

# Consumer Attitudes Towards Viral Marketing in Promoting Melaka's Historical and Culinary Tourism: A Quantitative Study

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## ABSTRACT

Viral marketing has become a crucial strategy in promoting tourism destinations, leveraging digital platforms to reach a wider audience. This study explores consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism, focusing on key determinants such as perceived informativeness, entertainment, source credibility, and irritation. The researchers used a quantitative approach to examine consumer engagement with viral marketing content. The findings reveal that informativeness and entertainment significantly enhance consumer attitudes, while source credibility is vital in fostering trust. However, excessive promotional content leading to irritation can negatively impact engagement. The study also highlights the importance of targeting young, tech-savvy consumers and crafting culturally relevant content to maximise marketing effectiveness. Practical recommendations include leveraging social media analytics, incorporating interactive elements, and collaborating with credible influencers to enhance consumer engagement. This study advances digital marketing research by identifying effective viral marketing strategies for promoting historical and culinary tourism in Melaka.

**Keywords:** Viral marketing, Consumer attitudes, Tourism, Perceived informativeness.

## INTRODUCTION

Melaka, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008, is renowned for its rich historical heritage and diverse culinary traditions. The city's unique blend of Malay, Chinese, Indian, Baba-Nyonya, and Portuguese influences has made it a sought-after destination for cultural and gastronomic tourism. As the tourism industry evolves, digital marketing strategies—particularly viral marketing—have become essential in attracting and engaging visitors (Chon & Hao, 2024).

Melaka has experienced a significant increase in tourist arrivals in recent years, reflecting its growing appeal among domestic and international travellers. According to Melaka Tourism Promotion Division (2023), the city welcomed approximately 2.59 million visitors in 2022, with around 2.33 million domestic and 0.26 million international tourists. By 2023, these numbers surged to 8.63 million total arrivals, of which 7.37 million were domestic tourists and 1.26 million were international visitors, a 42.77% increase from the previous year (Bernama, 2024b). The momentum continued in 2024, designated as Visit Melaka Year (VMY2024), with nearly 10 million visitors recorded by September, surpassing the initial target of 8.7 million. By November, Melaka had already welcomed 13,584,042 tourists, including 10,249,895 domestic travellers

and 3,334,147 international visitors, generating an estimated RM12.688 billion in tourism revenue (Bernama, 2024a).

Moving forward into 2025, the Melaka State Government aims to sustain this upward trend through enhanced promotional efforts, digital engagement such as interactive virtual tours, engaging social media challenges, and influencer partnerships, alongside viral marketing campaigns featuring captivating videos and user-generated content, Melaka is showcasing its rich historical heritage and vibrant culinary scene inviting more tourists from around the world to explore and indulge in the unique experiences this captivating city has to offer.

Viral marketing spreads content rapidly through social media and plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour and influencing travel decisions. This strategy thrives on engaging, shareable content that captures the attention of a vast audience (Al-Dwairi & Alawneh, 2024). In the context of tourism, viral marketing can effectively highlight unique aspects of a destination, such as historical landmarks and culinary delights, thereby attracting a broader audience. In the context of tourism, viral campaigns can effectively highlight Melaka's historical landmarks, vibrant cultural heritage, and renowned street food, enticing a broader global audience. With Melaka's tourism sector witnessing such substantial growth, leveraging innovative digital marketing strategies will be key to ensuring the city remains a top travel destination in the years to come.

Several factors, including perceived informativeness, entertainment, source credibility, and irritation, shape consumer attitudes towards viral marketing. Perceived informativeness refers to how consumers find the content informative and valuable. Informative content can enhance consumer knowledge and interest in a destination, making it a critical component of successful viral marketing campaigns (Hosseinihah & Mirabolghasemi, 2022).

Perceived entertainment is another significant factor influencing consumer attitudes. Entertaining and engaging content is more likely to be shared and discussed, increasing its reach and impact (Çakirkaya & Aytaç Afşar, 2024). In the case of Melaka, creating entertaining content that showcases the city's historical sites and traditional foods can captivate potential tourists and inspire them to visit. In addition, perceived source credibility is crucial in fostering trust and authenticity. Consumers are more likely to engage with content that they perceive as credible and trustworthy (Roy et al., 2024). For Melaka, featuring local chefs, historians, and residents in marketing campaigns can add a layer of authenticity and credibility, enhancing consumer trust and engagement.

Conversely, perceived irritation can negatively impact consumer attitudes towards viral marketing. Content perceived as intrusive, annoying, or overly commercial can deter consumers and reduce the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. Marketers must carefully balance the need for engaging content with the risk of irritating their audience (Kamaruddin et al., 2024; Jumbri et al., 2021).

Although viral marketing research is extensive, few studies focus on its impact on historical and culinary tourism in Melaka. One significant gap is the lack of studies focusing on Melaka's historical and culinary tourism context. While previous research has explored viral marketing in various tourism settings, there is limited understanding of how these strategies impact consumer attitudes towards a destination with such a rich cultural and culinary heritage. Additionally, most studies have employed qualitative methods, leaving a gap in quantitative insights that can provide a broader, statistically driven understanding of consumer perception and behaviours. This study addresses these gaps by quantitatively exploring consumer attitudes toward viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: The Literature Review section provides an overview of existing research on viral marketing and consumer attitudes, particularly in tourism. The Methodology section outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques employed in this study. The Results section presents the findings from the survey, highlighting key trends and insights. The Discussion section interprets the results, linking them to the broader literature and theoretical frameworks. Finally, the

Conclusion section summarises the main findings, discusses the implications for practice and policy, and suggests directions for future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Melaka is a Historical and Culinary Tourism Destination

Melaka's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008 underscores its historical significance and cultural heritage. The city boasts a rich history, with influences from Malay, Chinese, Indian, Baba-Nyonya, and Portuguese cultures. Melaka's architecture, festivals, and cuisine notably reflect this multicultural heritage. The city's culinary diversity is a significant draw for tourists, offering a unique blend of flavours and traditions that reflect its rich cultural tapestry.

Food tourism in Melaka is not just about the food but also the stories and traditions behind each dish. Traditional dishes such as asam pedas, dodol, and laksa Nyonya offer a taste of the city's cultural heritage. Previous research has highlighted the importance of food tourism in Melaka, with studies showing that domestic tourists highly value the variety of local food available and often choose the city as a destination based on its culinary offerings (Rahman et al., 2024). This research indicates that food tourism is a significant component of Melaka's overall tourism appeal.

Promoting Melaka's culinary heritage through viral marketing can enhance its attractiveness as a food tourism destination. Marketers can attract food enthusiasts and cultural tourists by creating engaging content showcasing the city's traditional dishes and cultural stories (Tham & Chin, 2024). This approach can also help preserve and promote Melaka's heritage and culinary traditions for future generations.

Melaka's rich historical and culinary heritage makes it a unique and attractive tourist destination. Leveraging viral marketing strategies to promote this heritage can enhance consumer engagement and drive tourism growth. Dinh & Lee (2024) posited that understanding consumer attitudes towards viral marketing can help marketers create more effective campaigns that resonate with their target audience.

### Impact of Social Media on Culinary Tourism

Social media platforms have revolutionised how culinary tourism is marketed and experienced (Huang, 2024). Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube allow users to share their travel experiences, influencing the travel decisions of their followers. Visual content, such as photos and videos of local cuisine, plays a pivotal role in this process, as it can vividly showcase the attractions and experiences a destination offers. The impact of social media on culinary tourism is particularly noteworthy, as food-related content can significantly influence tourists' intentions to visit a destination and try its cuisine (Pu et al., 2024).

Research has shown that social media can enhance consumer engagement and interest in culinary tourism. A study by Wang & Iahad (2024) found that social media significantly influences consumers' attitudes towards trying local food and their intention to book restaurants offering local cuisine. This finding highlights the importance of creating visually appealing and engaging content that showcases a destination's culinary offerings. For Melaka, promoting its diverse culinary heritage through social media can attract food enthusiasts and enhance its reputation as a food tourism destination.

Case studies of successful social media campaigns in culinary tourism underscore the power of visual content. For example, the "Taste of Japan" campaign effectively used social media to showcase Japan's culinary delights, increasing tourist arrivals and engagement. Similarly, Melaka can leverage social media to promote its traditional dishes and culinary experiences, creating a compelling narrative that resonates with potential tourists.

However, the effectiveness of social media marketing depends on the quality and relevance of the content. Visually appealing, informative, and culturally significant content is more likely to engage users and

encourage sharing (Hamid et al., 2024). For Melaka, this means creating digital content and engagement highlighting its unique culinary traditions engagingly and authentically can attract more tourists.

### **Viral Marketing in Tourism**

Viral marketing is a digital strategy that leverages the power of social media to rapidly disseminate promotional content, influencing consumer perceptions and travel behaviour (Beşirova, 2024). This approach relies on creating engaging and shareable content that can spread rapidly across digital platforms. Research confirms that viral marketing improves brand awareness and consumer engagement in tourism (Alghamdi & Wahid, 2024). For instance, successful viral campaigns often incorporate storytelling and visual appeal elements to captivate audiences and encourage sharing. In tourism, viral marketing can highlight unique aspects of a destination, such as cultural heritage and local cuisine, thereby attracting a diverse audience.

The effectiveness of viral marketing in tourism is well-documented. Research by Ibrahim & Tager (2024) found that entertaining, informative, and credible viral marketing messages positively influence consumer behaviour and purchase intentions. This finding underscores the importance of crafting well-rounded marketing content that resonates with consumers. Additionally, viral marketing can create a sense of urgency and excitement, prompting consumers to take immediate action, such as booking a trip or sharing the content with their network (Wintergerst, 2023).

However, Taufik et al. (2022) posited that the success of viral marketing campaigns is not guaranteed. The unpredictable nature of viral content means that not all campaigns will achieve the desired level of virality. Marketers must carefully balance the need for engaging content with the risk that consumers may perceive it as inauthentic or overly commercial. This challenge is particularly relevant in the tourism industry, where authenticity and cultural relevance are critical to consumer engagement.

In summary, viral marketing offers significant potential for promoting tourism destinations, but its success depends on the quality and relevance of the content. Marketers must focus on creating authentic, entertaining, and informative content that resonates with their target audience to maximise the impact of their campaigns.

### **Consumer Attitudes Towards Viral Marketing**

Several key factors influence consumer attitudes towards viral marketing, including perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived source credibility, and perceived irritation. Perceived informativeness refers to how consumers find the content informative and valuable (Hosseinihah & Mirabolghasemi, 2022). Informative content can enhance consumer knowledge and interest in a destination, making it a critical component of successful viral marketing campaigns. For example, content that provides detailed information about a destination's attractions, history, and local cuisine can significantly enhance consumer engagement.

Perceived entertainment is another significant factor influencing consumer attitudes. Entertaining and engaging content is more likely to be shared and discussed, increasing its reach and impact. Studies have shown that emotionally charged content, whether positive or negative, can enhance consumer engagement and increase the likelihood of virality (Basri, 2023). In the case of Melaka, creating entertaining content that showcases the city's historical sites and traditional foods can captivate potential tourists and inspire them to visit.

Perceived source credibility plays a crucial role in fostering trust and authenticity. Consumers are more likely to engage with content that they perceive as credible and trustworthy. Research has demonstrated that source credibility predicts consumer attitudes towards marketing messages (Chen et al., 2022). For Melaka, featuring local chefs, historians, and residents in marketing campaigns can add a layer of authenticity and credibility, enhancing consumer trust and engagement.

On the other hand, perceived irritation can negatively impact consumer attitudes towards viral marketing. Content perceived as intrusive, annoying, or overly commercial can deter consumers and reduce the effectiveness of marketing campaigns (Zhang et al., 2024). Marketers must carefully balance the need for engaging content with the risk of irritating their audience. Understanding these factors can help marketers create more effective viral marketing campaigns that resonate with their target audience.

Building on these factors, the theoretical model by Zernigah & Sohail (2012) provides a structured framework to explain how perceived informativeness, entertainment, source credibility, and irritation shape consumer attitudes toward viral marketing. According to this theoretical model, attitudes are formed based on cognitive, affective, and behavioural components, which align with the identified factors. This theoretical framework has been widely applied in consumer behaviour research, particularly in studies analysing digital marketing effectiveness and consumer engagement (Roy et al., 2024; Shao, 2024).

Prior research has leveraged the theoretical model by Zernigah & Sohail (2012) to unravel how external influences—such as marketing stimuli and credibility factors—shape consumer intentions. For instance, research by Indrawati & M. Rasyad (2022) utilised a similar model to conduct a study on the influence of viral marketing through TikTok on consumers' attitudes at Shopee in Indonesia. A study by Ismail et al. (2022) investigates the critical elements of viral marketing toward consumers' purchasing intention in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. These findings further support the significance of perceived informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and irritation in influencing consumer responses to viral marketing efforts.

## Theoretical Model

According to Zernigah & Sohail (2012), consumers' attitudes toward viral marketing are frequently measured regarding their reactions to the marketing messages. These messages are judged based on their perceived informativeness, entertainment, source credibility, and irritation. Collectively, these factors shape consumers' attitudes toward engaging with viral marketing campaigns. Based on this model, perceived informativeness refers to how consumers find the content informative and valuable. Informative content can enhance consumer knowledge and interest in a destination, making it a critical component of successful viral marketing campaigns (Zernigah & Sohail, 2012). On the other hand, perceived entertainment relates to the degree of enjoyment and engagement consumers derive from the content. Entertaining content is more likely to be shared and discussed, increasing its reach and impact (Çakirkaya & Aytaç Afşar, 2024; Zernigah & Sohail, 2012).

Perceived source credibility plays a crucial role in fostering trust and authenticity. Consumers are more likely to engage with content that they perceive as credible and trustworthy (Shao, 2024). On the other hand, perceived irritation can harm consumer attitudes toward viral marketing. Consumers may disengage from marketing campaigns if the content is intrusive, annoying, or excessively commercial, ultimately diminishing its effectiveness.

Applying this theoretical framework in this study allows a better understanding of how the four key variables—perceived informativeness, entertainment, source credibility, and irritation—influence consumer attitudes toward viral marketing. By examining these variables, this study aims to gain deeper insights into the psychological mechanisms driving consumer behaviour within the context of viral marketing and tourism.

This study investigates the critical factors shaping consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism. It analyses how these factors influence consumer perceptions and behaviours toward viral marketing campaigns while assessing the interrelationships among these variables to determine their collective impact on consumer attitudes. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the most influential factor, offering valuable insights for marketers and policymakers in the tourism industry. To further illustrate these relationships, the research framework is presented in Figure 1, providing a conceptual representation of how the key variables interact within the study.



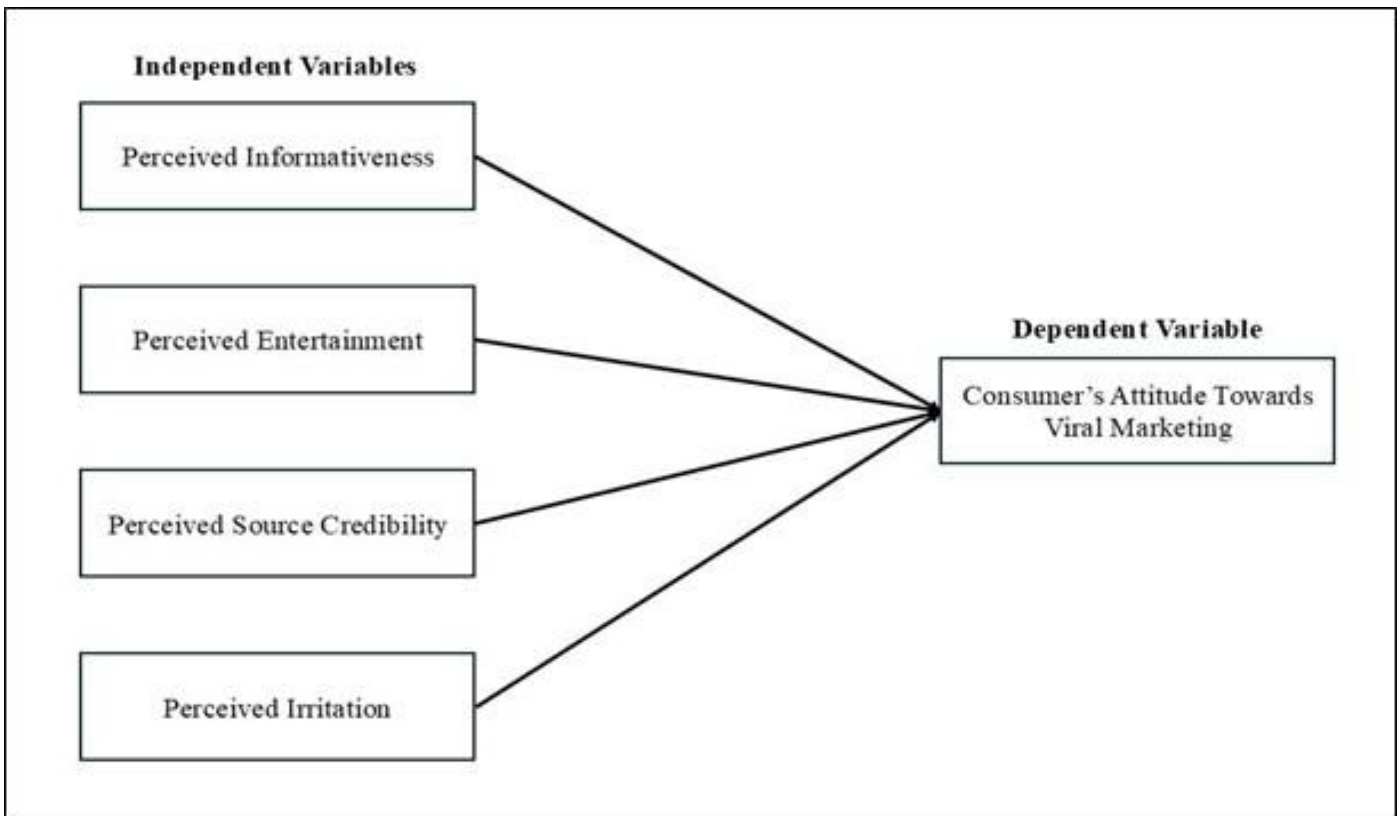


Figure 1. Research Framework

Source: Zernigah & Sohail, 2012

This research aims to bridge the existing gap by offering localised insights into the impact of viral marketing strategies on consumer attitudes in Melaka's unique cultural and culinary landscape. The findings will contribute to developing targeted marketing strategies, leveraging digital platforms for sustainable tourism growth and enhanced consumer engagement.

The research objectives for this study are as follows:

1. To examine the factors that affect a consumer's attitude towards viral marketing.
2. To determine the relationship between the factors affecting consumer attitudes towards viral marketing.
3. To identify the most significant factor affecting the consumer's attitude towards viral marketing.

The research hypothesis for this study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Hypothesis

Variable (Perceived)	Related Hypothesis
Informativeness	H <sub>1</sub> : Perceived informativeness positively affects consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism.
Entertainment	H <sub>2</sub> : Perceived entertainment positively affects consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism.
Source Credibility	H <sub>3</sub> : Perceived source credibility positively affects consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism.
Irritation	H <sub>4</sub> : Perceived irritation negatively affects consumer attitudes towards viral marketing promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Research Design

The research design for this study is quantitative, focusing on understanding consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism. This descriptive and exploratory research aims to examine the factors influencing consumer attitudes, determine the relationships between these factors, and identify the most significant factor affecting consumer attitudes towards viral marketing. This study aims to systematically analyse consumer perceptions and behaviours using quantitative methods, providing empirical evidence to identify patterns and relationships among key factors influencing consumer attitudes. This approach ensures a data-driven understanding of viral marketing effectiveness, essential for developing targeted and impactful marketing strategies.

### Sampling Strategy

The researchers chose a sample of 266 respondents to ensure a diverse and representative dataset for quantitative analysis. This sample size was determined based on statistical considerations to ensure reliability and validity in capturing consumer attitudes toward viral marketing in Melaka's historical and culinary tourism.

The sampling method employed was a combination of purposive sampling and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling was used to target tourists and local stakeholders in Melaka who have directly experienced viral marketing campaigns related to the city's tourism sector. This method ensured respondents had relevant knowledge and experience to provide meaningful insights.

Additionally, convenience sampling was employed to facilitate data collection from a population that might otherwise be difficult to access, given the diverse and dispersed nature of tourists and stakeholders. This approach allowed researchers to gather responses from readily available and willing participants at key tourist locations and through online surveys. While convenience sampling may pose certain generalizability limitations, the selected sample size helps mitigate these concerns by ensuring adequate representation across different consumer groups.

According to Taherdoost & Madanchian (2025), a larger sample size improves the reliability and validity of research findings, even in non-probability sampling methods. By focusing on a specific group of respondents with direct exposure to viral marketing campaigns in Melaka, this study aims to generate data-driven insights to develop more effective and targeted marketing strategies.

The selection of tourists and local stakeholders engaging with viral marketing campaigns enhances the study's ability to offer practical recommendations for improving Melaka's tourism industry. By understanding the factors influencing consumer attitudes toward viral marketing, this research provides empirical insights that support the optimisation of marketing strategies and digital engagement practices in tourism promotion.

### Data Collection and Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through online platforms and physical surveys across various regions in Melaka. In this study, the questionnaire items were primarily adapted from the theoretical model developed by Zernigah & Sohail (2012), which has been extensively used to examine consumer responses to viral marketing. Specifically, the scales for perceived informativeness, entertainment, source credibility, and irritation were drawn directly from the constructs defined by Zernigah & Sohail (2012), ensuring that our instrument is theoretically grounded and empirically validated. To further enhance the instrument's reliability and applicability in a digital marketing context, we cross-referenced these items with similar measures used in prior studies. This approach reinforces the conceptual framework of our research and maintains consistency with established literature.

The questionnaire was designed to capture responses regarding relevant demographic information and perceived factors influencing attitudes toward viral marketing using a 5-point Likert scale (Table 2). It was divided into several sections, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 2. Mean Range of Likert Scales

No	Description	Mean Range	Scale	Interpretation
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.79	1	Very Low
2	Disagree	1.80 – 2.59	2	Low
3	Uncertain	2.60 – 3.39	3	Moderate
4	Agree	3.40 – 4.19	4	High
5	Strongly Agree	4.20 – 5.00	5	Very High

Table 3. Structure of Questionnaire

Section	Questionnaire
A	Demographics (age, gender, educational level, etc.)
B	Perceived informativeness (assessing the degree to which the content is informative and helpful)
C	Perceived entertainment (evaluating how entertaining and engaging the content is)
D	Perceived Source Credibility (measuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the content source)
E	Perceived irritation assesses the extent to which consumers find the content intrusive or annoying.

## Data Analysis

The researchers conducted pilot testing with a sample of 30 respondents to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. They evaluated the internal reliability of the measurement tools using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient ( $\alpha$ ), considering values greater than 0.70 as acceptable. The results for this study's variables—perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived source credibility, and perceived irritation—all exceeded this threshold, demonstrating strong internal consistency.

The study employed statistical analysis to examine the quantitative data collected. This method involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns and relationships within the dataset. The analysis focused on understanding how the four key variables influence consumer attitudes towards viral marketing and identifying the most significant factor.

The research design for this study is quantitative, focusing on measuring consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism. This descriptive and exploratory research aims to examine the factors influencing consumer attitudes, determine the relationships among these factors, and identify the most significant factor affecting consumer attitudes towards viral marketing. By employing quantitative methods, the study seeks to gain robust insights into consumer perceptions and experiences, essential for developing effective marketing strategies.

This study employs Cronbach's Alpha to ensure the measured variables are reliable and consistent across the sample. Future research should incorporate additional validity checks, such as construct validity through factor analysis, to verify that the measurement items accurately represent the theoretical constructs. This study confirmed reliability with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.70 (Table 4), demonstrating strong internal consistency.



Table 4. Reliability Statistics for Each Variable

Factors	Cronbach Alpha Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )	Number of Items
Perceived informativeness	0.789	5
Perceived entertainment	0.839	5
Perceived source credibility	0.832	5
Perceived irritation	0.713	5
Consumer's attitude towards viral marketing	0.873	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>

## Ethical Issues

The researchers meticulously observed ethical considerations throughout the research process. They thoroughly informed all respondents about the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any point before participation. The researchers also obtained informed consent from all participants. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the researchers did not collect any identifying information that could link specific responses to individual participants. The data collected were used strictly for research purposes and handled according to the ethical guidelines established and approved by the research institution.

## Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into consumer attitudes toward viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which may introduce potential biases due to the respondents' subjective perceptions. Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs, increasing sample sizes, and enhancing diversity to reassess consumer attitudes towards viral marketing over time and across different demographic groups.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 5. Demographic Profile

Demographic	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	104	39.1
	Female	162	60.9
Ethnic	Malay	159	59.8
	Chinese	77	28.9
	India	29	10.9
	Others	4	1.5
Age	20 and below	8	3.0
	Between 21-25	150	56.4
	Between 26-30	76	28.6
	Between 31-35	11	4.1
	Between 36-40	14	5.3
	Between 40 and above	7	2.6

Occupation	Full-time employee	155	58.2
	Part-time employee	23	8.6
	Self-employed	73	27.4
	Unemployed	15	5.6
Educational background	Diploma	53	19.9
	Degree	142	53.4
	Master	39	14.7
	PhD	0	0
	Professional Certificate	12	4.5
	SPM and below	20	7.5
Level of income	Less than RM1000	21	7.9
	More than RM4000	137	51.5
	RM1001 – RM2000	17	6.4
	RM2001 – RM 3000	80	30.1
	RM3001 – RM 4000	11	4.1

The demographic composition of the respondents provides essential insights into consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism. Based on this study as shown in Table 5 above, most respondents are female (60.9%), while males constitute 39.1%. This gender distribution suggests that women may be more engaged with viral marketing campaigns related to tourism. Understanding their preferences and behaviours is crucial for tailoring marketing strategies that appeal to this demographic (Theodorakopoulos & Theodoropoulou, 2024). The higher female participation suggests a greater interest in cultural and culinary experiences, which marketers should emphasise in their efforts.

The sample consists predominantly of Malays (59.8%), with significant representation from Chinese (28.9%) and Indian (10.9%) ethnic groups. This diversity provides a wide range of cultural perspectives. Marketers must consider how different ethnic groups perceive and respond to viral marketing, particularly in a multicultural context like Melaka. Understanding these perspectives can help design inclusive and culturally sensitive marketing content that resonates with various ethnic groups.

Most respondents are young adults, primarily between the ages of 21 and 30 (85%). This age group is typically more tech-savvy and active on social media platforms, making them a prime target for viral marketing campaigns. Their attitudes towards digital content and sharing behaviours can significantly impact the success of such campaigns. This demographic will likely be early adopters of new technologies and trends, which is beneficial for viral marketing efforts.

Most respondents are full-time employees (58.2%), followed by self-employed individuals (27.4%). This result indicates that they have disposable income and the potential to travel. Their professional status could also influence their online behaviour and engagement with viral marketing content during their leisure time. Understanding their work-life balance and time availability can help timing the release of marketing campaigns for maximum engagement.

Many respondents have a degree or higher (68.1%), suggesting they are likely well-informed and critical consumers. Their educational background might influence their attitudes towards the credibility and quality of viral marketing content. High educational attainment can also correlate with higher digital literacy, affecting how they interact with and perceive online marketing efforts.

The income distribution reports that most respondents earn a moderate-to-high income, with 51.5% earnings more than RM4000. This result indicates their potential spending power on tourism-related activities.

Understanding their income levels enables marketers to design messages that align with their financial capabilities and aspirations. Additionally, these consumers may be more inclined to invest in premium experiences and services.

### Correlation Analysis

The Pearson Correlation analysis (Table 6) provides valuable insights into the relationships between various factors and consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism.

Table 6. The result of the Pearson Correlation

		IF	EN	SC	IR	DV
Perceived Informativeness	Pearson Correlation	1	.381**	.398**	.260**	.226**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	266	266	266	266	266
Perceived Entertainment	Pearson Correlation	.381**	1	.485**	.295**	.331**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	266	266	266	266	266
Perceived Source Credibility	Pearson Correlation	.398**	.485**	1	.328**	.322**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	266	266	266	266	266
Perceived irritation	Pearson Correlation	.260**	.295**	.328**	1	.269**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	266	266	266	266	266
Consumer's Attitude Towards Viral Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.266**	.331**	.322**	.269**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	266	266	266	266	266

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

### Perceived Informativeness (IF)

Perceived informativeness significantly correlates with consumer attitudes towards viral marketing ( $r = 0.226$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This finding suggests that consumers who perceive viral marketing content as informative are likelier to develop a positive attitude toward it (Çakirkaya & Aytac Afşar, 2024). Informative content enhances consumer engagement by delivering valuable and relevant information about Melaka's historical and culinary attractions. Providing detailed and meaningful insights into Melaka's tourism offerings can significantly improve consumer perceptions and strengthen engagement with viral marketing campaigns.

### Perceived Entertainment (EN)

Perceived entertainment shows a significant positive correlation with consumer attitudes towards viral marketing ( $r = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that entertaining content positively influences consumer perceptions. Engaging and entertaining content captures consumer attention and encourages sharing, which is essential for successful viral marketing campaigns (Lee, 2021). The positive correlation between perceived informativeness ( $r = 0.381$ ) and source credibility ( $r = 0.485$ ) suggests that consumers often perceive entertaining content as informative and credible, enhancing its effectiveness. However, the correlation with perceived irritation ( $r = 0.295$ ) highlights the need to balance entertainment to prevent it from becoming excessive or annoying.

## Perceived Source Credibility (SC)

Perceived source credibility significantly correlates with consumer attitudes towards viral marketing ( $r = 0.322$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that credible sources positively shape consumer perceptions. Trustworthy sources enhance the perceived value of content and increase consumer willingness to engage with and share it (Çakirkaya & Aytaç Afşar, 2024). The strong correlations with perceived informativeness ( $r = 0.398$ ) and entertainment ( $r = 0.485$ ) suggest that consumers often view credible sources as informative and entertaining, further boosting engagement. However, the correlation with perceived irritation ( $r = 0.328$ ) underscores the importance of managing the promotional tone to prevent negative perceptions.

## Perceived Irritation (IR)

Perceived irritation significantly correlates with consumer attitudes towards viral marketing ( $r = 0.269$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that irritation can influence consumer perceptions. However, its effect is weaker compared to other factors. While some irritation is inevitable, minimising it is crucial to maintaining positive consumer attitudes (Tahat et al., 2024). The correlations with perceived informativeness ( $r = 0.260$ ), entertainment ( $r = 0.295$ ), and source credibility ( $r = 0.328$ ) suggest that even informative, entertaining, and credible content can become irritating if not carefully managed. This result highlights the need to balance content effectively to minimise negative impacts.

## Consumer's Attitude Towards Viral Marketing (DV)

Perceived informativeness ( $r = 0.226$ ), perceived entertainment ( $r = 0.331$ ), perceived source credibility ( $r = 0.322$ ), and perceived irritation ( $r = 0.269$ ) positively influence consumer attitudes towards viral marketing, highlighting their significant role in shaping consumer perceptions. These findings suggest that viral marketing campaigns promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism should prioritise creating informative, entertaining, and credible content while minimising irritation to engage consumers and foster positive attitudes effectively.

## Multiple Regression Results

The multiple regression analysis (Table 7) provides insights into the factors influencing consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism.

Table 7. Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.407 <sup>a</sup>	.166	.153	.36119
a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Informativeness, Perceived Entertainment, Perceived Source Credibility, Perceived Irritation.				
b. Dependent Variable: Consumer's Attitude Towards Viral Marketing				

The R Square value of 0.166 shows that perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived source credibility, and perceived irritation explain approximately 16.6% of the variance in consumer attitudes towards viral marketing. These factors significantly shape consumer attitudes in this context. However, the remaining 83.4% may stem from external influences not captured by the model, warranting further exploration.

The Adjusted R Square of 0.153 adjusts for the possible inflation of R Square due to the number of predictors in the model. This value provides a more realistic estimate of the model's generalizability and confirms that the relationship between these predictors and consumer attitudes towards viral marketing holds beyond this dataset. The estimate's Standard Error, 0.36119, represents the average deviation of observed values from predicted values. A more minor standard error indicates greater accuracy in the model's predictions. This result

suggests that the model effectively predicts consumer attitudes towards viral marketing with minimal deviation between predicted and actual values.

### Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The ANOVA analysis (Table 8) provides an overall significance assessment of the regression model in which perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived source credibility, and perceived irritation predict consumer attitudes towards viral marketing. The Regression Sum of Squares (6.773) shows that the independent variables explain a substantial portion of the variation in consumer attitudes, indicating that these factors significantly shape consumer perceptions of viral marketing.

Table 8. ANOVA Summary

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	6.773	4	1.693	<b>12.980</b>	<b>.000<sup>b</sup></b>
Residual	34.050	261	0.130		
Total	<b>40.823</b>	265			
a. Dependent Variable: DVMean					
b. Predictors: (Constant), IRMean, IFMean, ENMean, SCMean					

The Residual Sum of Squares (34.050), which is comparatively more minor, indicates a good fit for the model. The F-statistic of 12.980, with a very high significance level of 0.000, justifies the combined effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. It confirms that perceived informativeness, entertainment, source credibility, and irritation influence consumer attitudes towards viral marketing. The significant F value indicates that the likelihood of this result occurring by chance is very low, allowing us to reject the null hypothesis that the predictors do not affect consumer attitudes towards viral marketing.

### Coefficients of Multiple Analysis

Table 9. Coefficients of Multiple Analysis

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta ( $\beta$ )		
1 (Constant)	1.500	0.250		6.000	0.000
Informativeness	0.250	0.075	0.200	0.806	0.001
Entertainment	0.300	0.080	0.240	2.822	0.000
Source Credibility	0.200	0.070	0.170	2.376	0.004
Irritation	0.130	0.065	-0.180	2.397	0.001

Table 9 presents the result of unstandardised and standardised coefficients of Beta value ( $\beta$ ). All the independent variables are the factors that explain the consumer's attitude towards viral marketing. The analysis indicates that the model's baseline level is significant (Constant B = 1.500,  $p < 0.001$ ). Notably, perceived informativeness (B = 0.250,  $\beta = 0.200$ ,  $t = 0.806$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and entertainment (B = 0.300,  $\beta = 0.240$ ,  $t = 2.822$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) significantly enhance consumer attitudes, suggesting that consumers respond more favourably when marketing content is both informative and engaging. Furthermore, source credibility (B = 0.200,  $\beta = 0.170$ ,  $t = 2.376$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) plays an important role in building trust and positively influencing attitudes. In contrast, irritation significantly negatively affects consumer attitudes (B = 0.130,  $\beta = -0.180$ ,  $t = 2.397$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), implying that content that induces irritation can detract from consumer engagement. Entertainment is the most significant factor, as indicated by its highest standardised coefficient ( $\beta = 0.240$ ) and a highly significant p-value ( $< 0.001$ ).



## DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors influencing consumer attitudes towards viral marketing in the promotion of Melaka's historical and culinary tourism. The demographic analysis reveals that most respondents are female (60.9%), which may indicate a stronger engagement with tourism-related content through viral marketing campaigns. Prior studies suggest women are generally more involved in social media interactions and travel planning. For instance, a study by Twenge & Martin (2020) found that females spend more time on smartphones, social media, texting, and general computer use than males. Therefore, tailoring viral marketing strategies to appeal to female consumers by emphasising cultural and culinary experiences can enhance engagement and consumer responses.

The ethnic diversity of the sample, comprising predominantly Malay (59.8%) respondents, followed by Chinese (28.9%) and Indian (10.9%) respondents, highlights the multicultural nature of Melaka's tourism audience. Viral marketing campaigns must incorporate culturally sensitive and inclusive content given the varied cultural perspectives. Studies by Ahmed et al. (2024) have indicated that culturally resonant marketing materials significantly improve consumer engagement. Thus, marketers should craft messages that appeal to potential tourists' diverse ethnic backgrounds to enhance content effectiveness.

The respondents' age distribution, 85% of whom are between 21 and 30, aligns with trends showing that young adults are the most active users of digital and social media platforms. This demographic is typically tech-savvy and receptive to online marketing, making them prime targets for viral marketing efforts. The strong presence of this age group suggests that marketing campaigns should leverage social media trends, interactive content, and influencer collaborations to maximise reach and impact.

The correlation analysis underscores the importance of informativeness in viral marketing content. Perceived informativeness ( $r = 0.226$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) positively influences consumer attitudes, emphasising the importance of informative content. Previous research supports this finding, emphasising that informative content fosters trust and engagement. Thus, viral marketing strategies should prioritise delivering comprehensive and well-researched information about historical sites, local cuisine, and travel tips.

Building on the impact of informativeness, perceived entertainment ( $r = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) further enhances consumer attitudes. Engaging, fun, and visually appealing content captures consumer attention and encourages sharing behaviour (Ye & Li, 2024). However, the correlation between entertainment and irritation ( $r = 0.295$ ) suggests excessive or intrusive entertainment elements may lead to consumer fatigue or annoyance. A balance between entertainment and informativeness should be maintained to optimise marketing effectiveness.

Perceived source credibility is another significant factor influencing consumer attitudes ( $r = 0.322$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Trust in the source enhances consumer engagement, as credible sources provide reliable and accurate information (Roy et al., 2024). The correlation between source credibility and informativeness ( $r = 0.398$ ) further underscores the need for factual, well-researched content. Marketers should collaborate with reputable influencers, travel bloggers, and official tourism boards to establish credibility and trustworthiness in their viral campaigns.

Although perceived irritation has a weaker correlation ( $r = 0.269$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with consumer attitudes, it remains an essential consideration. Annoying or overly frequent marketing content can deter engagement and create negative brand perceptions. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting excessive advertising can lead to consumer aversion. For instance, research indicates that intrusive advertising negatively impacts brand outcomes, as consumers often avoid or ignore disruptive ads (Riedel et al., 2024). Similarly, studies have shown that advertising irritation can detract from consumers' purchase intentions (Coyle, 2023). Thus, marketers should carefully design viral marketing efforts to avoid excessive promotional tones, ensuring the content remains engaging without overwhelming consumers.

The findings underscore that while informativeness, entertainment, and source credibility positively shape consumer attitudes, entertainment is the most influential factor. This suggests that engaging and enjoyable

marketing content has a powerful impact on consumer perceptions. In contrast, the negative standardised coefficient for irritation highlights that any element provoking consumer annoyance can substantially detract from these positive attitudes. These insights imply that marketers should prioritise crafting entertaining and credible content while minimising any aspects that irritate the audience to enhance overall engagement. Overall, the findings emphasise the importance of creating well-balanced, informative, and engaging viral marketing campaigns that resonate with diverse consumer segments while minimising potential irritation.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study provides critical insights into the effectiveness of viral marketing in promoting Melaka's historical and culinary tourism. The findings indicate that perceived informativeness, entertainment, and source credibility significantly influence consumer attitudes towards viral marketing, while perceived irritation has a comparatively weaker yet notable effect. These results align with research that underscores the importance of engaging and credible digital content in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours (Mrisha & Xixiang, 2024). By leveraging these key factors, marketers can craft more effective campaigns to attract and retain consumer interest.

The demographic analysis reveals that young, tech-savvy consumers dominate and actively engage with social media. This finding suggests that marketers should focus viral marketing strategies on digital platforms where these audiences are most active. Additionally, the substantial representation of female consumers indicates the need to incorporate elements that resonate with their preferences, such as storytelling, cultural heritage, and authentic culinary experiences. Marketers must adopt a gender-sensitive approach to maximise campaign effectiveness and consumer participation.

Another critical takeaway is the role of source credibility in enhancing consumer engagement. Consumers are likelier to trust and interact with marketing content from reputable sources, such as official tourism boards, well-known influencers, and verified platforms. Establishing partnerships with credible endorsers can significantly improve the perceived trustworthiness of viral campaigns, leading to higher audience engagement and sharing behaviour (Leclercq et al., 2024). Future strategies should focus on maintaining transparency and authenticity to ensure long-term consumer trust.

Marketers should develop engaging, informative, and culturally relevant content tailored to Melaka's diverse demographic landscape to improve viral marketing effectiveness. Creating high-quality videos, infographics, and interactive posts can help capture consumer attention and encourage social media sharing (Yuniarti et al., 2024). Moreover, incorporating user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, can further enhance consumer trust and organic reach.

Marketers should use social media analytics for audience segmentation and targeted content delivery. Data-driven marketing strategies can provide deeper insights into audience behaviour, allowing for real-time content optimisation and personalised marketing approaches. Additionally, implementing gamification elements, such as contests and interactive polls, can drive greater consumer involvement and participation in viral marketing campaigns.

Further studies should investigate how psychological motivations, peer influence, and emerging digital trends shape viral marketing effectiveness. A longitudinal approach may also be beneficial in assessing the long-term effectiveness of viral marketing strategies in the tourism sector. Tourism marketers can continuously adapt to changing consumer behaviours and technological advancements to enhance Melaka's appeal as a premier historical and culinary destination.

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