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An Analysis of The Effects of Viral Marketing, Food Influencers, and Brand Image on Consumer Purchase Intention Towards Seruit in Bandar Lampung

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the influence of viral marketing on the interest in buying Seruit's specialty foods in Bandar Lampung, analyze the role of food influencers in influencing the interest in buying Seruit's specialty foods, measure the impact of brand image on the interest in buying Seruit's specialty foods, and explore the relationship between viral marketing, food influencers, and brand image in increasing the interest in buying Seruit's specialty foods. This study uses a quantitative approach method to identify the causal relationship between variables with numerical data obtained from respondents. The data in this study were collected through a questionnaire with a Likert Scale, in-depth interviews, and literature studies. Then the data were analyzed using Validity and Reliability Tests, Descriptive Analysis, Classical Assumption Tests and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. The results of this study indicate that Brand Image has the most significant influence on Purchase Interest, while Viral Marketing and Food Influencers have a weaker influence. These findings will be compared with previous relevant studies. This study has limitations, including focusing on one type of food and one geographic location. Further research can expand the scope of the study by involving other types of food and different locations, and considering other factors that can influence purchase intention, such as price, sales promotion, and service quality.

Keywords: Purchase Intention, Brand Image, Regression Analysis

1. Introduction

According to the "Digital 2024: Indonesia" report by We Are Social and Meltwater, as of January 2024, the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 212.9 million people, or around 77% of the total population (Social, 2020). Social media users reached 167 million people, or around 60.4% of the total population. This data shows the enormous potential of the online market in Indonesia. Marketing has developed rapidly along with advances in information and communication technology (Yanuar et al., 2021). One of the increasingly popular modern marketing phenomena is viral marketing (Wong, 2017). Viral marketing utilizes the power of social media and digital platforms to quickly spread product or service information through consumer

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networks (Wijaya et al., 2024). In this context, the role of food influencers becomes very important, especially in the culinary industry. Food influencers are individuals who have great influence on social media through the culinary content they share (Sungkawati et al., 2023). Their influence is able to shape consumer perceptions of the brand image of a food product, including regional specialties such as Seruit from Bandar Lampung.

Seruit is a traditional food from Lampung that has great potential to be marketed to a wider audience (Carolina et al., 2024). Seruit is a typical Lampung dish consisting of grilled fish (usually river fish such as baung fish or patin fish) which is doused with chili sauce and tempoyak (fermented durian) (Guse et al., 2023). Variations of seruit consist of Seruit Baung Fish: Using grilled baung fish. Seruit Patin Fish (*Pangasius* sp.): Using grilled patin fish (Hanifah, 2024). Seruit Shrimp: Using grilled or fried shrimp (Kurniawati et al., 2022). Seruit with *Lalapan*: Usually served with various lalapan such as grilled eggplant, petai, jengkol, and cassava leaves (Carolina et al., 2024). Seruit is not just food, but also has an important cultural value for the people of Lampung. Usually served at traditional events, families, or celebrations (Ningrum et al., 2021).

However, the lack of exposure and effective marketing strategies makes this food less known outside the local community (Abell & Biswas, 2023a). By integrating viral marketing strategies and utilizing the influence of food influencers, the Seruit brand image can be strengthened so as to increase consumer buying interest (Ahmad et al., 2023). Factors such as product quality, attractive visualization, and consumer testimonials through influencers play an important role in building trust and consumer interest in this distinctive food (Alfarez & Sadat, 2024).

Kaplan & Haenlein (2011) showed that viral marketing is able to significantly increase consumer engagement through social media, which is also relevant to the marketing of traditional food. Another study by Razali et al., (2023) revealed that influencers have an important role in building consumer trust through authentic content. In addition, Keller (1993) in his theory of Brand Equity explained that a strong brand image can increase consumer loyalty and strengthen buying interest. In the context of Seruit's signature food, factors such as food visualization through social media, testimonials from food influencers, and well-designed viral marketing strategies can increase the likelihood of consumers trying the product. By referring to this previous research, this research provides new insights regarding the integration of modern marketing strategies in the promotion of regional specialties such as Seruit.

This research aims to explore the influence of viral marketing, food influencers, and brand image on buying interest in Seruit's signature food in Bandar Lampung. By understanding the relationship between these variables, this research can provide strategic recommendations to Seruit food business actors to increase the competitiveness and popularity of their products.

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2. Literature Review

Viral Marketing. Viral marketing is a marketing strategy that relies on individuals to spread marketing messages to others, creating exponential growth in the reach and influence of the message. The term "viral" itself refers to the rapid and widespread dissemination of information, similar to the spread of a virus. This concept utilizes the power of social networks and word-of-mouth communication to achieve marketing goals (Nursalim, 2023). The concept of viral marketing actually existed before the internet was popular. The basic idea is to harness the power of word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM), where recommendations from person to person have a major influence on purchasing decisions (Kartika & Pandjaitan, 2023).

Word-of-Mouth Marketing (WOMM): The basic theory underlying viral marketing is WOMM. Katz & Lazarsfeld (1959) in their research emphasized the important role of personal influence in the decision-making process. They identified "opinion leaders" as individuals who have significant influence over others in their social networks. The emergence of the internet and email in the mid-1990s gave a new dimension to WOMM. The term "viral marketing" itself was first popularized by Steve Jurvetson and Tim Draper in 1997 to describe Hotmail's successful marketing strategy (Rayport, 1996). Hotmail included a link in every email sent by its users, inviting recipients to create their own Hotmail account. This simple strategy resulted in very rapid user growth.

Along with the development of technology and social media, the theory and concept of viral marketing have also evolved. Some important concepts that have emerged include: The Law of the Few (Gladwell, 2006): Malcolm Gladwell in his book "The Tipping Point" introduced the concept of "The Law of the Few," which states that the successful spread of an idea or trend is highly dependent on three types of individuals: Mavens (experts who share knowledge), Connectors (people who have extensive social networks), and Salesmen (persuasive people). Six Degrees of Separation: This concept states that everyone is connected to everyone else through a chain of friendships that is no more than six steps. This concept is relevant to viral marketing because it shows the potential for a very wide reach through social networks. Emotional Contagion: Research shows that emotions can be contagious through social interaction (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). Effective viral marketing campaigns often utilize strong emotions, such as humor, surprise, or inspiration, to encourage the spread of messages.

Viral marketing is a marketing strategy that utilizes digital media to spread product information quickly and widely (Anindya & Indriastuti, 2023). Social Exchange Theory explains that social interaction through digital platforms can create economic value for business actors. Several previous studies have shown that viral marketing is effective in increasing brand awareness and consumer buying interest (Maruta, 2020). A study by Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) emphasized that

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viral marketing increases consumer engagement through social media. Research from Subramani & Rajagopalan (2003) revealed that viral marketing has a strong impact in creating a positive word-of-mouth effect. Chang & Chen (1998) found that emotionally engaging marketing content tends to be shared more often, accelerating the spread of product information. Furthermore, Ferguson (2012) stated that this strategy can create a personal relationship between the brand and consumers.

In the current digital age, viral marketing is becoming increasingly complex with the emergence of social media platforms, influencer marketing, and multimedia content. Some important aspects of contemporary viral marketing include: (1) Social Media Platforms: Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok play a central role in the dissemination of viral content. Sharing, commenting, and liking features allow messages to spread quickly among user networks. (2) Influencer Marketing: Utilizing influencers or influential figures on social media to promote products or services has become an effective strategy in viral marketing. Influencers have a loyal audience and can influence the behavior of their followers. (3) Content is King: Content quality is very important in viral marketing. Interesting, relevant, and shareable content has a greater potential to go viral. This content can be in the form of videos, images, memes, or articles. (4) Algorithmic Amplification: Social media platform algorithms also influence the spread of viral content. These algorithms prioritize content that gets a lot of interaction, thereby increasing its visibility.

Viral marketing has a positive and significant influence on buying interest because it is able to create wide exposure at a relatively low cost (Razali et al., 2023; Sungkawati et al., 2023). When a marketing content goes viral, information about a product or service spreads quickly through social media and other digital platforms, attracting the attention of a large number of consumers. Interesting, emotional, or unique content tends to be shared more easily, thereby increasing brand awareness and building consumer trust. With increased interaction and recommendations from other users, potential buyers are more encouraged to try products, which ultimately has a significant impact on increasing buying interest.

H1: Viral Marketing has a significant influence on Purchase Interest

Food Influencer. Food influencers are individuals who have great influence on social media in promoting food products (Weber et al., 2021). Moreover, food influencers are individuals who have influence on social media, specifically in terms of food and beverages. They create content related to culinary, such as restaurant reviews, recipes, food recommendations, and eating challenges (Abell & Biswas, 2023b). Their influence can affect food preferences, purchasing decisions, and even culinary trends in society (Misra et al., 2024). Based on the Diffusion of

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Innovation theory, food influencers can be agents of change who accelerate the adoption of new products among consumers (Coates et al., 2019).

Food influencers play an important role in today's digital marketing landscape. Some important aspects of their role and influence include (Vaqué, 2020): (1) Opinion and Trend Formation: Food influencers can shape public opinion about certain foods and drinks. Positive reviews or recommendations from them can increase the popularity of a product or restaurant. Conversely, negative reviews can have a negative impact on the reputation of a culinary business. (2) Driving Purchasing Decisions: Many consumers trust recommendations from food influencers. Interesting and informative content can encourage their followers to try the food or drinks being promoted. (3) Effective Marketing: For culinary businesses, collaborating with food influencers is an effective marketing strategy to reach a wider target market, especially the younger generation who are active on social media. (4) Content Creativity: Food influencers are required to be creative in creating interesting and original content. They use a variety of formats, such as photos, videos, live streaming, and stories, to captivate audiences.

Although food influencers offer many benefits, there are some challenges and ethical considerations that need to be considered: (1) Transparency: It is important for food influencers to be transparent about their relationship with the brand or business they are promoting (Wu et al., 2023). Disclosure of sponsors or endorsements is needed to maintain audience trust. (2) Accuracy of Information: Food influencers have a responsibility to provide accurate and accountable information about the food and drinks they review (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). (3) Impact on Health: Food influencers also need to consider the impact of their content on the health of followers. Excessive promotion of unhealthy foods can have a negative impact.

Food influencers have a positive and significant influence on consumer buying interest, especially in the rapidly growing culinary industry (Hidayati & Priyono, 2024; Naufal & Syaefulloh, 2023). With attractive visual content, honest reviews, and active interaction with followers, food influencers are able to build trust and shape consumer preferences for a food or beverage product. Recommendations given by food influencers are often considered more credible than conventional advertising, thereby increasing interest and purchasing decisions. In addition, the experience-based marketing strategies they implement, such as direct reviews, storytelling, and culinary challenges, further strengthen the appeal of a brand in the market. Thus, the role of food influencers not only influences consumer perceptions, but also drives a significant increase in buying interest.

H2: Food influencers have a significant influence on purchase intention.

Brand Image. Brand image is the perception, beliefs, and associations held by consumers towards a brand. Brand image is not just a brand's visual identity (such as logo and color), but also includes

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experiences, emotions, and values associated with the brand. A positive brand image can provide various benefits for companies, such as customer loyalty, premium prices, and stronger competitiveness. Several experts have provided definitions of brand image:

Kotler and Keller (2016): Define brand image as consumer perceptions of a brand, which are reflected in the associations that exist in the minds of consumers. (Aaker, 2009) Explains brand image as a set of associations held in memory, which can be product attributes, benefits, brand personality, and users. Keller (1993): Argues that brand image is related to strong, beneficial, and unique brand associations. The components of brand image include: (1) Product Attributes: Physical and functional characteristics of the product. (2) Benefits: The benefits consumers get from using the product. (3) Brand Personality: Human character associated with the brand. (4) Users: The type of person who uses the product (Misra et al., 2024).

According to the results of research conducted by Aaker (2012), it shows that a strong brand image has a positive effect on customer loyalty. Customers who have a positive perception of a brand tend to be more loyal and make repeat purchases. According to Keller & Swaminathan (2020), it was found that a positive brand image can influence consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers tend to choose brands that have an image that matches their preferences and values. Research conducted by Yoo & Donthu (2001) shows that brand image is an important dimension in building brand equity.

A strong brand equity can provide a competitive advantage for companies. Erdem et al., (2002) found that brands with a strong image can set higher prices compared to competing brands. Consumers are willing to pay more for brands they trust and admire. Contemporary research highlights the role of social media in shaping and disseminating brand image. Online interactions, user reviews, and content shared on social media can influence consumer perceptions of a brand (for example, research by De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017 on influencer marketing on Instagram).

Kotler & Keller (2012) emphasized that a strong brand image is able to increase consumer confidence. Research by Aaker (2009) also shows that a consistent brand image contributes to increasing the overall brand value. According to a study by Pitta & Prevel Katsanis (1995), a superior brand image can reduce consumer uncertainty in decision making. Meanwhile, research by Hendijani Fard & Marvi (2020) indicates that the visual and emotional elements of a brand also contribute to forming positive perceptions in the minds of consumers. Factors that Influence Brand Image Formation; Direct Experience: Consumer experience in using brand products or services. Marketing Communications: Advertising, promotions, public relations, and digital marketing. Word of Mouth Information: Recommendations from friends, family, and colleagues. Mass Media:

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News, articles, and reviews in the media. Association with Other Brands: Cooperation or co-branding with other brands.

A strong brand image has a positive and significant influence on consumer buying interest, because brands that have a good reputation tend to be more trusted and perceived to have higher quality (Gayatri, 2022; Pasharibu et al., 2020). Consumers tend to choose products with a positive brand image because it provides a sense of security, increases perceived value, and builds strong loyalty to the brand. Factors such as credibility, brand associations, and previous positive experiences further strengthen buying interest, because consumers feel confident that the products they choose will meet their expectations and needs. Thus, a good brand image not only encourages purchasing decisions, but also contributes to the sustainability of the relationship between the brand and its consumers.

H3: Brand image has a significant influence on buying interest.

Purchase Intention. Purchase intention is a stage in the purchase decision-making process where consumers form an intention or desire to buy a product or service. Purchase intention reflects the likelihood of consumers making a purchase in the future. Understanding purchase intention is important for marketers to predict consumer behavior and design effective marketing strategies.

Dodds et al. (1991) showed that perceived value has a significant relationship with purchase intention. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), attitudes towards products and subjective norms influence purchase intentions. Meanwhile, research by Zeithaml (1988) confirms that perceptions of quality and price play an important role in consumer purchasing decisions. Other research from Chandon et al. (2000) concluded that visual promotions such as discounts or bundling also increase buying interest. Kotler and Keller (2016): Define purchase intention as the tendency of consumers to buy a product. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA): Explain purchase intention as a function of attitudes towards behavior and subjective norms. Attitude towards behavior refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of the act of buying a product, while subjective norm refers to an individual's perception of what other people think about the action.

Bagozzi (1981) in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB): Developed TRA by adding a construct of perceived behavioral control, which refers to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty in performing a behavior (in this case, a purchase). Various factors can influence consumer buying interest, including: Attitudes towards Brands/Products: Consumers' overall evaluation of a brand or product, which includes beliefs, feelings, and behavioral intentions. Product Quality: Consumer perception of product quality and performance. Price: Consumer perception of value for money and affordability. Promotion: Marketing activities designed to persuade consumers to buy. Brand

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Image: Consumer perceptions and associations with the brand. Social Influence: Influence from family, friends, and reference groups. Product Availability: Ease of consumer access to products. Previous Experience: Previous consumer experience with the brand or product. Situational Factors: Factors such as time, place, and mood.

The results of research conducted by Zeithaml (2000) show that product quality that is perceived positively by consumers will increase buying interest. Monroe (2003) discusses how perceptions of price and value influence consumer buying interest. Research conducted by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) examines how advertising and promotions influence attitudes towards advertising and ultimately influence buying interest. Research by Cheung and Thadani, 2012 on the role of online reviews, recommendations on social media, and influencer marketing in influencing buying interest. Research conducted by Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991) shows that a strong and positive brand image will increase consumer buying interest.

3. Research Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey design to analyze the influence of viral marketing, food influencers, and brand image on buying interest in Seruit's signature food in Bandar Lampung. A quantitative approach was chosen to identify cause-and-effect relationships between variables with numerical data obtained from respondents through structured questionnaires. The survey design allows for efficient data collection from large samples in a limited time, so that it can provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied. The population in this study were all consumers who knew about Seruit's signature food, both those who had bought and those who had not, as well as social media users in Bandar Lampung. The sample used in this study was a purposive sampling technique to select respondents who met the following criteria: (1) 18 years of age or older. (2) Have used social media to find information about food. (3) Know or are familiar with Seruit's signature food. (4) Domiciled in Bandar Lampung.

4. Finding and Discussion

Outer Model Testing. The PLS analysis conducted began with the Outer Model, which measures validity using the loading factor (Hair & Brunsveld, 2019). Indicators for each variable with a loading factor value of less than 0.6 will be dropped from the model (Hair et al., 2014). The results of the convergent validity test after the invalid indicators were dropped from the complete model are shown in the following table:

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Table 1. Outer Model

	Brand Image	Food Influencer	Purchase Intention	Viral Marketing
CM1	0,935			
CM2	0,955			
CM3	0,936			
CM4	0,948			
CM5	0,944			
FI1		0,881		
FI2		0,927		
FI3		0,870		
FI4		0,915		
FI5		0,866		
MB1			0,892	
MB2			0,949	
MB3			0,962	
MB4			0,940	
MB5			0,836	
VM1				0,921
VM2				0,910
VM3				0,928
VM4				0,805
VM5				0,913

Next, discriminant validity test is done and the AVE in Brand Image is 0,890; Food Influencer values is 0,796 Purchase Intention is 0,841; and Viral Marketing is 0,804. It can be concluded that model has fulfilled the discriminant validity.

Table 2. Construct of Validity and Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composit Reliability	AVE
Brand Image	0,969	0,969	0,976	0,890
Food Influencer	0,936	0,939	0,951	0,796
Purchase Intention	0,952	0,956	0,963	0,841
Viral Marketing	0,938	0,941	0,953	0,804

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Based on the table, it can be seen that the Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs are > 0.6, where the acceptable limit for Cronbach's alpha values is greater than 0.6 (Hair et al., 2011). Thus, all constructs have met the construct reliability.

Inner Model Testing. The inner model describes the relationships between latent variables based on substantive theory. In assessing the model with PLS, it begins by looking at the R-squares for each dependent latent variable. The results of testing the inner model can see the relationship between constructs by comparing the significance [1] values and R-square of the research model (Ghozali & Latan, 2017).

Tabel 3. R-Squares Value

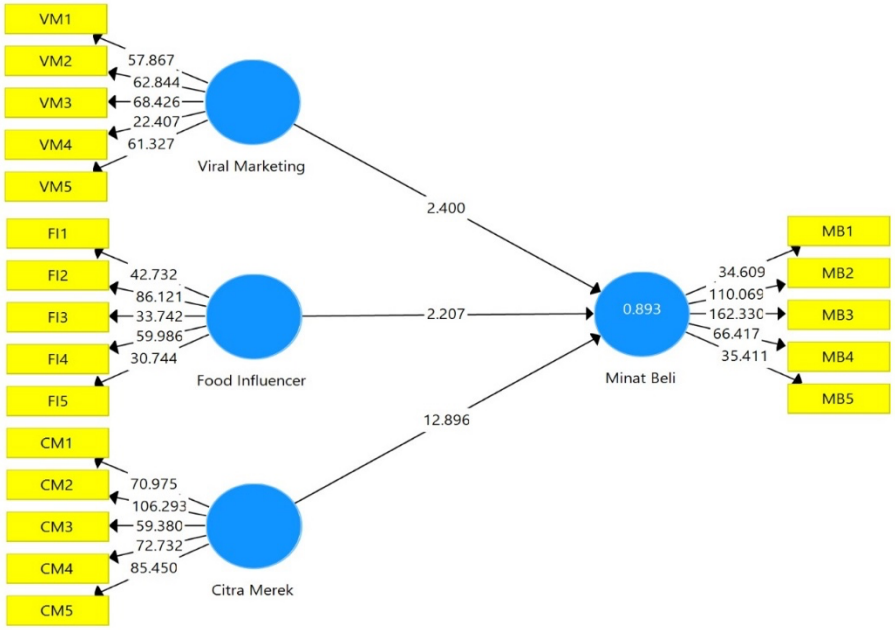
	R Square	**Adjusted R Square**
Minat Beli	0,893	0,892

The value of R-square in Viral Marketing is 0,893 in Table 4 which shows 89,3% persen of the Purchase Intention variable is explained by variabel Brand Image, Food Influencer dan Viral Marketing, while the other 10,7% is explained by the variables outside the model.

Testing Direct Effects. The hypothesis testing regarding the influence of the Brand Image, Food Influencer, Purchase Intention, and Viral Marketing variables is presented in Figure 1.

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Figure 1. t-value of Path Analysis Model Statistics



Testing of hypotheses in the PLS method is done by using simulations on each hypothesized relationship, in this case, the bootstrap method is performed on the sample. The bootstrap method also serves to minimize the problem of non-normality of the research data used. In this study, the T-table value with a significance of 5% has been previously determined, which is 1.656. All path coefficients have a t-statistic value above 1.656.

Table 4. Direct Influence

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistic (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0,635	12,896	0,000
Food Influencer -> Purchase Intention	0,172	2,207	0,028
Viral Marketing -> Purchase Intention	0,189	2,400	0,017

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The path coefficient obtained in the first hypothesis between Viral Marketing and Purchase Intention is 0.189 (positive value). This means that if Viral Marketing increases by one unit, Purchase Intention will increase by 18.9% and this effect is positive. The T-statistic is 2.400 ≥ 1.656 with a P-value of 0.017 ≤ 0.05, which is significant. It can be concluded that there is a significant effect between Viral Marketing and Purchase Intention. The positive value of the path coefficient means that the better the Viral Marketing, the better the Purchase Intention.

The path coefficient obtained in the second hypothesis between Food Influencers and Purchase Intention is 0.172 (positive value). This means that if Food Influencers increase by one unit, Purchase Intention will increase by 17.2% and this effect is positive. The T-statistic is 2.207 ≥ 1.656 with a P-value of 0.028 ≤ 0.05, which is significant. It can be concluded that there is a significant effect between Food Influencers and Purchase Intention. The positive value of the path coefficient means that the better the Food Influencer, the better the Purchase Intention.

The path coefficient obtained in the third hypothesis between Brand Image and Purchase Intention is 0.635 (positive value). This means that if Brand Image increases by one unit, Purchase Intention can increase by 63.5% and this effect is positive. The T-statistic is 12.896 ≥ 1.656 with a P-Value of 0.000 ≤ 0.05, which is significant. It is concluded that there is a significant effect between Brand Image and Purchase Intention. The positive value of the path coefficient means that the better the Brand Image, the better the Purchase Intention. The R^2 value of 0.893 indicates that this model has very good predictive ability. However, 10.7% of the variance in Purchase Intention that is not explained in the model suggests the need to consider additional variables, such as price or user experience.

Bandar Lampung, with its culinary richness, offers a variety of traditional dishes that tantalize the taste buds, one of which is Seruit. Seruit, a grilled fish dish served with chili sauce and fresh vegetables, has become an integral part of Lampung's culinary identity. In today's digital era, culinary marketing is undergoing a significant transformation with the emergence of viral marketing strategies and the role of food influencers. This research aims to comprehensively analyze the influence of viral marketing, food influencers, and brand image on consumer buying interest in Seruit in Bandar Lampung, as well as to compare these findings with previous research.

Competition in the culinary industry is increasingly fierce, encouraging business actors to adopt innovative marketing strategies. Viral marketing, with its ability to spread information quickly and widely through social media, has become an attractive option. On the other hand, food influencers with loyal followers on digital platforms have great potential to influence consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. Brand image, as a representation of consumer perceptions and associations with a product, also plays a crucial role in shaping buying interest.

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The Influence of Viral Marketing on Purchase Intention. Based on the findings of the research results, the first hypothesis can be interpreted that Viral Marketing can have a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention for Special Food Seruit in Bandar Lampung. This means that the increasing Viral Marketing will increase Purchase Intention. This research is consistent with research conducted by Sungkawati et al., (2023) who found that Viral Marketing has a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions at Ngikan Tebet. However, another study by Razali et al., (2023) showed that Viral Marketing had a positive but not significant effect on purchasing decisions for customers of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea in Medan. This difference may be due to differences in product context and consumer demographics. Viral marketing utilizes the power of digital word-of-mouth to promote products or services. Its success depends on engaging, relevant, and easily shareable content. In the culinary context, viral marketing can take the form of mouthwatering food photos or videos, positive reviews, or attention-grabbing food challenges. Research by Utami (2021) found that viral marketing has a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions at Ngikan Tebet. This finding indicates that the right viral marketing strategy can effectively encourage consumers to make purchases. In contrast, research by Putri (2023) shows that viral marketing has a positive but insignificant effect on purchasing decisions for customers of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea in Medan. This difference highlights the importance of product context and consumer demographics in the effectiveness of viral marketing. Products that are easier to go viral, such as trending food or drinks, may be more easily influenced by this strategy than other products. A study by Yahya and Çınar (2024) highlights an important aspect of viral marketing, namely advertising disclosure. They found that advertising disclosure on platforms like Instagram can affect consumer avoidance of influencers, which in turn affects the effectiveness of viral marketing. [1] This emphasizes the importance of transparency and authenticity in viral content. Consumers tend to trust content that looks organic and not forced as advertising. [2] In the context of Seruit, viral marketing can be done through uploading interesting photos or videos of Seruit on social media, Seruit eating challenges, or positive reviews from customers. However, it is important to pay attention to transparency in any promotional content to maintain consumer trust.

The Influence of Food Influencers on Purchase Intention. Based on the findings of the research results, the second hypothesis can be interpreted that Food Influencers can have a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention for Special Food Seruit in Bandar Lampung. This means that the increasing Food Influencer will increase Purchase Intention. This research is relevant to research by Hidayati & Priyono, (2024) which revealed that Influencer Marketing has a significant effect on purchasing decisions at the Clubhouse Restaurant Pontianak. Similarly, research by Naufal & Syaefulloh (2023) shows that Influencer Marketing has a positive effect on purchase intention through online customer reviews on fashion at TikTok Shop. These results are in line

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with the findings that Food Influencers have an influence on Purchase Intention, although in the context of Seruit the effect is weaker. Food influencers, with their credibility and influence on social media, can influence the preferences and purchasing decisions of their followers. Recommendations or reviews from food influencers can provide valuable information for consumers, especially in choosing places to eat or trying new foods. A study by Fitriani (2023) revealed that Influencer Marketing has a significant effect on purchasing decisions at the Clubhouse Restaurant Pontianak. Similar findings were also found by Syaefulloh (2023) which showed that Influencer Marketing has a positive influence on purchase intention through online customer reviews on fashion at TikTok Shop. These results are in line with the findings in this study that Food Influencers have an influence on Seruit Purchase Intention, although the influence is relatively weaker compared to Brand Image.The research by Yahya and Çınar (2024) again highlights the importance of advertising disclosure by influencers. Clear and transparent disclosure can affect consumer perceptions of influencer credibility, which ultimately impacts purchase intention. [1] Consumers are increasingly smart in distinguishing between organic content and paid content. Therefore, food influencers who are honest and transparent in conveying information tend to be more trusted by their followers. In the context of Seruit, collaboration with local food influencers who have credibility and relevant followers can help increase visibility and purchase intention. However, it is important for food influencers to maintain transparency and authenticity in every content published.

The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Intention. Based on the findings of the research results, the third hypothesis can be interpreted that Brand Image can have a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention for Special Food Seruit in Bandar Lampung. This means that the increasing Brand Image will increase Purchase Intention. This research supports research by Gayatri (2022) which shows that Brand Image has a significant effect on Purchase Intention and Purchase Decision with Risk Perception as a mediating variable. In addition, a study by Pasharibu et al., (2020) found that Brand Image influences consumer buying intentions. These findings are consistent with the results of current research which shows that Brand Image has the strongest influence on Purchase Intention. Brand image encompasses the perceptions, beliefs, and associations that consumers have towards a brand. A positive brand image can create customer loyalty, increase brand preference, and ultimately drive purchase intention. Research by Gayatri (2022) shows that brand image has a significant effect on purchase intention and purchase decisions with risk perception as a mediating variable. A study by Pasharibu (2020) also found that brand image influences consumer buying intentions. These findings are consistent with the results of this study, which shows that brand image has the strongest influence on Seruit purchase intention. This shows that building and maintaining a positive brand image is very important in the context of culinary marketing. The study by Yahya and Çınar (2024) adds an important

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dimension in building a brand image, namely transparency in advertising disclosure. They argue that clear advertising disclosure can increase influencer credibility, which in turn can strengthen brand image and increase consumer purchase intention. This shows that transparent marketing strategies not only affect perceptions of influencers but also of the brand itself. In the context of Seruit, building a brand image can be done by highlighting authenticity, quality of raw materials, distinctive taste, and the history behind the dish. Consistent and transparent promotion across various platforms can also help strengthen the brand image of Seruit in the eyes of consumers.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that Brand Image has the strongest influence on Purchase Intention for Seruit's signature food in Bandar Lampung compared to Viral Marketing and Food Influencers. This shows that consumer perceptions of the brand, including quality, uniqueness, and association with cultural values, are very decisive in their purchasing decisions. Although Viral Marketing and Food Influencers also contribute to buying interest, their influence is more varied and depends on the marketing context used. Viral Marketing can increase buying interest if the message conveyed is interesting and easy to spread on social media, while Food Influencers play a role in building product credibility through interaction with their followers. However, transparency in digital marketing is an important factor that can affect consumer trust in influencers and the brands they promote. The results of this study are also in line with various previous studies which show that digital marketing strategies such as Viral Marketing and Food Influencers can be effective tools, but they still have to be supported by a strong brand image in order to increase Purchase Intention optimally.

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