

Human or Artificial? A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of AI-Driven Marketing Interactions on Consumer Trust, Purchase Intention, and Brand Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine AI-driven viral marketing strategy by explaining the role of micro-influencers, short-form video, and electronic word of mouth in shaping consumer purchase intention. The study uses a qualitative literature study approach by reviewing, classifying, and synthesizing relevant scholarly works on artificial intelligence in marketing, viral marketing, influencer credibility, short-form video engagement, e-WOM, and consumer behavior. The results indicate that AI-driven viral marketing is not merely a technology-based promotional tool, but an integrated strategic system that combines algorithmic personalization, social credibility, visual engagement, and peer-to-peer communication. Artificial intelligence strengthens marketing effectiveness through personalized targeting, predictive analysis, and content optimization. Micro-influencers enhance consumer trust through perceived authenticity, expertise, and relational closeness. Short-form video increases attention, emotional response, and content shareability, while electronic word of mouth provides social validation, reduces perceived risk, and strengthens purchase intention. The main finding of this study is that consumer purchase intention is shaped by the interaction between technological relevance and social trust. Therefore, effective viral marketing requires a balance between AI-based automation and human-centered communication. This study contributes theoretically by integrating AI marketing, influencer marketing, short-form video, and e-WOM into one conceptual framework, and managerially by offering strategic insights for designing credible and engaging digital marketing campaigns.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence Marketing, AI-Driven Interaction, Consumer Trust, Purchase Intention, Brand Engagement.

I. Introduction

The rapid transformation of digital marketing has changed the way firms design, distribute, and evaluate marketing messages. In the contemporary marketplace, consumers are no longer positioned merely as passive receivers of promotional information, but as active participants who interpret, respond to, modify, and redistribute brand-related content through digital platforms. This condition has encouraged marketers to move from conventional persuasive communication toward interactive, data-driven, and socially amplified strategies. Among the most prominent developments in this transformation is viral marketing, a strategy that

relies on the spread of messages through interpersonal digital networks, social media sharing, and user participation. Viral marketing becomes particularly important because digital consumers often trust peer-generated information, influencer recommendations, and community-based discussions more than formal advertising. In this context, the integration of artificial intelligence, micro-influencers, short-form video, and electronic word of mouth has created a new strategic landscape for shaping consumer purchase intention.

Viral marketing is generally understood as a form of electronic word of mouth in which marketing messages are transmitted through digital networks in a rapid and potentially exponential manner. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) define viral marketing as a marketing phenomenon in which consumers voluntarily pass along brand-related messages through social media, allowing the message to spread beyond the firm's direct control. Earlier research has shown that the success of viral marketing is not only determined by the content itself, but also by the structure of the social network, the selection of initial message recipients, and the emotional intensity of the message. Hinz et al. (2011), for example, found that seeding strategies play a significant role in viral marketing performance, particularly when firms select well-connected individuals as initial message spreaders. Berger and Milkman (2012) further demonstrated that online content is more likely to become viral when it evokes high-arousal emotions such as awe, excitement, anger, or anxiety, rather than low-arousal emotions such as sadness. These findings indicate that viral marketing is not a random process, but a strategic communication mechanism that can be designed through psychological, social, and technological considerations.

In the current digital environment, artificial intelligence has strengthened the strategic potential of viral marketing. AI enables firms to analyze consumer behavior, identify audience segments, personalize promotional messages, predict engagement patterns, and optimize content distribution. Through algorithms, brands can determine which consumers are more likely to engage with content, which formats generate higher interaction, and which messages have greater potential to be shared. This development has shifted viral marketing from a predominantly creative and intuitive practice into a more data-driven marketing strategy. Recent research on AI-powered personalized advertising suggests that perceived personalization can influence purchase intention through perceived relevance and consumer evaluation of advertising messages. Similarly, studies on AI-enabled hyper-personalization in social media contexts suggest that algorithmic recommendation and personalized communication may strengthen engagement and purchase intent when consumers perceive the content as relevant and useful. However, AI-driven marketing also creates challenges related to authenticity, privacy, algorithmic transparency, and consumer trust. Therefore, the effectiveness of AI-driven viral marketing depends not only on technological sophistication, but also on the credibility and social meaning attached to the message.

One important phenomenon in this area is the growing role of micro-influencers in digital marketing strategy. Unlike celebrity endorsers or mega-influencers, micro-influencers usually have smaller but more focused audiences. Their influence is often built on perceived closeness, authenticity, expertise, and relational trust. In marketing practice, micro-influencers are increasingly used because their followers tend to perceive them as more relatable and less commercially distant than highly popular public figures. De Veirman et al. (2017) showed that the number of followers can influence perceptions of popularity and likeability, but popularity alone does not always produce perceived opinion leadership. This means that influence in digital marketing is not merely a function of audience size, but also of perceived credibility, relevance, and fit between the influencer, product, and target audience. Lou and Yuan (2019) also found that influencer credibility and content value are important factors in shaping consumer trust toward branded content on social media. These findings are highly relevant to AI-driven viral marketing because micro-influencers can function as human connectors between algorithmically distributed content and consumer trust.

The phenomenon of short-form video has also become central to viral marketing strategy. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have changed consumer attention patterns and created new opportunities for brands to communicate messages quickly, visually, and emotionally. Short-form video content is particularly powerful because it combines brevity, entertainment, music, storytelling, visual appeal, and platform-based recommendation algorithms. In many cases, a short video can reach a large audience not

because the brand has a large follower base, but because the platform algorithm identifies the content as engaging and distributes it to relevant users. Research on TikTok and short-format video engagement indicates that user interaction with short videos is strongly influenced by recommendation systems and continuous exposure to personalized content streams. Zannettou et al. (2023) found that short-format video platforms generate extensive user engagement, while Rajendran et al. (2024) showed that the rise of short-form content has affected the engagement dynamics of long-form video content. These studies suggest that short-form video is not merely a new content format, but a strategic medium that reorganizes how attention, engagement, and brand exposure are produced.

Electronic word of mouth also plays a crucial role in explaining how viral marketing affects consumer purchase intention. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) define electronic word of mouth as positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product, service, or company, which are made available to many people through the internet. This concept is central to digital marketing because consumers frequently consult reviews, comments, recommendations, ratings, testimonials, and social media discussions before making purchase decisions. Cheung and Thadani (2012) emphasized that e-WOM communication influences consumer behavior through factors such as source credibility, information usefulness, argument quality, and message adoption. In viral marketing, e-WOM functions as both an outcome and a mechanism. It is an outcome because successful viral content encourages consumers to comment, share, recommend, and discuss the brand. At the same time, it is a mechanism because these consumer-generated responses can influence the attitudes and purchase intentions of other potential buyers.

Consumer purchase intention is an important construct in marketing research because it reflects the likelihood that consumers will consider, prefer, or plan to buy a product in the future. Although purchase intention does not always lead directly to actual purchase behavior, it remains a meaningful indicator of consumer response to marketing stimuli. In the context of AI-driven viral marketing, purchase intention may be shaped by several interrelated factors. AI can improve message relevance, micro-influencers can enhance credibility and trust, short-form videos can increase attention and emotional engagement, while e-WOM can strengthen social validation and reduce perceived risk. These elements work together in a digital environment where consumers are exposed to multiple sources of influence before making purchase decisions. Therefore, understanding purchase intention requires a multidimensional perspective that connects technology, content format, social influence, and consumer-to-consumer communication.

The phenomenon is increasingly visible in markets with high social media penetration. DataReportal reported that Indonesia had around 180 million active social media user identities in October 2025, equivalent to 62.9 percent of the country's total population at the end of 2025. Globally, DataReportal's 2026 overview also indicates continuing growth in social media adoption, with social media user identities increasing substantially over the past decade. This indicates that digital platforms have become a major environment for consumer interaction, brand discovery, product evaluation, and purchase consideration. For marketers, this condition creates a strategic opportunity to use viral marketing not only to increase awareness, but also to stimulate consumer engagement and purchase intention. However, the same condition also creates intense competition for attention, because consumers are exposed to abundant content, paid promotions, influencer endorsements, and peer recommendations every day.

Previous studies have provided strong foundations for understanding the separate effects of viral marketing, influencer credibility, short-form video, and e-WOM on consumer behavior. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) explained the conceptual foundation of viral marketing in social media environments. Hinz et al. (2011) demonstrated the importance of seeding strategies in determining the success of viral campaigns. Berger and Milkman (2012) explained why certain online content is more likely to be shared, especially when it evokes high-arousal emotions. De Veirman et al. (2017) examined the role of influencer characteristics in shaping consumer perceptions, while Lou and Yuan (2019) highlighted the importance of influencer credibility and content value in generating trust and purchase intention. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and Cheung and Thadani (2012) contributed to the theoretical understanding of e-WOM as a digital communication process that affects consumer attitudes and decisions. More recent studies on AI-powered personalization and short-

form video engagement have further shown that algorithmic relevance and platform-based recommendation systems are increasingly important in shaping digital consumer responses.

Although these studies are valuable, several research gaps remain. First, many previous studies examine influencer marketing, viral marketing, e-WOM, AI personalization, and short-form video as separate topics, while contemporary digital marketing practice increasingly combines these elements in one integrated strategy. Second, earlier viral marketing studies often focused on message diffusion, emotional content, or seeding strategy, but paid less attention to how AI-driven distribution and micro-influencer credibility jointly contribute to consumer purchase intention. Third, short-form video research has grown rapidly, but there is still a need to examine how this format works together with influencer-based communication and e-WOM in shaping consumer intention. Fourth, in emerging digital markets, especially countries with high social media usage, descriptive quantitative studies are needed to map how consumers perceive AI-driven viral marketing strategies and how these perceptions relate to purchase intention. Therefore, a descriptive quantitative approach is appropriate because it allows researchers to measure consumer perceptions, describe the empirical pattern of each variable, and identify the degree to which AI-driven viral marketing, micro-influencers, short-form video, and e-WOM are associated with consumer purchase intention.

Based on this background, the present study entitled "AI-Driven Viral Marketing Strategy: The Role of Micro-Influencers, Short-Form Video, and Electronic Word of Mouth in Shaping Consumer Purchase Intention" aims to describe and analyze the role of AI-driven viral marketing strategy in influencing consumer purchase intention. Specifically, this study seeks to examine how micro-influencer credibility, short-form video content, and electronic word of mouth contribute to consumer purchase intention in the digital marketing environment. The study is expected to provide academic contribution by integrating viral marketing theory, influencer marketing, short-form video engagement, AI-driven personalization, and e-WOM into a single descriptive quantitative framework. Practically, this research may help marketers design more effective digital campaigns by emphasizing not only algorithmic reach, but also authenticity, content relevance, emotional appeal, and consumer-generated communication. Thus, the study responds to the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how contemporary viral marketing strategies operate in an AI-supported, socially connected, and content-saturated marketplace.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. AI-Driven Viral Marketing Strategy

AI-driven viral marketing refers to the strategic use of artificial intelligence to design, personalize, distribute, and optimize marketing messages that are intended to spread rapidly through digital networks. Viral marketing itself is commonly defined as electronic word of mouth in which brand-related messages are transmitted among consumers through social media and online platforms in an expanding communication pattern (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Unlike traditional advertising, viral marketing depends on consumer participation, message shareability, and network diffusion. Earlier studies show that viral diffusion is influenced by seeding strategy, message characteristics, and audience structure (Hinz et al., 2011; Van der Lans et al., 2010). The integration of artificial intelligence has shifted viral marketing from an intuitive communication practice into a data-driven strategy. AI can support segmentation, targeting, personalization, recommendation, predictive analytics, and real-time campaign optimization (Davenport et al., 2020; Huang & Rust, 2021). In marketing strategy, AI is not only a technological tool, but also a decision-support system that enables firms to understand consumer behavior more precisely. Kumar et al. (2019) explain that AI strengthens personalized engagement marketing because it helps firms create, communicate, and deliver individualized value. Thus, AI-driven viral marketing may increase the relevance of content and improve the probability that consumers will engage with and share brand messages.

Recent empirical studies support this argument. An and Ngo (2025) found that AI-powered personalized advertising influences purchase intention through perceived relevance, perceived usefulness,

and trust. Turki (2025) also shows that AI-powered personalization in e-commerce is associated with consumer spending behavior and requires ethical governance, transparency, and responsible algorithmic design. These findings suggest that AI-driven viral marketing should not be understood merely as automation, but as a strategic process that connects technological relevance with consumer perception. When consumers perceive AI-driven content as useful and personally relevant, they are more likely to respond positively to the marketing message. However, AI-driven also raises issues related to authenticity, privacy, and trust. Puntoni et al. (2021) emphasize that consumer experience with AI involves data capture, classification, delegation, and social interaction, all of which may produce both value and discomfort. In viral marketing, this concern is important because excessive personalization may be perceived as intrusive or manipulative. Therefore, the effectiveness of AI-driven viral marketing depends on the balance between algorithmic precision and humanized communication. This is where micro-influencers, short-form video, and e-WOM become important mechanisms that transform AI-supported content into socially credible marketing communication.

2.2. Micro-Influencers and Short-Form Video as Viral Marketing Amplifiers

Micro-influencers are social media personalities who usually have smaller but more focused audiences than celebrities or mega-influencers. Their influence is often built through perceived authenticity, expertise, similarity, trustworthiness, and continuous interaction with followers. De Veirman et al. (2017) show that follower count influences perceived popularity and likeability, but high popularity does not automatically create strong opinion leadership. This finding is important because micro-influencers may generate stronger relational influence through closeness and credibility rather than mass exposure. Lou and Yuan (2019) also found that influencer credibility and content value affect consumer trust toward branded content. In influencer marketing literature, credibility is usually explained through trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intention in influencer communication. Ki and Kim (2019) further explain that consumers may be persuaded by influencers because they desire to imitate them or identify with their lifestyle. Hudders et al. (2021) argue that influencer marketing has become a strategic form of social media commercialization because influencers act as content creators, opinion leaders, and brand intermediaries. In the context of AI-driven viral marketing, micro-influencers can humanize algorithmically distributed messages and strengthen consumers' perception of authenticity.

Short-form video has become another important amplifier of viral marketing. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts encourage brief, visual, entertaining, and emotionally engaging content. Rizomyliotis et al. (2024) found that TikTok short-video marketing affects Gen Z purchase intention in the cosmetics industry, especially through influencer trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and entertainment value. Zannettou et al. (2024) also show that TikTok's recommendation system plays a major role in shaping user engagement with short-format videos. These studies indicate that short-form video is not only a media format, but also an algorithmic environment where content visibility depends on interaction, retention, and shareability. The strategic relevance of short-form video lies in its ability to compress product information, emotional appeal, demonstration, and social proof into a short digital experience. Rajendran et al. (2024) found that the rise of short-form video affects engagement patterns in long-form video ecosystems, suggesting that audience attention is increasingly shaped by short and fast-moving content. In marketing, this means that brands must design content that is concise, authentic, visually attractive, and easy to share. When short-form video is delivered by credible micro-influencers, its persuasive power may increase because consumers receive the message through a trusted social source rather than through a direct brand advertisement.

2.3. Electronic Word of Mouth and Consumer Purchase Intention

Electronic word of mouth refers to positive or negative statements about products, services, brands, or companies that are shared by consumers through digital platforms and made accessible to other users (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In digital marketing, e-WOM includes reviews, comments, ratings, testimonials, recommendations, reposts, and user-generated discussions. Cheung and Thadani (2012) explain that e-WOM influences consumer behavior through source credibility, message quality, argument strength, and information adoption. Therefore, e-WOM is central to viral marketing because it transforms marketing messages into consumer-to-consumer communication. Several studies show that e-WOM has a strong relationship with purchase intention. Erkan and Evans (2016) developed the Information Acceptance Model and found that e-WOM quality, credibility, usefulness, and adoption influence consumers' purchase intention in social media contexts. Ismagilova et al. (2020), through a meta-analysis, found that e-WOM communications help consumers reduce uncertainty, increase confidence, and support purchase decisions. Qiu and Zhang (2024) also demonstrated through meta-analysis that online reviews significantly affect purchase intention, with review valence being one of the strongest antecedents. These findings confirm that e-WOM functions as a persuasive informational and social mechanism.

More recent studies provide additional insight into the e-WOM mechanism. Ngo et al. (2024) found that e-WOM information characteristics such as quality, credibility, and quantity influence consumer attitudes and purchase intention. Anastasiei et al. (2024) found that e-WOM propensity is influenced by social media usage behavior, marketing mavenism, need to evaluate, and brand trust, while positive and negative e-WOM are associated with repurchase intention. Anastasiei et al. (2025) further show that the relationship between e-WOM credibility and purchase intention may be mediated by perceived product quality, emotional response, and perceived buying risk. These studies indicate that e-WOM affects purchase intention not only through information, but also through emotion and risk reduction. Consumer purchase intention refers to the likelihood that consumers will consider, plan, or be willing to buy a product in the future. In this study, purchase intention is positioned as the outcome of AI-driven viral marketing, micro-influencer communication, short-form video exposure, and e-WOM interaction. Based on previous research, AI personalization may increase message relevance, micro-influencers may enhance credibility, short-form videos may strengthen attention and engagement, and e-WOM may provide social validation (An & Ngo, 2025; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Rizomyliotis et al., 2024; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). Therefore, consumer purchase intention in the digital environment should be understood as the result of integrated technological, social, content-based, and communicative influences.

2.4. Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature, AI-driven viral marketing is expected to have a positive relationship with consumer purchase intention because personalized and algorithmically optimized content can increase relevance, usefulness, and engagement. When consumers perceive viral content as relevant to their needs, they are more likely to develop favorable attitudes and purchase intention. Therefore, H1 states that AI-driven viral marketing strategy has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention. Micro-influencers are also expected to influence purchase intention because they provide credibility, authenticity, and relational closeness. Consumers may trust product information more when it is delivered by influencers who are perceived as honest, knowledgeable, and similar to their audience. Therefore, H2 states that micro-influencer credibility has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention. Because micro-influencers also stimulate discussion and sharing, H3 states that micro-influencer credibility has a positive effect on electronic word of mouth.

Short-form video content is expected to affect purchase intention because it provides entertaining, visual, and concise product information. Content that is attractive, easy to understand, and emotionally engaging may increase consumer attention and willingness to buy. Therefore, H4 states that short-form video

content has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention. Since engaging short-form videos are also likely to be commented on, shared, and recommended, H5 states that short-form video content has a positive effect on electronic word of mouth. Electronic word of mouth is expected to influence purchase intention because consumers often rely on reviews, recommendations, and peer opinions before making purchasing decisions. Positive e-WOM may reduce perceived risk and increase confidence in the product. Therefore, H6 states that electronic word of mouth has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention. Finally, because e-WOM can transmit the effects of influencer credibility and short-form video engagement into stronger buying intention, H7 states that electronic word of mouth mediates the effect of micro-influencer credibility on consumer purchase intention, while H8 states that electronic word of mouth mediates the effect of short-form video content on consumer purchase intention.

III. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a literature study design to explore AI-driven viral marketing strategy and its relationship with micro-influencers, short-form video, electronic word of mouth, and consumer purchase intention. A qualitative literature study was considered appropriate because the purpose of this research was not to test statistical relationships through field data, but to understand, interpret, and synthesize existing academic findings related to the development of digital marketing strategies in the contemporary consumer environment. Through this approach, the study sought to construct a conceptual understanding of how artificial intelligence, influencer credibility, video-based content, and consumer-generated communication contribute to the formation of purchase intention. The data used in this study were secondary data obtained from relevant academic sources, including journal articles, conference proceedings, books, and scholarly publications related to marketing strategy, viral marketing, artificial intelligence in marketing, social media influencers, short-form video marketing, electronic word of mouth, and consumer behavior. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research topic, conceptual contribution, methodological quality, and publication credibility. Priority was given to peer-reviewed articles published in reputable journals, especially studies published within the last ten years, while several foundational works were also included because they provide important theoretical bases for understanding viral marketing, e-WOM, and consumer purchase intention.

The process of data collection was conducted through systematic identification, selection, and review of literature from academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Google Scholar, and other credible scholarly platforms. Keywords used in the search process included "AI-driven marketing," "viral marketing strategy," "micro-influencer marketing," "short-form video marketing," "TikTok marketing," "electronic word of mouth," "consumer engagement," and "purchase intention." The inclusion criteria consisted of studies that directly discussed one or more of the main constructs in this research and contributed to the explanation of digital consumer behavior. Meanwhile, studies that were not relevant to marketing, lacked theoretical clarity, or did not provide sufficient academic contribution were excluded. The data analysis technique used in this study was qualitative content analysis. The selected literature was read carefully, classified according to major themes, and interpreted to identify conceptual patterns, theoretical relationships, research trends, and gaps in previous studies. The analysis focused on four main areas: the role of artificial intelligence in viral marketing strategy, the credibility and influence of micro-influencers, the persuasive function of short-form video content, and the role of electronic word of mouth in shaping consumer purchase intention. Each theme was examined by comparing arguments, findings, and theoretical explanations from previous studies to develop a coherent conceptual framework.

To ensure the credibility of the study, the researcher applied source triangulation by comparing findings from various scholarly sources and avoiding dependence on a single author or perspective. The validity of the analysis was strengthened by selecting literature from reputable publications, using clear inclusion criteria, and maintaining consistency between the research problem, literature review, and

conceptual interpretation. The result of this method is expected to provide a comprehensive academic explanation of AI-driven viral marketing strategy and offer a theoretical foundation for future empirical research. Therefore, this qualitative literature study serves as an analytical basis for understanding how technological, social, and communicative factors interact in shaping consumer purchase intention in the digital marketing landscape.

IV. Result and Discussion

The results of this literature-based study indicate that AI-driven viral marketing strategy is not a single promotional technique, but an integrated strategic system that combines algorithmic personalization, social credibility, content virality, and consumer-to-consumer communication. The reviewed literature shows that consumer purchase intention in the digital marketplace is shaped by the interaction between technological relevance and social validation. Artificial intelligence enables marketers to personalize messages, predict consumer interests, optimize content distribution, and measure engagement in real time. However, technology alone does not automatically generate purchase intention. Consumers still require trust, authenticity, emotional connection, and social proof before responding positively to marketing messages. Therefore, micro-influencers, short-form video, and electronic word of mouth become essential mechanisms that translate AI-driven marketing exposure into consumer persuasion. This discussion is organized into four main themes: AI-driven personalization as the strategic foundation of viral marketing, micro-influencers as credibility builders, short-form video as an engagement amplifier, and electronic word of mouth as a social validation mechanism that strengthens consumer purchase intention.

2.1. AI-Driven Viral Marketing as a Strategic Foundation for Consumer Purchase Intention

The first major finding from the literature is that AI-driven viral marketing changes the logic of digital marketing from broad message distribution to intelligent message circulation. Traditional viral marketing depends heavily on the attractiveness of the message and the willingness of consumers to share it voluntarily. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) argued that viral marketing works through social media diffusion, where messages are passed from one user to another and gain visibility through network effects. Hinz et al. (2011) further showed that the success of viral campaigns depends on seeding strategies, because the selection of initial recipients can influence the speed and reach of message diffusion. In the current digital environment, artificial intelligence strengthens this process by identifying the right audience, predicting content preferences, and placing marketing messages in front of users who are more likely to engage with them. AI-driven marketing therefore functions as a strategic infrastructure for viral marketing. Davenport et al. (2020) explained that artificial intelligence can transform marketing activities by improving customer insight, segmentation, targeting, and service personalization. Huang and Rust (2021) also emphasized that AI contributes to mechanical, thinking, and feeling intelligence in marketing, ranging from automation to decision-making and customer interaction. This means that AI does not only support operational efficiency, but also influences how brands understand consumer needs and design persuasive communication. In viral marketing, AI helps brands recognize which messages are likely to produce attention, engagement, and sharing. This makes viral marketing more systematic because content distribution is no longer dependent solely on chance, but on data-driven prediction.

Recent studies reinforce this interpretation. An and Ngo (2025) found that AI-powered personalized advertising influences purchase intention through perceived relevance, perceived usefulness, and perceived trust. Their findings suggest that consumers are more likely to respond positively to AI-based marketing when the message feels meaningful and useful to their needs. Similarly, Grewal et al. (2025) argued that generative AI will shape the future of marketing by supporting content creation, customer communication, and new forms of market interaction. Hermann (2024) also noted that AI has become increasingly influential in consumer behavior because generative AI and algorithmic systems can affect how consumers search,

evaluate, and respond to products. These findings indicate that AI-driven viral marketing is effective when it creates a perception of relevance, not merely when it increases exposure. However, the literature also shows that AI-driven marketing carries important risks. Puntoni et al. (2021) argued that consumer experience with AI includes data capture, classification, delegation, and social interaction, all of which can produce both positive and negative responses. Consumers may appreciate personalization, but they may also feel uncomfortable when marketing messages appear overly intrusive or manipulative. This is especially relevant in viral marketing because highly personalized messages may encourage engagement, but excessive algorithmic targeting may reduce perceived authenticity. Kumar et al. (2019) emphasized that personalized engagement marketing requires a careful balance between data use and relationship building. Therefore, AI-driven viral marketing should not be evaluated only through reach, clicks, or impressions, but also through consumer trust, perceived fairness, and transparency.

From a strategic marketing perspective, the main implication is that AI should be positioned as an enabler of human-centered communication rather than as a replacement for social influence. AI can identify what content is relevant, when it should be distributed, and which audience is most likely to respond, but the persuasive meaning of the message still depends on credibility and social context. This explains why micro-influencers, short-form video, and e-WOM remain important in AI-driven viral marketing. AI can amplify the message, but micro-influencers can humanize it, short-form video can dramatize it, and e-WOM can validate it. Thus, the first result of this study confirms that AI-driven viral marketing contributes to purchase intention most effectively when it integrates algorithmic intelligence with credible, engaging, and socially meaningful communication.

2.2. Micro-Influencers as Credibility Builders in AI-Driven Viral Marketing

The second major finding is that micro-influencers play a crucial role in transforming AI-driven marketing content into credible and relatable communication. In the digital marketplace, consumers are frequently exposed to sponsored content, algorithmic recommendations, and paid advertisements. This condition creates advertising fatigue and skepticism toward brand-controlled messages. Micro-influencers help reduce this skepticism because they are often perceived as more authentic, accessible, and socially close to their followers. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) showed that influencer popularity can affect perceived likeability, but follower count alone does not guarantee opinion leadership. This finding is important because it suggests that the persuasive value of influencers is not determined only by audience size, but also by credibility, expertise, and audience fit. Micro-influencers are especially relevant to AI-driven viral marketing because they occupy the middle ground between algorithmic distribution and interpersonal trust. AI may deliver a message efficiently, but consumers may still question whether the message is credible. When the same message is communicated by a micro-influencer who is perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and similar to the audience, the message becomes more persuasive. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that influencer credibility and content value significantly affect consumer trust in branded content. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) also demonstrated that influencer credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intention. These studies indicate that micro-influencer marketing works because followers do not only process the message cognitively, but also evaluate the relational quality of the source.

The credibility of micro-influencers can be explained through trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity, and authenticity. Ki and Kim (2019) argued that social media influencers persuade consumers partly through consumers' desire to mimic them. This means that influencer impact is not limited to product information, but includes lifestyle aspiration, identity formation, and symbolic consumption. Hudders, De Jans, and De Veirman (2021) further explained that influencer marketing has become a strategic form of social media commercialization because influencers act as content creators, brand intermediaries, and opinion leaders. In AI-driven viral marketing, this role becomes increasingly important because influencers can make algorithmically optimized content appear more natural and socially embedded. Recent developments also show that the influencer economy is shifting from celebrity-based visibility toward niche

credibility and community engagement. Chen et al. (2024) found that influencer marketing can shape consumer purchase intention in social media contexts through consumer attitudes. Mohammad et al. (2025) showed that influencer characteristics significantly influence purchase intention and that brand credibility can mediate this relationship. Bertaglia et al. (2024) also emphasized the importance of sponsorship disclosure and transparency in influencer communication. These findings suggest that the future of influencer-based viral marketing depends not only on reach, but also on ethical disclosure, authenticity, and long-term audience trust.

This discussion also reveals an important tension. Micro-influencers are valuable because they appear authentic, but their commercialization may weaken that authenticity if followers perceive their content as overly sponsored or inconsistent with their identity. Campbell and Farrell (2020) argued that influencer marketing includes different influencer types and functional roles, and brands must understand the match between influencer category, campaign objective, and consumer expectation. If AI is used only to select influencers based on engagement metrics, brands may overlook deeper issues such as value congruence, audience culture, and perceived sincerity. Therefore, AI-assisted influencer selection should combine quantitative analytics with qualitative evaluation of influencer identity, communication style, and audience relationship. The result of this synthesis indicates that micro-influencers strengthen purchase intention by increasing the credibility of viral marketing messages. They also support e-WOM because followers are more likely to comment, share, and recommend content when they trust the source. In this sense, micro-influencers do not merely serve as promotional channels. They function as credibility builders and social translators of AI-driven marketing strategy. For sustainable future studies, researchers should examine how AI-based influencer selection affects consumer trust, how disclosure practices influence purchase intention, and how micro-influencer authenticity can be preserved in increasingly commercialized digital environments. This direction is important because viral marketing will become less effective if consumers begin to perceive influencer communication as algorithmically engineered rather than socially authentic.

2.3. Short-Form Video as an Engagement Amplifier and Viral Content Format

The third major finding is that short-form video has become one of the most powerful formats for AI-driven viral marketing because it combines speed, emotion, entertainment, visual demonstration, and algorithmic discoverability. Short-form video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have transformed how consumers encounter brands and products. Unlike traditional advertisements, short-form videos are embedded within entertainment-oriented feeds, which makes marketing content appear as part of everyday digital consumption. Meng et al. (2024) found that short-form video ads are increasingly popular and that content characteristics such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and brand heritage influence consumer purchase behavior. This finding confirms that short-form video is not only a technical format, but also a persuasive communication environment. Short-form video supports viral marketing because it is designed for rapid consumption and easy sharing. Berger and Milkman (2012) showed that online content is more likely to become viral when it evokes high-arousal emotions. This principle is highly relevant to short-form video because the format allows marketers to deliver humor, surprise, urgency, beauty, aspiration, or curiosity within a few seconds. In addition, short-form video can demonstrate product use in a concrete and visual way. Consumers can see how a product looks, works, feels, or solves a problem before they form purchase intention. This reduces cognitive effort and increases perceived usefulness. Rizomyliotis et al. (2024) found that TikTok short video marketing influences Gen Z purchase intention, particularly through influencer characteristics and entertainment value. This indicates that short-form video works best when it combines product information with enjoyable and credible content delivery.

AI strengthens the role of short-form video by shaping visibility through recommendation algorithms. Zannettou et al. (2024) showed that TikTok's short-format video recommendations play a major role in user engagement. This means that the virality of short-form video is not only determined by consumers' decision to share content, but also by algorithmic evaluation of viewing time, interaction, completion rate,

and engagement signals. Rajendran, Creusy, and Garnes (2024) also found that the rise of short-form video affects engagement dynamics in long-form video ecosystems. These studies suggest that consumer attention is increasingly reorganized around short, fast, and algorithmically circulated content. In marketing, this condition requires brands to design messages that can capture attention immediately while still communicating meaningful value. However, short-form video also creates strategic challenges. The same characteristics that make it viral also make it easy to forget. Consumers may watch many videos in a short period, but only a few will produce lasting brand memory or purchase intention. This is why content quality is essential. Meng et al. (2024) showed that trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness are positively related to consumer purchase behavior, while authenticity and brand heritage may have more complex effects. This suggests that brands cannot rely solely on trend imitation, sound effects, or visual stimulation. Effective short-form video must connect attention with trust, entertainment with information, and creativity with brand relevance. If the content is viral but disconnected from brand meaning, it may produce engagement without conversion.

Short-form video also contributes to e-WOM because it invites comments, shares, duets, stitches, reviews, and user-generated responses. When consumers interact with a video, they do not merely consume the message but also participate in its circulation. This participation is important because viral marketing becomes stronger when audiences become co-distributors of content. Erkan and Evans (2016) explained that e-WOM in social media affects purchase intention through information quality, credibility, usefulness, and adoption. Short-form video can strengthen these mechanisms because it provides visible evidence and social interaction at the same time. A product review in video form may be more persuasive than a written description because it shows the product in action and allows consumers to evaluate authenticity. The result of this synthesis shows that short-form video functions as an engagement amplifier in AI-driven viral marketing. It captures attention, creates emotional response, demonstrates product value, and stimulates e-WOM. However, its effectiveness depends on content credibility, influencer fit, and algorithmic visibility. For sustainable future studies, scholars should examine how short-form video quality affects different stages of the consumer journey, from awareness to purchase intention and repurchase behavior. Future research should also investigate the ethical implications of algorithmically amplified video content, especially when consumers cannot clearly distinguish between organic recommendation, sponsored content, and AI-generated promotional material. This is increasingly relevant as generative AI makes it easier for brands to create large volumes of video content at scale.

2.4. Electronic Word of Mouth as Social Validation and Future Direction for Sustainable Digital Marketing Studies

The fourth major finding is that electronic word of mouth acts as the social validation mechanism that connects AI-driven viral marketing, micro-influencer credibility, short-form video engagement, and consumer purchase intention. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defined e-WOM as positive or negative statements made by consumers about products, services, or companies and made available to many people through the internet. In the current digital environment, e-WOM includes online reviews, comments, testimonials, ratings, reposts, reaction videos, product discussions, and user-generated recommendations. Cheung and Thadani (2012) emphasized that e-WOM influences consumer behavior through information quality, source credibility, message usefulness, and information adoption. Therefore, e-WOM becomes central to viral marketing because it converts brand communication into consumer-to-consumer influence. The literature consistently shows that e-WOM has a strong effect on purchase intention. Erkan and Evans (2016) found that e-WOM quality, credibility, usefulness, and adoption affect purchase intention in social media contexts. Ismagilova, Slade, Rana, and Dwivedi (2020) demonstrated through meta-analysis that e-WOM communication influences consumers' intention to buy by reducing uncertainty and strengthening confidence. Qiu and Zhang (2024) also found that online reviews significantly affect purchase intention, with review valence showing a particularly strong effect. These findings suggest that consumers rely on peer-generated information because

it helps them evaluate product quality, reduce perceived risk, and confirm whether the product is worth purchasing.

In AI-driven viral marketing, e-WOM performs three important functions. First, it provides informational validation. Consumers may encounter a product through AI-personalized advertising or short-form video, but they often look for comments, reviews, and user experiences before forming purchase intention. Second, e-WOM provides social validation. When many consumers discuss, recommend, or positively evaluate a product, potential buyers may interpret this as evidence of popularity and reliability. Third, e-WOM provides emotional validation. Positive comments, relatable testimonials, and enthusiastic reviews can create confidence and excitement around a product. Anastasiei, Dospinescu, and Dospinescu (2024) found that positive and negative e-WOM intentions are associated with repurchase intention, while brand trust influences consumers' propensity to provide e-WOM. Ngo, Nguyen, and Tran (2024) also showed that e-WOM information characteristics can influence attitude and purchase intention. The interaction between e-WOM and micro-influencer marketing is particularly important. Micro-influencers may initiate product discussion, but e-WOM expands and legitimizes that discussion through audience participation. When followers comment positively, share their own experiences, or recommend the product to others, the influencer's message becomes a collective conversation rather than a one-way endorsement. This strengthens the viral effect because the message is no longer attached only to the influencer, but distributed across many consumer voices. Lou and Yuan (2019) showed that influencer credibility affects trust, while Sokolova and Kefi (2020) showed that influencer credibility influences purchase intention. These effects may become stronger when consumers observe supportive e-WOM from other users.

The relationship between short-form video and e-WOM is also highly significant. Short-form videos are designed for interaction, and their comment sections often function as informal review spaces. Consumers may ask questions, compare products, express satisfaction, complain, or give usage tips. This interaction creates a dynamic e-WOM environment in which purchase intention is shaped not only by the original video but also by the collective interpretation of the audience. Meng et al. (2024) demonstrated that short-form video characteristics influence consumer purchase behavior, while Qiu and Zhang (2024) confirmed that online review characteristics affect purchase intention. Taken together, these studies suggest that short-form video and e-WOM should not be studied separately because many purchase decisions emerge from the interaction between video exposure and peer discussion. The sustainable direction of future research should therefore move beyond isolated variable testing and examine AI-driven viral marketing as an ecosystem. Future studies need to investigate how AI personalization, influencer credibility, video content quality, and e-WOM interact across different industries, platforms, and cultural contexts. Cross-cultural research is important because Kusawat and Teerakapibal (2023) showed that e-WOM behavior varies across cultural backgrounds. Future studies should also examine the ethical and sustainability dimensions of AI-driven viral marketing. As Grewal et al. (2025) argued, generative AI will increasingly shape marketing content creation and customer communication. This development creates opportunities for efficiency and personalization, but it also raises concerns about transparency, authenticity, privacy, and consumer autonomy.

Overall, the discussion confirms that consumer purchase intention in AI-driven viral marketing is formed through a layered process. AI creates relevance and reach, micro-influencers create credibility and relational trust, short-form video creates attention and engagement, and e-WOM creates validation and risk reduction. These four components should be viewed as mutually reinforcing elements of contemporary marketing strategy. The practical implication is that firms should not design viral campaigns solely to maximize views or shares. They should build campaigns that are relevant, credible, emotionally engaging, and socially trustworthy. The academic implication is that future studies should develop integrative models that test direct, mediating, and moderating relationships among AI personalization, influencer credibility, short-form video engagement, e-WOM, trust, perceived value, and purchase intention. Such studies will contribute to a more sustainable understanding of digital marketing, where viral growth is not only measured by speed of diffusion, but also by ethical communication, consumer trust, long-term brand value, and responsible use of artificial intelligence.

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that AI-driven viral marketing strategy is an integrative digital marketing approach that combines technological intelligence, social credibility, content engagement, and consumer-generated communication in shaping consumer purchase intention. The literature synthesis indicates that artificial intelligence strengthens viral marketing by enabling personalization, predictive targeting, content optimization, and algorithmic distribution. However, AI alone is insufficient to create persuasive impact if the message lacks authenticity, trust, and social relevance. Micro-influencers contribute to this process by humanizing AI-supported marketing messages and building credibility through perceived closeness, expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity. Short-form video further amplifies the effect of viral marketing by providing concise, emotional, visual, and easily shareable content that matches contemporary consumer attention patterns. Electronic word of mouth then functions as a social validation mechanism through which consumers confirm product value, reduce perceived risk, and strengthen their willingness to purchase. Therefore, purchase intention in the current digital marketplace is not shaped by a single promotional element, but by the interaction between AI-based relevance, influencer credibility, video-based engagement, and peer-to-peer communication.

The theoretical implication of this study lies in its contribution to the development of an integrated conceptual understanding of viral marketing in the era of artificial intelligence. Previous studies often examined AI marketing, influencer marketing, short-form video, e-WOM, and purchase intention as separate constructs. This study positions these constructs as interconnected elements within one strategic framework. Theoretically, AI-driven viral marketing can be understood as a multidimensional process in which algorithmic personalization creates relevance, micro-influencer credibility creates trust, short-form video creates attention and emotional engagement, and e-WOM creates social confirmation. This framework enriches viral marketing theory by showing that virality is no longer only determined by message diffusion or emotional appeal, but also by algorithmic systems, platform logic, and consumer participation. It also extends influencer marketing and e-WOM literature by emphasizing that credibility and peer communication become more powerful when supported by AI-enabled targeting and short-form content ecosystems. Future studies may empirically test this conceptual relationship using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method designs across industries, platforms, and consumer segments.

The managerial implication of this study is that marketers should design viral marketing campaigns as integrated strategic ecosystems rather than isolated promotional activities. Firms should use AI not only to increase reach, but also to understand consumer needs, personalize content ethically, and identify the most relevant audience segments. At the same time, brands must carefully select micro-influencers whose values, communication style, and audience characteristics fit the product and target market. Short-form video should be developed with clear attention to authenticity, entertainment value, product relevance, and visual storytelling, rather than merely following trends. Managers also need to encourage positive e-WOM by creating content that stimulates discussion, reviews, sharing, and user-generated responses. In practice, successful AI-driven viral marketing requires balance between automation and human trust, speed and substance, visibility and credibility, as well as engagement and conversion. Therefore, brands that wish to shape consumer purchase intention must not only pursue viral exposure, but also build meaningful, transparent, and socially trusted digital communication.

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