

A Study to Discover the Impact of Viral Marketing on Consumer Behaviour

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Abstract: Viral marketing is modern tool for marketing the products, whereby the information regarding the product or the service is passed through the internet. Dan Zarella a social media scientist, he says that viral marketing is a marketing strategy in which the marketer creates a campaign that focuses on goal spontaneously send it to friends. As we find drastic changes in the field of marketing, viral marketing has emerged as more attractive than ever. Viral marketing is more effective than traditional marketing. By circulating a structured questionnaire to 100 respondents the study makes an attempt to understand the perception of customers with impact on viral marketing. Our main findings were that a) viral marketing creates awareness among customers about the product or service but it does not impact on their purchasing decision, b) most of our respondents were neutral about the security issue, c) customers are more flexible or willing for market services when compared to products, d) most of the respondents tend to share the details of the product or service to the targeted customers, e) the study also shows us that the respondents are aware of viral marketing and they feel that it is more effective than traditional marketing. Therefore this paper helps us to identify the factors driving viral marketing and the impact of viral marketing on consumer's behaviors. A sample size of 100 respondents was taken, and Google forms were circulated to gather primary data.

Keywords: Viral marketing, target customers, marketers, impact, respondents.

1. Introduction

In today's world the power of internet is so vast and strong that people prefer online shopping, Google search for any information and for personal interaction they use social networks like Facebook, Instagram, twitter, etc...hence marketers these days have switched to social networking sites to promote their goods and services so that it may reach the targeted audience. Marketers have taken latest strategy for advertising which has overtaken traditional advertising media like radio, TV, print media, etc. For attracting customers. One of the powerful marketing tools with untapped potential is viral marketing. Marketers mainly use viral marketing to create brand awareness among their customers. The biggest advantage in viral marketing is that the customers while surfing social networks themselves propagates the advertisement of the marketer's product and service. Viral marketing was introduced in a Harvard Business School by professor, Jeffrey Rayport, in December 1996 in an article for Fast Company magazine called

The Virus of Marketing. Viral marketing is a self-publishing web content which spreads to numerous persons. Viral marketing is also known as virtual WOM marketing, word of mouse marketing and marketing buzz. Viral marketing is the most successful and cost-free technique of marketing. Some examples of well-known companies who have used viral marketing are amazon, Hotmail, swiggy, uber, zomato, Ola, etc... and it has paid off big time for them. Through the use of viral marketing business-to-consumer (B2C) has a greater impact than any other tools of marketing. Viral marketing may be in the form of video clips, interactive flash games, eBooks, emails, advergames, images, web pages, text messages or brand able software. The first ever viral marketing was held in Las Vegas in the early 2013.

A. Types of Viral Marketing

1) Pass along

It is the most common type of viral marketing because it encourages the user of social media to pass the message that he received to the targeted customers. The message at the bottom of the email makes the user to forward the message to his or her family and friends. Pass along is more effective when the viral marketing is in the form of video clips, images etc. where people tend to forward. When the users forward such messages, they may receive a reward or incentive. Thus, this type of viral marketing is effective only the user requires the other person to take action.

2) Buzz marketing

It is also known as Edgy Gossip. It is a method where it creates controversy about a product/ service. This makes use of advertisements or messages that create controversy by challenging the readers taste or appropriateness of usage. It is a strategy which involves ads that create controversy that led to gossip or a topic of discussion.

E.g. Sabyasachi's Clothing where all the recent celebrities who got married got their dresses designed by him and hence it created a buzz for his products.

3) Incentivized viral

This type of strategy is used in most of the organization where the user receives a message and forwards it to others they may receive some incentives or gifts or benefits from that organization. In other words it calls the users to take action in order to be awarded. Thus this type of viral marketing is

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effective only the user requires the other person to take action.

4) *Under cover marketing*

It is nothing but were as a viral message or ads that just appears to be a cool or unusual page or a piece of information without any provocation to forward it to others. Most of the times it does not market anything. Due to this the messages are being passes to others in a quiet way. This strategy is also known as stealth marketing. It markets a product or service without specifying the brands name.

5) *Blogs and Podcasts*

Large number of people nowadays uses blog and podcasts. The main advantage of this strategy is that people can not only view the advertisement but also can view the comments. Really simple syndication (RSS) permits the users to get regular update based on subscription which encourages them to visit the website and pass messages to others continuously.

6) *Advantages of viral marketing*

- The highest scope of viral marketing is that it is a cost free technique and also reaches a large number of people at a rapid rate.
- Absence of interruption has been noticed in viral marketing.
- Viral marketing is effective in customer targeting i.e., when a user of social network sees a viral marketing advertisement, most likely the user will pass it to a person whom he /she knows will be interested in it.
- Viral marketing has a potential to reach large customers in a globe at a short period of time.
- By using viral marketing marketers get high and instant responses from customers than in any other marketing strategy

7) *Limitation*

As viral marketing is effective, the following limitations should also be considered before using this method to promote a business:

- One of the main limitations of viral marketing is “nuisance factor”.
- Sometimes viral marketing may create negative buzz instead of positive buzz. People may talk bad about a product or service to others if they don’t like that particular product or service.
- Many people have privacy issues. People may not buy the product or service if the business ask them a lot of personal information. hence the marketers should have a privacy policy.
- Viral marketing is hard to measure, thus marketing campaign must be measurable, so that business owners and managers can determine whether it is effective.

2. Review of Literature

A study on the impact of viral marketing on consumer (Poovika; N.V Kavitha: April 2014) tells us that Viral marketing possesses immense potential as a marketing line of attack and in the future, more companies will try to harness its power and reap the benefits. It will be essential to perform more profound and through research in order to develop even more

successful marketing in future.

Impact of viral marketing message on consumer purchase intention (Md Rakib Hassan: June 2018) Viral marketing message has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention although leaving a good scope of other attributes of viral marketing behind. Several researchers have also worked on similar topic and all of them have summarized that viral marketing message have a positive impact on consumer purchase intention in many different ways.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To study the factors driving viral marketing.
- To study the impact of viral marketing on consumer choices.

4. Scope of the Study

This study can be useful for marketers to know how far the customers are comfortable using viral marketing content. It will also help the marketers or the firm using viral marketing technique to further improve their services to the customers based on real-time opinions of customers.

5. Limitations of the Study

- The study is based on the responses from limited respondents.
- It mainly concentrated on certain particular age groups.
- Time was a major limitation for the study.
- It focused on the respondents who were on some social media.

6. Research Methodology

It is research conducted taking into consideration the primary and the secondary data with proper analysis of the data. The primary data was obtained by taking submitting Google forms and the secondary data was obtained through journals, books and magazines. A sample size of 100 respondents was taken in order to conduct the study. Tools like bar graph, charts were used for analyzing the data and interpreting it to arrive at the conclusion of the study by fulfilling its objectives.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The various charts and graphs presented below are the main factors that focus on the objectives of the paper. These graphs are tabulated and the results are shown, which tells us the various factors that are acting as the driving force of viral marketing and the impact of consumer behavior on consumer choices.

A. Charts and graphs showing the factors driving viral marketing

My decision to purchase product or service is based on the reviews on social media
100 responses

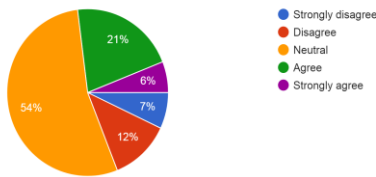


Fig. 1. Showing decision related to purchase of product or service from social media

Inference: From the above chart we can infer that 54% are neutral of the fact whether their decision to purchase is based on reviews on social media, where as 21% agree and 6% strongly agree that their decision to purchase is based on their views on social media. Whereas 12% disagree and 6% disagree that their decision to purchase does not depend on the reviews.

I gather information regarding product or service before going for purchase. specify reasons for Yes or No
100 responses

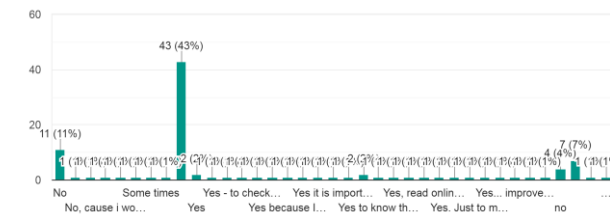


Fig. 2. Showing gathering of information regarding product and services

Inference: From the chart it can be analyzed that 43% sometimes gather their information about the product or service because they want to know the exact details about the product, to make their purchases easy and so on. Whereas 7% say they do not gather information about the product as they just make random purchases.

I don't click on the product or service link which i get because of security reasons
100 responses

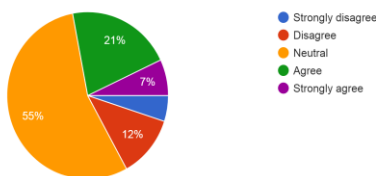


Fig. 3. Showing Security reasons on the product or service

Inference: 55% of the respondents are neutral about the security issues associated with the online marketing data. Whereas 21% agree and 7% strongly agree that do not click on the link of product or service because of security reasons and 12% disagree as they believe that the company has taken the required measures to protect their customers information.

I suggest the product or service that I purchased to others
100 responses

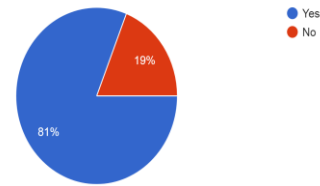


Fig. 4. Showing suggestion of products and services that was purchased to others

Inference: From the above pie chart it can be easily understood that 81% of the respondents suggest and share the responses of the products or services to others and only 19% do not share the details of the product or service. Hence pass along and buzz marketing is used.

B. Charts showing the impact of viral marketing on consumer choices

Viral Marketing technique is very interesting as there is no middlemen required to get the information about the product
100 responses

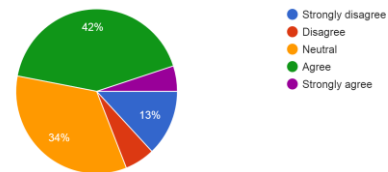


Fig. 5. Showing Viral Marketing technique as there is no middlemen required

Inference: From the above pie chart 42% agree that viral marketing is very interesting as there is no middlemen required to get the information of the product or service and 34% are neutral about the fact. Whereas only 13% disagree that viral marketing is not interesting.

Do you think Viral Marketing is effective?
100 responses

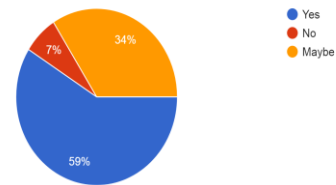


Fig. 6. Showing viral marketing effectiveness

Inference: From the above pie chart 59% of the respondents feel that viral marketing is effective as they get the information of the product in seconds and 34% feel maybe viral marketing is effective and only 7% feel that viral marketing is ineffective.

How many times have you made purchase after viewing an advertisement on social media
100 responses

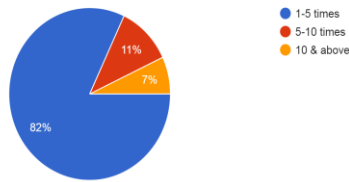


Fig. 7. Showing purchase after viewing an advertisement on social media

Inference: From the above pie chart 82% of the respondents have made purchases at least 1-5 times after viewing advertisements on social media and 11% have made purchases 5-10 times and 7% have made purchases 10 times and above.

8. Findings of the Study

- The study showed that viral marketing creates awareness among customers about the product or service but it does not impact on their purchasing decision.
- It showed that most of our respondents were neutral about the security issue.
- The customers are more flexible or willing for market services when compared to products.
- Most of the respondents tend to share the details of the product or service to the targeted customers.
- The study also shows us that the respondents are aware of viral marketing and they feel that it is more effective than traditional marketing.

9. Suggestions for the Study

A. For the marketers

1. The marketers have to position their product in such a way that it should attract the age group of 21-30 years as the majority of respondents with a maximum percentage of 74% lie in this age group.
2. The marketers should present relevant advertisements according to their desire as it will not make the consumers irritating.
3. The marketers should have adequate content so that it generates interest in it.
4. They should have a control over their advertisements or else the marketing campaign may go in a negative

way which may cause irreparable events to the organization

5. Viral marketing should be created in such a way that it can be measured so that determining the value can become easy.

B. For the consumers

1. The consumers should make sure that their passwords are not saved in
2. the phones data base as there will be chances for data breach and also data theft.
3. When the link has arrived the user should ensure that the personal information's are not revealed.
4. As per the study the consumers should go through the reviews and comments of the desired product or service before purchasing it, so as to avoid unsatisfaction.

10. Conclusion

Viral marketing is a powerful tool that spans across many boundaries and borders. Certain challenges that viral marketing face is spamming, privacy attack etc. but for the growth viral marketing is an indispensable tool. It is often misunderstood as people apply it to any successful enough story without taking into account the word 'viral'. The study tells us that there is an immense shift from traditional marketing to viral marketing. The customers are well aware of the benefits of viral marketing but there is always a fear of privacy issues which the marketers need to take into consideration and take alternative privacy policies into their business. Viral marketing is a major revolution in the marketing sector. It is a very easy mode as the marketer and the business organization can get their targeted customer base. Greater customer satisfaction can be achieved by maintaining good relationship with customers and satisfying their requirements on time.

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