

THE IMPACT OF FOOD VLOGGER CONTENT ON PURCHASING DECISIONS : THE MEDIATING ROLE OF VIRAL MARKETING (Survey of Tiktok Users in Sukabumi City)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of the attractiveness of food vlogger content on purchasing decisions of MSME products, as well as the role of viral marketing as a mediating variable on TikTok users in Sukabumi City. The background of this study is based on the phenomenon of the increasing use of social media, especially TikTok, as a means of promoting MSME products through collaboration with food vloggers. The method used is quantitative with a descriptive and associative approach. Data collection techniques were carried out through online questionnaires distributed to 145 respondents who met certain criteria. Data analysis used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the help of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The results of the study show that the attractiveness of content has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions, both directly and indirectly through viral marketing. Viral marketing has been shown to mediate the relationship between the attractiveness of content and purchasing decisions, which means that interesting content can increase the likelihood of content spreading virally, and ultimately influence consumer purchasing decisions. These findings indicate that content-based marketing strategies and social media have an important role in supporting the promotion of MSME products. This study provides theoretical implications in the development of digital marketing literature as well as practical recommendations for MSMEs and content creators to optimize the potential of social media in reaching consumers more effectively.

Keywords: Content Attraction, Viral Marketing, Purchasing Decisions

INTRODUCTION

The development of the digital economy has had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including business and marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2023). Social media now functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a means of marketing products and services (Ariani et al., (2022)). According to data from *we are social* in 2023, as many as 213 million Indonesians have been connected to the internet, this shows that the digital economy has become an important part of everyday life. It is said that 49% of the 139 million internet users in

Indonesia are recorded as actively using social media (Annur, 2024). We Are Social shows data on the number of internet users in Indonesia.

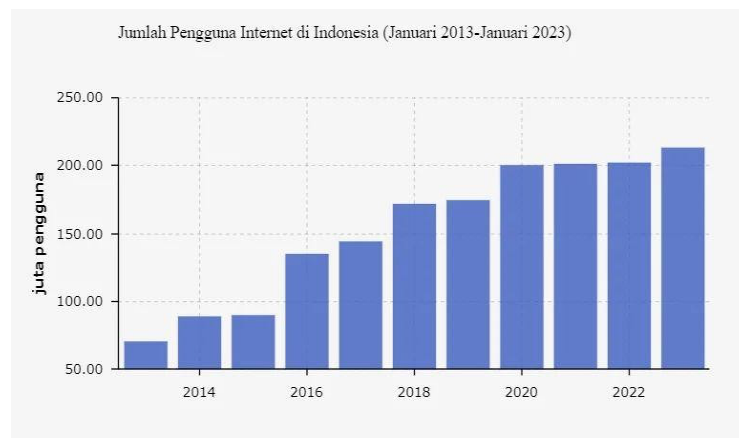


Figure 1. Number of internet users in Indonesia
Source: databox.katadata.co.id

One of the platforms that plays an important role in the digital economy is TikTok. The TikTok application has evolved from being just an entertainment platform to an effective marketing tool, especially in the food industry. In this case, content created by food vloggers, such as mouth-watering videos and engaging narratives, has been shown to influence consumer perceptions of food products, thus driving their purchasing decisions. This is reinforced by research that states that interesting and viral social media content has the ability to increase the appeal and credibility of a product (Lee & Watkins, 2016). With its wide reach and interactive nature, TikTok plays an important role as a bridge connecting MSMEs in the food sector with consumers, making this social media platform one of the main drivers in shaping purchasing decisions in the digital era (Dolan, R, et al (2019).

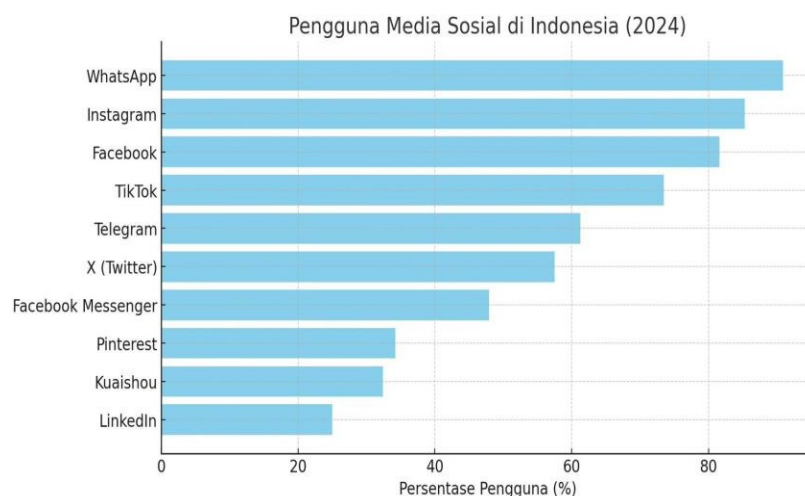


Figure 2. Social Media User Data in Indonesia
Source: Data Reportal (We Are Social & Meltwater)

Based on the Digital 2024 Indonesia report from Data Reportal (We Are Social & Meltwater), 73.5% of internet users in Indonesia actively use TikTok, making it one of the platforms that influences purchasing decisions. In addition, other social media such as WhatsApp (90.9%), Instagram (85.3%), and Facebook (81.6%) also have high adoption rates, indicating that social media is still an important part of people's digital activities in 2024. TikTok's popularity is influenced by its ability to present interesting content that is easily viral, so it has the potential to influence consumer behavior, especially in supporting MSME products. With an algorithm that adjusts to user preferences and the implementation of viral marketing strategies, TikTok has developed into an effective marketing platform for small and medium businesses to reach a wider audience.

Consumer purchasing decisions are the result of various considerations influenced by many factors, including recommendations from sources considered credible, such as food vloggers. Visually appealing and authentically delivered content is often able to create an emotional connection between the audience and the product. This is in accordance with the findings of Lee and Watkins (2016), who stated that viral and interesting content not only succeeds in attracting attention but also increases consumer trust in the product. This trust then has a direct impact on purchasing decisions.

One of the relevant marketing strategies in the digital era is viral marketing, which takes advantage of the speed of information dissemination on social media to reach a wider audience. TikTok, with its interest-based algorithm and features such as popular hashtags and current trends, supports this strategy optimally. According to Yadav and Rahman (2018), viral marketing has a domino effect, where one interesting content can trigger massive consumer engagement. In the context of MSMEs, this strategy helps products gain great attention in a short time, increases brand awareness, and drives consumer intention to purchase. Thus, viral marketing is an important element in social media-based marketing.

The appeal of food vlogger content includes elements such as visual quality, delivery style, and credibility. Appetizing visuals can create a more engaging experience for the audience, while relaxed and honest delivery increases consumer trust in reviews. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), the credibility of the information source greatly influences consumer decisions. In this case, food vloggers with a good reputation are more effective in building trust and driving purchasing decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Strong narratives and attractive visuals are key to the success of their content (Xu & Pratt, 2018)

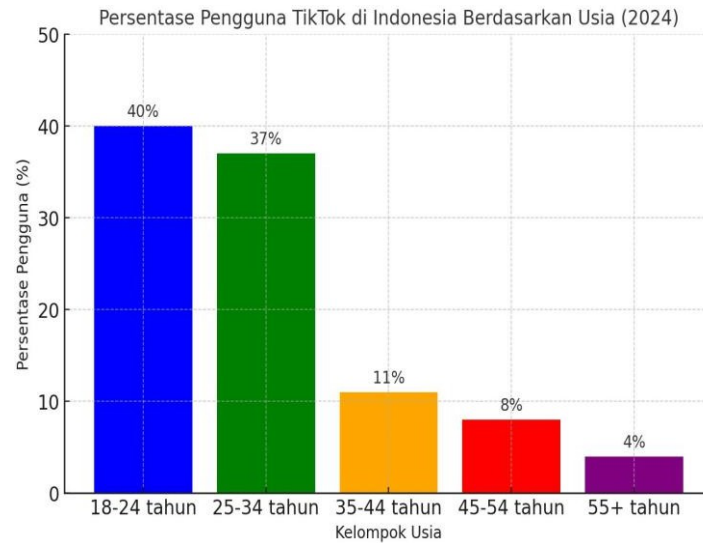


Figure 3 . Data on the Age of TikTok Users in Indonesia
Source: Ginee Insight

According to data from Ginee Insights in 2024, most TikTok users in Indonesia come from the young age group. 40% of users are aged 18–24 years, making it the group with the largest number of users on this platform. Followed by 37% of users aged 25–34 years, which shows that the millennial generation also has a big influence in the TikTok community. Meanwhile, users aged 35–44 years account for 11%, followed by 8% of users aged 45–54 years, and 4% of users aged 55 years and over. These statistics make it clear that TikTok is more dominantly used by the younger generation who are active in consuming and interacting with various types of digital content.

In Sukabumi City, more and more culinary MSMEs are collaborating with food vloggers on TikTok to expand their reach and increase the appeal of their products. Based on observations of a number of food vlogger accounts on TikTok and direct surveys with Culinary MSMEs at the Old Sukabumi Terminal, researchers found that there were 105 MSMEs that utilized food vlogger services throughout 2023 to 2025. This shows that viral marketing on TikTok is becoming an increasingly popular strategy among MSME players, because it allows them to reach a wider and more diverse audience, and promote their products more effectively and efficiently.

From a pre-survey conducted involving 45 respondents, the survey results showed that 37.8% of respondents disagreed, 26% strongly disagreed with the statement that products recommended by food vloggers can meet consumer needs. This finding shows that although food vlogger content can attract consumers' attention, it does not always guarantee that the

recommended products are in accordance with consumer needs. For example, if a food vlogger reviews food A with claims of being delicious and tempting, it turns out that after being tried by consumers it does not meet expectations. This finding highlights a problem in terms of consumer trust in the relevance of recommended products, which has an impact on purchasing decisions for MSME products.

Therefore, this study needs to examine more deeply the extent to which food vlogger recommendations can influence purchasing decisions, especially in the context of MSME products promoted through viral marketing. Previous research by Evan Prayudha Saksama in his study entitled "*The Influence of Food Vlogger Attraction on Generation Z's Buying Interest on TikTok*" showed that the credibility of food vloggers has a significant effect on purchasing interest (Saksama & Evan, 2023). However, the study did not examine specific elements of the content, such as visual design, narrative style, or TikTok-specific trends that may influence purchase decisions. This gap opens up opportunities for more in-depth research on these elements, which could provide new insights into the role of video content in influencing consumer behavior.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative method with a descriptive and associative approach. According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative methods are used to study certain samples or populations using instruments that produce quantitative or statistical data to test hypotheses. Descriptive research aims to provide a clear and complete picture of the object or subject being studied (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). Meanwhile, the associative approach is used to measure the relationship between two or more variables.

This study uses a non-probability sampling method with a purposive sampling approach, which means that researchers select respondents who meet certain criteria according to the research objectives. These criteria are TikTok users in Sukabumi City who have watched food vlogger content and purchased MSME products in the last three months. This technique was chosen because it allows researchers to get respondents who are more relevant to the research topic, so that the data obtained is more specific and focused (Sekaran, 2016). Determining the number of samples refers to the guidelines put forward by Hair et al. (2017), which recommends that in quantitative research based on Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the minimum number of samples should range from 5 to 10 times the number of

indicators used. In this study, there are 29 indicators, so the minimum number of samples required is:

$$5 \times 29 = 145 \text{ respondents}$$

The number was chosen by considering the efficiency of time and available resources, but still meets the basic requirements for SEM analysis so that the research results can be tested statistically and produce a reliable model. Data collection was carried out through the distribution of online questionnaires aimed at TikTok users in Sukabumi City who met the established criteria. It is hoped that this approach will be able to comprehensively describe how food vlogger content can influence MSME product purchasing decisions, by considering the role of viral marketing as a mediating variable in the process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The structural model is created by designing the relationship between latent variables. The results of construct validity and reliability testing are explained in the following outer model stage:

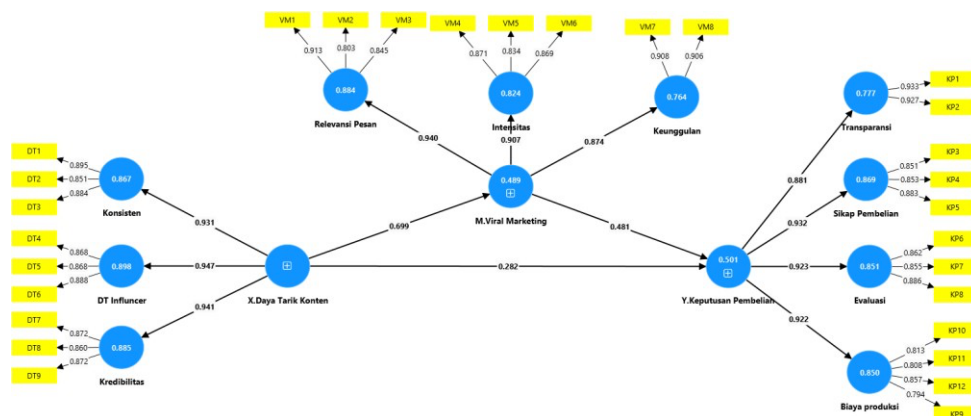


Figure 4. Path Diagram of the Model
Source: processed by researchers, 2025 (SmartPLS 4.0)

Coefficient of determination (R Square) is used to measure the extent to which the independent variable is able to explain the dependent variable. According to Hair et al. (2010), the R2 value is categorized as follows:

Values above 0.75 are considered strong, between 0.50-0.75 are considered moderate, and around 0.25 are categorized as weak.

Table 1. R Square Value

Variables	R Square	Category
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.501	Currently
Viral Marketing (Xmed)	0.489	Currently

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025 (SmartPLS 4.0)

Based on the table above, the R Square value for the Purchase Decision variable is 0.501, which means that the combination of the Content Appeal and Viral Marketing variables is able to explain 50.1% of the variation in the Purchase Decision. This value is in the moderate category, indicating that although its contribution is quite strong, there are still other factors outside the model that can influence the purchase decision. Meanwhile, the R Square value for the Viral Marketing variable is 0.489, also classified as moderate, indicating that Content Appeal contributes around 48.9% in explaining the Viral Marketing variable.

To make it easier to understand the influence between latent variables in the model, all the results of the influence values (direct and indirect) are summarized in one matrix table. This matrix presents the t-statistic value, p-value, and total influence of each variable .

Table 2. Summary Matrix of Influence Between Variables

Relationship Between Variables	T- Statistic	P-Value	Direct Influence	Indirect Influence	Total Influence
Content Appeal (X) →Purchase Decision (Y)	3.242	0.001	0.282	0.337	0.619
Content Attraction (X) →Viral Marketing (Xmed)	13,371	0.000	0.699	-	0.699
Viral Marketing (Xmed) →Purchase Decision (Y)	6.129	0.000	0.481	-	0.481
Content Appeal (X) →Viral Marketing (XMed) →Purchase Decision (Y)	5.155	0.000	-	0.337	0.337

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025 (SmartPLS 4.0)

Based on the summary results in Table 4.6 above, it is known that all relationships between variables in this research model show a significant influence. The explanation of each hypothesis is as follows:

a. Hypothesis 1

The Content Attractiveness variable has a direct influence on Purchasing Decisions with a coefficient value of 0.282, t-statistic $3.242 > 1.96$, and p-value $0.001 < 0.05$. These results indicate that H_1 is accepted, meaning that content attractiveness contributes significantly to influencing purchasing decisions. In addition, there is also an indirect influence through mediating variables, so that the total influence is 0.619.

b. Hypothesis 2

Content Appeal also has a positive and significant effect on Viral Marketing, with a coefficient value of 0.699, t-statistic of 13.371, and p-value of 0.000. Since the t-value is more than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, H_2 is accepted. This indicates that the more interesting the content delivered by a food vlogger, the higher the possibility of the content going viral.

c. Hypothesis 3

The influence of Viral Marketing on Purchasing Decisions is also significant, with a coefficient value of 0.481, t-statistics of 6.129, and p-value of 0.000. This supports H_3 , which means that the more viral the content, the more likely consumers are to be encouraged to make a purchase.

d. Hypothesis 4

There is an indirect effect of Content Appeal on Purchasing Decisions through Viral Marketing of 0.337 (p-value 0.000). This strengthens that Viral Marketing acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between content appeal and purchasing decisions.

DISCUSSION

The results of data processing through SmartPLS version 4.0.9.9 show that Content Attractiveness has a positive and significant direct influence on Purchasing Decisions, indicated by a coefficient value of 0.282, a T-statistic value of 3.242 (greater than 1.96), and a p-value of 0.001 (smaller than 0.05). Thus, the relationship between content attractiveness and purchasing decisions is stated to be statistically significant and the first hypothesis (H_1) is accepted.

This means that the more interesting the content displayed by a food vlogger, the higher the likelihood of someone making a purchasing decision for the displayed MSME product. Content that is visually and emotionally appealing will increase audience interest, form

positive perceptions, and encourage purchasing actions. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Astuti & Raharjo (2021), which states that visual and narrative elements in social media content have a significant influence on consumer decisions. In addition, research by Maulidah & Hidayat (2022) also supports that the appeal of digital content, especially that displayed through social media such as TikTok, plays an important role in influencing purchasing decisions. The results of the study showed that Content Appeal significantly influenced Viral Marketing, with a path coefficient of 0.699, a T-statistic value of 13.371, and a p-value of 0.000. These values indicate that the second hypothesis (H2) can be accepted because the relationship formed is strong and statistically significant. In other words, engaging content will encourage social media users to like, share, or leave comments, thus expanding the reach and increasing the potential for viral content distribution. The characteristics of informative, emotional, and entertaining content contribute to high audience participation.

This study is in line with the results of a study by Puspita & Anggraini (2021) which explains that visual and emotional elements of content can trigger a viral effect on social media. Likewise with the findings of Nugroho & Kartika (2023), which emphasize that entertaining and easy-to-understand content is more likely to spread widely. From the test results obtained, Viral Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Purchasing Decisions, with a coefficient value of 0.481, a T-statistic value of 6.129, and a p-value of 0.000. Thus, the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted. This explains that the more often content is widely distributed or goes viral, the higher the tendency of the audience to make purchases of the promoted product. The viral phenomenon can increase brand visibility and create positive perceptions and social trust, which ultimately have an impact on purchasing decisions. This finding is in line with the results of research by Kartika & Permana (2022), which states that viral marketing can increase purchasing decisions because it creates the perception that the product is trending. Additional support comes from Hasibuan (2023), who emphasized that the virality of content creates social pressure (FOMO) that drives purchasing actions, especially among active social media users.

CONCLUSION

- a. Content Appeal has a positive and significant influence on Purchasing Decisions. This finding shows that attractive content in terms of visuals, messages, and delivery style can increase consumer desire to buy MSME products promoted by food vloggers. This means that the higher the appeal of a content, the greater its influence on consumer

- purchasing decisions.
- b. Content Appeal has a significant impact on Viral Marketing. Content that is packaged attractively tends to spread more widely on social media. Characteristics such as visual aesthetics, clarity of message, and connection with the audience trigger virality. In other words, the more attractive the content, the more likely it is to go viral.
 - c. Viral Marketing has a positive influence on Purchasing Decisions. When a content has spread widely and received great attention on social media, it encourages the emergence of purchasing interest from consumers. The viral phenomenon creates a psychological effect that the product is popular or in demand, thus fostering a sense of trust and encouragement to try the promoted product.
 - d. Viral Marketing becomes a mediating variable between Content Appeal and Purchase Decision. This finding indicates that the influence of Content Appeal on Purchase Decision does not only occur directly, but is also strengthened through the existence of Viral Marketing. In other words, interesting content increases the potential for virality, and this virality indirectly has a positive impact on consumer purchasing decisions.

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