

The Impact of Spotify Advertisements On Free Accounts To Purchase Decisions For Spotify Premium Accounts With Consumer Attitudes As The Mediating Variable

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Abstract

In recent years, digital music streaming services have increasingly relied on advertisements to generate revenue and encourage users to upgrade to premium accounts. Previous research has shown that effective advertising can significantly influence consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. However, advertisements may also provoke negative reactions such as annoyance and irritation, potentially impacting user experience. This study examines the impact of Spotify advertisements on consumers' purchasing decisions to upgrade from free to premium accounts, with consumer attitude as a mediating variable. This study used a quantitative approach to collect data from an online survey of 399 Spotify users. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that advertising significantly enhances customer attitudes and positively influences purchase decisions. Furthermore, advertisements impact purchase decisions indirectly through customer attitudes. Despite these positive effects, the study also reveals that advertisements can cause adverse reactions, such as annoyance and irritation. Respondent feedback highlights ad content, frequency, and timing issues, which often disrupt the user experience. These findings provide valuable insights for digital marketers and advertisers seeking to optimize their campaigns on platforms like Spotify. Additionally, this research contributes to the broader understanding of advertising effectiveness, customer behavior, and digital marketing strategies in the context of music streaming services.

Keywords: Advertisement, Consumer Attitude, Purchase Decision, Music Streaming Service

A. INTRODUCTION

The music industry has undergone significant transformations due to advancements in digital technology, particularly with the rise of music streaming services. Music streaming, or audio streaming, allows users to access music from servers via laptops and mobile devices. Music streaming has become increasingly prevalent in Indonesia, with 50.3% of internet users listening to music weekly through these platforms in 2022 (Data Indonesia, 2023). Spotify, one of the largest global music streaming services, reported having 574 million monthly active users in the third quarter of 2023, including 226 million premium subscribers (Spotify, 2024). In Indonesia, Spotify has 100 million active users, with half being premium subscribers. The platform uses a freemium business model, offering basic features for free while charging for additional services. Premium subscribers benefit from an ad-free experience, improved audio quality, and offline listening capabilities. However, less than 1% of music streaming users in Indonesia pay for premium plans (Forde et al., 2023).

Despite the benefits of premium subscriptions, advertisements on free-tier accounts have received mixed reactions. While some users find these ads informative and entertaining, others view them as disruptive and annoying. Preliminary surveys show that 97.6% of Spotify premium users are annoyed by the advertisements on the free tier. Moreover, many users have expressed dissatisfaction with the frequency and content of these advertisements on social media, resulting in 44 out of 148 users switching to other music streaming services like YouTube Music and Apple Music. The problem lies in the dual role of Spotify's advertisements. While they are intended to generate revenue and encourage users to upgrade to premium accounts, the adverse reactions they provoke can undermine these goals. However, there is limited research on the specific impact of Spotify advertisements on upgrading to premium accounts.

This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing how Spotify's free-tier advertisements influence consumer attitudes and subsequent purchase decisions for premium subscriptions. The findings will provide valuable insights for digital marketers and advertisers aiming to enhance the effectiveness of their campaigns on music

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streaming platforms. Understanding these dynamics can help Spotify and similar services optimize advertising strategies to align with consumer preferences and enhance user experience.

Based on a review of previous research, the researcher selected and adapted the conceptual framework from Khusnaeni et al. (2017). This framework, depicted in Figure 1, includes the elements of Advertisement, Consumer Attitude, and Purchase Decision. The journal was chosen due to the similarity of the variables studied and the alignment with the research objectives. In the study by (Khusnaeni et al., 2017), all hypotheses were confirmed. The findings indicated that advertisements have a positive impact on consumer attitudes. The research also stated that consumer attitude and advertisement positively impact purchase decisions. This research aims to discover whether these hypotheses will still be accepted with a different case study. From the conceptual framework, three hypotheses were developed.

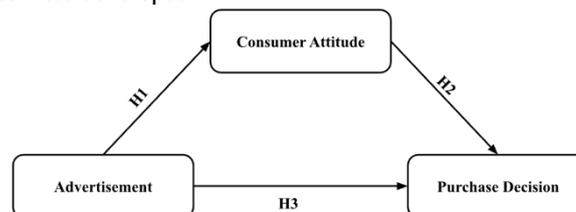


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework (adapted from Khusnaeni & Sunarti, E., 2017)

Advertisement and Consumer Attitude

The primary objective of advertising is to influence consumer attitudes (Jefkins, 2000). Advertising can alter consumer perceptions and behaviors, especially when it evokes emotional responses. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo in 1986, the impact of advertising on attitudes depends on the individual's cognitive processing and level of engagement with the advertisement. When consumers engage deeply with an advertisement through the central route, it can lead to lasting changes in their attitudes. (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000) Further, it explains that the connection between advertising impact and attitudes is based on consumers' emotions and thoughts in response to advertising exposure. These emotions and thoughts ultimately shape their attitudes toward the advertisement and the beliefs formed from that exposure.

A study by (Khusnaeni and Sunarti, 2017) investigated how advertisements affect consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. Their findings highlight the significant role of advertising in shaping consumer attitudes. The study demonstrated that advertisements perceived as familiar and entertaining substantially impacted consumer attitudes. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Advertisement has a positive impact on Consumer Attitude.

Consumer Attitude and Purchase Decision

Consumer attitudes are pivotal in shaping purchasing decisions by influencing thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Anilkumar and Joseph, 2012). According to (Kotler and Keller, 2016), beliefs and attitudes significantly affect purchasing behavior during the evaluation phase of decision-making. Positive consumer attitudes towards a product can enhance the likelihood of a purchase, while negative attitudes tend to deter it. This relationship is underlined by research (Miau, 2017), which highlights that favorable consumer attitudes can drive purchasing decisions. The study found that attitudes directly impact how consumers perceive a product and their subsequent purchase choice. Therefore, the hypothesis posits a clear correlation between consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. Thus,

H2: Consumer Attitude has a positive impact on Purchase Decision.

Advertisement and Purchase Decision

Advertising is a key component of the promotional mix, including four elements influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Lamb et al., 2011). Advertising primarily aims to alter consumer attitudes and encourage future product purchases. (Fazri, 2017) research highlights the significant role of Spotify advertisements in influencing users' purchasing decisions, demonstrating that these ads influence consumer behavior. The study found that Spotify commercials, particularly informational advertisements, received favorable responses from users, indicating their effectiveness in driving purchase intent. Additionally, (Khusnaeni and Sunarti, 2017) confirmed the positive impact of advertising on purchasing decisions, further supporting the notion that

advertisements play a crucial role in influencing consumer choices. Therefore, based on these findings, the hypothesis suggests a strong correlation between advertising and consumer purchasing decisions. Thus, *H3: Advertisement has a positive impact on Purchase Decisions.*

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach for the main research and a mixed-methods approach for preliminary research to investigate the influence of Spotify advertisements on consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions regarding Spotify Premium accounts.

Preliminary Research

This phase utilized quantitative and qualitative methods to identify key issues related to Spotify advertisements. It began with a qualitative component that analyzed user feedback on social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter). Keywords such as "Iklan Spotify," "Iklan Podcast Spotify," "Iklan Horror," and "Spotify Premium" were used to gather insights into user sentiment. Additionally, a quantitative survey was conducted with 45 respondents from Generation Z and young Millennials (18-35) who had upgraded to Spotify Premium. This initial phase was crucial for refining the research focus and designing a comprehensive survey instrument.

Main Research

For the primary data collection, a structured online questionnaire was distributed to a larger sample of Spotify users in Indonesia, specifically targeting Generation Z and young Millennials. The survey aimed to include users who had experienced both free and premium tiers of Spotify. The questionnaire collected data on demographic characteristics, user behavior, attitudes toward Spotify advertisements, and purchase decisions. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents who met the study's criteria. The final sample comprised 399 respondents who provided valid and complete responses. The questionnaire featured multiple-choice and Likert scale items to capture attitudes and perceptions effectively.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic and behavioral characteristics. Inferential statistical techniques, particularly Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), were applied to test hypotheses and examine the relationships between variables. This analysis assessed both the direct and indirect effects of Spotify advertisements on purchasing decisions, with consumer attitudes as a mediating variable. The findings offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of Spotify's advertising strategy and its impact on user behavior, providing essential information for digital marketers and advertisers to optimize their campaigns on music streaming platforms and enhance user experience.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the quantitative analysis performed to understand the impact of Spotify advertisements on purchase decisions for Spotify Premium accounts, mediated by consumer attitudes. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Demographic and Behavioral Analysis

The demographic profile of the 399 respondents reveals that most are young adults, with 29% aged 25-34 and 26% aged 18-24, indicating that Spotify's user base is primarily within a tech-savvy and socially active age group. Predominantly, the respondents are students (45%) and young professionals (35%), suggesting that Spotify is popular among individuals likely to integrate music into their daily routines, whether for study or work.

Behavioral analysis reveals significant engagement with Spotify, with 40% of respondents using the platform for 1-2 hours daily and 35% for 3-4 hours, demonstrating its integration into users' daily routines. The primary reasons for upgrading to a premium account are ad-free listening (65%), indicating that ads are a major annoyance and users seek uninterrupted music; high audio quality (50%), suggesting that sound quality is crucial for users; and offline mode (45%), showing that the ability to listen without an internet connection is highly valued. According to Figure 2, 98.3% of respondents find Spotify ads

annoying, with Horror Podcast Ads being the most bothersome (81.8%). These findings emphasize the critical role of consumer attitudes towards Spotify advertisements in retaining and converting users to Premium accounts. PLS-SEM was employed to test hypotheses and explore the relationships between Spotify advertisements, consumer attitudes, and purchase decisions.

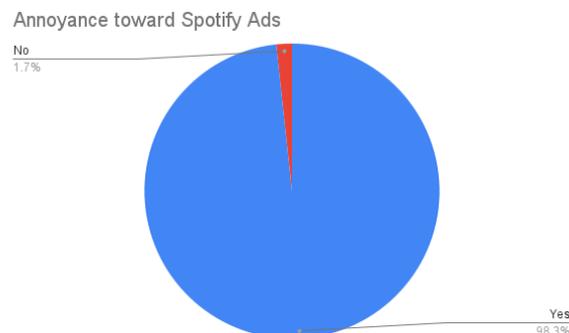


Figure 2 Annoyance Towards Spotify Ads
 Source: Research data, 2024

Measurement Model

According to (Hair et al., 2010), an outer loading score between 0.6 and 0.7 indicates acceptable reliability. In this study, all indicators achieved scores exceeding 0.805, with the highest score reaching 0.949. This indicates strong internal consistency, meaning each indicator reliably captures the intended variable. Other than that, (Wong, 2013) states that a composite reliability score exceeding 0.7 indicates acceptable internal consistency. In this study, all latent variables surpassed the minimum threshold, demonstrating strong internal consistency and confirming that the items reliably measure their respective constructs. The detailed composite reliability scores for each variable can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Internal Consistency Reliability

Variables	Composite Reliability	Reliability
Advertisement	0.975	Reliable
Consumer Attitude	0.960	Reliable
Purchase Decision	0.925	Reliable

Source: Research data, 2024

(Malhotra et al., 2016) State that the AVE (average variance extracted) must be 0.5 or greater for the validity test, which is used to determine how transparent and true the responses from the respondents are. As a result, all variables are considered valid because they meet the required minimum score. Table 4.4 provides the complete numbers for each variable.

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Variables	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Validity
Purchase decision	0.750	Valid
Advertisement	0.822	Valid
Consumer attitude	0.821	Valid

Source: Research data, 2024

In Table 3, the bold numbers on the diagonal represent each variable's square root of the AVE. These diagonal values should be larger than those in their rows and columns (correlations with other variables). As evident in Table 3, all the bold diagonal values are indeed greater than the other values in their respective rows and columns. This confirms discriminant validity, indicating that the variables in this study are distinct concepts. The complete result of the discriminant validity test can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

	Advertisement	Consumer Attitude	Purchase Decision
Advertisement	0.907		
Consumer Attitude	0.872	0.906	
Purchase Decision	0.313	0.313	0.866

Source: Research data, 2024

Structural Model

Table 4 shows that all the variables had T statistic scores greater than 1.96: Advertisement to Consumer Attitude, Advertisement to Purchase Decision, and Consumer Attitude to Purchase Decision. The most significant path is from Advertisement to Consumer Attitude, with a T statistic value of 38.612. In contrast, the variable Consumer Attitude to Purchase Decision has the lowest T statistic, 2.237. In conclusion, the relationships between Advertisement to Consumer Attitude, Advertisement to Purchase Decision, and Consumer Attitude to Purchase Decision are significant

Table 4. Structural Path Significance

Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics
Advertisement -> Consumer Attitude	0.872	0.873	0.023	38.612
Advertisement -> Purchase Decision	0.313	0.315	0.047	6.599
Consumer Attitude -> Purchase Decision	0.168	0.172	0.075	2.237

Source: Research data, 2024

The results from Table 5 indicate the model's explanatory and predictive power for Consumer Attitude and Purchase Decisions. Consumer Attitude has an R² value of 0.760, which means that the independent variables explain 76% of its variance and show a strong explanatory power. Other than that, the R² value for Purchase Decision is 0.105, indicating that the model explains only 10.5% of its variance. The Q² values are 0.758 for Consumer Attitude and 0.092 for Purchase Decision, indicating strong predictive relevance for the former but limited for the latter. This model's Goodness of Fit (GoF) is 0.280, indicating a moderate overall model fit.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R²) And Stone-Geisser (Q²) Test

Variables	R ²	Q ²
Consumer Attitude	0.760	0.758
Purchase Decision	0.105	0.092
Average	0.4325	0.425
GoF	0.280	

Source: Research data, 2024

Based on the result above, it can be seen that Advertisements significantly affect consumer attitudes. However, advertisements and consumer attitudes do not directly affect purchase decisions. This suggests that while advertisements effectively shape consumer attitudes, these attitudes, along with advertisements, do not directly translate into purchase decisions. Other factors not included in the model may be more influential in driving the purchase decision of Spotify Premium.

Table 6. F Square (F²) Effect Size

	Consumer Attitude	Purchase Decision
Advertisement	3.173	0.007
Consumer Attitude		0.008
Purchase Decision		

Source: Research data, 2024

Hypothesis Testing

This research examined the inner and outer models to assess the proposed hypotheses' validity. This evaluation involved analyzing the t-statistics and p-values generated by SmartPLS for each path in the model. A p-value less than 0.05 and T statistics greater than 1.96 are considered statistically significant, implying that the data support the corresponding hypothesis. Table 7 provides a comprehensive breakdown of these results.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Structural Path	T statistics	P values	Result
H1	Advertisement -> Consumer Attitude	38.612	0.000	Accepted
H2	Consumer Attitude -> Purchase Decision	2.237	0.025	Accepted
H3	Advertisement -> Purchase Decision	2.073	0.038	Accepted

Source: Research data, 2024

Mediation Analysis

Consumer attitude significantly mediates the relationship between advertisements and purchase decisions (T-statistic > 1.96, $p < 0.01$). The analysis confirms that Spotify advertisements positively influence consumer attitudes, affecting purchase decisions for Spotify Premium accounts. Additionally, advertisements directly impact purchase decisions, albeit to a lesser extent when not mediated by consumer attitudes. According to the mediation test results, both the direct and indirect effects are significant and in the same direction, showing that customer attitude partially mediates the relationship between advertisements and purchase decisions. This type of mediation is known as complimentary mediation, in which both direct and indirect effects are significant and go in the same direction. As a result, advertisements directly influence purchase decisions and indirectly shape customer attitudes.

Discussion

The hypothesis testing results reveal a significant positive correlation between advertisements and consumer attitudes. The high T-statistic of 38.612 and a P-value of 0.000 indicate a strong relationship, suggesting that advertising is highly effective in shaping consumer attitudes toward a product or brand. This supports the hypothesis that the relationship between advertisements and consumer attitudes is statistically significant and positively correlated. However, this positive impact may be influenced by negative reactions, such as annoyance and irritation caused by Spotify ads, particularly those for horror podcasts. Survey responses show that most respondents disagreed with statements about the frequency and timing of ads, indicating that increased ad exposure leads to more pronounced negative attitudes.

Additionally, the survey highlights substantial negative attitudes toward Spotify ads, with 98.3% of respondents expressing annoyance and 81.8% finding horror podcast ads particularly bothersome. Frequent ad exposure, especially among users who spend over 4 hours daily on Spotify, enhances recall and recognition but also increases negative attitudes. Theories such as Brehm's Theory of Reactance and previous research suggest that while excessive or intrusive advertising can lead to negative consumer responses, it can still effectively increase brand awareness and recall. This study aligns with prior research, confirming that Spotify advertisements have a significant impact on consumer attitudes, even if that impact includes negative reactions.

Hypothesis 2, which posits that consumer attitudes positively influence purchase decisions, is supported by a T-value of 2.237, exceeding the critical value of 1.96, and a P-value of <0.05, indicating a significant effect. This suggests that favorable consumer views positively influence the decision to purchase Spotify Premium. This finding is reinforced by respondents' answers to questions about the conative dimension of consumer attitude, specifically the CA6 indicator, which showed an average response of 4.35 out of 6, indicating a positive reaction toward upgrading to Spotify Premium based on attitudes toward the ads. Previous studies by Dewi et al. (2017) and Miauw (2017) also support this result, highlighting that consumer attitudes significantly affect purchase decisions.

Despite mixed reactions to the ads, consumer attitudes toward Spotify advertisements significantly influence purchase decisions. The irritation and annoyance caused by the advertisements can motivate users to upgrade to a Premium account to avoid disruptions. Indicators related to purchase decisions (PD1 to PD5) show a mode of 5 out of 6, suggesting that despite annoyance, users are positively influenced to purchase Spotify Premium. Younger respondents, particularly those aged 18-24, exhibit a strong correlation between their attitudes toward Spotify ads and their decision to upgrade to a Premium account. This age group, often seeking value and convenience, is more likely to appreciate the benefits of a premium subscription, such as ad-free listening and offline playback. In summary, while Spotify advertisements generate negative emotional reactions, positive consumer attitudes towards the benefits conveyed lead to increased Premium subscriptions, demonstrating that consumer attitudes positively impact purchase decisions despite unfavorable reactions to the ads.

The final hypothesis confirmed that advertisements positively impact purchasing decisions, with a T-statistic of 2.073 (greater than 1.96) and a P-value of 0.038 (less than 0.05), indicating a statistically significant positive effect. This suggests that advertisements not only influence consumer attitudes but also their purchasing decisions. Survey results indicate that respondents find Spotify advertisements informative, clearly communicating the benefits of Spotify Premium and making users aware of its value. This aligns with Lamb et al. (2011), who noted that advertising significantly influences consumers' purchasing decisions. The relevance and targeting of the ads, addressing the audience's interests and

needs, along with their structure and format—including compelling calls to action and engaging interactive features—enhance their effectiveness. Direct evidence of this influence is seen in responses to question PD4, where the average score of 4.94 out of 6 indicates strong agreement that advertisements play a significant role in the decision to purchase Spotify Premium. Previous studies by Khusnaeni et al. (2017), Agustina and Wartini (2018), and Fazri (2020) also support this, showing that informative advertisements significantly affect Spotify Premium purchases. Therefore, it can be concluded that advertisements positively impact Spotify Premium's purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of Spotify advertisements on consumer attitudes and purchase decisions for Spotify Premium accounts. The hypothesis testing results reveal a significant positive impact of Spotify's free-tier advertisements on consumer attitudes, evidenced by a T-statistic of 38.612 (exceeding the critical value of 1.96) and a P-value of 0.000. This indicates that Spotify's advertisements are effective in shaping and enhancing consumer attitudes toward the platform. However, it is important to note that this positive impact may be influenced by negative reactions, such as annoyance and irritation due to frequent and intrusive ads. This finding aligns with Brehm's Theory of Reactance (1966), which suggests that while intrusive ads may provoke negative subjective experiences, they still contribute to increased brand awareness and recall.

Additionally, the results show that Spotify advertisements positively affect the purchase decisions for Premium accounts. A T-statistic of 2.073 (greater than 1.96) and a P-value of 0.038 (less than 0.05) indicate a statistically significant positive effect. This suggests that the influence of advertisements on consumer attitudes translates into actual purchase decisions. Respondents' average score of 4.94 out of 6 for the statement, "I have purchased Spotify Premium features after seeing the advertisement," supports this conclusion. Previous studies by Hair et al. (2011), Khusnaeni & Sunarti (2017), and Fazri (2020) also corroborate the positive impact of advertisements on purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, the study confirms that consumer attitudes significantly impact purchase decisions. The T-value of 2.237 (exceeding the critical point of 1.96) and a P-value of less than 0.05 underscore a significant effect. Favorable consumer attitudes toward Spotify advertisements are shown to positively influence the decision to purchase Spotify Premium. Respondents' average score of 4.35 out of 6 for the statement, "Spotify ads make me more likely to consider purchasing Spotify Premium," aligns with findings from Kotler and Keller (2016) and Miauw (2017), which highlight the significant role of consumer attitudes in shaping purchasing behavior. Thus, it can be concluded that positive consumer attitudes towards Spotify's free-tier advertisements significantly impact the purchase decisions for Spotify Premium accounts.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made for Spotify: First, address Negative Reactions: Spotify should listen to and analyze user feedback, which is essential for identifying the specific aspects of advertisements that cause negative reactions. This approach helps identify the issues and demonstrates to users that their opinions are valued, fostering a more positive relationship with the platform.

Second, creating Relevant Advertisement Content: Spotify should focus on enhancing the advertisement content by highlighting the benefits and features of a premium account while ensuring that ads are not overly intrusive to minimize negative reactions from users. Third, Optimize Advertisement Frequency and Timing: To minimize negative reactions, it is important to optimize the frequency and timing of advertisements. Avoiding excessive repetition and ensuring ads do not disrupt the listening experience can help maintain a positive user experience.

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