	Unstandardized		Standardize			
	Coefficient	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	4,615	1,408			3,277	0.001
Viral Marketing (X)	0.598	0.093		0.525	6,405	0.000
R Square	0.275					
Adjusted R Square	0.269					

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Based on the results of the path analysis in Table 5, the structural equation that is formed can be formulated as follows:

$$M = \beta_2 X + e_1$$

$$M = 0.525X$$

This structural equation can be interpreted as meaning that the viral marketing variable has a coefficient of 0.525, which means that viral marketing has a positive influence on purchasing decisions. This means that if viral marketing increases, purchasing decisions will also increase.

Table 6. Results of Path Analysis on Substructure II

Model	Unstandardized		Standardize			
	Coefficient	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	6,368	1,255			5,075	0.000
Viral Marketing (X)	0.263	0.093		0.263	2,826	0.006
Brand Awareness (Y)	0.340	0.082		0.388	4,163	0.000
R Square	0.327					
Adjusted R Square	0.314					

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Based on the results of the path analysis, the structural equation formed is $Y = 0.263X + 0.388M$, which indicates that viral marketing and brand awareness have a positive effect on purchasing decisions. The direct influence value of each variable is 0.263 for the influence of viral marketing on purchasing decisions, 0.525 for the influence of viral marketing on brand awareness, and 0.388 for the influence of brand awareness on purchasing decisions; while the indirect influence of viral marketing on purchasing decisions through brand awareness is 0.203, resulting in a total influence of 0.466. The calculation of the total determination coefficient of 0.513 indicates that 51.3 percent of the variation in purchasing decisions is influenced by viral marketing and brand awareness, while 48.7 percent is influenced by other factors outside the model. The results of the simultaneous test show a significance value of 0.000, which means that both independent variables have a joint influence on purchasing decisions, and the results of the partial test show that viral marketing has a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions ($\beta =$

0.263; Sig = 0.006), viral marketing has a significant positive effect on brand awareness (β = 0.525; Sig = 0.000), and brand awareness has a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions (β = 0.388; Sig = 0.000), so that all research hypotheses are declared accepted.

Table 7. Direct Influence, Indirect Influence, and Total Influence of Viral Marketing (X), Brand Awareness (M), and Purchasing Decisions (Y)

Influence of Variable	Direct Influence	Indirect Influence Through Brand Awareness	Total Influence	Sig	Results
XY→	0.263	0.203	0.466	0.006	Significant
XM→	0.525	-	0.525	0.000	Significant
MY→	0.388	-	0.388	0.000	Significant

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

Table 7 shows that the direct effect of viral marketing on purchase decisions is 0.263. The direct effect of viral marketing on brand awareness is 0.525, while the direct effect of brand awareness on purchase decisions is 0.388. These results indicate that purchase decisions are more strongly influenced by brand awareness than by viral marketing. Meanwhile, the indirect effect of viral marketing on purchase decisions through brand awareness is 0.203. Thus, the total effect of viral marketing on purchase decisions through brand awareness is 0.466. This means that the total effect of viral marketing on purchase decisions through brand awareness is greater than its direct effect without the involvement of the mediating variable.

Sobel test

The mediation hypothesis was tested using the Sobel test, which examines the strength of the indirect effect of viral marketing (X) on purchase decisions (Y) through brand awareness (M). The indirect effect is computed by multiplying the path coefficient from X to M (a) and the path coefficient from M to Y (b), or ab. The standard errors of coefficients a and b are denoted as Sa and Sb, while the standard error of the indirect effect is denoted as Sab.

The Sobel test shows a Z-value of 3.45, which is greater than 1.96. This indicates that viral marketing significantly influences purchase decisions through the mediating variable brand awareness. Therefore, brand awareness is confirmed as a mediator in the relationship between viral marketing and purchase decisions for Tukies Coconut products in Gianyar Regency, and the mediation hypothesis is accepted.

VAF Test

Mediation effects illustrate the relationship between independent and dependent variables through an intervening or mediating variable. The influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable does not occur directly but through a transformational

process represented by the mediator. The VAF value indicates the extent to which the mediator absorbs the previously significant direct effect in the non-mediated model.

Based on the VAF results, the obtained value of 43.5% indicates that brand awareness functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between viral marketing and purchase decisions. A value between 20% and 80% indicates partial mediation, meaning that the mediator explains part of the relationship while the direct effect remains significant. Therefore, viral marketing has a significant direct effect on brand awareness and purchase decisions, and brand awareness also significantly affects purchase decisions for Tukies Coconut in Gianyar.

Discussion of Research Results

Effect of Viral Marketing on Purchase Decisions

The effect of viral marketing on purchase decisions is 0.263, with a significance value of 0.006, which is lower than the 0.05 significance level ($0.006 < 0.05$). This indicates that viral marketing has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions. This means that the higher the viral marketing exposure received by consumers, the stronger their intention to purchase Tukies Coconut products.

Responses from participants support this finding, as most stated that they had shared information about Tukies Coconut with others, either with friends or family. This shows that the viral marketing strategy has successfully created widespread information dissemination among consumers. Viral marketing not only acts as a promotional tool but also strengthens brand awareness. Recommendations shared through personal networks—such as friends or family are often perceived as more credible than traditional advertising, thereby significantly influencing purchase decisions.

This process generates a snowball effect, where increasing exposure to shared content raises curiosity and ultimately encourages more consumers to make a purchase. These findings align with prior studies by Wahyuni et al. (2023), Sihombing & Husei (2024), Rahayu & Kusumadewi (2023), Nggilu et al. (2019), Maulida et al. (2022), and Holwati et al. (2021), all of which confirm that effective viral marketing increases purchase decisions.

Effect of Viral Marketing on Brand Awareness

The effect of viral marketing on brand awareness is 0.525, with a significance value of 0.000 ($0.000 < 0.05$), indicating a positive and significant influence. This implies that the more effective the viral marketing activities implemented, the higher the resulting level of brand awareness.

Viral marketing takes advantage of the power of social media and interpersonal interactions to spread information widely and rapidly. When consumers are exposed to engaging and relevant viral content, they are more likely to recall and recognize the brand, thereby strengthening brand awareness and forming a positive brand image.

These findings are in line with studies by Abbas et al. (2024), Gina (2018), Mukherjee et al. (2023), Rahayu & Kusumadewi (2023), and Ramadhan et al. (2023), which similarly demonstrate that effective viral marketing increases consumer brand awareness.

Effect of Brand Awareness on Purchase Decisions

Brand awareness has a direct effect on purchase decisions of 0.388 with a significance value of 0.000 ($0.000 < 0.05$), indicating a positive and significant influence. This shows that brand awareness helps build trust and loyalty among consumers. When consumers recognize and remember a brand, they are more inclined to purchase its products compared to unfamiliar brands.

High brand awareness also shapes consumer perceptions of product quality, as well-known brands are often associated with high-quality offerings.

These findings align with research by Victoria & Utama (2022), Irfanudin et al. (2022), Tjaya & Iskandar (2023), Ramadhan et al. (2023), and Al Akbar & Hadi (2024), all of which confirm that higher brand awareness leads to a higher likelihood of purchase.

The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness in the Relationship between Viral Marketing and Purchase Decisions

Based on the Sobel test result ($Z = 3.45 > 1.96$), brand awareness significantly mediates the effect of viral marketing on purchase decisions. The VAF value of 43.5% also indicates partial mediation. This means that the better the viral marketing activities implemented by Tukies Coconut, the stronger the brand awareness formed, which in turn increases consumers' purchase decisions.

These findings support previous research by Rahayu & Kusumadewi (2023), Ramadhan et al. (2023), and Lakruwan et al. (2023), which confirm that brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between viral marketing and purchase decisions. Effective viral marketing enhances brand awareness, which then contributes to higher consumer purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions that can be drawn based on the discussion of the research results that have been carried out are as follows:

1. Viral marketing has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions. The more viral the marketing of Tukies Coconut products, the more likely it is that consumers will make purchasing decisions for the products offered.
2. Viral marketing has a positive and significant impact on brand awareness. The better the viral marketing activities for Tukies Coconut products, the more people will talk about them.
3. Brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. The higher the consumer's brand awareness, the more significant the increase in purchasing decisions for Tukies Coconut products.

4. The role of brand awareness positively and significantly mediates the relationship between viral marketing and purchasing decisions. The results of the analysis obtained from the analysis technique show that brand awareness is able to positively and significantly mediate the influence of viral marketing on purchasing decisions for Tukies Coconut products in Gianyar Regency.

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