



**A STUDY OF THE KEY ELEMENTS IN VIRAL
MARKETING TOWARDS CONSUMERS' PURCHASE
INTENTION IN KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA**

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Abstract:

This study investigates the critical elements of viral marketing toward consumers' purchasing intention in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. Five perceived viral marketing elements were identified and tested on their relationship to consumers' purchase intentions. The five key factors are perceived informativeness, entertainment, irritation, source credibility, and incentive. To gather and analyse the data related to this study, questionnaires were distributed through the online google platform to the consumers in Klang Valley. A total of 434 respondents contributed to the discussion and conclusion of this study. These respondents are frequent internet users who are familiar with viral marketing. Therefore, it increased the research's credibility. Findings obtained from this study indicated that four key elements of viral marketing, perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived source credibility, and perceived incentives, are significant and display a positive relationship to consumers' purchasing intention. In contrast, this study illustrated that perceived irritation is not significant for consumers' purchase intentions, indicating that the consumers in the Klang Valley, Malaysia, do not perceive the advertising messages targeted at them causes any annoyance but as helpful during their purchase intention.

Keywords: perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived irritation, perceived source credibility, perceived incentives, viral marketing, consumers' purchasing intention

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1. Introduction

The term "viral" is now frequently used to refer to entire marketing campaigns or specific components of promotional strategies for a wide variety of consumer goods, services, and media products. However, "viral" only recently entered our everyday media dictionary (Janes, 2015). Marketing communication refers to the techniques marketers employ to stimulate the consumer's interest. Due to young people's widespread use of the Internet to share information, marketers should concentrate on viral marketing as a new kind of marketing. Since the Internet's inception, its user base has proliferated (Haghirian et al., 2005). No longer limited to illnesses or computer viruses, "getting viral" has been used for advertising campaigns to dancing hamsters and recordings of animals playing the piano. However, when attempting to define "viral marketing," it becomes evident that the definition of this now-famous term is relatively ambiguous.

Moreover, one reason for this is that the term "viral marketing" often conjures up connotations such as "buzz" or "word-of-mouth" (Janes, 2015). In terms of message sharing, digital marketing using social media has surpassed email, and messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook Messenger, and WeChat have played a significant role in its rise (Kanapathipillai & Kumaran, 2022; Intelligence BI, 2016). This has ramifications for determining how and which viral marketing might attract prospective consumers (Gulati et al., 2018). According to (Ler, 2014), business people need to grasp the success of viral advertising and innovate it by recognizing viral marketing consumers' attitudes. Advertisers are eager to include social media in their advertising plans to increase digital engagement. Adidas, for example, has declared that it would concentrate its marketing efforts entirely on digital and social media, noting that "*digital interaction is critical to us*" (Mccarthy, 2017).

Additionally, viral marketing through social media networking is another way for sellers to promote products and enhance work performance (Kanapathipillai, 2021). Viral marketing aims to disseminate knowledge about a product or service from person to person via word of mouth or online or email distribution. The purpose of viral marketing is to encourage people to share marketing messages with their friends, family, and other contacts, resulting in an exponential increase in the number of people who get it. Therefore, this research will give marketers the significance of viral marketing in creating consumers' purchase intention. Additionally, this research's outcome will resolve issues that will impact marketers' mindsets regarding viral marketing in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

1.2 Research Problem Statement

The product's informativeness affects consumers since it assists them in making purchasing choices (Tsang et al., 2004). Persuasive advertising educates consumers about new items and demonstrates how the product outperforms the competition's offerings (Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011). According to research conducted by (Muzaffar & Kamran, 2011), there is a positive correlation between perceived informativeness and

customer perception. However, according to (Blanco et al., 2010), individuals often view mobile advertisements as having a low degree of informativeness since they find them uninteresting. Additionally, the findings of (Ahmad & Lasi, 2020) shows no correlation between perceived informativeness and customer perception. Therefore, there is evidence of a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention.

Additionally, entertainment can influence consumers' attitudes. Therefore, consumers' purchase intention toward the product will change (Saadeghvaziri et al., 2011). Viral marketing campaigns that revolve around amusement, surprise, and delight significantly influence how consumers react to them. Following that, consumers respond positively to humorous and entertaining messaging. According to (Palka et al., 2009), entertainment is a significant indicator of mobile marketing uptake by consumers. Contrarily, (Ler, 2014) mentioned that entertainment has no impact on consumers' perception. Hence, there is no doubt that there is a void in the literature regarding the relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention.

Moreover, consumers may feel irritated or outraged by advertising messages conveyed unpleasantly or, more significantly, by the perceived revealing of personal information (Wei & Long, 2015). When communications become overly deceptive, consumers become annoyed and develop negative views about viral marketing (Palka et al., 2009). Furthermore, according to (Ler, 2014), perceived irritation negatively affects consumers' perception of viral marketing. However, readers were much more likely to view a review as helpful when it contained a moderate number of emotional words and exclamations, but not when it was full of such emotional markers (Mccune, 2017). A study from (Jonsson et al., 2021) elaborates that underlying helpfulness, usefulness, and entertainment outweigh negativity and feelings of irritation. Hence, there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention.

Furthermore, consumers also tend to seek recommendations to make a quality purchase decision. They usually take advice from private sources and commercial sources. With the changes in consumers' trends with the advancement of the internet, the communication landscape has drastically changed where consumers can interact and exchange information with other consumers online. Based on (Ahmad & Lasi, 2020), the source's credibility is critical since consumers are more likely to accept and trust advertising material that they get from trustworthy and trusted sources. This is echoed by the finding of (Dong et al., 2018), who discovered that source credibility promotes attitude toward the brand in online social media repetition through brand credibility and favorable views about the brand. Contrarily, (Ohanian, 1990) mentioned that the highly credible sources are not always more effective than less-credible ones. Thus, there is evidence of a gap in the literature between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention.

Additionally, little research on viral marketing has supported the relationship between incentives and customer purchasing intentions (Ler, 2014). Therefore, incentives

in marketing are a vital element. For instance, games, gifts, bonuses, and discounts offer the desired actions (Wang & Lan, 2018). It works best when an enticing reward is presented, motivating consumers to spread the word about the product and favourably affecting customers' purchase intentions. On the contrary, Subramanian (2017) mentioned that incentive alone does not increase consumers' purchase intention; it must be accompanied by other factors, including understanding the consumers' mindset. Evidently, there is a gap in the literature that needs addressing.

Malaysia seems to be falling behind in the digital marketing industry (Kanapathipillai & Kumaran, 2022). In the nation with the high internet penetration level in the ASEAN region, 89.6% of the population has access to the internet (Kanapathipillai & Kumaran, 2022; Muller, 2021). It is estimated that about 26 million Malaysians out of 32 million are active social media users (Kanapathipillai, 2021; Statista, 2021). However, despite the advance in internet technology, digital marketing is still considered a relatively new business segment in this country, resulting in Malaysian marketers' reluctance to invest in this strategy. Based on a (GetCraft, 2020) survey of 50 marketers across different industries, two out of five marketers admitted that this hesitation stems from being unsure of the implication of digital marketing and the usage of digital strategies.

Furthermore, the marketing content is outdated and unsuitable for today's consumers as marketing has changed from traditional to digital marketing (Kanapathipillai & Kumaran, 2022). Additionally, according to (Sharma, 2019), marketers that promote their items by email must alter the message content to meet the newest customer trends. Therefore, to induce consumers to initiate purchase intention, Malaysian marketers should evaluate and improve their marketing techniques since the current approach is incompatible with the consumers in Malaysia.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention?

RQ4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention?

RQ5: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention?

1.4 Research Objectives

RO1: To examine the relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention.

RO2: To study the relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention.

RO3: To test the relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention.

RO4: To scrutinize the relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention.

RO5: To inspect the relationship between perceived incentive and consumers' purchase intention.

2. Theoretical Underpinning Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The following sub-sections focus on the theoretical underpinning, literature, and hypothesis developed regarding perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived irritation, perceived source credibility, perceived incentive, and consumers' purchase intention.

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

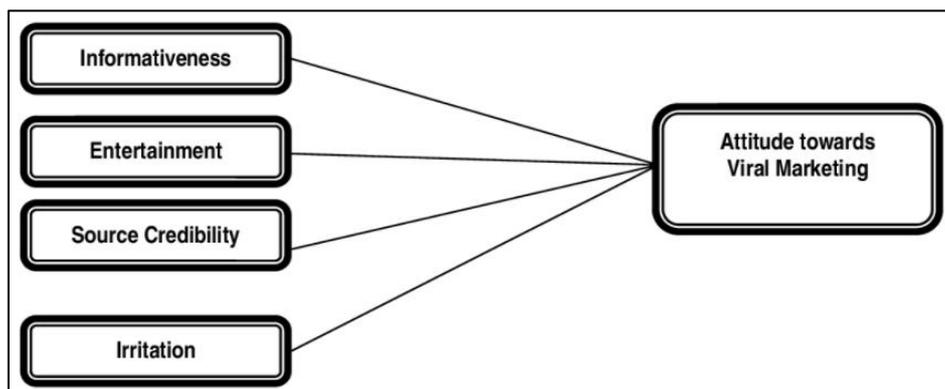


Figure 1: Theoretical Model (Zernigah & Sohail, 2012)

Consumers' attitudes about viral marketing are commonly described in their response to marketing communications, which are evaluated based on their informativeness, entertainment, sources credibility, and irritation (Zernigah & Sohail, 2012). As a result, to assess consumers' mindsets about viral marketing, this investigator included four independent variables: informativeness, entertainment, source credibility, and irritation, and examined their influence on the reliance on a variable, stance about viral marketing. This demonstrated that consumers' attitudes toward viral marketing might be good and unfavourable. Consumers will have a good attitude if the perceived informativeness of viral marketing messaging is significant and valuable, or a lousy perception if it is not.

If marketing communications can pique consumers' curiosity while also being amusing and capturing their focus, this will lead to a positive attitude. Furthermore, emerging consumers' attitudes about viral marketing are influenced by source credibility.

According to (Nguyen, 2020), credibility has an excellent and straightforward impact on attitudes toward advertising and brand to form brand awareness. As such, it would improve the consumers' purchasing intention. When consumers obtain advertising texts from relatives and companions, they are more likely to trust and embrace messaging since individuals with whom they are associated have a greater level of trust.

On the other hand, irritation is another crucial factor influencing consumers' attitudes regarding viral marketing. Because of the recurrence of material, needless publicity, inappropriate and incorrect information presented, or privacy breach, viral marketing messages usually irritate people, resulting in a bad attitude. Therefore, the theory by (Zernigah & Sohail, 2012) displayed in Figure 1 has become an underpinning theory for this study.

Additionally, when consumers receive viral marketing communications, rewards are benefits or advantages they can gain (Hanley et al., 2006). Furthermore, Consumers expect to use shop vouchers that benefit from promotional marketing and are sent through mobile marketing. (Kumar et al., 2016). Incentives in marketing are vital elements such as games, gifts, bonuses, and discounts. It leads the target consumers to the desired actions (Wang, 2018). According to (Yousra, 2019), perceived value and trust are incentives in advertising and channel acceptance that positively influence consumers. According to (Pietz & Storbacka, 2007) findings consumers who enable marketing messages to be sent to their handheld phones are rewarded financially through incentive-based advertising. The significant advantage of this strategy is that it gives consumers a cause to take part in viral marketing efforts. By delivering incentive-based marketing communications, advertisers add value to communication, create positive sentiments in consumers, and make it live (Iddris, 2006).

Moreover, there are a variety of ways to implement incentive-based viral marketing. Bonus points or any other sort of sales promotion, such as listening to audio advertising with unlimited connection time, as accomplished via viral marketing, are considered motives, according to (Tsang et al., 2004). Vouchers, contextually sensitive services, financial rewards, and free minutes, according to (Hanley et al., 2006), are some common types of rewards. Several studies on viral marketing have shown a link between incentives and client purchase intentions (Ler, 2014). Therefore, it works better by encouraging individuals to spread the product's message to positively affect the consumers' purchasing intention. Thus, the theories and findings of the previous scholar have prompted a study on the impact of viral marketing on consumers' purchase intention in Klang, Valley, Malaysia.

2.2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

The following section provides the relevant literature that led to the development of the hypotheses for this study.

2.2.1 Relationship between Perceived Informativeness and Consumers' Purchase Intention

The quality of marketing information is a crucial factor in determining its efficacy (Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011). Informativeness is defined as a marketing text's capacity to share information with consumers about various items to maximize customer happiness (Waladt et al., 2009) and the ability to offer relevant information effectively. To transmit information, advertising plays a crucial role (Ling et al., 2010). Consumers of diverse generations have varying perceptions of the media richness of the same marketing channels. The perceived media diversity of the investigated marketing channels influences the channel's intention to be used online (Bondos & Lipowski, 2018). As a result, consumers' interaction behaviours were strongly influenced by the informativeness and amusement of online stores (Wu et al., 2020). In this study, informativeness refers to marketing's capacity to provide clients with information that is relevant to their needs. The study showed that the empirical analysis of (Bevan-Dye, 2020) confirms that perceived information value significantly affected Generation Y's perceived value of online consumer reviews, which was a significant predictor of their frequency of using such evaluations. An instructive statement must always disclose details about the currently available product while raising customer awareness of new items (Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011). As previously said, qualities such as timeliness, correctness, and applicability should be incorporated into an educational message conveyed via viral marketing to build good customer attitudes. According to research done in Portugal, Generation Y people are more inclined than prior generations to read consumer-generated product evaluations and comments on corporate Facebook sites (Bento et al., 2018). According to research, there is a positive correlation between informativeness and consumers' opinions toward viral marketing (Muzaffar & Kamran, 2011).

Additionally, marketers should impose a word restriction on online customer evaluations to avoid information overload (Kim et al., 2017). As a result, when communications are given using viral marketing techniques, the quality of content must be prioritized. On the other hand, (Blanco et al., 2010) discovered that individuals often regard mobile advertisements as poor informativeness due to their boredom. Additionally, both studies (Ahmad & Lasi, 2020; Ler, 2014) found no correlation between perceived informativeness and customer attitude. As a result, there is a gap in the literature between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention. Based on the literature above, the following hypothesis, H1, is formulated:

H1: There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention.

2.2.2 Relationship between Perceived Entertainment and Consumers' Purchase Intention

The five factors that comprised the perceived entertainment value were "entertaining," "enjoyable," "pleasant," "fun to use," and "interesting" (Bevan-Dye, 2020). To create sentiments about viral marketing, consumers must appreciate the brand message that advertisers deliver. Today, it is critical that viral marketing communications are succinct and to the point, while still appealing to the gaze. Entertainment can influence consumers' attitudes and consumers' purchasing intention toward a product or service. Therefore, integrating entertainment into marketing communications will cause a better chance of consumers' purchase intention (Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011; Haghirian et al., 2005). Hence perceived entertainment will lead to consumers' purchase intention. The importance of entertainment in viral marketing cannot be overstated. When marketing communications are entertaining and enjoyable, consumers have a more favourable view of companies or items. According to the studies by (Bauer et al., 2005; Tsang et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2002), the most crucial factor that impacts consumers' attitudes about viral marketing is entertainment. Inability to meet viewers' perceptual, entertaining, or emotional delight demands are defined as amusement. Therefore, entertainment is regarded as an advertising tool for promoting commercial communications.

Contrarily, (Ler, 2014) mentioned that entertainment has no impact on consumers' perception. Hence, there is no doubt that there is a gap in the literature concerning the relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, based on the literature above, the following hypothesis, H2, is articulated:

H2: There is positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention.

2.2.3 Relationship between Perceived Irritation and Consumers' Purchase Intention

Consumers may become irritated if advertisers employ methods that bother, humiliate, or disrespect them. When communications become overly deceptive, consumers become annoyed and develop negative views about viral marketing, which causes irritation (Palka et al., 2009). Consumers may also respond negatively to viral marketing communications that include information that is readily misconstrued, diverted, or overburdening to message recipients. Additionally, consumers' attitudes regarding marketing strategies deteriorate when the volume of spam or advertising communications increases because it irritates them. In principle, any offensive statements that may be at odds with a customer's ideals are seen as annoyances or irritation (Oh & Xu, 2006).

Furthermore, consumers may be irritated or outraged by obnoxious advertisements or, more significantly, by the perceived revealing of personal information (Wei & Long, 2015). Annoyance is described as using marketing methods that irritate, outrage, humiliate, or are highly manipulative from a marketing standpoint (Waldt et al., 2009). Consumers find the techniques employed by advertisers to fight for their interests

irritating. As a result, non-irritating advertising campaigns foster a good attitude about viral marketing among consumers (Muzaffar & Kamran, 2011).

Despite the declining returns on emotion, genuine smiles improve product evaluation ratings, and marketing managers and other decision-makers should use this knowledge to display models with genuine smiles to influence consumer product assessment (Isabella et al., 2020). According to (Ler, 2014), perceived irritation negatively affects consumers' perception when viral marketing is used.

On the other hand, readers were much more likely to view a review as helpful when it contained a moderate number of emotional words and exclamations, but not when it was full of such emotional markers (McCune, 2017). A study from (Jonsson, 2021) elaborates that underlying helpfulness, usefulness, and entertainment outweigh negativity and feelings of irritation. Thus, there is a gap in the literature that needs to be bridged. Therefore, based on the literature above, the following hypothesis, H3, is derived:

H3: There is positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention

2.2.4 Relationship between Perceived Source Credibility and Consumers' Purchase Intention

According to (Akdim, 2021), valence, relevance, understandability, and visual cues are the most significant experience of message usefulness and the reader's behavioural intentions. Source credibility is the sender characteristic that most affects the reader's behavioural intentions, and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence is the receiver characteristic that most influences their attitudes and behavioural intentions. Before making a purchase, consumers consult their peers, which is why earned social media is significant (Pauwels, 2017). According to linked research, marketers should emphasise brand knowledge and perceived value since these factors ultimately impact consumers' purchase intentions (Chakraborty, 2019).

Furthermore, (Daugherty et al., 2007) saw advertising credibility as representing consumers' aspirations of marketing fairness and truthfulness. The amount of perceived danger is inextricably linked to the trustworthiness of messaging. The potential threat is minimal when the signals come from a reliable source. According to (Palka et al., 2009), when consumers get advertising messages through their social platform, they feel uneasy and have no concerns about privacy. As a result, acquired source credibility is critical since consumers are more likely to accept and trust advertising information they get from reputable and trustworthy sources. The source's credibility is critical since consumers are more likely to accept and trust advertising material that they get from trustworthy and trusted sources (Ahmad & Lasi, 2020).

Additionally, it has been shown that following fan pages affect fan page activity, affecting purchase intention and social media connectivity. Through brand credibility and favourable views about the brand, source credibility promotes attitude toward the

brand in online social media repetition (Dong et al., 2018). Besides that, whether the reviews are favourable or harmful, it is prudent to have a dedicated reputation marketer(s) whose primary responsibility is to monitor and react to reviews, whether to express gratitude for a lovely review or to fix any concerns raised in a negative review (Pitman, 2019). The source's reliability influences consumers' perceptions regarding the utility of information. The source's credibility has a substantial impact on opinion; sources with a high level of credibility have a more substantial influence on opinion change than sources with a low level of credibility.

On the contrary, (Ohanian, 1990) stressed that the highly credible sources are not always more effective than less-credible ones. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention. To reduce the gap in the literature, the following hypothesis, H4, was developed:

H4: There is a positive relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention.

2.2.5 Relationship between Perceived Incentives and Consumers' Purchase Intention

When consumers receive viral marketing communications, rewards are benefits or advantages they can gain (Hanley & Martinsen, 2006). Furthermore, Consumers expect to use shop vouchers that benefit from promotional marketing and are sent through mobile marketing (Kumar et al., 2016). Incentives in marketing are vital elements such as games, gifts, bonuses, and discounts. It offers that targets the desired actions (Wang & Lan, 2018).

According to (Yousra, 2019), perceived values and trust are forms of incentives in advertising and channel acceptance, which positively influence the acceptance of products and attitudes towards advertising via SMS. Consumers that enable marketing campaigns to be sent to their handheld phones are rewarded financially through incentive-based advertising (Pietz & Storbacka, 2007). The significant advantage of this strategy is that it gives consumers a cause to take part in viral marketing efforts. By delivering incentive-based marketing communications, advertisers add value to communication, create positive sentiments in consumers, and make it live (Iddris, 2006). Furthermore, according to (Ler, 2014), several studies on viral marketing have exposed a connection between incentives and client purchase intentions. Incentives work better by encouraging individuals to spread the product's message and positively affect the consumers' purchasing intention.

However, (Subramanian, 2017) mentioned that incentive alone does not increase consumers' purchase intention; it must be accompanied by other factors, including understanding the consumers' mindset. Hence, there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis H5 was proposed:

H5: There is positive relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention

2.3 Proposed Conceptual Framework

This study aims to analyse the influence of five critical elements of viral marketing on consumers' purchase intention in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. Figure 2 expresses the proposed conceptual framework developed to demonstrate the relationship between the study's independent variables and the dependent variable of this study.

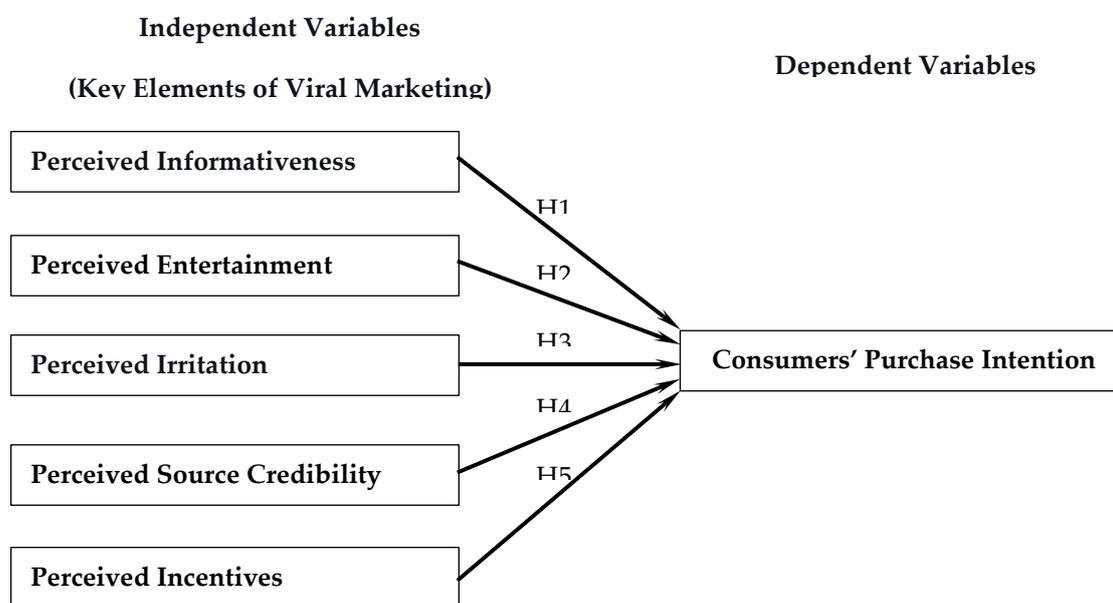


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

The following section provides the reliability analysis, population, sampling and measurements used in this research.

3.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Perceived Informativeness	0.803	5
Perceived Entertainment	0.794	5
Perceived Irritation	0.850	6
Perceived Source Credibility	0.846	5
Perceived Incentives	0.841	4
Consumer's Purchase Intention	0.769	3

Based on Table 1, the value of Cronbach's Alpha for Perceived Informativeness is 0.803 with 5 items, and the second variable is the perceived entertainment, which showed

Cronbach's alpha value of 0.794 with 5 items. As such, the Cronbach's alpha values of Perceived Irritation, Perceived Source Credibility, and Perceived Incentive are 0.850, 0.846, and 0.841, respectively. Finally, the Cronbach's alpha value of Consumer Purchasing Intention was 0.769. All the Cronbach's values have shown more than 0.7, which means the construct is adequate for this study.

3.2 Population, Sampling and Measurements

This research aims to learn about viral marketing elements and consumers' purchase intention in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Hence, the selected respondents are consumers within Klang Valley between 18 and 60 years old. This group of people is classified as adults in Malaysia and comprises 70% of the population. Klang Valley's estimated population is 8.2 million residents (DOSM, 2021).

Based on the aims of this study, the (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) table furnished the estimated sample size. The population of Klang Valley is estimated at 8.2 million people (DOSM, 2021). Therefore, a suitable sample size based on (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) tabulation is 384.

To reach a more significant and diverse audience, questionnaires will be circulated through multiple media platforms such as email services, WhatsApp, Telegram, and QR codes. A total of 1500 sets of questionnaires were distributed to consumers in the Klang Valley. The response was 434, which is approximately a 29 percent response rate. According to (Visser et al., 1996), a response rate of below 20 percent will also yield accurate results for the research. Therefore, the response rate of 29 percent was deemed excellent and adequate for this study.

4. Findings and Interpretation

The following section provides the findings of this study, including the respondents' demographic profiles, descriptive analysis, correlation, and regression analysis.

4.1 Demographic Profile

The profile of the respondents studied is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 434)

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	225	52%
	Female	209	48%
Age	< 20	6	1%
	21-30	190	44%
	31-40	207	48%
	> 41	31	7%
Race	Malay	220	51%
	Chinese	141	32%
	Indian	59	14%

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	Others	14	3%
Academic Qualification	Secondary / SPM	53	12%
	Diploma / STPM / A-Level / Pre-U	101	23%
	Undergraduate	255	59%
	Postgraduate	25	6%
Internet Usage	2 days or less/week	6	1%
	3-4 days/week	20	5%
	5-6 days/week	25	6%
	Everyday	383	88%
Usage of Viral Marketing Tools	Email	18	4%
	Video Website (i.e. YouTube)	53	12%
	Blogs	14	3%
	Messaging Services (WhatsApp / Telegram)	173	40%
	Social Network (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	158	36%
	Forum	7	2%
	Others	11	3%

Based on table 2, the number of respondents in this research N=434. The survey exhibits that the majority of respondents were males (52%) or 225. In terms of age, the majority were between (31-40) years old, which is (48%) or 207 respondents. A majority of 220 or (51%) of the respondents are Malays. In terms of academic qualification, a majority of 255 or (59%) of the respondents have attained an undergraduate degree. A majority of 383 or (88%) of the respondents use the internet daily. Finally, A majority of 173 or (40%) of the respondents use messaging services such as WhatsApp or Telegram.

4.3 Mean, Standard Deviation and Normality Analysis

The descriptive statistics in Table 3 show the mean, standard deviation (SD), skewness and kurtosis values of this study.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics (N = 605)

Factors	Mean	SD	Skew	Kurtosis	Min	Max
Perceived Informativeness	2.080	0.638	0.950	1.172	1	5
Perceived Entertainment	2.180	0.727	1.061	0.155	1	5
Perceived Irritation	2.308	0.654	0.020	0.676	1	5
Perceived Source Credibility	2.190	0.696	0.843	1.574	1	5
Perceived Incentives	2.112	0.570	0.996	1.267	1	5
Consumer's Purchase Intention	2.120	0.655	0.962	0.476	1	5

From Table 3, the factor perceived irritation shows the highest mean value of 2.308 ± 0.654. The lowest mean value is perceived informativeness, 2.080 ± 0.638. The normality test denotes that the skewness and kurtosis values have a threshold of ±2 which means that the data are distributed normal, as elucidated by (Chinna & Yuen, 2015; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014).

4.4 Correlation Analysis

To study how the variables are correlated, the correlation analysis is shown in Table 5: Correlation Matrix.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix (N = 434)

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Informativeness	1					
2. Perceived Entertainment	0.578**	1				
3. Perceived Irritation	0.251**	0.290**	1			
4. Perceived Source Credibility	0.623**	0.647**	0.310**	1		
5. Perceived Incentives	0.545**	0.519**	0.235**	0.626**	1	
6. Consumer's Purchase Intention	0.597**	0.587**	0.202**	0.650**	0.617**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on the correlation matrix shown in Table 4, it was noted that the data significantly supported the measurement model. The correlation matrix recorded that the variables perceived informativeness and perceived entertainment, displays a moderate positive correlation with the variable consumers' purchase intention ($r = 0.597$; $p < 0.001$) and ($r = 0.587$; $p < 0.001$) respectively. The correlation between perceived informativeness and perceived entertainment is positive and moderately correlated ($r = 0.578$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the variables perceived source credibility and perceived incentives illustrates a high positive correlation with consumers' purchase intention ($r = 0.650$; $p < 0.001$) and ($r = 0.617$; $p < 0.001$) respectively. The correlation between perceived source credibility and perceived incentives is high and positively correlated ($r = 0.626$; $p < 0.001$). Additionally, the variable perceived irritation shows a low positive correlation with the variable consumers' purchase intention ($r = 0.202$; $p < 0.001$).

Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a mixed strength but positive association between all the variables tested.

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

The multiple regression procedure is used to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this study.

Table 5: Model Summary^b

Model 1	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	0.739 ^a	0.546	0.541	0.444
a. Predictors: (Constant), Informativeness, Entertainment, Irritation, Source Credibility, Incentive				
b. Dependent Variable: Consumers' Purchase Intention				

From Table 5 Model Summary, $R = 0.739$ indicates the multiple correlation coefficient value which exhibits a high degree of predictive accuracy. The $R^2 = 0.546$. This implies that 54.6% of the variation in the dependent variable (consumers' purchase intention) can

be explained by the independent variables (perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived irritation, perceived source credibility, and perceived incentive).

Table 6: ANOVA^a

Model 1	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	101.423	5	20.285	102.930	0.000 ^b
Residual	84.347	438	0.197		
Total	185.770	433			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' Purchase Intention
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Informativeness, Entertainment, Irritation, Source Credibility, Incentive

Table 6 ANOVA, shows that the independent factors statistically and substantially predict the dependent variable, (F = 102.930, p < 0.001) Therefore, the regression model fit is good. Thus, the independent variables (perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived irritation, perceived source credibility and perceived incentive) can be used to predict the dependent variable (Consumers' Purchase Intention)

Table 7: Coefficients

Model 1 Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.268	0.103		2.595	0.010
Informativeness	0.204	0.046	0.199	4.462	0.000
Entertainment	0.162	0.041	0.180	3.974	0.000
Irritation	-0.041	0.035	-0.410	-1.199	0.231
Source Credibility	0.241	0.047	0.256	5.107	0.000
Incentive	0.304	0.050	0.265	6.075	0.000

Dependent Variable: Consumers' Purchase Intention

From Table 7 Coefficients, show that perceived informativeness (B = 0.204; p < 0.001) perceived entertainment (B = 0.162; p < 0.001), perceived source credibility (B = 0.241; p < 0.001) and perceived incentive (B = 0.304; p < 0.001) are statistically significant. Meanwhile, perceived irritation (B = -0.041; p > 0.001) is insignificant.

Thus, this implies that there is a significant relationship between the predictor variables (perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived source credibility and perceived incentive) and dependent variable (Consumers' Purchase Intention).

Based on Table 7 Coefficients, the linear regression equation is as follows:

$$\text{CPI} = 0.268 + 0.204 (\text{INF}) + 0.162 (\text{ENT}) + 0.241 (\text{SC}) + 0.304 (\text{INC})$$

Where;

CPI = Consumers' Purchase Intention

INF = Perceived Informativeness

ENT = Perceived Entertainment,
SC = Perceived Source Credibility,
INC = Perceived Incentive,
0.268 is the constant or the y-intercept.

The result indicates that with a one-unit increase in perceived informativeness, there is an increase in the consumers' purchase intention (CPI) by 0.204. Similarly, one unit increase for perceived entertainment and source credibility will increase consumers' purchase intention by 0.162 and 0.241, respectively. Last but not least, consumers' purchase intention increases by 0.304 when perceived incentives increases by one unit.

Additionally, the outcome of multiple regression analysis rates the influence of independent factors on the dependent variable. The stronger the standardization coefficient, the more significant the influence of the predictor variables on customers' purchase intention. With a standard coefficient (Beta = 0.265), the predictor variable perceived incentives contributes the most to the variance in consumers' purchase intentions. Perceived source credibility follows with (Beta = 0.256), perceived informativeness (Beta = 0.199) and perceived entertainment (Beta = 0.180).

5. Discussion

The first objective of this research was to examine the relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention. To realize this objective, it was hypothesized that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention.

The multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention. Then, Pearson's correlation coefficient was observed to determine the size and direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant. The results showed that the relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention is statistically significant (p-value less than 0.001).

This shows that the results are consistent with the literature, suggesting that perceived informativeness is a significant determinant of consumers' purchase intention. The quality and adequate information are perceived as a vital element, which leads to purchase intention among the consumers in this study.

The findings of this study are parallel to the discoveries of (Wu et al., 2020; Bevan-Dye, 2020; Bento et al., 2018; Muzaffar & Kamran, 2011), who confirm that perceived informativeness significantly affect consumers' purchase intention when consumers seek further knowledge and reviews of products or services that they expect to purchase.

Additionally, this study invalidates the findings of (Ahmad & Lasi, 2020; Ler, 2014; Blanco et al., 2010), who found that perceived informativeness does not impact consumers' purchase intentions. Thus, hypothesis H1 is supported by data. The findings of this study were able to address, conclude, and narrow the gap in the literature and

validate that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention.

The second objective of this research was to study the relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention. To attain this objective, it was hypothesized that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention.

The multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention. Then, Pearson's correlation coefficient was scrutinized to determine the size and direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant. The results showed that the relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention is statistically significant (p-value less than 0.001).

This shows that the results are coherent with the literature, suggesting that perceived entertainment is a significant determinant of consumers' purchase intention. The importance of entertainment in viral marketing cannot be overstated. When marketing communications are entertaining and enjoyable, consumers have a more favourable view of companies or items. Therefore, this study has proved that perceived entertainment is a vital element that leads to purchase intention among the consumers in the Klang Valley.

The findings of this study are parallel to the discoveries of (Bevan-Dye, 2020; Wang et al., 2009; Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011; Tsang et al., 2004; Bauer et al., 2005; Haghirian & Madlberger, 2005) who confirm that perceived entertainment significantly affects consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, perceived entertainment is, without question, a critical element for viral marketing. In addition, the communications have elements of humour and directness that may readily capture the imagination of consumers' purchasing intention.

Additionally, this study invalidates the findings of (Ler, 2014), who found that perceived entertainment does not impact consumers' purchase intentions. Thus, hypothesis H2 is supported by data. The findings of this study were able to highlight, conclude, and narrow the gap in the literature and validate that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention.

The third objective of this research was to test the relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention. To reach this objective, it was hypothesized that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention.

The multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention. Then, Pearson's correlation coefficient was observed to determine the size and direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant. The results showed that the relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention is statistically insignificant (p-value = 0.231).

This shows that the results contradict the literature, which suggests that perceived irritation is an insignificant determinant of consumers' purchase intention. The findings of this study are in line with the outcomes of (McCune, 2017; Ler, 2014), who confirm that perceived irritation negatively affects consumers' purchase intention claiming a negative association between viral marketing and annoyance. Consumers' unfavourable views about viral marketing may be influenced by annoyance caused by unwanted viral advertising messages; thus, it will affect consumer purchasing intention.

Additionally, this study refutes the conclusions of (Isabella et al., 2020; Wei & Long, 2015; Muzaffar & Kamran, 2011; Palka et al., 2009; Oh & Xu, 2006), who found that perceived irritation impacts consumers' purchase intentions. Thus, hypothesis H3 is not supported by data. Although the findings of this study were able to address, conclude, and narrow the gap in the literature, it invalidates the hypothesis that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention.

The fourth objective of this research was to scrutinise the relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention. To achieve this objective, it was hypothesized that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention.

The multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention. Then, Pearson's correlation coefficient was observed to determine the size and direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant. The results showed that the relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention is statistically significant (p-value less than 0.001).

This shows that the results are consistent with the literature, suggesting that perceived source credibility is a significant determinant of consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, consumers may show an intention to purchase products or services because of the perceived source legitimacy. Additionally, if the messages are inaccurate or originate from unreliable sources, the consumers' purchase intention will not occur. Hence, consumers' purchase intention is most likely triggered by perceived source credibility because it is highly informative and motivating.

The findings of this study are parallel to the research findings of (Akdin, 2021; Ahmad & Lasi, 2020; Dong et al., 2018; Pauwels, 2017; Chakraborty, 2019; Palka et al., 2009), who confirms that perceived source credibility significantly affects consumers' purchase intention. According to these scholars, source credibility is critical since consumers are more likely to accept and trust advertising information they get from reputable and trustworthy sources. Therefore, this study validates these findings that the source's credibility is critical since consumers are more likely to accept and trust advertising material that they get from trustworthy and trusted sources.

Additionally, this study contradicts the findings of (Ohanian, 1990), who stressed that the highly credible sources are not always more effective than less-credible ones. Thus, hypothesis H4 is supported by data. The findings of this study were able to reveal,

conclude, and narrow the gap in the literature and validate that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention.

The fifth objective of this research was to inspect the relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention. To fathom this objective, it was hypothesized that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention.

The multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention. Then, Pearson's correlation coefficient was observed to determine the size and direction of the relationship and whether it was statistically significant. The results showed that the relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention is statistically significant (p-value less than 0.001).

This shows that the results are consistent with the literature, suggesting that perceived incentives are a significant determinant of consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, incentives in marketing are essential in creating consumers' purchase intention. Elements such as games, gifts, bonuses, and discounts are incentives provided by marketers, which lead consumers to purchase intentions; as such, consumers will take the desired steps to purchase products or services (Wang, 2018).

Moreover, the findings of this study are parallel to the discoveries of (Yousra, 2019; Kumar et al., 2016; Pietz & Storbacka, 2007; Ler, 2014; Hanley & Martinsen, 2006), who confirm that perceived incentives significantly affect consumers' purchase intention whereby, incentive-based marketing adds value to the viral marketing efforts and creates positive sentiments in consumers. This builds excitement in consumers, which leads to purchase intention.

Additionally, this study invalidates the findings of (Subramanian, 2017), who has found that perceived incentive alone does not lead to consumers' purchase intention; it must be accompanied by the consumers' understanding of the products and services offered. Thus, hypothesis H5 is supported by data. The findings of this study were able to expose, conclude, and narrow the gap in the literature and validate that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention.

6. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

Responses for the first independent variable, perceived informativeness, indicated a moderate statistically significant relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention. This answers to the first research question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived informativeness and consumers' purchase intention? A past study by (Tsang et al., 2004) indicates that perceived informativeness affects consumers since it helps in their decision-making process. Additionally, a study by (Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011) found that informational and

educational viral marketing teaches clients about new products and explains how the product exceeds competitors' offers. However, (Ahmad & Lasi, 2020) discovered no link between perceived informativeness and consumers' perception. In conclusion, this study has supported the findings of (Tsang et al., 2004; Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011). Thus, information is crucial in viral marketing because the accuracy and timely information provided to consumers will lead to purchase intention.

Responses for the second independent variable, perceived entertainment, indicated a moderate statistically significant relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention. This solves the second research question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived entertainment and consumers' purchase intention? A past study by (Bauer et al., 2005) stated that the most crucial factor that impacts consumers' purchase intention is amusement. In addition, when viral marketing is engaging and interesting, buyers develop a more positive attitude about products and services. However, as (Wei & Long, 2015) reported, entertainment has an insignificant effect on consumers' purchase intention. However, this research supports the finding of (Bauer et al., 2005) and subsequently negates the findings of (Wei & Long, 2015). Therefore, marketers who use entertainment in viral marketing will be able to increase the consumers' purchase intention.

Responses for the third independent variable, perceived irritation, revealed a statistically insignificant relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention. The answer to the third research question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived irritation and consumers' purchase intention? Indicates that annoyance through viral marketing does not impact the consumers' purchase intention. According to (Jonsson, 2021), helpfulness, usefulness, and entertainment outweigh negativity and feelings of irritation. Therefore, this research implies that consumers are not affected by the displeasure caused by viral marketing. This could be mainly because consumers nowadays are more likely to read a review before purchasing.

Responses for the fourth independent variable, perceived source credibility, indicated a strong statistically significant relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention. This answers the fourth research question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers' purchase intention? A study by (Ahmad & Lasi, 2020) indicates that source credibility is crucial because consumers are more likely to accept and believe viral marketing content from reputable and trusted sources. However, (Ohanian, 1990) highlighted that highly credible sources are not always practical when convincing consumers to make a purchase decision. Then again, this research has proven the significance of perceived source credibility in viral marketing. Therefore, marketers should establish source credibility so that viral advertising messages do not cause discomfort and privacy concerns among consumers who intend to make a purchase decision.

Responses for the fifth independent variable, perceived incentives, indicated a strong statistically significant relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention. This answers the fifth research question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived incentives and consumers' purchase intention? A previous study by (Iddris, 2006) indicates that viral marketing becomes more favourable when it offers particular monetary or non-monetary incentives to the consumer. On the contrary, (Subramanian, 2017) elucidated that incentive alone does not increase consumers' purchase intention. However, this research has demonstrated that perceived incentives are vital when marketers use viral marketing techniques. The significant advantage of this strategy is that it gives consumers a cause to take part in viral marketing efforts. By delivering incentive-based marketing communications, advertisers add value to communication and create positive consumer sentiments.

In terms of the managerial implications, this research will aid corporate executives and advertisers understand Malaysian consumers' opinions about viral marketing. It aids them in comprehending consumers' perception of critical elements within viral marketing: perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived irritation, perceived source credibility, perceived incentive, and its influence on their buying intention. Marketers will indeed be able to use the output of this study to tailor the content of their advertising. As a result, advertisers will find this study valuable as a baseline or set of standards for viral marketing campaigns.

7. Limitations and Further Research

The focus of this study was on the impact of the critical elements of viral marketing on consumers' purchase intention in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. Subsequently, to acquire further knowledge in this research area, an analysis can be conducted to compare the impact of the critical factors of viral marketing on consumers' purchase intention in urban and rural areas. A comparison study can also be undertaken between different consumer segments.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors of this research would like to proclaim that there are no conflicts of interest linked with this research, and this research was not subsidised by anyone that could have manipulated its results. As the researchers of this study, the authors validate its novelty, emphasise that this study has not been published previously, and verify that it is not presently intended for publication elsewhere.

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A STUDY OF THE KEY ELEMENTS IN VIRAL MARKETING TOWARDS CONSUMERS'
PURCHASE INTENTION IN KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA

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