



## Consumer Engagement in Fudgybro's “Cookie Bomb Challenge” Viral Marketing

Dera Eka Candelia<sup>a</sup>, Nikmah Hadiati Salisah<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Ilmu Komunikasi, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia*

<sup>b</sup> *Ilmu Komunikasi, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia*

[deraekac@gmail.com](mailto:deraekac@gmail.com), [nikmah.hadiati@uinsa.ac.id](mailto:nikmah.hadiati@uinsa.ac.id)

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**Abstract.** Advertising is one of the main factors in making a brand famous and attractive to the public. However, with changing times, there is a need for innovation so that the advertisements produced can be considered creative and successful in attracting consumers' attention. Through social media, which currently has a big role in changing consumers' views of a brand. As for presenting an advertisement or marketing a product, there needs to be a strategy. The viral marketing strategy is the one most widely used by companies to introduce their brand. However, viral marketing certainly has a dependency on consumers who will be the support in producing content that goes viral. The Fudgybro brand is one brand that uses a viral marketing strategy that involves consumers in most of its content. Using the literature study research method helps researchers study a phenomenon that is analyzed using concepts that have been described in the literature. Based on the research carried out, the results obtained are that the Fudgybro Brand actively involves consumers to create viral marketing, starting with holding the "Cookie Bomb Challenge" so that it can reach not only Fudgybro's own social network, but also the environment of every consumer. Therefore, to produce a brand that can reach a wider reach, it is necessary to have an appropriate strategy to meet the targets of the brand itself. This study highlights the novelty of consumer-generated viral marketing through participatory digital culture, where consumers act not only as message recipients but also as active co-creators of brand content. The contribution of this research lies in demonstrating how consumer engagement and co-created experiences can strengthen brand awareness and purchase intention, expanding the understanding of viral marketing within communication studies.

**Keywords:** advertising; creative; viral marketing; consumers.

\*Correspondent Author  
University/Institution and Address  
Mobile Phone of Correspondent Author

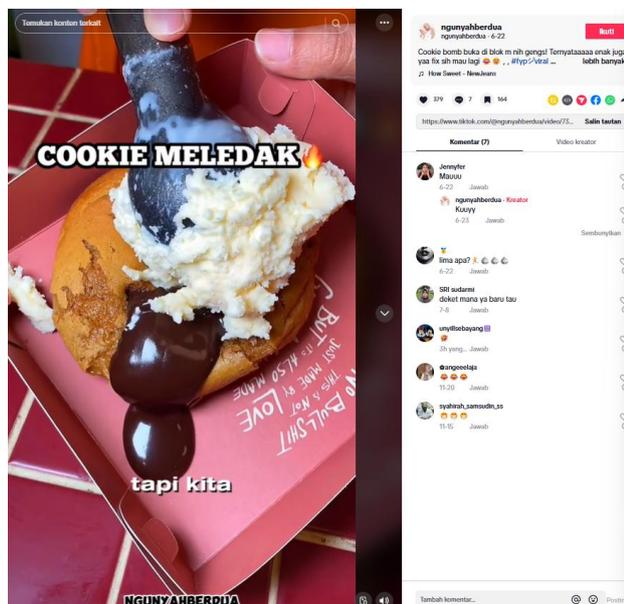
: Dera Eka Candelia  
: Ilmu Komunikasi, UIN Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia  
: 081381763533

## INTRODUCTION

Marketing through social media has become a strategy adopted by many brands as it is considered effective in capturing consumer attention in this modern era. With the ability to reach consumers within seconds, social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram have become central points for many marketing efforts (Abdul Rahman, 2024). However, effectiveness does not necessarily mean that targeting the public as consumers will be easy, as creative advertisements are required to produce compelling promotional content. This is supported by Nurfebiaraning (2016), whose research stated that creating effective advertisements requires creative strategies so that the execution of the message aligns with its objectives, targets, and chosen advertising media. The more unique the advertisement, the stronger its ability to attract consumer interest (Bakar, Desa and Mustafa, 2015).

Creative advertisements influence purchasing decisions, a thought process where individuals evaluate various options and decide to choose one product over others (Zahra and Rina, 2018). A brand must have strong brand awareness to influence consumer purchasing decisions (Ramadayanti, 2019). One of the widely used methods for marketing products in this modern era is the viral marketing strategy (Sari, 2019). Viral marketing has been successfully employed by several brands to create engaging content that elicits positive reactions from consumers (Puriwat and Tripopsakul, 2021). Not all social media marketing efforts succeed, some still fail to position a brand in consumers' hearts. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the factors that differentiate between success and failure in implementing social media marketing strategies.

However, previous studies on viral marketing and consumer engagement have mostly focused on brand-driven campaigns, overlooking how consumers themselves can act as co-creators of viral content. The existing literature still lacks discussion on consumer-generated viral marketing, where audience participation directly contributes to the creation and dissemination of brand messages. This gap becomes important to explore in order to understand how participatory digital culture transforms the dynamics of marketing communication.



**Figure 1. Screenshot of @ngunyahberdua video “Cookie Boomb Challenge”**  
Source: TikTok account of participating in Fudgybro's Cookie Bomb Challenge (post on June 22, 2024)

The workings of viral marketing are evident through the utilization of communication facilities available in the current digital era (Granata and Scozzese, 2018). Simply put, viral marketing serves as

a mechanism to spread a "virus" that can rapidly and widely "infect" (Sari, 2019). By leveraging social media platforms, brands utilizing viral marketing strategies can disseminate brand content broadly and quickly, taking advantage of user networks to expand the brand's message reach (Karina, Hernaningsih and Rivanto, 2022). Content that is interesting, humorous, or emotional has a high potential to be shared by users, creating a snowball effect that can exponentially increase brand visibility (Basri, 2023). Among the growing array of interesting phenomena, such as the "Cookie Bomb Challenge" launched by Fudgybro, the importance of innovative adaptation in digital marketing today becomes evident.

Creative challenges like Fudgybro's Cookie Bomb Challenge demonstrate how user interactions can be leveraged to create a buzz among audiences. In this context, consumer engagement becomes the main key, where active participation by audiences in sharing experiences and content related to the product not only increases brand awareness but also builds a loyal community around the brand (Kelvin *et al.*, 2024). Fudgybro's challenge simplifies the creation of creative advertisements by utilizing consumer-generated content instead of producing ads themselves. They provide positive feedback by replacing any Cookie Bombs that do not meet the standard serving protocol (SOP) free of charge. Thus, viral marketing not only serves as a promotional tool but also as a means to foster closer relationships between brands and consumers in this increasingly connected world (Glennardo, 2016). This study aims to analyze how Fudgybro's viral marketing strategy through the "Cookie Bomb Challenge" engages consumers and influences their awareness and purchase decisions. This purpose is aligned with the need to understand consumer participation as an integral part of co-created marketing communication in the digital era.

To further understand the communication mechanism behind this phenomenon, this study applies Kaplan and Haenlein's (2011) "5C Model" covering consumer, company, content, collaboration, and context as a framework to analyze the success of Fudgybro's campaign. In addition, perspectives from communication theories such as Social Exchange Theory and Word-of-Mouth Communication are used to explain how mutual benefits and message dissemination occur between brands and consumers in the viral marketing process.

Based on the above background, the purpose of this research is to uncover how the viral marketing strategy employed by Fudgybro through the Cookie Bomb Challenge influences consumer engagement, brand awareness, and product purchasing decisions. This research will explore the methods used by Fudgybro in creating challenges that attract public attention and how consumer interaction and participation in these challenges contribute to increasing brand awareness and influence purchasing decisions. By understanding the relationship between viral marketing strategies and consumer engagement, this research aims to provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of digital marketing approaches in the modern era. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for other brands in designing innovative and effective marketing strategies to capture consumer attention in an increasingly competitive market.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a literature review, which involves studying and analyzing existing literature related to the research topic, including books, journals, and other relevant sources. The literature serves to support the discussion of the research questions posed by the researcher. Additionally, the literature review aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how the viral marketing strategy implemented by Fudgybro through the Cookie Bomb Challenge influences consumer engagement, brand awareness, and product purchasing decisions.

Data collection is conducted through content analysis of materials participating in the challenge and social media posts related to the Cookie Bomb Challenge. Specifically, this study analyzed 25 TikTok videos and 10 Instagram posts uploaded between May and June 2024 using the hashtags #CookieBombChallenge and #Fudgybro. The data were selected based on engagement levels (likes, comments, and shares), relevance to the campaign, and the clarity of user participation in the challenge.

Observations of user interactions on social media platforms are also carried out to gain insights into the dynamics of consumer engagement.

The analytical process was conducted through three stages, first, data identification and coding of recurring themes such as participation, emotion, and product response, second, categorization of content based on consumer engagement type (active sharing, commenting, and co-creation), and third, interpretation and comparison with related literature to strengthen theoretical analysis. Using a qualitative approach, this research focuses on uncovering the meanings and subjective experiences of consumers, with the aim of providing a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of viral marketing strategies in the context of current digital marketing practices

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Consumer Co-Creation and Engagement

Indonesia is rich in diverse culinary delights that are incredibly intriguing to try (Besra, 2012). One of the brands widely recognized, especially among young people, is Fudgybro. Fudgybro is a brand known for its signature product, fudgy brownies, which boast a soft texture and rich flavor. Founded by Rayendra Abiyasa in 2018, Fudgybro originated from his love for brownies and his desire to create the perfect recipe, inspired by food videos on YouTube (Permatasari and Jaolis, 2024). The brand offers various brownie flavors, including dark chocolate, red velvet, and Oreo, as well as tantalizing beverage products. Fudgybro focuses not only on the quality of its flavors but is also committed to providing customers with a delightful experience through friendly and responsive interactions. With rapid growth, Fudgybro now operates several outlets in Jakarta and Surabaya and has successfully reached customers outside Java. This success is driven by innovative marketing strategies and collaborations with other brands, positioning Fudgybro as one of the pioneers in Indonesia's contemporary dessert industry.

Recently, Fudgybro's product, cookies, has become a public conversation topic, especially with the rise of the "Cookie Bomb Challenge" trend. This trend, which emerged as a promotion for a new product and featured transparent trial-and-error content, allowed Fudgybro to create creative and engaging content. The Cookie Bomb trend from Fudgybro has gone viral on social media, particularly on TikTok, thanks to its innovative and creative marketing strategy. Launched in a mysterious yet transparent manner, the product captured consumer attention with teasers that sparked curiosity before its official release. The uniqueness of the Cookie Bomb lies in the concept of a chocolate "explosion" expected when the product is opened, making it highly shareable on social media platforms. Fudgybro leveraged this phenomenon by encouraging consumers to record their moments of trying the Cookie Bomb and share them online. If the product didn't explode as expected, customers were rewarded with a free Cookie Bomb, which further motivated more people to try and share their experiences. According to a study this approach allowed Fudgybro to boost sales by up to 1500% and generate significant buzz among the younger generation, making the Cookie Bomb one of its best-selling products (Luqia Nurintan *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, active engagement with the audience through relatable language and influencer collaborations also contributed to the success of this trend, solidifying Fudgybro's position as one of Indonesia's leading dessert brands.

### Impact of User-Generated Content on Brand Awareness

The trend generated by Fudgybro, which directly involved consumers, demonstrates a viral marketing strategy where creative and innovative promotional efforts successfully created a viral phenomenon on social media, particularly TikTok. Fudgybro leveraged elements of surprise and exclusivity by launching the Cookie Bomb in a mysterious and limited manner, sparking consumer curiosity. This challenge encouraged consumers to record their moments of purchasing the Cookie Bomb, offering a free product if it failed to "explode" as expected an approach that heightened interest and participation. The use of User-Generated Content (UGC) proved highly effective, as consumers

voluntarily shared their experiences, extending the brand's reach and increasing brand awareness by 48.2% (Yusianti and Manafe, 2023). Fudgybro also tailored its communication style to the characteristics of its young audience and collaborated with influencers to amplify the campaign's impact. Overall, the Cookie Bomb Challenge stands as a successful example of viral marketing that not only boosted sales but also strengthened the brand's position in Indonesia's dessert market.

In the context of the Cookie Bomb Challenge, Fudgybro succeeded in implementing an active viral marketing and high integration strategy by involving consumers directly in the promotional process and consumers not only became recipients of information but also played an active role in spreading the message through creating content that recorded experiences when trying Cookie Bomb. This strategy not only utilizes social media technology to disseminate information but also builds intimate relationships with the audience. By using relevant hashtags and popular hashtags, Fudgybro was able to create unexpected momentum, making many people interested in trying the product.

As a result, Cookie Bomb has become one of the most popular products among young Indonesians, with sales increasing drastically and significant brand awareness. Apart from that, intensive interaction between Fudgybro and its consumers also increases customer loyalty, so that Fudgybro is not only successful in selling products but also building a solid community around the brand. Thus, Fudgybro shows how important it is to integrate consumers in marketing strategies to create a sustainable viral phenomenon.

### **Viral Marketing Instruments Supporting Engagement**

Additionally, Fudgybro also utilized vital instruments that created a widespread viral phenomenon and dramatically increased brand awareness. Engaging content, direct interaction with consumers, and creative marketing strategies all contributed to the success of Fudgybro's Cookie Bomb Challenge trend. These instruments are as follows (Skrob, 2005):

1. **Customer Recommendation:** Fudgybro effectively utilized customer recommendations. Satisfied customers with the Cookie Bomb product are likely to recommend it to their friends, increasing brand awareness and triggering sharing activities. For example, many customers recorded the "explosion" moment of the Cookie Bomb and shared it on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram.
2. **Newsletter:** Although Fudgybro did not explicitly use newsletters, they successfully encouraged consumers to share product content through up-to-date information about the Cookie Bomb. Relevant and useful information made consumers interested in spreading it.
3. **Linking Strategies:** Fudgybro's smart linking strategies helped increase website traffic and expand marketing reach. By linking to engaging content, such as the Cookie Bomb trial and error videos, consumers could easily share this information, significantly boosting brand visibility.
4. **Communities:** Online communities like WhatsApp groups or social media apps are ideal spaces for fostering a conducive environment for viral marketing. Consumers involved in these communities tend to share their experiences and information about the Cookie Bomb product, creating strong social bonds and enhancing brand awareness.
5. **Free Offer:** The free offers or special discounts provided by Fudgybro attracted consumers to try the Cookie Bomb product. After experiencing the product's benefits, consumers are likely to share their positive experiences with others, triggering a wide viral effect.
6. **Sweepstakes:** While not explicitly using sweepstakes, the "cookie explosion" challenge promoted by Fudgybro is similar to a prize lottery. Participation in this event involved consumers sharing information about the product, dramatically increasing brand awareness.
7. **List of Prospective Buyers:** A valid list of potential customers helps Fudgybro target their marketing campaigns. They ensure that the marketing message reaches the right and relevant ears, enhancing promotional effectiveness.
8. **Chat Rooms:** Online chat rooms such as Discord or Telegram serve as platforms to facilitate conversations between consumers and the marketing team. Open and interactive conversations

spark creative ideas that can become viral content, such as customer reactions when trying the Cookie Bomb.

9. Reference List: A complete and accurate reference list helps consumers make purchasing decisions. When consumers feel confident in the brand's reputation, they are likely to share positive information about the Cookie Bomb product, increasing customer loyalty.
10. Product Texts: Informative and engaging product texts confuse consumers into sharing information about the Cookie Bomb product. Detailed and persuasive descriptions make consumers interested in spreading this information, such as the unique description of the chocolate-filled center that oozes when pressed.
11. Affiliate Programs: Transparent and profitable affiliate programs motivate affiliates to share information about the Cookie Bomb product. This leverages the affiliate network to expand marketing reach organically, effectively increasing brand awareness.
12. Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Effective search engine optimization helps increase the visibility of Fudgybro's website in Google search results. SEO-optimized websites attract more organic visits, increasing the chances of triggering viral marketing and significantly enhancing brand awareness.

### **Purchase Decision and Emotional Connection**

Fudgybro also applied the "5C" model proposed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) to demonstrate how the brand successfully created a viral phenomenon through effective marketing strategies. Fudgybro understands the characteristics and preferences of consumers, especially among the younger generation active on social media, by involving them directly in the Cookie Bomb Challenge. This approach ensured that consumers were not just recipients of information but also played an active role in spreading the message through content shared on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

The Cookie Bomb product stands out in the innovative dessert category with its "chocolate explosion" concept that offers a unique experience, while the company successfully built a positive image and trust through creative marketing and friendly communication. Engaging content, such as trial and error videos and the "cookie explosion" challenge, was designed to evoke consumer emotions, encouraging them to share their experiences. Moreover, message dissemination was heavily influenced by the current social context and digital environment, with the strategic use of social media platforms and timely message delivery. Overall, the combination of consumer understanding, product innovation, effective communication strategies, engaging content, and a supportive social context has contributed to Fudgybro's viral marketing success, boosting product sales while building a loyal community around its brand.

The creative marketing conducted also influences purchase decisions, showing that the marketing strategy applied, particularly through the Cookie Bomb product, has a significant impact on consumer purchase intention. Research by Sherly Novi Permatasari and Ferry Jaolis reveals that the value of advertising content positively influences the intention to purchase and the intention to share the ad content. When consumers find the content presented engaging and relevant, they are more likely to share it with others, which in turn increases their desire to make a purchase (Christy, 2022).

Furthermore, active consumer interaction in the Cookie Bomb challenge contributes to purchase decisions by creating an emotional connection between the consumer and the brand. Consumers who are involved in sharing videos and stories about the product feel more confident in choosing to buy Cookie Bomb. The strategy used by Fudgybro shows that the greater the desire of consumers to share content, the higher the likelihood of them making a purchase, indicating that active participation in viral campaigns can strengthen purchase intention. By considering factors such as marketing trends and the value of advertising content, Fudgybro successfully created an environment that supports consumer purchase decisions, demonstrating that the combination of creative marketing strategies and active interaction can significantly influence purchase decisions in the context of innovative dessert products like Cookie Bomb.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Key Findings on Fudgybro’s Cookie Bomb Challenge Viral Marketing**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Finding/Observation</b>	<b>Evidence/Supporting Source</b>
Sales Growth	Product sales increased up to 1500% during the Cookie Bomb Challenge period.	Luqia Nurintan <i>et al.</i> (2024)
Brand Awareness	Brand awareness increased by 48.2% due to user-generated content and viral sharing.	Yusianti and Manafe (2023)
Consumer Engagement	Consumers actively co-created content by uploading TikTok/Instagram videos using #CookieBombChallenge.	Observation of social media content (2024)
Influencer Collaboration	Collaboration with influencers amplified campaign visibility and credibility.	Kelvin <i>et al.</i> (2024)
Emotional Connection	Consumers developed trust and attachment through participatory challenge content.	Christy (2022), Permatasari and Jaolis (2024)
Purchase Intention	Consumers developed trust and attachment through participatory challenge content.	Christy (2022), Permatasari and Jaolis (2024)

Source: **Research Data, 2024**

Therefore, Fudgybro has successfully created a significant viral phenomenon through the Cookie Bomb product, which not only increased sales but also built a loyal community around its brand. The innovative and creative marketing strategy, such as the Cookie Bomb Challenge, actively involves consumers in the promotion process, making them information spreaders through content shared on social media. By utilizing elements of surprise and exclusivity, as well as offering incentives like a free product if it doesn’t “explode” as expected, Fudgybro successfully attracted consumer attention and participation. Research shows that the value of advertising content positively influences purchase intention, with consumers who feel interested and engaged becoming more confident in making a purchase. Additionally, direct interaction with the audience through friendly communication styles and collaborations with influencers further strengthens the impact of this campaign. Overall, the combination of consumer understanding, product innovation, and creative marketing strategies has created an environment that supports purchase decisions in the context of innovative dessert products like Cookie Bomb.

## CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that the viral marketing strategy implemented by Fudgybro through the Cookie Bomb Challenge successfully increased consumer purchase decisions significantly. By actively involving consumers in the promotion process and creating engaging content that could be shared on social media, Fudgybro not only enhanced brand awareness but also built a strong emotional connection with its audience. The analysis results show that active consumer participation in this challenge encourages them to recommend the product to others, thereby exponentially expanding the marketing reach. Moreover, the elements of surprise and incentives offered, such as a free product if it doesn’t “explode” as expected, further increased consumer interest in trying the Cookie Bomb. Thus, the combination of product innovation, effective communication

strategies, and consumer engagement contributed to Fudgybro's success in influencing purchase decisions, making it one of the pioneers in Indonesia's contemporary dessert industry. In addition, this study expands the understanding of viral marketing literature by emphasizing the role of co-created consumer experiences in shaping engagement and purchase behavior. It highlights how participatory digital culture transforms consumers from passive audiences into active collaborators, providing new insights for communication studies on digital marketing and consumer interaction.

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