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The Mediating Role of Brand Image in the Relationship between Viral Marketing and Repurchase Intention among Menantea Consumers in Bandung

Henny Utarsih [1*], Nabila Cinta Putri [2]
[1*,2] Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Ekuitas Indonesia, Bandung City, West Java Province, Indonesia

Email: henny.utarsih@ekuitas.ac.id [1*], nabilaputri@ekuitas.ac.id [2]

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Abstract

Digital platforms have reshaped competition in the food and beverage sector, making it increasingly important for brands to convert short-term online attention into sustained customer loyalty. This study investigates whether brand image explains how viral marketing translates into repurchase intention among Menantea consumers in Bandung, Indonesia. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted with 130 consumers who had previously purchased Menantea products and had encountered the brand's digital content. Respondents were selected purposively, and the data were examined through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4 with a 5,000-resample bootstrapping procedure. The results show that viral marketing significantly strengthens both brand image and repurchase intention. Brand image also has a positive effect on consumers' willingness to buy Menantea again. The indirect relationship is significant while the direct path remains significant, demonstrating partial mediation. Accordingly, widely shared content is more likely to support repeat purchasing when it also reinforces a distinctive, credible, and favorable perception of the brand. The study extends signaling theory and consumer behavior research by clarifying brand image as a mechanism that connects digitally circulated marketing messages with post-purchase intentions in an Indonesian beverage-brand setting. Managerially, the findings indicate that Menantea should combine authentic, interactive, and shareable content with consistent brand cues, dependable product quality, and responsive social-media engagement to cultivate longer-term customer relationships.

Keywords:
Viral Marketing; Brand Image; Repurchase Intention; Consumer Behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digitalization has altered how food and beverage companies communicate with their markets. Rather than depending primarily on conventional advertising, firms now use Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and related platforms to circulate messages, invite participation, and maintain contact with customers in real time. Within this environment, viral marketing is valuable because audiences can voluntarily retransmit a message through their own networks, allowing a campaign to gain extensive exposure without a proportionate increase in media expenditure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Kotler et al., 2021). Its strategic relevance therefore lies not only in generating visibility, but also in creating repeated interactions that may develop into enduring customer relationships.

Repurchase intention represents a consumer's readiness to choose the same offering again after an earlier buying experience and is commonly treated as an early indication of loyalty. Retaining a satisfied buyer generally requires fewer resources than continuously replacing customers who leave (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Repeat-purchase decisions are shaped by the value customers remember, the confidence they place in the brand, and the quality of their subsequent interactions with it. Viral communication may contribute to this process by keeping a brand salient, stimulating electronic word-of-mouth, and encouraging consumers to revisit product-related information.

Menantea provides a relevant setting for examining this issue. The Indonesian beverage franchise, introduced by content creator Jerome Polin, initially attracted widespread attention through distinctive and highly shareable social-media campaigns. More recently, however, preliminary observations suggest weaker online interaction, lower audience participation, and slower expansion than during the brand's early growth phase. A number of consumers also appear less responsive to current digital content and less inclined to purchase the products again. This condition implies that temporary virality is insufficient by itself; the messages distributed online must also sustain a coherent and positive brand meaning if they are to support repeat buying.

Empirical research generally indicates that viral marketing can influence both brand-related evaluations and future purchase behavior. Herinama and Setiawan (2024) identified a significant contribution of viral marketing to the repurchase intention of Mixue consumers, while Adela and Tuti (2024) reported a comparable pattern in the food-service sector. Salina and Sudaryanto (2023) found that viral communication improves brand image, and Shalihah et al. (2024) showed that brand image can transmit the effect of viral marketing to purchase intention. More recent evidence from Citradewi et al. (2025) and Rohmah et al. (2025) likewise demonstrates that digitally shared messages can shape consumer evaluations and post-purchase responses when they are supported by positive brand-related experiences. Earlier Indonesian literature from 2018-2020 provides additional context for these relationships. Firmansyah (2018) emphasizes that post-purchase behavior develops from the interaction between consumer attitudes, remembered value, and marketing stimuli, while Firmansyah (2019) highlights the need for integrated communication to preserve a stable brand meaning across contact points. In an Indonesian service setting, Aprillio and Widodo (2020) found that viral marketing affected purchasing decisions both directly and through customer trust. Further notes that repeat-purchase intention is shaped by prior experience and the benefits consumers expect to receive in subsequent transactions. Together, these studies support the argument that viral reach is most useful when it reinforces favorable evaluations formed during earlier consumption.

The accumulated evidence is not entirely uniform. Kristyani and Kristyana (2022) found no significant direct effect of viral marketing on repurchase intention in the Scarlett Whitening context, and Rosyihuddin et al. (2022) reported a similarly insignificant relationship for traditional food products. In addition, much of the available research concentrates on direct effects or on purchase intention before an initial transaction. Fewer studies explain how brand image converts viral exposure into the intention to buy again, especially in Indonesia's beverage-franchise market. This unresolved mechanism forms the central research gap addressed in the present study.

The proposed model is anchored in signaling theory and consumer behavior theory. Online marketing messages act as signals through which consumers infer product quality, brand credibility, and the firm's intentions. When the content is relevant, believable, and consistently associated with the same identity, those signals can reduce uncertainty and strengthen brand image. Consumer behavior theory further suggests that favorable cognitive and affective evaluations formed from prior experience guide subsequent choice. Thus, a positive image of Menantea is expected to help translate viral exposure into trust, attachment, and a greater willingness to repurchase (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2013).

Accordingly, the study addresses three related objectives: to determine whether viral marketing shapes Menantea's brand image; to assess the separate effects of viral marketing and brand image on repurchase intention; and to test whether brand image carries part of the influence of viral marketing to repurchase intention. Examining these paths together provides a more complete explanation of repeat-purchase behavior than evaluating viral exposure as an isolated promotional outcome.

The research offers both conceptual and managerial value. Conceptually, it specifies brand image as an intervening mechanism linking social-media diffusion with a post-purchase behavioral intention in an Indonesian setting. Managerially, the model helps beverage businesses distinguish between content that merely attracts attention and content that simultaneously builds recognizable brand meaning. This distinction is important for designing digital campaigns that contribute to customer retention rather than producing only short-lived engagement. The following section explains the research design, respondents, measurements, and analytical procedures. It is followed by the descriptive and PLS-SEM results, a theory-based interpretation of the direct and indirect effects, and a final section presenting managerial implications, limitations, and directions for subsequent research.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative cross-sectional design was used to evaluate the relationships among viral marketing, brand image, and repurchase intention at a single point in time. The model contains latent constructs and an intervening variable; therefore, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was selected as the analytical framework. This variance-based approach is appropriate for prediction-oriented models, simultaneous estimation of several paths, and mediation testing (Hair et al., 2021).

The population comprised Bandung consumers who had purchased Menantea and were familiar with the brand's marketing activities on digital platforms. Because the total population could not be identified precisely, the minimum sample was estimated with the Lemeshow formula. The final dataset contained 130 usable responses. Purposive sampling was applied to recruit individuals who were at least 17 years old, had bought a Menantea product, had encountered the brand's viral content, and agreed voluntarily to participate. These requirements were intended to ensure that each respondent could evaluate the constructs on the basis of actual exposure and purchasing experience.

Data collection took place from January to March 2025 through a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The first part recorded respondent characteristics, including gender, age, income, purchase frequency, and information source. The second part contained the construct indicators. Academic books, peer-reviewed articles, and relevant organizational materials were used as secondary sources to develop the theoretical arguments and measurement definitions.

Viral marketing was operationalized with items adapted from Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) and Kotler et al. (2021), covering exposure, message reach, interaction, relevance, entertainment value, credibility, and willingness to share. Brand image was measured through brand strength, favorability, distinctiveness, product image, user image, and overall brand associations based on Aaker (1996) and Keller (2013). Repurchase intention followed Ferdinand's (2014) transactional, preferential, referential, and exploratory dimensions. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The measurement model was examined before the structural relationships were interpreted. Convergent validity was assessed through indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), whereas Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability were used to evaluate internal consistency. Discriminant validity was checked with the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio. The inner model was then evaluated through R^2, Q^2, f^2, the Variance Inflation Factor, and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Hypothesis testing employed the SmartPLS 4 bootstrapping routine with 5,000 resamples. Direct and indirect paths were evaluated using standardized coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and confidence intervals. Brand image was considered to mediate the relationship when the specific indirect effect was statistically significant. All decisions used a 5% significance threshold (Hair et al., 2021).

Ethical safeguards were embedded in the online survey. Participants received an explanation of the study's academic purpose before accessing the questionnaire and indicated consent electronically. Participation was optional, no personally identifying information was requested, and the responses were stored and analyzed only for research purposes.

Several design constraints should be recognized when interpreting the findings. The cross-sectional approach captures perceptions at one time and cannot demonstrate how the relationships develop longitudinally. Self-reported answers may also contain recall, common-method, or social-desirability bias. In addition, purposive recruitment and the exclusive focus on Menantea consumers in Bandung limit statistical generalization. The use of established indicators and a structured PLS-SEM assessment nevertheless provide a systematic basis for examining the proposed mechanism.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Respondent Characteristics

The analysis was based on 130 Bandung consumers with prior experience purchasing Menantea. Table 1 summarizes the composition of the sample and the principal characteristics relevant to the study.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	84	64.60%
	Male	46	35.40%
Age	< 17 years	6	4.60%
	18–20 years	44	33.80%
	21–25 years	33	25.40%
	> 25 years	47	36.20%
Monthly Income	< IDR 1,000,000	20	15.40%
	IDR 1,000,000–IDR 3,000,000	72	55.40%
	> IDR 4,000,000	38	29.20%
Purchase Frequency (per Month)	1 time	83	63.80%
	2–5 times	36	27.70%
	> 6 times	11	8.50%
Source of Information	Online (Social Media)	78	60.00%
	Offline (Friends/Family)	52	40.00%

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Women represented 64.60% of the sample and men 35.40%. The largest age group consisted of respondents older than 25 years (36.20%), followed by those aged 18-20 years (33.80%) and 21-25 years (25.40%). More than half reported monthly income between IDR 1,000,000 and IDR 3,000,000. Occasional purchasing predominated: 63.80% bought Menantea once per month, whereas 8.50% purchased more than six times. Social media was the main source of brand information for 60.00% of respondents, reinforcing the relevance of digital communication to Menantea's customer contact.

3.2. Descriptive Analysis of Variables

A continuum analysis was used to describe the current condition of each construct. With 130 respondents, the possible index ranged from 130 to 650 and was divided into five intervals: very poor (130-233), poor (234-337), fair (338-441), good (442-545), and very good (546-650). Table 2 reports the scores obtained for every dimension.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Variable	Dimension	Total Score	Category
Viral Marketing (X)	Content Exposure	359	Poor
	Information Reach	368	Poor
	Content Interaction	342	Poor
	Content Relevance	371	Poor
	Purchase Impact	356	Poor
Brand Image (Y)	Brand Image	365	Poor
	Product Image	372	Poor
	User Image	358	Poor
	Brand Association (Creativity)	341	Poor
Repurchase Intention (Z)	Transactional Intention	333	Poor
	Referential Intention	352	Poor
	Preferential Intention	346	Poor
	Exploratory Intention	331	Poor

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The descriptive results place the dimensions of viral marketing, brand image, and repurchase intention in the poor category, indicating that respondents did not perceive Menantea's current digital activities as sufficiently strong to encourage repeated buying. Content relevance achieved the highest viral-marketing score (371), whereas content interaction was the weakest dimension (342). Within brand image, product image ranked highest (372), but creativity as a brand association received the lowest score (341). Referential intention was relatively stronger than the other repurchase dimensions (352), while exploratory intention was lowest (331). These patterns suggest that Menantea's content is considered somewhat relevant, yet it does not consistently trigger participation, communicate a distinctive creative identity, or stimulate customers to explore additional products.

The descriptive and structural findings should be read together. The low dimension scores describe respondents' evaluation of Menantea's present execution, whereas the significant path coefficients indicate the direction in which improvements are likely to matter. Thus, the model does not imply that the current campaigns are already effective; it shows that stronger viral-marketing performance is associated with a better brand image and a higher probability of repeat purchasing.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Interpretation
Viral Marketing	0.659	0.659	0.667	0.576	Marginally Acceptable; Valid
Brand Image	0.651	0.651	0.663	0.585	Marginally Acceptable; Valid
Repurchase Intention	0.650	0.651	0.663	0.583	Marginally Acceptable; Valid

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The outer-model assessment considered Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability, and AVE. The reported internal-consistency coefficients range from 0.650 to 0.667. Although these estimates are below the preferred 0.70 benchmark, coefficients between 0.60 and 0.70 may be retained in exploratory PLS-SEM when the indicators remain theoretically relevant and convergent validity is satisfactory (Hair et al., 2021). The AVE values range from 0.576 to 0.585, exceeding 0.50 and indicating that each construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators.

Accordingly, the measurement model demonstrates adequate convergent validity and marginally acceptable internal consistency for an exploratory analysis. The retained indicators were therefore used in the structural assessment, while the reliability estimates should be reported transparently as a limitation rather than described as excellent.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Interpretation
Brand Image	0.644	0.644	Substantial
Repurchase Intention	0.646	0.645	Substantial

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The structural model explains a substantial proportion of both endogenous constructs. Viral marketing accounts for 64.4% of the variance in brand image ($R^2 = 0.644$), while viral marketing and brand image jointly explain 64.6% of the variance in repurchase intention ($R^2 = 0.646$). The corresponding adjusted R^2 values are nearly identical, indicating that the model's explanatory capacity is not materially inflated by the number of predictors. The remaining variance reflects influences that were not incorporated into the present specification.

Model fit was assessed with the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. The SRMR value of 0.037 is well below the commonly applied 0.08 guideline, suggesting a close correspondence between the model-implied and observed correlations (Hair et al., 2021).

Effect-size analysis clarifies the relative importance of the predictor paths. Viral marketing produced a very large incremental contribution to brand image ($f^2 = 12.802$) and a large contribution to repurchase intention ($f^2 = 0.605$). The pattern indicates that the quality and circulation of Menantea's digital messages are central to how respondents form brand perceptions and decide whether to purchase again.

Table 5. Direct-Effect Hypothesis Tests

Hyp.	Path	Path Coeff. (β)	Sample Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Viral Marketing → Brand Image	0.669	0.669	0.007	135.258	< 0.001	Supported
H2	Viral Marketing → Repurchase Intention	0.531	0.531	0.077	9.879	< 0.001	Supported
H3	Brand Image → Repurchase Intention	0.143	0.142	0.082	2.510	0.012	Supported

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Table 6. Specific Indirect-Effect Test

Hyp.	Path	Indirect Effect (β)	Sample Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value	Decision
H4	Viral Marketing → Brand Image → Repurchase Intention	0.138	0.138	0.079	2.506	0.012	Supported

Source: Processed Data (2025)

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping confirmed that each direct hypothesis was statistically supported. Viral marketing positively affected brand image ($\beta = 0.669$, $t = 135.258$, $p < 0.001$) and repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.531$, $t = 9.879$, $p < 0.001$). Brand image also had a positive effect on repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.143$, $t = 2.510$, $p = 0.012$). These estimates support H1, H2, and H3, respectively.

The specific indirect path from viral marketing to repurchase intention through brand image was significant ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 2.506$, $p = 0.012$), supporting H4. Because the direct viral-marketing path remained significant after brand image was included, the result represents partial rather than full mediation. Viral content therefore appears to encourage repeat purchasing through two routes: an immediate behavioral influence and an additional influence produced by a more favorable brand perception.

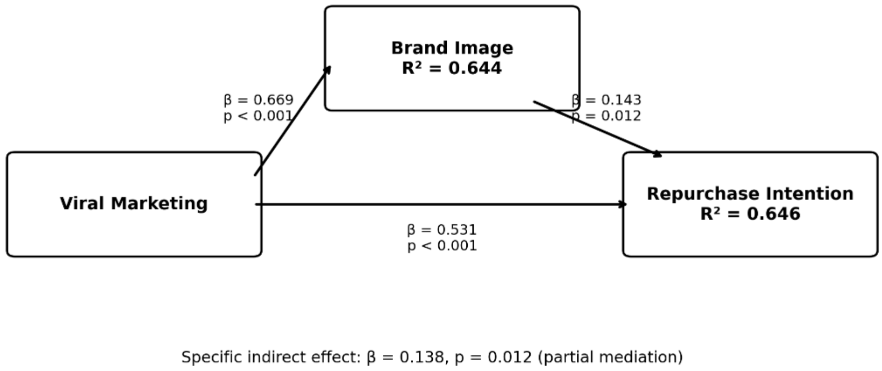

Figure 1. Structural Model and Mediation Results

3.4. The Effect of Viral Marketing on Brand Image (H1)

H1 is supported because viral marketing has a positive and significant association with brand image ($\beta = 0.669$, $t = 135.258$, $p < 0.001$). Broadly circulated, recognizable, and credible messages can increase awareness and make particular brand meanings easier to retrieve from memory. In signaling terms, consistent digital content reduces uncertainty by giving consumers observable cues about the brand's identity and expected value. The result is consistent with Shalihah et al. (2024), Dewi et al. (2024), and Citradewi et al. (2025), who likewise found that viral or highly shareable communication contributes to more favorable brand evaluations.

3.5. The Effect of Viral Marketing on Repurchase Intention (H2)

The direct relationship between viral marketing and repurchase intention is also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.531$, $t = 9.879$, $p < 0.001$), confirming H2. Relevant information, entertaining delivery, and interactive features can remind prior buyers of the brand and provide reasons to return. This interpretation is compatible with relationship-marketing logic, in which continued communication maintains customer involvement beyond the first transaction. Similar positive effects have been reported by Adela and Tuti (2024), Pane and Siregar (2025), and Rohmah et al. (2025).

3.6. The Effect of Brand Image on Repurchase Intention (H3)

H3 is supported by the positive effect of brand image on repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.143$, $t = 2.510$, $p = 0.012$). Although this coefficient is smaller than the direct viral-marketing path, it shows that repeat choice is partly shaped by what consumers associate with Menantea. A clear and favorable image can strengthen confidence, reduce perceived risk, and make the brand easier to prefer over alternatives. This finding is consistent with customer-based brand equity theory (Keller, 2013) and with the results of Abriandi and Puspa (2023), Putri and Jatra (2024), and Safari et al. (2024).

3.7. The Mediating Role of Brand Image in the Relationship between Viral Marketing and Repurchase Intention (H4)

The significant indirect effect confirms that brand image partially carries the influence of viral marketing to repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 2.506$, $p = 0.012$). Viral communication may create an immediate reason to return, but it also leaves cognitive and emotional associations that affect later choice. Partial mediation means that brand image is an important explanatory route without being the only route. The result extends the evidence of Salina and Sudaryanto (2023) and Shalihah et al. (2024) by showing that brand-building consequences remain relevant after an initial purchase. Campaigns should therefore be evaluated not solely by views or shares, but also by whether the content consistently communicates Menantea's identity and improves the meaning consumers attach to the brand.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined four relationships among Menantea consumers in Bandung: viral marketing to brand image, viral marketing to repurchase intention, brand image to repurchase intention, and the indirect viral-marketing effect through brand image. All proposed paths were supported. Viral marketing improves consumers' perceptions of the brand and directly encourages them to purchase again, while brand image independently contributes to repurchase intention. The simultaneous significance of the direct and indirect paths establishes partial mediation.

Theoretically, the findings clarify how digitally circulated messages operate as signals that influence subsequent consumer behavior. Virality does not create value only through reach; part of its effect is retained in the brand associations that consumers carry into future decisions. This evidence adds an Indonesian beverage-brand perspective to research on viral marketing, brand image, and post-purchase intention and demonstrates the benefit of examining communication and brand-building processes within one model.

For Menantea and comparable beverage businesses, the results call for a coordinated content-and-brand strategy. The low interaction score can be addressed through participatory formats such as polls, challenges, duets, creator collaborations, and user-generated content. The weak creativity association suggests a need for more consistent visual cues, storytelling, tone of voice, and product narratives. To strengthen exploratory and repeat-purchase intentions, digital campaigns may also feature new variants, bundles, limited offerings, and post-purchase reminders, while customer comments should be answered promptly and product quality must remain consistent with promotional claims.

The conclusions are subject to several limitations. Data were collected once, from one brand and one city, through self-reported responses; consequently, temporal change, causal development, and wider market generalization cannot be established. Subsequent research should use larger and more heterogeneous samples, compare multiple beverage brands or regions, and employ longitudinal or experimental designs. Additional mechanisms such as brand trust, satisfaction, customer experience, electronic word-of-mouth, and perceived value may also explain when viral exposure develops into sustained repurchase behavior.

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