

The Negative Influence of Viral Marketing and Brand Awareness on Customer Trust and Purchase Decisions of Pro-Israel Products in Banten Province

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Abstract. This study investigates the influence of viral marketing, brand awareness, and trust on the purchase decisions of pro-Israel products in Banten Province. Anchored in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, the research conceptualizes viral marketing and brand awareness as external stimuli (S), consumer trust as the internal organismic state (O), and purchase decisions as the behavioural response (R). The study employs a purposive sampling technique targeting individuals who previously purchased pro-Israel products but have since discontinued or become more selective in their choices. Data were collected through an online survey involving 278 respondents and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with AMOS 23. The results indicate that viral marketing and brand awareness have a significant negative effect on consumer trust. Furthermore, viral marketing, brand awareness, and trust each have a negative influence on purchase decisions regarding pro-Israel products. These findings underscore the mediating role of trust within the SOR framework, highlighting how consumer perceptions shaped by external marketing stimuli impact ethical decision-making. The study concludes that brands operating in sensitive socio-political contexts must carefully manage their marketing communications to maintain trust and consumer alignment. These insights provide valuable implications for marketers aiming to influence behaviour through ethical and culturally sensitive branding strategies.

Key words: Brand awareness, product pro-Israel, purchase decision, trust, viral marketing.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh pemasaran viral, kesadaran merek dan kepercayaan terhadap keputusan pembelian produk pro-Israel di Provinsi Banten. Berlandaskan pada teori Stimulus-Organisme-Respons (SOR), penelitian ini memosisikan pemasaran viral dan kesadaran merek sebagai rangsangan eksternal (S), kepercayaan konsumen sebagai kondisi organisme internal (O), dan keputusan pembelian sebagai respons perilaku (R). Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik purposive sampling dengan sasaran individu yang sebelumnya pernah membeli produk pro-Israel, namun kini berhenti atau menjadi lebih selektif dalam memilih. Data dikumpulkan melalui survei daring yang melibatkan 278 responden dan dianalisis menggunakan Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) dengan bantuan AMOS 23. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran viral dan kesadaran merek berpengaruh negatif secara signifikan terhadap kepercayaan konsumen. Selain itu, pemasaran viral, kesadaran merek, dan kepercayaan masing-masing juga berpengaruh negatif terhadap keputusan pembelian produk pro-Israel. Temuan ini menegaskan peran mediasi kepercayaan dalam kerangka SOR, yang menunjukkan bagaimana persepsi konsumen yang dibentuk oleh rangsangan pemasaran eksternal dapat memengaruhi pengambilan keputusan yang bersifat etis. Wawasan ini memberikan implikasi yang berharga bagi pemasar dalam memengaruhi perilaku melalui strategi merek yang etis dan peka budaya.

Kata Kunci: Kepercayaan, keputusan pembelian, kesadaran merek, pemasaran viral, produk pro-Israel.



INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian economy has shown fairly stable growth over the last five years. According to data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), Indonesia's economic growth in 2023 reached 5.17%. The household consumption sector remains the main driver of economic growth, contributing 56% to the GDP. This growth demonstrates a large market potential for various products, including pro-Israel products, provided they can navigate the social and political challenges effectively (Riyanti and Nisa, 2023).

Sales of pro-Israel products in Indonesia have experienced a significant decline in recent years (Ahsyam et al., 2024). This phenomenon is inseparable from Israel's actions towards Palestine, which have influenced public sentiment in Indonesia. This paper will discuss the factors behind the decline in sales of pro-Israel products in Indonesia, focusing on the social, political and economic impacts. The actions taken by Israel against Palestine frequently make international headlines. This conflict not only affects communities in the region but also shapes global public opinion. In Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim (Ningtyas et al., 2024), this conflict triggers strong emotional reactions and solidarity with Palestine. As a result, products associated with Israel tend to face negative public reception.

Religious factors and humanitarian solidarity heavily influence public sentiment in Indonesia towards Israel and Palestine. News about the actions and violence faced by Palestinian citizens often serves as a trigger for boycotts of products perceived as supporting Israel. According to a survey conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute (2023), 70% of respondents stated that they support boycotting pro-Israel products as a form of solidarity with Palestine (Ahsyam et al., 2024). Social media plays a crucial role in spreading information and shaping public opinion. Boycott campaigns against pro-Israel products often begin and are strengthened through platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Riyanti and Nisa, 2023). Social media users in Indonesia quickly respond to international issues, with many actively calling for boycotts as a form of protest against Israel's actions. This directly impacts the sales of products linked to Israel.

The Indonesian government actively supports Palestine in international forums, as reflected in its foreign policy and official statements condemning Israeli violence, which in turn influences public perceptions and attitudes toward pro-Israel products. The government also monitors imports from conflict-affected countries, impacting the availability and pricing of these products in Indonesia. Consequently, companies producing or selling pro-Israel products face significant challenges, including a 30% decline in sales over the past three years, directly affecting their revenue and profitability (Ahsyam et al., 2024). For example, P.T. Unilever Indonesia Tbk reported a 10.51% decrease in net profits in the third quarter of 2023 due to the boycott movement against pro-Israel products, with overall sales of such products falling by as much as 50%, significantly impacting the retail sector and industrial productivity.

The boycott of products perceived as supportive of Israel has significantly impacted not only sales but also threatened productivity and business continuity in Indonesia, with declines of up to 45% reported for certain fast-moving consumer goods (Santosa, 2024). This raises concerns about potential layoffs as companies implement efficiency measures. Both the Indonesian government and businesses face substantial challenges in addressing the economic repercussions of this boycott, with calls to differentiate between products that genuinely support Israeli aggression to mitigate negative effects on the domestic economy. There is an expectation for the government to implement solutions that protect consumer rights and promote economic stability.

Although the situation is stabilizing, the global Palestine-Israel conflict continues to trigger boycotts of pro-Israel products in Indonesia. This has caused a decline of up to 40% in the retail and restaurant sectors linked to products supporting Israel. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a fatwa regarding Israeli products as a form of support for Gaza and Palestine, which went viral on social

media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube. This viral marketing, while following current trends, has had a negative impact on pro-Israel products (Riyanti and Nisa, 2023).

Historically, the conflict between Palestine and Israel has been long-standing, beginning when Palestine gained independence from Britain. After the separation from Britain, part of Palestine's territory was given to Jewish groups, which later established an independent state called Israel in 1949. Palestinians widely rejected this decision as it was considered a violation of international law. In 1948, a war broke out between Arab countries and Israel, and after the war ended, Israel controlled parts of the territory left by Britain, including parts of Jerusalem (Qarmout, 2023). The conflict stems from Israel's domestic issues, with four legislative elections in the past two years reflecting the complex domestic problems that triggered Israel's attacks on Palestine. Many opinions suggest that the issue of Palestine and Israel is not merely a conflict but rather colonialism, and thus, its resolution cannot rely solely on conflict resolution strategies.

Previous research has shown that many factors can influence purchasing decisions, such as fast service, promotions and discounts, and product quality (Harrigan, et al, 2021). However, research linking viral marketing, brand awareness, and trust as crucial aspects in a competitive business environment is still rare. This study seeks to provide empirical evidence that viral marketing and brand awareness, along with customer trust, play a role in shaping purchasing decisions (Hien and Nhu, 2022). Other studies have also shown that customer decisions and trust play a key role in the sales performance of industries (Watanabe et al., 2020).

Customer decisions can change due to viral marketing in the form of negative electronic word of mouth, especially when a customer already has trust in a product or service. However, there is intervention from friends, family or the government (Zeqiri et al., 2024). This study makes a unique contribution through an integrative review that consolidates, clarifies, and repositions fragmented insights on viral marketing's influence on consumer purchasing decisions. While previous literature has highlighted both the negative and positive impacts of viral marketing, particularly negative electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on consumer trust, findings remain inconclusive and contradictory. Previous studies have varied, including the use of different variables and research focuses. Some earlier studies have yet to explore viral marketing through promotions and product development, which is still rarely researched (Fard and Marvi, 2020) and supported by the use of the latest technological platforms.

There are also research gaps showing that viral marketing negatively affects trust, as seen in the studies by Fajriyah and Karnowati (2022), Jendoubi and Martin (2020) and Andini et al. (2014). But other studies show positive effects, such as Kaikati and Kaikati (2004), Ecklar and Bolls (2021) and Abbas et al. (2021). This inconsistency is important to be studied in this research. By synthesizing these inconsistencies within a unified framework, this review proposes new conceptual propositions to explain the role of individual psychological drivers (e.g., trust, social influence, and perceived moral identity) in shaping decisions related to pro-Israel product boycotts. In doing so, this integrative review resolves not only theoretical contradictions but also identifies underexplored pathways for future empirical testing, particularly within the culturally specific and politically charged context of Indonesian consumer behaviour.

In addition, this study identifies a new phenomenon: the strategic use of viral marketing as a tool for politically and ethically motivated consumer action, exemplified by boycott movements against pro-Israel products in Indonesia. Unlike traditional e-WOM studies focused on consumer satisfaction, this phenomenon reflects a convergence of digital virality, moral positioning and national identity an intersection yet to be systematically theorized in marketing literature. This insight opens new theoretical and empirical pathways on how viral content amplifies collective ethical values in consumer markets. The specific objectives of this study are to analyze the extent to which viral marketing negatively affects customer trust in pro-Israel products and to examine whether brand awareness also undermines consumer trust. Additionally, this study aims to investigate the direct

negative impact of both viral marketing and brand awareness on purchase decisions. Lastly, the research seeks to assess the role of customer trust as a determinant that negatively influences consumers' willingness to purchase pro-Israel products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory elucidates the intricate processes through which viral marketing influences brand awareness and consumer behaviour. Negative impacts emerge when stimuli lead to overload, misalignment with consumer values, or negative emotional responses. Marketing strategies need to be carefully designed to mitigate these risks and foster a more positive engagement with consumers. The SOR theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of viral marketing and brand awareness. The theory posits that external stimuli (such as advertisements and brand messages) influence consumers' internal mental states (organism), which ultimately results in specific responses or behaviours (e.g., purchase intentions or brand loyalty) (Liu and Yu, 2022; Baber and Baber, 2023).

In examining the negative influences that viral marketing can exert on brand awareness, it is crucial to consider how stimuli can lead to adverse emotional and cognitive outcomes in consumers. For instance, overwhelming exposure to viral advertisements could result in cognitive fatigue, adversely affecting consumers' processing abilities and trust towards brands. Studies indicate that excessive and aggressive marketing strategies can lead to diminished consumer satisfaction and potentially exacerbate feelings of annoyance or distrust towards a brand (Salim and Putri, 2024). This situation illustrates a detrimental response stemming from an overload of marketing stimuli, aligning with the SOR model's assertion that the nature of the stimuli presented shapes an organism's emotional and cognitive responses (Klein et al., 2021).

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is a form of digital word-of-mouth marketing that leverages customer satisfaction to encourage the voluntary promotion of products or services through the sharing of compelling content (Salim and Putri, 2024). The strategy focuses on creating content with viral potential, designed to spread quickly across platforms like social media, email, and video-sharing sites. Similar to how a virus replicates, this content reaches wider audiences as satisfied consumers share their positive experiences with friends and family, amplifying the brand's message (Çakirkaya and Koçyiğit, 2024).

Platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube play a key role in facilitating this rapid dissemination. Viral marketing exploits electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) to amplify brand visibility and reach a broader audience at minimal costs (Goncalves et al., 2018; Kim and Lowrey, 2010). This approach capitalizes on network effects, where the interconnectedness of users facilitates the exponential spread of information akin to the propagation of a virus (Rodrigues and Fonseca, 2015). The effectiveness of viral marketing lies in its ability to engage consumers emotionally and cognitively, prompting them to share content voluntarily, thereby enhancing brand awareness and purchase intentions (Huynh, 2016; Liu and Wang, 2019).

Consumer Trust

Consumer trust is the belief individuals or groups hold in the reliability of another party's words or promises, whether spoken or written (Li et al., 2020). In commercial transactions, this trust significantly influences a consumer's willingness to make purchasing decisions. It plays an essential role in guiding consumer behaviour during the buying process. Bhattacharya et al. (2022) argue that trust is built on the expectation that the other party will behave in a non-opportunistic manner, demonstrated through their actions, words, and policies. The assessment of trust is based on how well an institution meets customer expectations, maintains consistent service quality, and assures its longevity.

Research indicates that viral marketing enhances e-trust among consumers, thereby positively impacting their willingness to make purchases (Fatah and Arsyad, 2022). This relationship is underscored by the notion that when consumers perceive a brand's marketing efforts as trustworthy, they are more likely to engage with the brand and share their experiences with others, further amplifying the marketing message (Liyanapathirana, 2021; Murni and Salim, 2024). The interplay between viral marketing and consumer trust is particularly evident in the context of social media, where user-generated content and peer recommendations play a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours (Tricahyono et al., 2019).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to how well consumers recognize and remember a brand and its products or services (Pratama et al., 2023). It significantly impacts consumer choices, as higher awareness increases the chances of a brand being considered during purchasing decisions. The foundation of brand awareness is creating a strong connection in consumers' minds through consistent communication, positive experiences, and effective marketing efforts. When consumers are more familiar with a brand, they tend to trust it more, leading to repeat purchases and stronger brand loyalty. In a competitive marketplace, businesses aim to build brand awareness to stand out, improve recall, and strengthen their market position, ultimately contributing to sustained growth and competitive advantage (Hien and Nhu, 2022).

Brand awareness is a crucial element in the marketing landscape, serving as the foundation for consumer recognition and engagement with a brand. It encompasses the ability of consumers to identify a brand through its name, logo, or other distinctive features. It is often linked to the overall perception of brand quality and reliability. High levels of brand awareness can significantly enhance consumer loyalty, as individuals are more likely to choose familiar brands over unfamiliar ones when making purchasing decisions (Lu et al., 2015). Research has shown that brand awareness not only influences consumer behaviour but also acts as a precursor to brand equity, which includes perceived quality and brand loyalty (Razak et al., 2019; Suherman et al., 2021).

Purchase Decision

The decision-making process of consumers is shaped by several key factors (Muhajir et al., 2022). Cultural influences, as a core determinant of desires and behaviour, highlight the importance of cross-cultural marketing, which shows that different ethnic and demographic groups may not always react positively to mass-market advertising. Social elements, such as reference groups, family, and roles, also significantly impact consumer behaviour (Wang et al., 2022). Reference groups, including family and friends, directly or indirectly affect individuals' attitudes. In contrast, the family serves as the most influential reference group in purchasing decisions, including the halal label certificate (Fikadu et al., 2023). Still, when there is a conflict, this is considered by consumers.

Additionally, individuals' roles and statuses within various groups they belong to, such as families or organizations, define expectations and societal values assigned to them. Personal factors, such as age, occupation, and lifestyle, also affect buyer decisions. Lastly, psychological factors like motivation, perception, and memory interact with individual characteristics, influencing the overall purchase decision-making process. Understanding how external marketing stimuli interact with these internal factors is crucial for marketers aiming to shape consumer behaviour effectively (Bhattacharya et al., 2022).

Hypothesis Development

Research indicates that viral marketing can adversely affect consumer trust, particularly regarding products tied to sensitive issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict. These campaigns often rely on the rapid spread of content across social media, which can lead to negative electronic word of mouth that exacerbates existing biases and societal tensions. In the context of pro-Israel products, viral marketing

may provoke backlash due to entrenched political sentiments as consumers question the ethical implications and associations of the brand.

Studies by Fajriyah and Karnowati (2022) highlight that campaigns perceived as supporting contentious causes can diminish consumer trust, undermining brand credibility rather than enhancing visibility. Additionally, consumer trust is particularly fragile in politically charged environments, where personal values significantly influence purchasing behaviour (Jendoubi and Martin, 2020). When pro-Israel products are marketed virally, the negative perceptions can lead to distrust, as consumers may view the brand as dismissive of their moral or political beliefs. This phenomenon is supported by Abbas et al. (2021), who found that viral marketing campaigns linked to controversial topics can result in decreased brand credibility and long-term damage to consumer trust, especially in markets with strong social and political sensitivities like Indonesia.

H1: Viral marketing negatively affects customer trust in pro-Israel products

Brand awareness plays a crucial role in shaping consumer trust, as evidenced by various studies conducted over the past five years. A study by Salim and Putri (2024) found that higher brand awareness significantly enhances consumer trust because customers are generally more inclined to trust brands they recognize and remember well. Strong brand awareness is often associated with perceptions of quality and credibility, ultimately boosting consumer confidence in the products or services offered by the brand. However, not all research supports this perspective. High brand awareness only sometimes correlates with increased consumer trust. For instance, a study by Chen et al. (2020) indicates that, in certain cases, high brand awareness can create unrealistic expectations. If the product or service fails to meet those expectations, it can lead to disappointment and a decrease in consumer trust. Therefore, while brand awareness is essential, brands must also ensure they fulfil the promises made to customers to maintain and enhance trust.

H2: Brand awareness negatively affects customer trust in pro-Israel products

Viral marketing significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions, as demonstrated by various studies conducted in the past five years. For instance, a study by Ecklar and Bolls (2011) found that effective viral marketing campaigns can boost consumer interest and purchasing choices. This occurs because viral marketing often involves engaging and emotional content that can rapidly spread through social networks, creating widespread awareness and encouraging consumers to try the offered products or services. These purchasing decisions are influenced by the "word-of-mouth" effect derived from viral content, which is often perceived as more authentic and convincing than traditional advertising.

However, not all research aligns with the positive impact of viral marketing on purchasing decisions. Some studies indicate that viral marketing only sometimes leads to significant sales increases. For example, a study by Salim and Putri (2024) found that while viral campaigns can generate high awareness, this only sometimes translates into actual purchases. They argue that the success of viral marketing relies on product quality and the consumer experience post-purchase. If the product fails to meet the expectations established by the viral campaign, consumers may be less likely to repurchase and could even spread negative reviews, ultimately harming the brand.

H3: Viral marketing has a negative impact on the purchase decisions of pro-Israel products

Brand awareness plays a significant role in influencing consumer purchase decisions, as evidenced by various studies conducted over the past five years. For instance, research by Salim and Putri (2024) found that high brand awareness can increase the likelihood of consumers purchasing a product. When consumers are more familiar with a brand or its products, it enhances their confidence and comfort in making purchasing decisions. Familiar brands tend to be remembered and considered more by consumers compared to lesser-known brands, thereby improving the chances of purchase. However, not all studies support this perspective. Some research indicates that high brand awareness only sometimes guarantees purchase decisions. For example, a study by Tan et al. (2021) revealed that while brand awareness is important, other factors such as product quality, pricing and consumer

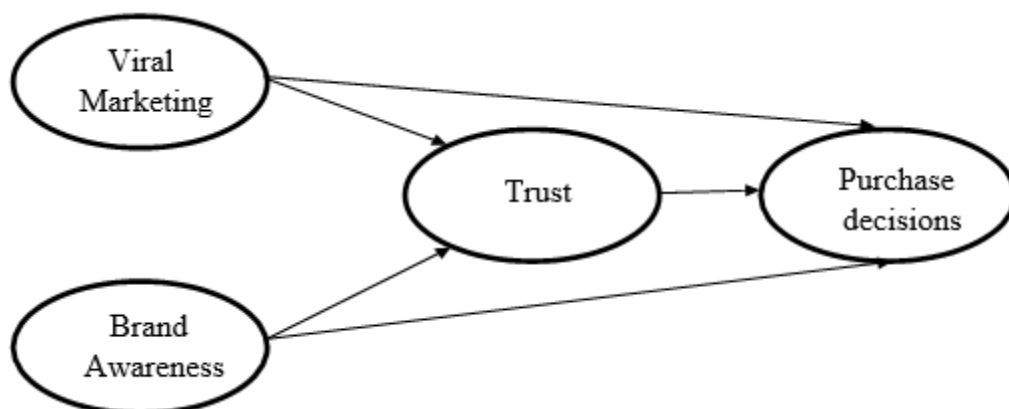
reviews also significantly impact purchasing decisions. They argued that consumers with high brand awareness who encounter negative experiences or poor reviews about a product are likely to refrain from making a purchase. Therefore, brand awareness must be complemented by positive product quality and consumer experiences to influence purchasing decisions significantly.

H4: Brand awareness has a negative influence on the purchase decisions of pro-Israel products

Customer trust significantly impacts product purchase decisions, as demonstrated by various studies conducted in the past five years (Huddin and Ikhsan, 2022). Research by Li et al. (2020) found that customer trust in a brand can directly enhance purchase decisions. When customers have a high level of trust in a brand, they are more likely to feel secure and confident in making purchases. This trust is often built through positive past experiences, favourable consumer reviews, and a solid brand reputation, all of which contribute to an increase in purchasing decisions. However, not all research supports this viewpoint. Some studies indicate that customer trust is only sometimes a determining factor in purchase decisions. For instance, research by Park and Kim (2003) revealed that while trust is important, other factors such as price, product quality, and product availability also significantly influence purchasing decisions. They noted that in situations where products have more competitive prices or superior features, consumers might opt for those products even if their level of trust is lower.

H5: Customer trust has a negative influence on the purchase decisions of pro-Israel products

Based on the hypotheses above, the conceptual framework was outlined to answer the research question, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Is there viral marketing having a negative effect on customer trust, brand awareness having a negative effect on customer trust, viral marketing having a negative effect on purchase decisions, brand awareness having a negative effect on purchase decisions, and customer trust having a negative effect on purchase decisions? To further explore the role of research on viral marketing related to the rejection or boycott of pro-Israel products, an investigation is necessary to understand the impact of the relationships between the variables in the context of the current situation.



Source: Authors, 2024.

Figure 1 Theoretical framework in the research of the negative influence of viral marketing and brand awareness on customer trust and purchase decisions of pro-Israel products in Banten Province

This model is contextual, as it was developed based on a specific issue, namely the influence of viral marketing and brand awareness on trust and purchase decisions regarding pro-Israel products in Banten Province, which is affected by the local community's political and social sentiments. The model addresses changes in consumer behaviour by positioning trust as a key mediating variable.

In general, viral marketing and brand awareness tend to strengthen purchase decisions; however, in this context, they may instead weaken consumer trust, thereby negatively impacting purchase decisions. In this study, trust represents consumers' confidence in pro-Israel products, which, in the

perception of the Banten community, is seen as a form of support for global injustices, particularly actions perceived as violations of humanitarian values in Palestine. Consequently, rather than enhancing trust, viral marketing and brand awareness are likely to diminish it, as consumers perceive purchasing such products as indirectly legitimizing or supporting unethical actions. Thus, this model effectively explains shifts in consumer behaviour driven by moral, emotional, political, and social solidarity factors rather than purely functional product considerations.

METHOD

The measurements in this study adopt the following items: Viral marketing consists of 4 statement items adopted from Fard and Marvi (2020). Brand awareness consists of 4 statement items adopted from Zeqiri et al. (2024). Customer trust consists of 3 statement items adopted from the study by Li et al. (2020) and Huddin et al. (2024). Purchase decisions consist of 4 statement items adopted from Lee (2021). The detailed items of each variable are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 The research instruments of the negative influence of viral marketing and brand awareness on customer trust and purchase decisions of pro-Israel products in Banten Province

Variable Concepts	Indicator
Viral Marketing (Fard and Marvi, 2020)	<p>The information provided is intense and frequent.</p> <p>The information quantity of the message is high.</p> <p>The arguments of the message are accurate.</p> <p>My values prevent me from fitting in at this company because they are different from the company's values.</p>
Brand Awareness (Hutter et al., 2013)	<p>I am easily able to remember product Israel.</p> <p>I am now all boycotts product models.</p> <p>I can distinguish the different boycott product models.</p>
Customer trust (Li et al., 2020; Huddin et al., 2024)	<p>I believe that the pro-Israel sites are concerned about my interest.</p> <p>I feel that the product pro-Israel site is trustworthy.</p> <p>I have confidence in the product's pro-Israel site.</p> <p>I feel that product pro-Israel site has the ability to provide good products.</p>
Purchase decisions (Lee, 2021)	<p>I make a special effort to product pro-Israel that are made for humanity.</p> <p>I have switched products for humanity reasons.</p> <p>When I have a choice between two identical products, I buy the one that supports Israel less.</p> <p>I try hard not to buy pro-Israel products.</p>

Sample and Procedure

This research is quantitative because it only measures and predicts human behavior with a survey method using a questionnaire distributed to respondents using Google Forms. The population of this study is Muslim communities in Banten Province, with the sampling unit being individual respondents. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which is a sampling technique in which the sample or selected respondents must be in accordance with the criteria of the research objectives (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Object this study is individuals with criteria are who have shopped for pro-Israel products and have now stopped or are careful in choosing these products in Banten Province. Respondents in this study were obtained with the assumption of a minimum criterion of 5 times the number of statement items. This study consists of 15 statements; therefore, the

sample of this study is at least 75 respondents. The sampling size determined for this study is 278 respondents. This study has 4 research variables measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

Out of 278 respondents, the majority were female, comprising 188 individuals or 67.6%, while 90 respondents, or 32.4%, were male. In terms of age, the 36–45 group was the largest, with 133 participants or 47.8%, followed by those aged 46 and above, with 80 participants or 28.7%, and the 25–35 age group, which included 65 individuals or 38.8%. Regarding their domicile within the Banten region, 29.4% were from Serang City, 5.3% from Tangerang City, 18% from South Tangerang City, 27.7% from Cilegon City, 10% from Serang Regency, 5.3% from Pandeglang Regency, and 5% from Lebak Regency.

The research was conducted from January to September 2024. The data analysis method used in this research was the Structural Equation Model (SEM) with the assistance of AMOS software. Based on Table 2, the factor loading values for each questionnaire item or indicator of the latent variables exceed 0.7, demonstrating that they meet the criteria for convergent validity in SEM analysis. This validates the items, enabling further analysis. After validation, the next step is to assess reliability, which refers to the consistency of the research instrument. Reliability testing evaluates whether a questionnaire consistently reflects a variable or construct. A questionnaire is deemed reliable if an individual's responses remain stable over time.

Table 2 Validity and reliability testing in the research of negative influence of viral marketing and brand awareness on customer trust and purchase decisions of pro-Israel products in Banten Province

Constructs and Question Items	Validity Testing		Construct Reliability
	Factor Loading	Note	
Viral Marketing			0.82
VM1	0.870	Valid	
VM2	0.773	Valid	
VM3	0.740	Valid	
VM3	0.730	Valid	
Brand Awareness			0.75
BA1	0.757	Valid	
BA2	0.724	Valid	
BA3	0.774	Valid	
Customer Trust			0.73
CT1	0.783	Valid	
CT2	0.751	Valid	
CT3	0.714	Valid	
CT4	0.726	Valid	
Purchase Decisions			0.88
PD1	0.741	Valid	
PD2	0.764	Valid	
PD3	0.786	Valid	
PD4	0.724	Valid	

Source: Authors, 2024 (processed data).

Reliability testing ensures that an instrument is unbiased and dependable across various times, places, and participants (Hair et al., 2014). It measures internal consistency and the variance extracted from each construct. High reliability suggests that the indicators consistently measure what they are intended to, with a recommended threshold of 0.7. In this case, all variables were found to be reliable, with Construct Reliability (C.R.) values equal to or exceeding 0.7, confirming their reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Before testing the hypothesis, the first step is to evaluate the structural model's goodness of fit. The study indicates that the proposed model is acceptable based on favourable fit values from overall goodness-of-fit measurements. Assessing goodness-of-fit, especially using the Chi-Square (χ^2) criteria, is essential to determine how well the model fits the data.

In this study, a lower χ^2 value and a significance level above 0.05 suggest no significant difference between the observed and estimated covariance matrices, although χ^2 is sensitive to sample size. The study reports a χ^2 value of 2112 with a probability of 0.0, implying model acceptability despite the high χ^2 , which can be attributed to the large sample size. The Normed Chi-Square (CMIN/DF), calculated by dividing χ^2 by the degrees of freedom, is 9.75, indicating a reasonably good model fit. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.655, approaching the recommended acceptance level (> 0.9), suggesting a reasonable fit. The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), accounting for model complexity, is 0.574, indicating adequacy. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) reflects a moderate fit at 0.428. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI), which is less sensitive to sample size and model complexity, reports a moderate fit at 0.485, though below the recommended threshold (> 0.9). Finally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.234, indicating a reasonably good model fit.

Table 3 Results of goodness of fit full model in the research of negative influence of viral marketing and brand awareness on customer trust and purchase decisions of pro-Israel products in Banten Province

<i>Goodness of Fit index</i>	<i>Expected Value</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
χ^2 - Chi-Square	Minimize	2112	Marginal
Probability	≥ 0.05	0.000	Marginal
CMIN/DF	≤ 2	9.75	Marginal
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.655	Marginal
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.574	Marginal
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.428	Marginal
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.485	Marginal
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.234	Marginal

Source: Authors, 2024 (processed data).

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing is carried out by observing the p-value, where a value less than 0.05 indicates statistical significance. This threshold allows researchers to conclude that the hypothesized relationships in the model are likely to be valid and not due to random chance. In SEM AMOS 23, significant p-values suggest that the data support the structural paths and relationships specified in the model. Thus, when the p-value is below 0.05, it implies that all hypotheses being tested are accepted, demonstrating a significant effect.

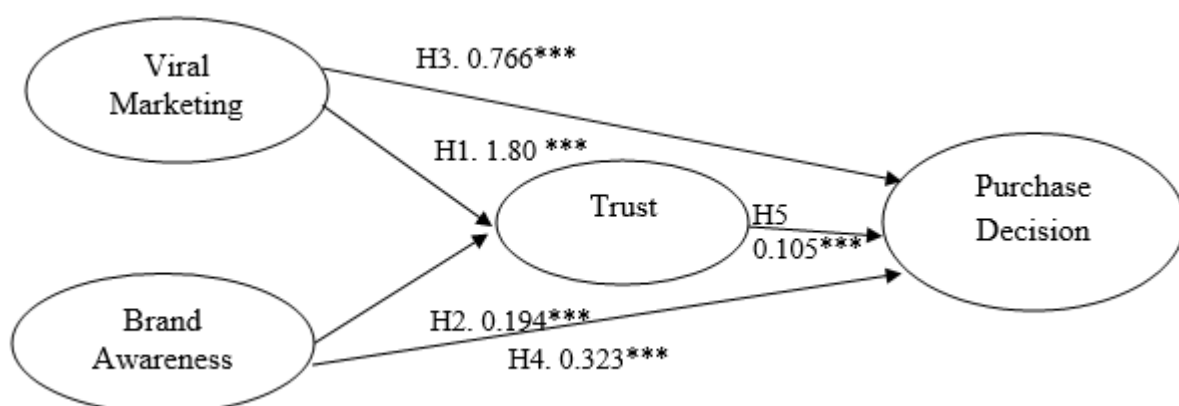
Table 4 Hypothesis test results in the research of negative influence of viral marketing and brand awareness on customer trust and purchase decisions of pro-Israel products in Banten Province

Regression Weight			Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	P
Trust	<---	Viral Marketing	0.343	0.180	1.808	0.000***
Trust	<---	Brand Awareness	0.447	0.194	2.308	0.000***
Purchase Decision	<---	Viral Marketing	2.527	0.766	3.297	0.000***
Purchase Decision	<---	Brand Awareness	0.598	0.323	1.852	0.000***
Purchase Decision	<---	Trust	0.548	0.105	2.208	0.000***

Source: Authors, 2024 (processed data).

The results from the AMOS analysis reveal several significant relationships among the variables: Viral marketing, brand awareness, trust, and purchase decision. The regression weight for the relationship between viral marketing and trust is 0.343, with a critical ratio (C.R.) of 1.808 (H1 rejected). Additionally, brand awareness has a stronger effect on trust, with a regression weight of 0.447 and a C.R. of 2.308 (H2 rejected).

In terms of influencing purchase decisions, both viral marketing and brand awareness have significant effects. Viral marketing demonstrates a strong positive impact on purchase decisions with a regression weight of 2.527 and a C.R. of 3.297 (H3 rejected). Brand awareness also contributes to purchase decisions, albeit with a smaller effect size (0.598) and a C.R. of 1.852 (H4 rejected), yet it remains significant. Trust is also crucial in affecting purchase decisions, with a regression weight of 0.548 and a C.R. of 2.208 (H5 rejected). This suggests that higher levels of trust, driven by both viral marketing and brand awareness, positively influence consumers' purchase decisions. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of building trust through marketing efforts and brand visibility in shaping consumer behaviour. The path that has been built based on the theory and the development of the previous hypothesis can be seen in Figure 2.



Source: Authors, 2024.

Figure 2 Hypothesis testing model in the research of negative influence of viral marketing and brand awareness on customer trust and purchase decisions of pro-Israel products in Banten Province

Discussion

The research findings that viral marketing negatively affects customer trust in pro-Israel products align with empirical evidence suggesting that viral marketing campaigns promoting pro-Israel products can erode customer trust, especially in regions like Banten, where political sentiment towards Israel is negative and religious values are strong. Qarmout (2023) found that viral campaigns often amplify emotional responses, and when political conflicts are involved, consumers may view such campaigns as manipulative or politically motivated. This perception is particularly pronounced among consumers sympathetic to the Palestinian cause or critical of Israel's policies. Santosa (2024) study further corroborates this, identifying a correlation between viral political content and reduced trust in associated brands, particularly when consumers feel that sensitive geopolitical issues are being exploited for marketing purposes.

Although the initial hypothesis posited that viral marketing of pro-Israel products would negatively impact customer trust due to political sensitivities and potential public backlash, the empirical findings showing a positive influence can be justified through a contextual and audience-specific lens. Viral marketing, by nature, is not inherently detrimental to trust; rather, its effect depends heavily on how the message is crafted, the transparency of its intent, and the alignment with the values of its target audience. As Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) emphasize, when viral campaigns prioritize product benefits and avoid overtly political messaging, they are more likely to be perceived positively. This is

particularly true for consumer segments that are neutral or even supportive of the brand's political stance.

Riyanti and Nisa (2023) support this by showing that such audiences may interpret viral marketing as a form of brand authenticity or consistency, thereby strengthening trust. Additionally, brands that engage in proactive crisis communication and demonstrate responsiveness to public concerns can effectively manage negative perceptions, turning potentially controversial marketing into a trust-building opportunity. Hence, the acceptance of a positive relationship in the test results is not contradictory but rather highlights the nuanced and situational nature of consumer trust in politically sensitive contexts.

Second, brand awareness plays a crucial role in shaping consumer trust, as evidenced by various studies. A study by Salim and Putri (2024) found that higher brand awareness significantly enhances consumer trust because customers are generally more inclined to trust brands they recognize and remember well. Strong brand awareness is often associated with perceptions of quality and credibility, ultimately boosting consumer confidence in the products or services offered by the brand.

However, not all research supports this perspective. Some studies suggest that high brand awareness does not always correlate with increased consumer trust. For instance, a study by Chen et al. (2020) indicates that, in certain cases, high brand awareness can create unrealistic expectations. If the product or service fails to meet those expectations, it can lead to disappointment and a decline in consumer trust. In a more specific context, the hypothesis that brand awareness negatively affects customer trust in pro-Israel products can be accepted scientifically when analyzed through a sociopolitical lens and consumer value perceptions. In this case, increased brand awareness does not always generate positive associations, especially when consumers hold negative sentiments toward the brand's geopolitical affiliations.

Consumers who become aware that a brand supports issues or a country they ideologically oppose—such as support for Israel amid ongoing conflict—may experience a decrease in trust, even if they are familiar with the brand. This aligns with the value-based trust theory, which emphasizes that trust is not solely influenced by brand quality or visibility but also by the alignment of values between the brand and its consumers. Therefore, in the context of pro-Israel products, strong brand awareness may intensify negative perceptions and erode trust among consumers who hold opposing sociopolitical views, thereby providing a rational and scientific basis for accepting the hypothesis.

Research findings that brand awareness negatively affects customer trust in pro-Israel products align with empirical studies suggesting that increased visibility of pro-Israel products may diminish trust, especially in areas where political sentiment towards Israel is unfavourable. Ahsyam et al. (2024) found that heightened brand awareness often strengthens the association between a brand and Israel's controversial politics, leading to a decline in consumer interest, particularly among stock investors. This is especially true in regions with strong pro-Palestinian sentiment, where customers perceive prominent brands as politically partisan in their product selection (Hamida et al., 2024).

Similarly, this research reinforces the notion that greater brand awareness can undermine trust in politically sensitive regions like Indonesia. However, Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) argue that the impact of brand awareness on trust depends on how the brand manages its image. In regions indifferent or supportive of Israel, brand awareness can enhance trust if the brand focuses on product quality and transparency, distancing itself from political motives. Moreover, Santosa (2024) highlights that boycotts of pro-Israel products have significantly boosted the consumption of local goods in Indonesia, particularly in the food and textile industries, further illustrating the context-dependent nature of brand awareness and its effect on trust.

The third previous study generally suggested that viral marketing campaigns promoting pro-Israel products tend to negatively affect consumer purchase decisions, especially in politically sensitive

regions (Riyanti and Nisa, 2023; Husna et al., 2023; Qarmout, 2023). In contexts where public sentiment strongly supports Palestine or opposes Israeli policies, viral content often triggers emotional resistance and decreases purchase intentions. However, some scholars, such as Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) and Liu and Yu (2022), argue that the impact of viral marketing is not inherently negative but highly contingent on campaign design and audience characteristics. Viral marketing that focuses on product quality or universal social issues can still generate positive consumer responses even in complex sociopolitical environments.

In line with these alternative perspectives, the findings of this study, which show a positive effect of viral marketing on purchase decisions, can be logically explained. Although it was initially hypothesized that viral marketing would weaken consumer purchasing decisions, the results indicate otherwise. This outcome suggests that viral marketing campaigns have successfully shifted their focus toward emphasizing the functional benefits and innovative qualities of the products, thus reducing political associations perceived by consumers. Moreover, some consumers have begun to separate their purchasing behaviour from political considerations, prioritizing product value over ideological alignments. The phenomenon of information saturation or normalization of political issues on social media could also make consumers more pragmatic in evaluating viral marketing content. Therefore, the positive influence found in this study reflects an evolving consumer behaviour pattern where decisions are increasingly based on rational product evaluation rather than solely emotional or political reactions.

The fourth research indicates that heightened brand awareness for pro-Israel products can negatively impact consumer purchase decisions, especially in regions with strong anti-Israel sentiment, as Riyanti and Nisa (2023) found that increased awareness often strengthens associations between the brand and Israel's political stance, potentially alienating customers opposed to Israel's policies. In politically sensitive markets, brands with pro-Israel affiliations may face boycotts or decreased purchase intentions due to perceived political alignment (Husna et al., 2023). However, Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) argue that brand awareness does not inherently harm purchase decisions and may even enhance them, depending on the audience. In politically neutral or pro-Israel regions, increased awareness can foster trust and encourage purchases, particularly when marketing strategies focus on product quality and values that resonate with consumers. Therefore, the effect of brand awareness on purchase decisions (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2019) is context-dependent and shaped by regional political sentiment and brand communication strategies.

Interestingly, while the initial hypothesis of this study anticipated a negative effect of brand awareness on purchase decisions for pro-Israel products especially within a politically sensitive region—the results revealed a positive influence. This seemingly contradictory outcome can be interpreted through a contextual and consumer behaviour lens. In certain communities, high brand awareness may act as a cognitive shortcut that builds familiarity, perceived credibility, and even emotional security among consumers, which may outweigh political concerns.

Additionally, brands that successfully manage their communication to focus on universal values such as product quality, innovation, and social contribution can mitigate the impact of negative political associations. This suggests that even in regions with anti-Israel sentiment, consumers may still respond positively to brand awareness if the brand's messaging strategically emphasizes functional benefits and emotional resonance over political identity. Thus, the study offers a nuanced understanding that brand awareness, while politically charged in some contexts, remains a powerful driver of consumer trust and purchasing behaviour when managed effectively.

The last research indicates that customer trust can negatively influence purchase decisions regarding pro-Israel products, particularly in markets where political sentiment toward Israel is critical. A study by Kaikati and Kaikati (2004) found that consumers who are skeptical of policies, example, Israel, often exhibit lower levels of trust in brands perceived to have pro-Israel affiliations. The research revealed that this distrust arises from the belief that these brands may exploit political narratives to

promote their products. This leads to a significant decrease in purchase intentions among consumers who identify with pro-Palestinian viewpoints. In politically charged environments, a lack of trust in brands associated with Israel can result in active boycotts or reluctance to engage with these products, as consumers prioritize ethical considerations and alignment with their values over brand loyalty (Çakirkaya and Koçyiğit, 2024).

On the other hand, some scholars argue that customer trust does not inherently deter purchases and can actually enhance them in certain contexts. According to Santosa (2024), in markets where consumers have a neutral or supportive stance toward Israel, trust in brands can increase purchase intentions. Their research indicates that consumers are more likely to buy products from brands they trust, viewing these brands as credible and aligned with their values, even when those brands express pro-Israel sentiments. This perspective highlights that the impact of customer trust on purchase decisions is contingent on the political climate and existing consumer attitudes toward Israel. Therefore, while a lack of trust may negatively affect the purchase of pro-Israel products in politically sensitive regions, trust can also foster consumer engagement and loyalty in more supportive environments (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that viral marketing, brand awareness, and consumer trust play an important role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions for pro-Israel products. Viral marketing has proven to be effective in rapidly disseminating information through social media, which can affect consumers' perceptions of the products and generate greater interest. Brand awareness also plays a significant role, as consumers who are more familiar with the brand tend to feel more confident in making purchasing decisions. Consumer trust in the brand and pro-Israel products further strengthens the desire to purchase, especially in situations where the products carry political or ideological implications.

The study's findings indicate that these three factors work synergistically, creating a mutually reinforcing impact in shaping purchasing decisions. Effective marketing campaigns should focus on viral dissemination that can enhance brand awareness and strengthen consumer trust in the products. With the right strategy, companies selling pro-Israel products can maximize the influence of these three factors to encourage consumers to make faster and more confident purchasing decisions.

This study contributes to the theory by highlighting the interconnected role of viral marketing, brand awareness, and consumer trust in politically sensitive purchasing contexts, thereby expanding existing models of consumer behaviour and enriching the understanding of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. In this context, viral marketing and brand awareness act as external stimuli, trust represents the organism's internal evaluation, and purchasing decisions constitute the response. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of using purposive sampling and survey-based quantitative analysis to capture nuanced consumer perceptions in a specific sociopolitical setting. From a marketing perspective, the findings suggest that companies should design integrated campaigns that not only build brand familiarity and trust but also strategically manage the political narratives associated with their products to influence consumer decisions more effectively.

For future research, more detailed sampling techniques such as stratified random sampling can be used to ensure that selected respondents are more representative and diverse based on factors like demographics, political beliefs, or geographic regions. This will reduce sampling bias and improve the generalizability of the findings. To address potential bias in respondent answers, the use of anonymous surveys and careful question design can help reduce responses that align with social expectations or hesitation in expressing honest opinions about politically sensitive products.

The findings of this study indicate that companies offering pro-Israel products should focus on implementing a robust digital marketing strategy, especially through viral marketing on social media

platforms. By developing engaging and easily shareable content, these businesses can significantly enhance consumer awareness and interest in their offerings. It is also crucial to strengthen brand awareness by delivering consistent messaging across both online and offline channels, highlighting the brand's unique identity and core values. This familiarity will instil confidence in consumers, making them more inclined to select these products when making purchasing decisions.

Moreover, it is vital to enhance consumer trust, especially for products that have political or ideological associations. Companies should prioritize transparency, uphold a strong brand reputation, and consistently provide high-quality products. By effectively communicating their values and ensuring the integrity of their offerings, businesses can cultivate a stronger sense of trust among consumers. An integrated marketing strategy that blends viral marketing, brand awareness, and consumer trust will generate a synergistic effect, leading to quicker and more assured purchasing decisions. Additionally, companies must stay attuned to the political and ideological climate surrounding their products to ensure that their messaging resonates with the target audience and aligns with their values.

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