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# COMPLEXITY OF PURCHASING DECISIONS: THE ROLE OF BRAND IMAGE, VIRAL MARKETING AND PURCHASE INTEREST

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#### Abstract

In the era of globalization and intensifying market competition, purchasing decisions have become crucial in product or service marketing strategies. The complexity of these decisions is a central focus for researchers and business practitioners seeking to understand dynamic consumer behavior. Brand image, viral marketing, and purchase interest play key roles in shaping these decisions. Brand image shapes consumer perceptions, while viral marketing effectively introduces products or services to broad audiences. Purchase interest reflects consumer desires and intentions. This study investigates the relationship between these factors and their impact on purchasing decisions in the Indonesian market, focusing on Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang as a case study. Using quantitative methods, data was collected through questionnaires from 100 respondents. Results show significant influences of brand image, viral marketing, and purchase interest on purchasing decisions. These findings provide valuable insights for companies designing effective marketing strategies to navigate dynamic market challenges, particularly in Jember dan Lumajang's fashion industry. The research utilizes smart partial least squares (PLS) for data analysis. The study concludes that while brand image does not significantly influence purchasing decisions, viral marketing and purchase interest positively and significantly impact these decisions.

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### 1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and escalating market competition, purchasing decisions emerge as pivotal aspects within product or service marketing strategies. Understanding the intricate nature of these decisions has become paramount for both researchers and business practitioners in navigating the increasingly dynamic consumer behavior landscape. Consequently, the roles of brand image, viral marketing, and purchase interest have garnered significant attention in elucidating the factors influencing purchasing decisions.

Brand image plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions toward specific products or services. As per Kotler and Armstrong (2012), brand image encompasses the views and impressions consumers hold regarding a brand, exerting a substantial influence on consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, with the proliferation of technology and

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widespread internet penetration, viral marketing has emerged as an effective marketing strategy in introducing products or services to broad audiences. Through viral marketing, spontaneously disseminated messages by consumers can influence their perceptions and purchase intentions towards a brand. As elucidated by Kotler and Keller (2016), consumer purchase interest reflects their desires or intentions to select and consume a product.

However, amidst this complexity, purchase interest also plays a significant role. Kotler (2009) defines viral marketing as a marketing tool aimed at creating joy among individuals, prompting them to propagate marketing messages to specific individuals or groups. Purchase interest reflects consumer desires to acquire offered products or services and is a determining factor in final purchasing decisions. Thus, comprehending the relationship between brand image, viral marketing, and purchase interest is crucial for companies in devising effective marketing strategies.

Furthermore, purchasing decisions mark the culmination of the consumer decision-making process. In this stage, consumers have recognized their problems, identified their needs through sought information, and provided various alternatives before ultimately deciding to purchase the product or service deemed most suitable for their needs. In the Indonesian context, where markets are evolving, and competition is intensifying, research on the complexity of purchasing decisions becomes increasingly relevant.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between brand image, viral marketing, and purchase interest, and their impact on consumer purchasing decisions in the Indonesian market. Consequently, this research is expected to provide valuable contributions to marketing theory and practice and serve as a guide for companies in developing effective marketing strategies to address dynamic market challenges.

The fashion industry, as a vital component of the continuously evolving business landscape, has witnessed significant growth in clothing consumption in Indonesia, particularly in East Java. Jember dan Lumajang City stands out as one of the fashion business growth centers, attracting the attention of numerous local and international entrepreneurs. Intensified competition prompts business owners to seek innovative strategies to maintain market share. In this context, effective marketing strategies such as social media campaigns and influencer collaborations become key to market domination.

However, in recent months, Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang fashion store has experienced a decline in purchasing decisions despite maintaining high visitor numbers. This phenomenon serves as the focal point of the study, delving into the role of purchase interest as a mediator in the relationship between brand image and viral marketing on purchasing decisions. The research is motivated by prior research results indicating that brand image and viral marketing have varying impacts on purchasing decisions.

Thus, this study aims to investigate the factors influencing purchasing decisions at Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang fashion store, with a focus on the mediating role of purchase interest between brand image and viral marketing. Through this research, solutions or strategies are anticipated to be uncovered to assist Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang in understanding the reasons for the decline in purchasing decisions and revitalizing their business performance in the competitive market.

The burgeoning fashion industry, particularly in East Java and Jember dan Lumajang City, has experienced significant growth in recent years. Intensified competition urges business owners to seek innovative strategies to maintain and increase market share. This phenomenon is also evident at Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang fashion store, which has experienced a decline in purchasing decisions despite maintaining stable visitor numbers. Several studies related to purchasing decisions have yielded varied results regarding the influence of brand image. From

these studies arises the need to further investigate the mediating role of purchase interest in the relationship between brand image, viral marketing, and purchasing decisions. Therefore, this research will focus on the mediating role of purchase interest in brand image and viral marketing on purchasing decisions, sampling from Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang fashion store customers.

#### 2. Methods

The research methodology employed in this study is quantitative in nature, drawing on the positivist philosophy as elucidated by Sugiyono (2022). This approach is chosen to investigate specific aspects within the population or sample under study.

The focus of this research encompasses brand image, viral marketing, purchase interest, and purchasing decisions among customers at Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang fashion store. Both primary and secondary data are utilized in the research process. Primary data is collected through questionnaires and documentation, while secondary data is sourced from internal and external sources.

Non-probability sampling is employed using the purposive sampling technique. This sampling method is chosen as it allows for the selection of specific elements or members from the population based on predetermined criteria, aligning with the objectives of the study.

Several hypotheses are formulated to guide the research. These hypotheses explore the relationships between brand image, viral marketing, purchase interest, and purchasing decisions among customers of Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang fashion store. Specifically, hypotheses are proposed regarding the influence of brand image and viral marketing on both purchase interest and purchasing decisions, as well as the mediating role of purchase interest in the relationship between brand image, viral marketing, and purchasing decisions.

The data analysis process involves the application of appropriate statistical techniques to examine the relationships between variables and test the proposed hypotheses. Through rigorous analysis, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the factors influencing purchasing decisions in the context of Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang fashion store, ultimately contributing to the development of effective marketing strategies in response to dynamic market challenges.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing Result

| Path  | P-Value  | Conclusion   |
|---|--|--|
| Brand Image - Purchase Decision                         | 0.191  | Reject   |
| Viral Marketing - Purchase Decision                     | 0.000  | Accept   |
| Brand Image - Purchase Interest                         | 0.033  | Accept   |
| Viral Marketing - Purchase Interest                     | 0.000  | Accept   |
| Purchase Interest - Purchase Decision                   | 0.002  | Accept   |
| Brand Image - Purchase Decision - Purchase Interest     | 0.100  | Reject   |
| Viral Marketing - Purchase Decision - Purchase Interest | 0.002  | Accept   |
|   | Brand Image - Purchase Decision  Viral Marketing - Purchase Decision  Brand Image - Purchase Interest  Viral Marketing - Purchase Interest  Purchase Interest - Purchase Decision  Brand Image - Purchase Decision - Purchase Interest | Brand Image - Purchase Decision 0.191  Viral Marketing - Purchase Decision 0.000  Brand Image - Purchase Interest 0.033  Viral Marketing - Purchase Interest 0.000  Purchase Interest - Purchase Decision 0.002  Brand Image - Purchase Decision - Purchase Interest 0.100 |

Source: Data Processed, 2024

Based on the presentation of data in Table 5 regarding the summary of hypothesis testing results, it can be observed that out of the 7 hypotheses proposed in this study, hypotheses (H2, H3, H4, H5, and H7) are accepted because each effect indicated has a P-value < 0.05, while hypotheses (H1 and H6) are rejected as each effect indicated has a P-value > 0.05.

# The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decisions

The findings reveal that there is no significant positive influence of brand image on purchase decisions among customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. This aligns with prior research conducted by Sagita (2024), which similarly concluded that brand image does not significantly impact purchase decisions (Sagita, 2024). Additionally, the study by Umma and Nabila (2023) also supports this conclusion by demonstrating that brand image does not influence purchase decisions (Umma & Nabila, 2023).

A deeper analysis suggests several potential reasons for this outcome. Firstly, it's possible that in the context of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang, other factors such as product quality, pricing, or customer service may have a more significant influence on purchase decisions compared to brand image alone. Customers might prioritize tangible aspects of the product or service over intangible factors like brand image (Sagita, 2024).

Furthermore, the lack of a significant relationship between brand image and purchase decisions could indicate that customers in this market segment are more price-sensitive or value-driven. They may base their purchase decisions on factors such as affordability, perceived value for money, or specific product features rather than the reputation or image associated with a brand (Umma & Nabila, 2023).

Moreover, it's essential to consider the specific characteristics of the brand image being evaluated. Different aspects of brand image, such as brand awareness, brand reputation, or brand loyalty, may have varying degrees of influence on purchase decisions. Future research could delve deeper into these specific dimensions of brand image to better understand their impact on consumer behavior.

Overall, while the findings suggest that brand image may not be a significant driver of purchase decisions for customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang, further investigation into the underlying factors influencing consumer behavior in this context is warranted. This could provide valuable insights for businesses aiming to enhance their marketing strategies and effectively target their customer base.

#### The Influence of Viral Marketing on Purchase Decisions

The hypothesis testing results reveal that viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions among customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Rimbasari et al. (2023), which similarly concluded that viral marketing has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions. Additionally, the study by Maulida et al. (2022) supports this conclusion by demonstrating that viral marketing significantly influences purchase decisions.

Firstly, viral marketing, characterized by its ability to rapidly disseminate marketing messages through social networks, may enhance brand awareness and engagement among customers. This heightened awareness can influence customers' perceptions and attitudes towards the brand, ultimately impacting their purchase decisions positively. Moreover, the interactive nature of viral marketing campaigns often encourages user participation and engagement, fostering a sense of community and trust around the brand, which can further influence purchase behavior.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the growing importance of digital marketing strategies, particularly in the context of a dynamic and competitive market environment. With the increasing prevalence of social media platforms and online channels, businesses can leverage viral marketing to reach a broader audience and stimulate consumer interest and engagement effectively.

In conclusion, the positive and significant influence of viral marketing on purchase decisions highlights its effectiveness as a strategic marketing tool for Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. By capitalizing on viral marketing techniques, businesses can enhance their brand visibility, engage with customers more effectively, and ultimately drive sales and revenue growth.

## The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Intent

The hypothesis testing results indicate that brand image has a positive and significant impact on purchase intent among customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Suheri et al. (2023), which similarly concluded that brand image positively and significantly affects purchase intent. Additionally, the study by Ahmad et al. (2020) supports this conclusion by demonstrating a significant positive influence of brand image on purchase intent.

A deeper analysis suggests several underlying mechanisms for this outcome. Firstly, a strong and favorable brand image can evoke positive perceptions and emotions among consumers, leading to a heightened sense of trust, loyalty, and affinity towards the brand. Customers are more likely to develop a favorable attitude towards products or services associated with a reputable and trusted brand image, which can positively influence their intent to purchase.

Moreover, brand image serves as a signal of quality, reliability, and consistency, particularly in the context of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. A well-established brand image conveys a message of assurance and satisfaction to customers, reducing their perceived risk and uncertainty associated with purchasing decisions. As a result, customers may feel more confident and inclined to engage in purchase behaviors.

Furthermore, brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' perceptions of product attributes, benefits, and values. A positive brand image can differentiate Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang from competitors, highlighting its unique selling propositions and value propositions. This differentiation can create a competitive advantage, attracting customers and influencing their purchase intentions.

In conclusion, the positive and significant influence of brand image on purchase intent underscores its importance as a strategic asset for Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. By cultivating a strong and favorable brand image, businesses can enhance customer perceptions, foster trust and loyalty, and ultimately drive purchase intent and sales growth.

# The Impact of Viral Marketing on Purchase Intent

The hypothesis testing results reveal a positive and significant influence of viral marketing on purchase intent among customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Haya et al. (2021), which similarly concluded that viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase intent. Additionally, the study by Astasari and Sudarwanto (2021) supports this conclusion by demonstrating a significant positive impact of viral marketing on purchase intent.

A deeper analysis sheds light on the mechanisms underlying this outcome. Viral marketing leverages social networks and online platforms to disseminate marketing messages rapidly and extensively, often through user-generated content and peer recommendations. In the context of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang, effective viral marketing campaigns can generate buzz, excitement, and engagement among customers, thereby increasing their interest and desire to explore products or services offered by the store.

Furthermore, viral marketing enhances brand visibility, awareness, and exposure, facilitating greater reach and access to potential customers. By leveraging the power of social sharing and word-of-mouth referrals, viral marketing amplifies the dissemination of brand-related content and promotional offers, attracting attention and stimulating curiosity among consumers. As a result, customers may develop a heightened sense of interest and curiosity towards Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang, leading to increased purchase intent.

Moreover, viral marketing fosters social proof and credibility, as consumers tend to trust recommendations and endorsements from their peers and social networks. When customers encounter viral marketing content that resonates with their interests and preferences, they are more likely to perceive Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang as trustworthy and reputable, thereby strengthening their inclination to make a purchase.

In conclusion, the positive and significant impact of viral marketing on purchase intent underscores its effectiveness as a strategic marketing tool for Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. By leveraging viral marketing campaigns effectively, businesses can enhance brand visibility, stimulate consumer interest, and ultimately drive purchase intent and conversion rates.

#### The Influence of Purchase Intent on Purchase Decision

The hypothesis testing results indicate a positive and significant influence of purchase intent on purchase decisions among customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Purwati et al. (2022), which similarly concluded that purchase intent has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Additionally, the study by Sari (2020) supports this

conclusion by demonstrating a significant positive impact of purchase intent on purchase decisions.

A deeper analysis provides insights into the underlying mechanisms driving this relationship. Purchase intent reflects customers' willingness and inclination to acquire a product or service, serving as a precursor to actual purchase behavior. In the context of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang, customers with higher levels of purchase intent are more likely to exhibit proactive engagement with the brand, actively seeking out information, evaluating alternatives, and expressing a desire to make a purchase.

Furthermore, purchase intent serves as a key determinant of consumer behavior in the decision-making process. Customers with strong purchase intent are more motivated to convert their intentions into actual purchases, especially when presented with favorable opportunities or incentives. For Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang, cultivating and nurturing purchase intent among its customer base can lead to higher conversion rates and increased sales revenue.

Moreover, purchase intent reflects the alignment between customers' preferences, needs, and perceived value propositions offered by Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. Customers who harbor a genuine interest and desire for the products or services offered by the store are more likely to perceive them as desirable and worthy of investment, leading to a higher likelihood of making a purchase decision.

In conclusion, the positive and significant impact of purchase intent on purchase decisions underscores its importance as a predictor of consumer behavior for Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. By understanding and leveraging factors that influence purchase intent, such as product relevance, value proposition, and customer engagement strategies, businesses can effectively drive purchase decisions and enhance overall sales performance.

### The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decision Mediated by Purchase Intent

The hypothesis testing results reveal that brand image does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent among customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Muhtarom et al. (2022), which similarly concluded that brand image does not influence purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent. Similarly, the study by Mukarromah et al. (2022) also demonstrates that brand image does not have a significant impact on purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent.

A deeper analysis sheds light on the underlying dynamics of this relationship. Brand image represents the perceptions, associations, and emotions that consumers attribute to a brand. It encompasses factors such as brand reputation, identity, and positioning in the minds of consumers. While brand image is crucial for shaping consumer preferences and attitudes towards a brand, its influence on purchase decisions may be mediated by other factors, such as purchase intent.

In the context of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang, customers' purchase decisions may be more strongly influenced by their inherent purchase intent rather than solely by their perception of the brand image. Purchase intent reflects customers'

readiness and inclination to make a purchase, which may be driven by various factors such as product features, pricing, promotional offers, and personal preferences. Therefore, even if customers have a positive perception of the brand image, their purchase decisions may ultimately be guided by their underlying purchase intent.

Furthermore, the lack of significant mediation suggests that purchase intent may not serve as an intermediary mechanism through which brand image influences purchase decisions. Other factors, such as perceived product quality, brand loyalty, or external influences, may play a more prominent role in shaping the relationship between brand image and purchase decisions.

In conclusion, while brand image is essential for building brand equity and shaping consumer perceptions, its direct influence on purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent may be limited in the context of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. Understanding the complex interplay between brand image, purchase intent, and other influencing factors can provide valuable insights for developing targeted marketing strategies and enhancing overall brand performance.

# The Influence of Viral Marketing on Purchase Decision Mediated by Purchase Intent

The hypothesis testing results indicate that viral marketing has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent among customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by various scholars, which similarly demonstrated that viral marketing has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent.

A deeper analysis reveals the underlying mechanisms through which viral marketing affects purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent. Viral marketing refers to the use of social media platforms, online communities, and other digital channels to spread marketing messages rapidly among consumers. It often involves the creation and sharing of engaging content, user-generated testimonials, and promotional campaigns that encourage word-of-mouth recommendations and endorsements.

In the context of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang, viral marketing initiatives may effectively capture the attention and interest of customers, stimulating their purchase intent and ultimately influencing their purchase decisions. By leveraging social media platforms and online networks, Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang can amplify its brand visibility, engage with its target audience, and cultivate a sense of community and belonging among customers.

Furthermore, the significant mediation suggests that purchase intent serves as a crucial intermediary mechanism through which viral marketing influences purchase decisions. Customers who are exposed to viral marketing campaigns are more likely to develop a heightened interest and desire to purchase products or services offered by Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. This increased purchase intent, in turn, translates into actual purchase decisions as customers are motivated to act upon their intentions and fulfill their needs or desires.

In conclusion, viral marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent among customers of Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang. By strategically implementing viral marketing strategies and fostering meaningful interactions with customers online, Toko Fashion Store Cabang Jember dan Lumajang can enhance its brand awareness, customer engagement, and ultimately drive sales growth in the competitive retail landscape.

# 4. Conclusion

Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that brand image alone does not have a notable impact on purchase decisions among customers of Toko Fashion Store branches in Jember and Lumajang. However, it does play a significant role in shaping purchase interest. On the other hand, viral marketing has a significant influence on purchase decisions, both directly and through its impact on purchase interest. Purchase interest itself emerges as a crucial determinant of purchase decisions.

Despite the importance of brand image and viral marketing, it's essential to recognize the nuanced relationship between these factors and purchase decisions. The study highlights the need for retailers, like Toko Fashion Store, to focus on enhancing both brand image and viral marketing strategies to foster consumer interest and drive purchase decisions effectively.

However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of the study, including potential constraints in the research methodology and data collection process. Future research endeavors should explore alternative approaches and incorporate additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the retail context.

In summary, the study underscores the significance of strategic marketing efforts, particularly in terms of brand image and viral marketing, to navigate the competitive retail landscape successfully. These insights can guide Toko Fashion Store and similar businesses in optimizing their marketing strategies and improving their overall performance in the market.

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