

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

The ongoing era of digital transformation has led to major changes in various industries, including the film industry, which has experienced shifts in marketing practices, distribution, and media consumption (Wardhani, 2023). Digital marketing has become the backbone of contemporary film success, as it effectively adapts to consumer behavior and audience preferences (Nurhafiah, 2024). According to (Adilla et al., 2023), technological advancements have transformed both the marketing and film industries, gradually replacing conventional strategies with more dynamic and modern digital approaches (Ardani, 2022; Harahap et al., 2021). Following global trends, the Indonesian film industry has quickly embraced digital technology, changing not only how films are marketed but also how audiences consume and interact with film-related content through social media (Djamaly et al., 2023).

In recent years, social media usage has increased massively worldwide. In Indonesia, companies actively utilize social media as a platform for marketing communication activities (Afifah et al., 2022). Social media has evolved from merely a communication tool into a strategic marketing instrument, including within the film industry (Adilla et al., 2023). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X, and YouTube not only serve as promotional channels but also as interactive spaces where audiences engage with film content through creative formats (V. C. Santoso et al., 2024). According to (We Are Social, 2025),

Indonesia's active social media users reached 143 million in early 2025, representing more than half of the total population, 50.2%. With this number, Indonesia ranks fourth in the world for the population with the largest number of social media users. Data from (We Are Social, 2025), also showed that the average social media user in Indonesia spends 3 hours and 8 minutes playing every day, making social media a powerful platform for film marketing strategies.

Social media has revolutionized consumer behavior, transforming it into a critical factor in purchasing decisions, including decisions to watch films. This phenomenon affects how consumers search for information, evaluate options, and validate choices through social proof, reviews, viral trends, and digital community recommendations (B. Santoso et al., 2025). According to (Djamaly et al., 2023), the advantage of social media in film marketing lies in its ability to create organic buzz, facilitate user-generated content, and enable viral marketing that can reach millions of users quickly. This allows film producers and marketers to interact directly with their audiences, expand market reach, and introduce upcoming films to potential audiences.

The data from (Kementerian Perekonomian RI, 2021), during the Covid-19 recovery period, the national film industry adapted by accelerating the digitalization of film distribution, both through the big screen (cinemas) and digital streaming services. According to Cinema XXI's official website (Cinema21.co.id, 2025), they recorded revenues of IDR 5.7 trillion in 2024, representing a 9.2% increase in total revenue compared to the previous year's IDR 5.2 trillion. As the largest cinema chain in Indonesia, XXI explained that their increased revenue was derived from

cinema ticket sales and encouraging various business innovations and strategies, such as the addition of new cinemas in strategic and potential locations, as well as effective and targeted promotional programs. This has certainly changed how the film industry adapts and adopts digital technology to market films with more modern methods and approaches (Ardani, 2022). One form of modern approach that is prominent in digital marketing is through social media, particularly the TikTok application (Penefaho et al., 2023).

TikTok social media users in Indonesia total 108 million users, meaning that almost 70% of the Indonesian population is familiar and active on the TikTok platform, with the largest penetration in the 18-34 age group (We Are Social, 2025). The gender distribution of TikTok users in Indonesia is also very even, with approximately 50.8% being dominated by women and 49.2% being dominated by men. The large number of TikTok users in Indonesia is also accompanied by a highly intensive level of TikTok usage. Based on a report from "TikTok User Age, Gender, & Demographics" (Duarte, 2025), it was revealed that the average TikTok user in Indonesia spent around 41 hours and 35 minutes per month playing the application in 2024. In other words, the average TikTok user in Indonesia spent around 1 hour and 24 minutes per day, making the platform the social media with the most "time spent" in Indonesia.

According to (Igben & Acchugbue, 2024), TikTok has unique characteristics that can support the viral spread of content. Content consumption patterns on TikTok are no longer linear or one-way like conventional media in general, but instead involve interactivity, recommendation algorithms, and active

participation of its users in creating and spreading messages. TikTok's dominance in social media consumption time not only increases the opportunity for effective viral marketing but also indicates a shift in public behavior from the majority previously using conventional media to now shifting to digital (Igben & Acchugbue, 2024). This large consumption time also changes the competitive techniques of the film industry, where viral campaigns created on TikTok can quickly boost interest in cinema attendance.

Several studies have suggested that moviegoers' decisions in the digital era are heavily influenced by peer reviews, community recommendations, and viral trends developing on digital platforms (Zou, 2024). This can shift the determinant of viewing decisions from initially being based on the actor's fame (star power) or the story summary to the effect of electronic word-of-mouth with social validation and hype created both organically and intentionally (Irawan & Misbach, 2020). Content currently circulating on social media, such as peer reviews, secret content, memes, and other things, can create growing trends. When these trends are disseminated and become a topic of conversation (electronic word-of-mouth), they become viral marketing. This phenomenon emerges from the virality generated on social media, which refers to the rapid and widespread spread of information or content. (Razali et al., 2023).

Virality, or what is generally known as viral marketing, is a digital marketing strategy that relies on word-of-mouth communication through digital platforms or social (Irawan & Misbach, 2020). This strategy is designed to allow information or opinions to spread massively, quickly, and widely on social

networks (B. Santoso et al., 2025). Viral marketing refers to a marketing strategy that takes advantage of hotly discussed situations or trends in society, with the aim of spreading the desired message by the marketer quickly and easily, and reaching a wider target audience. Pemasaran viral atau *viral marketing* mengacu pada strategi pemasaran dengan memanfaatkan situasi yang sedang hangat dibicarakan atau tren di masyarakat, dengan maksud agar pesan yang diinginkan oleh pemasar (*marketer*) dapat tersebar secara cepat dan mudah, serta menjangkau target yang lebih luas. According to (Afifah et al., 2022), viral marketing strategies are often used to raise awareness of a product or goods among the public and encourage them to make decisions about the goods or products, which in the context of this study are films, thereby increasing the sales of the film in theaters. Film marketers have two main strategies to boost sales: creating viral content or following popular trends (Huang, 2024).

The competitive advantages of the TikTok platform include strengthening the practice of viral marketing due to its algorithmic nature which makes certain content suddenly popular and appears on the For You Page (FYP) of millions of users in just a matter of hours (Irawan & Misbach, 2020) without relying entirely on the number of followers or large advertising investments. According to (Fatimah et al., 2025), the success factors of viral marketing on social media are emotional appeal and connection to the audience's reality. This is also supported by (Jannah & Purworini, 2024), who stated that originality, creativity, and authenticity of content are also supporting factors. Furthermore (B. Santoso et al., 2025), support from artists/influencers and user-generated content can also be

categorized as supporting factors for the success of viral marketing on social media, especially on TikTok. By understanding these success factors, the FYP feature on TikTok can be maximized, facilitating digital word-of-mouth marketing and creating viral trends for various products, including the decision to watch a film.

The term viral marketing was first introduced by Jeffrey Rayport in 1996 through his article titled “The Virus of Marketing (Afifah et al., 2022; Amanda & Farid, 2024) which refers to a marketing strategy that relies on the distribution of promotional messages through digital networks, with the aim of spreading the message or information rapidly like a virus. This marketing strategy is assumed to be a virus that spreads rapidly and reproduces itself (Ayu, 2020). According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) dalam (Igben & Acchugbue, 2024), the effectiveness of this strategy is increasingly evident in line with changes in consumer behavior, who currently tend to search for, share, and review film-watching experiences through social media before making their watching decisions.

Based on data from the page (Cinepoint, 2025), showed that local films managed to dominate the Indonesian box office list throughout 2025, this shows bright prospects with public enthusiasm for local films continuing to increase. Data in 2023 recorded the number of viewers reaching 54 million, surpassing the highest record ever achieved in 2019. This trend continued in 2024, with local films successfully reaching around 60 million viewers. This number is also projected to continue to rise to reach 80 million viewers in 2025. If in previous years, the dominance of cinema screens was more for horror films, then the trend is different

in 2025. The film *Jumbo*, which is actually an animation/family genre, recorded the highest number of viewers in Indonesia history. This phenomenon shows that besides horror, other genres can also compete and still have a place in the hearts of audiences, especially for local films. Next, there is the film *SORE: Istri dari Masa Depan*, which is a drama/fantasy/romance genre, premiered in cinemas in July 2025, and got 3 million viewers, making it the fourth highest-grossing Indonesian film in 2025, after *Pabrik Gula* and *Petaka Gunung Gede*.

Films themselves can be categorized as products because they possess unique characteristics that combine elements of goods, services, and experiences. According to (Horváth, 2024), films fall into the category of experience goods, namely products whose quality and level of satisfaction can only be fully evaluated after consumption. Audiences cannot definitively assess the quality of the story, acting, or cinematography before actually watching the film. Fundamentally, films are experiential products that offer emotional value and multisensory experiences. Therefore, films are consumed not to fulfill functional needs, but rather to obtain entertainment, pleasure, and emotional satisfaction that are personal and subjective.

The film *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* succeeded not only through its story and visuals, but also through an effective marketing campaign that generated organic traffic, reached the right audience, and built an emotional connection with viewers. This makes the film a highly relevant case study in analyzing the effectiveness of viral marketing on TikTok on Indonesian film consumption behavior. The film's marketing campaign emphasized a comprehensive digital-first strategy, utilizing various interactive elements on TikTok, such as the use of

hashtags, sharing teasers aligned with FYP trends, collaborations involving content creators and influencers, and the massive phenomenon of user-generated content in the form of scene remakes, reaction videos, memes, and personal testimonials (Iskandar, 2025). According to (Naem & Okafor, 2022), this type of content is created organically, but often has a greater promotional effect than commercial advertising, because it is considered more authentic and has a personal touch in the public eye. Marketers can capitalize on this by building intimate relationships with audiences and encouraging these relationships to create purchasing decisions through marketing campaigns based on viral marketing on social media, especially TikTok.

The TikTok marketing campaign for the film "Sore" not only succeeded in building brand awareness quickly, but also increased engagement, accelerated electronic word-of-mouth, and drove a significant increase in ticket sales in the first weeks. The viral phenomenon on TikTok caused expectations and influenced public discussion about the film to increase drastically, thus creating a snowball effect on viewing interest. The uniqueness of the film's approach also lies in adapting campaign content to TikTok's algorithm and user preferences. Through authenticity, active audience participation, and emotionality (Chen, 2023), the film went viral and successfully broke records in the Indonesian film industry.

This phenomenon certainly strengthens the argument that TikTok-based viral marketing is a relevant, efficient, and effective promotional tool in influencing film consumption in the digital era (Az-Zahra Ciersya et al., 2023). This is very much in line with the principles of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which

assumes that an individual's interest or behavioral decision depends on their attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived control over the behavior (Elistia & Nurma, 2023). This theory further explains how individuals who use social media, in this context TikTok, are exposed to social pressure or encouragement regarding their decision to watch a film. This ranges from entertaining viral content, information through reviews and trailers, social interaction through participation in digital discussions, and the expression of personal identity through the creation of film-related content. These factors also work synergistically and sustainably, ultimately driving an individual's decision to watch the film.

Viral marketing is not a new marketing strategy, however, the viral marketing phenomenon has developed and emerged and gained massive momentum due to the rapid growth in the number of internet and social media users (Crisp & Gonring, 2015). The selection of this research topic aims to provide practical recommendations for film industry practitioners in maximizing the potential of marketing campaigns that continue to adapt to the digital era, where traditional marketing strategies are gradually being replaced by more interactive and participatory approaches.

This research is also relevant in an academic context because there are still limited empirical studies that analyze the causal relationship between viral marketing on TikTok social media and purchasing decisions, which are then interpreted as film watching decisions. By using a quantitative approach based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the author hopes to fill the literature gap in the field of digital marketing communications and social media consumer behavior,

while also providing empirical validation of viral marketing strategies with the following research entitled **"THE EFFECT OF TIKTOK'S VIRAL MARKETING ON FILM WATCHING DECISION SORE: ISTRI DARI MASA DEPAN"**

1.2. Research Problem

Based on the background above, the research problem is formulated as: "Does TikTok's viral marketing affect the film watching decision Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan?"

1.3. Research Objective

This study aims to analyze the effect of TikTok's viral marketing on film watching decision Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan.

1.4. Research Benefits

This research is important, relevant, and certainly has benefits, both academically and practically. By understanding the effect of TikTok's viral marketing on film watching decision "Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan," we can optimize digital marketing campaigns to increase film consumption, which can also drive ticket sales.

1.4.1. Theoretical Benefits

1. To increase academic knowledge regarding the effect of viral marketing in the digital marketing realm, particularly in the Indonesian film industry.

2. To provide an empirical basis for developing consumer behavior models in the digital era that incorporate the Theory of Planned Behavior into decision-making.
3. To serve as a reference for future research seeking to develop studies related to consumer decision-making in the digital era.

1.4.2. Practical Benefits

1. To serve as a guide for film industry players, such as producers, distributors, and marketers, regarding optimal digital marketing strategies by leveraging the potential of viral marketing, particularly on TikTok.
2. To provide insights for content creators, influencers, and those involved in the digital marketing industry to develop content that increases the potential for virality by authentically and relevantly driving audience consumption decisions.
3. To assist policymakers in the creative industry and social media platform managers in understanding the potential and challenges of viral marketing in the digital era.