

# The Impact of Viral Stealth Marketing on Consumers' Buying Interest on Cosmetic Products

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## Abstract

The concept of viral stealth marketing has been actively used by marketers to make products well-received in society. Stealth marketing is one of the digital marketing strategies that advertises a product or service to someone without them realizing that they are becoming a marketing object. Stealth marketing is more commonly found on social media platforms today, such as Facebook or Instagram, than traditional advertising media, such as newspaper, TV, and radio broadcasts. Influencers as service providers are becoming more general in this method of marketing. Cosmetic products are products that are often marketed with the viral stealth marketing method. Recommendations of cosmetic products from people we know will be easier to accept. Data collection was carried out by conducting a survey on the age group of Gen Z. Data processing using paired t-test and F-test. The results of the paired t-test found that there was a difference in the buying interest of consumers who received product promotion treatment (B1) with the group of consumers who received agent recognition treatment (B2) with a significance value of 0.000. Meanwhile, the results of the F-test show that the presence of agent recognition treatment affects consumers' buying interest in indicators of seeking information, trying products, knowing more, and the desire to own products. This result indicates a change in the buying interest of consumers in cosmetic products when they are aware of the use of viral stealth marketing promotion methods.

*Keywords: Customer, viral marketing, viral stealth marketing, t-test and F-test*

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## 1. Introduction

In line with the development of communication technology, competition between marketers is getting tougher and unavoidable [1]. Every day, marketers have to do more, work smarter and harder, be creative and have to have many ways to convince consumers to make their communication messages more audible [2]. Advertising is one of the ways used by marketers to send messages to consumers to communicate company products [3]. The traditional communication strategy that has been built by companies with their consumers has begun to change [4], [5], where in influencing consumers or in their marketing communications, marketers try to create a strategy that as much as possible, uses a more subtle way of persuading consumers [6], [7] so as to avoid defense mechanisms as an initial reaction to consumers that can hinder the achievement of these marketing communication goals [8].

One of the factors that causes traditional marketing techniques, such as advertising on TV, tabloid newspapers, radio, and other media, to be shifted due to the ineffectiveness of conventional advertising today due to the huge advertising costs and also the decreasing

opportunities for consumers to pay attention to existing advertisements [9], [10]. Marketing techniques are moving more toward digital with more subtle word-of-mouth communication methods [11], [12]. One that is quite famous is viral stealth marketing (VSM). Alkhafagi and ALSiede [13] stated that stealth marketing methods show a positive effect on customer engagement. The development of social media that has entered all levels of society has also caused conventional methods to be considered ineffective. The linkage between social networks and marketing is formed by the relationship of the world's communication and society [14].

The target market that is very relevant to marketing new models through viral stealth marketing is Generation Z, who have excellent digital literacy. From [15] in their book *Marketing to Gen Z*, they state that a special approach is needed to be able to sell products to Generation Z. They have a liberal relationship, are based on the strength of numbers or group acceptance, are oriented towards entrepreneurial skills, and think globally without forgetting their locality.

Cosmetic products become unique products for sale. Marketers must be smart in influencing potential consumers to gain consumer buying interest [16]. Cosmetic products that are applied to the consumer's body

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cause consumers to be very selective in choosing cosmetic products that are suitable for them. Cosmetics have become a basic necessity for women in beautifying themselves in a fast way. The increasing need for women to beautify themselves has made the cosmetics industry increase rapidly in Indonesia [17]. This is what causes a new marketing technique to become more popular, especially for the target market of Gen Z. Techniques that use a more refined approach, attract more attention, and can reduce advertising costs are needed to know consumers' buying interest. Based on the description above, researchers tried to raise the title The Impact of Viral Stealth Marketing on Consumer Buying Interest in Cosmetic Products.

## 2. Research Methodology

The tools and materials used in this study are questionnaires, examples of cosmetic products (face wash soap), product promotional videos and promotional agent recognition videos as treatment tools given to respondents.

The type of research used is experimental research. The experimental research approach aims to identify cause-and-effect relationships between variables [18]. Experimentation is an objective observation of phenomena that are made to occur in a highly controlled situation in which one or more factors are allowed to vary while others are allowed to be constant [19]. The stages of conducting laboratory experimental research with the data collection method using this questionnaire are as follows:

1. Preparation of data retrieval instruments.  
The data collection instrument in the form of a questionnaire is made based on the results of the literature review regarding consumer buying interest indicators.
2. Creation of treatment videos.  
There are 2 videos of treatment given in this study, firstly a promotional video that tells the experience of the agent in using cosmetic product X. Second the video of the agent's recognition that the experience of using cosmetic product X that was previously told was not based on his personal reference but the scenario obtained from cosmetic product company X and the agent got paid from cosmetic product company X.
3. Division of respondent groups.  
The data collection process begins by dividing the group of respondents into two groups of respondents, namely group A as the group of respondents control and group B as the group of treatment respondents.
4. Giving treatment to the respondent group.  
The treatment was given in two sessions. The first session was given a treatment using product promotional videos for each group (A1 and B1). The second session was given the same product promo video in the first session for group A (A2) and the agent recognition video treatment for group B (B2).
5. Data collection using questionnaires for each group of respondents.  
A questionnaire measuring the buying interest of Generation Z consumers was given to each group in each session with the following variables:  
Y1 = looking for information

- Y2 = consider buying
- Y3 = interested in trying
- Y4 = want to know
- Y5 = want to have

The Likert scale with a range of choices strongly agrees to the point of strongly disagreeing. The scores for each of the answer choices are as follows:

- SA = Strongly Agree; Score 5
- A = Agree; Score 4
- LS = Less Agree; Score 3
- DA = Disagree; Score 2
- SDA = Strongly Disagree; Score 1

### 6. Data processing.

The data obtained were then processed using paired t-test samples for groups A1-A2 (Pair 1), B1-B2 (Pair 2), A1-B1 (Pair 3), and A2-B2 (Pair 4). This is done to find out the differences between the groups paired in the test. In this study, the F test was also used to determine which variables distinguished the control group (A) and the treatment group (B).

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Results

This study involved 30 respondents who were divided into two groups of 15 people each. Group A is the control group, and group B is the group that is given treatment. Respondents were selected by a random purposive method based on a group of Generation Z consumers between the ages of 20 and 21. Statistical data on pairs of groups of respondents can be seen in Table 1.

In Table 1, it can be seen that there are 4 pairs of groups paired, namely A1-A2 (Pair 1), B1-B2 (Pair 2), A1-B1 (Pair 3), and A2-B2 (Pair 4). All groups had a sample count (N) of 15 data each. This indicates that the amount of data entered on the data processing is the same for each test group and has been completed [20]. Pair 1 compares the A1 data group with A2 where it shows the average data spread, standard deviation, and standard mean error have the same values for both groups (A1-A2). The display of the results of this preliminary data can be expected for the two groups, but there is no difference in consumer buying interest. Pair 2 compared the B1 and B2 groups with their average values, standard deviations, and average standards to be quite different, so we can guess that the group of B1 respondents who got the cosmetic product promotion treatment with the group of B2 respondents who got the recognition treatment, had different buying interests.

Table 1. Paired samples statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	A1	4.160	15	.2414	.0623
	A2	4.160	15	.2414	.0623
Pair 2	B1	3.840	15	.5082	.1312
	B2	3.067	15	.7118	.1838
Pair 3	A1	4.160	15	.2414	.0623
	B1	3.840	15	.5082	.1312
Pair 4	A2	4.160	15	.2414	.0623
	B2	3.067	15	.7118	.1838

Pair 3 comparison between groups A1 and B1 shows that the average value of the respondents' data distribution is not much different, namely 4.160 (A1) and 3,840 (B1). It is alleged that the two groups had relatively similar buying interests after receiving promotional treatment for cosmetic products. The average answer that respondents had was around a score of 4, which means that consumer interest in cosmetic products is quite good. The average respondent chose to agree to the buying interest variable (Y 1, Y 2, Y 3, Y 4, and Y 5). Pair 4 compared groups A2 and B2, where the two groups had different treatments. Group A2 (group A, session 2) received the same promotional video treatment in the first session as the control group. Group B2 (group B session 2) received a video recognition treatment. In Table 1, groups A2 and B2 have quite different average values, standard deviations, and standard mean errors. The average choice of respondents in group A2 had a score of 4 (agree), while in group B2, it was in group 3 (less agree). It can be presumed that there are differences in consumer buying interest from the two groups of respondents [21].

The paired data are then processed by conducting a t-test for each group of respondents. The results of data processing using SPSS can be seen in Table 2.

In Table 2, we can see that with a significance level of less than 0.05, pair 1 (A1-A2) shows an insignificant value (1,000). This can be interpreted as the two groups being equal or not having a difference in buying interest in both the first session and in the second session [22]. This control group showed that the promotion treatment given in session 1 (A1) and session 2 (A2) was consistent. Pairs 2, 3, and 4 produce signification values of less than 0.05 i.e., 0.001, 0.033, and 0.000, respectively. This shows that

between the groups for each of their partners have different buying interests. The existence of a video of the agent's recognition treatment affects consumers' buying interest in the cosmetic products offered [23].

The F test is used to determine what variables most distinguish the group that gets the promotion treatment (B1) from the group that gets the agent recognition treatment (B2). The following are the results of processing F test data:

In Table 3, the significance values that are less than 0.05 are the variables Y1, Y 3, Y 4, and Y 5. Y 1 of 0.013, Y 3, Y 4, and Y5 are 0.000 each. This suggests that the presence of agent recognition treatment affects consumers' buying interest in the indicators of seeking information, trying products, knowing more, and the desire to own products [24].

### 3.2. Discussion

The results showed that there was no difference in the buying interest of respondents in the control group (A) both in session 1 and in session 2 (A1 and A2). The control group consists of respondents who only get product promotion videos and without agent recognition videos related to the Viral Stealth Marketing (VSM) promotion method in sessions 1 and 2. Respondents' buying interests remained the same, and the same treatment was used in different sessions. Consumer buying interest was different in the group of respondents who received a video of agent recognition related to the VSM promotion method in session 2. This can be seen in pairs 2, 3, and 4, showing significantly different values of less than 0.05, namely 0.001, 0.033, and 0.000, respectively.

Table 2. Paired samples t-test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
					Pair 1	A1 - A2			
Pair 2	B1 - B2	.77	.7245	.1871	-.3721	1.175	4.13	14	.001
Pair 3	A1 - B1	.32	.5226	.1349	.0306	.609	2.37	14	.033
Pair 4	A2 - B2	1.09	.7741	.1999	.6646	1.522	5.47	14	.000

Table 3. F-test

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Y1	Between Groups	6.533	3	2.178	3.909	.013
	Within Groups	31.200	56	.557		
	Total	37.733	59			
Y2	Between Groups	3.333	3	1.111	2.102	.110
	Within Groups	29.600	56	.529		
	Total	32.933	59			
Y3	Between Groups	20.867	3	6.956	13.401	.000
	Within Groups	29.067	56	.519		
	Total	49.933	59			
Y4	Between Groups	17.250	3	5.750	8.718	.000
	Within Groups	36.933	56	.660		
	Total	54.183	59			
Y5	Between Groups	18.983	3	6.328	8.714	.000
	Within Groups	40.667	56	.726		
	Total	59.650	59			

The average score of consumers buying interest in session 2 in the group that received treatment was lower than the average score of consumers buying interest in session 1. This decrease in the average value shows that consumers' buying interest decreases after knowing that the products offered use the viral stealth marketing method [25], [26]. Significant indicators of consumer buying interest in the respondent group are indicators of seeking information, trying products, knowing more, and the desire to own products. This can be seen from the results of the F test with a significance value for each attribute of Y1 of 0.013, Y3, Y4, and Y5 of 0.000 each. Consumer interest decreases to find information related to products, try products, find out more about the product, and the desire to own products with the VSM promotion method [27].

#### 4. Conclusion

Research on the impact of viral stealth marketing on the buying interest of consumers from the Generation Z age group in cosmetic products, it can be concluded that from the paired t-test results, it is known that there is a difference in the buying interest of consumers who get product promotion treatment (B1) with the group of consumers who get agent recognition treatment (B2) with a significance of 0.000. Meanwhile, the results of the F test show that the presence of agent recognition treatment affects consumers' buying interest in indicators of seeking information, trying products, knowing more, and the desire to own products. This result replicates a change in the buying interest of consumers of cosmetic products when they learn about the use of viral stealth marketing promotion methods.

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