

CUSTOMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS DIGITAL MARKETING: A STRUCTURAL SNAPSHOT ON VIRAL MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

It was the purpose of this survey to find out what people think about viral marketing. This study hypothesises that customers' opinions toward viral marketing are influenced by their perceptions of its utility and their own intrinsic motivations. Customers' perceptions of social media and viral marketing were also evaluated in this research. This study also demonstrated that customers' views of viral marketing are positively correlated with perceived incentives.

Keywords: Consumer Attitudes, Viral Marketing, Incentives, Perceived Informativeness.

JEL Classification: M30, M31, J33, D83.

INTRODUCTION

Viral marketing is a subcategory of internet marketing in general. This kind of marketing strategy encourages people to spread a marketing message to their colleagues and friends, thereby expanding the marketing message's exposure and influence. Viral marketing is an example of this type of marketing strategy (Patel, 2009.). Viruses utilise fast duplication to rapidly distribute a particular message from hundreds to millions of people at once. The Internet's "word of mouth" may be compared to viral marketing. Over the last decade, e-commerce has grown tremendously, making the Internet a more viable distribution strategy (Cheng et al., 2006). New technologies are being developed to fulfil the requirements of the new social environment, which mandates the use of another kind of marketing approach called as viral marketing. It's becoming more fashionable to use "Viral Marketing" tactics on the Internet to "spread the word" and "increase exponentially" (Patel, 2009). In fact, the Internet has created a marketing environment where customers' responses to their purchasing behaviour may be influenced. Internet marketing's impact on consumers' buying choices has been the subject of several studies (Kulkarni & Kannan, 2012). Customers may be more open to marketing methods used by a website if they have a strong emotional connection to that website's media vehicle. A number of elements of internet marketing communications technology are attracting attention. One of the most popular methods of communication is through social media. Even though the majority of marketers are still experimenting with these social networks, they've been fairly interested in them because of their viral marketing potential.

Viral marketing has many benefits over traditional forms of advertising, including lower costs, better relationships between businesses and their customers, and a new

perspective on how products are distributed (Tiago &Tiago, 2012). As a current trend, internet marketing should be considered by companies because of its expected future growth. Manufacturers and retailers are increasingly turning to new media, such as the internet, mobile devices, and social media, for promotional purposes (Naik & Peters, 2009). Thus, technological advancements have affected not just how people get knowledge, but also how they purchase items. Over time, it is certain that it will have a profound effect on the way people interact with one other. Customers' opinions about viral marketing may be used to better assess the effectiveness of the tactic and how it can be improved.

In a marketing context like a brand or retail location, a consumer's thoughts, behavioural intentions, and feelings about particular things are all included in their attitudes (Perner, 2010). The word "*attitude*" encompasses a wide range of concepts, all of which relate to how we organise our mental, emotional, and motivational processes in reaction to our surroundings (Hawkins et al., 2004). This research will use three components to measure attitude: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural.

Consumers Attitude

When it comes to our mental, emotional, and motivational processes, the term "*attitude*" embraces a vast variety of elements (Hawkins & Coney, 2004). In a nutshell, it consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components that work together to form an experience. According to Pride & Ferrell (2005) one's attitude is made up of one's sentiments and knowledge about a certain action or item 1991. Agreeing with one's own beliefs about actions or objects is one of the most important functions of attitude, according to Katz (1960), Grewal, et al. (2000). Customers' sentiments about certain products are considered in marketing contexts like those of a brand or a retail shop (Perner, 2010). Since the consumer's reaction to the product is influenced by these characteristics, it is common to review them together. According to Kotler and Armstrong, a consumer's attitude toward a product is influenced and developed by psychological characteristics such perception, motivation, attitude, personality, education, and belief 2006. To understand marketing, you need to know what your customers want, and what they do to fulfil those desires. Daily, consumers make a plethora of purchasing decisions in order to suit their needs. Customers' buying patterns and attitudes should be examined by marketing professionals in order to find out why, what, how much and where people buy. Marketers use the word "*attitude*" to characterise people's shared views about a certain product or service, as seen in customers' buying and shopping habits were influenced by their mindset. Marketers have a dilemma when trying to understand the emotions of their customers. In order to anticipate client behaviour, perceptive marketers exercise command over their knowledge of customer attitudes. Marketing experts know precisely how to discern between attitudes, beliefs and behaviours while simultaneously leveraging all three in the development of their marketing strategies.

Viral Marketing

Word-of-mouth advertising, often known as "*buzz marketing*," is frequently used interchangeably with "*viral marketing*". As a new idea, viral marketing has a wide range of theories as to how it works (Kurucz, 2008). Voluntary transmission is the primary method through which viral marketing spreads. Kiss & Bichler (2008) describe "*marketing approaches that employ social media to generate brand awareness all the way through*" as "*viral messaging and computer viruses that have the power to self-replicate*." Kim & Lowrey (2010) have defined viral marketing as a marketing tactic or phenomena that promotes and inspires individuals to distribute marketing messages through social media networks among

each other (Kim & Lowrey 2010). It's a new way to promote and advertise businesses by using interactive media and viral marketing. Ferguson (2008) refers to viral marketing as "*Electronic Word of Mouth*," abbreviated as EWOM. Thus, it has developed into a big commercial breakthrough. Viral marketing is described by Palka and colleagues as a marketing message that spreads like an untamed influenza virus.

Marketing through virality is still a relatively new phenomenon and trend. Additionally, it is the oral form of communication that has been transferred to the Internet with the use of new instruments for online discourse. According to Best (2009), a good marketing plan should have the capability of pleasing, maintaining, and recruiting target consumers. For businesses who believed viral marketing could be utilised to exert influence over the consumer market, viral marketing was a significant expectation. However, new study has shown that it is neither as widespread nor as effective as previously believed, especially in terms of encouraging product sales (Leskovec et al., 2007).

E-mail

Marketing a company's product or service through email is known as email marketing, and it encompasses any email sent to potential or present consumers. When asked why consumers sign up for brand emails, the most common response was "*discounts*." Other common responses were "*product or service updates*" and "*respect for the brand*" Blue Hornet. In order for a brand to send relevant messages, consumers are willing to share personal information that they believe is required.

Significance

The rise of Internet technology has enormous promise in this new age. Marketers may minimise the costs of product and service delivery by using viral marketing. It is indisputable that the Internet has effectively revolutionised the way marketing is conceived and perceived during the last decade. This research may help business leaders get a better understanding of customers' opinions about viral marketing. Additionally, it enables them to comprehend how customers' views influence their purchasing intentions. If they have this information, they will be able to successfully market their products or services on the Internet. Viral marketing will be ineffective if marketers ignore customer feelings about it, since consumers will not disseminate the message as intended if this is the case. In today's digital world, many company marketers recognise the need of using internet-based resources. Marketers are unable to properly use viral marketing because they lack expertise and information about client attitudes. Customers' views toward viral marketing should be assessed by business owners, who should then take advantage of the opportunity to sell their goods. The attitudes of clients toward viral marketing must thus be determined. The findings of this research will serve as a guide or set of criteria for viral marketing campaigns.

Objectives

1. To ascertain the existence of a substantial association between customers' attitudes regarding viral marketing and their intention to buy.
2. To determine whether customer attitudes toward viral marketing and perceived levels of informational value are linked.
3. To determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between perceived motivation and consumer attitudes towards viral marketing.
4. There is no correlation between customers' sentiments regarding viral marketing and their desire to buy.
5. There is no correlation between customers' perceptions of informativeness and their attitudes toward viral marketing.

6. There is no correlation between perceived incentives and attitudes toward viral marketing among consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study on consumer views of viral marketing will be carried out in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, as part of this project, which intends to establish client perceptions of viral marketing. Most quantitative research strategies are centred on forecasting in an attempt to increase the relevance of the outcomes obtained from the investigation. Because the results of statistical hypothesis testing lead to generalisations about the features of a population, quantitative techniques are sometimes referred to as deductive approaches. If we look at Vijayawada's views of viral marketing, which of the following better represents that of their customers?

Sampling Design

The respondents in this study are residents of Vijayawada. The questionnaire will be circulated by an easy sampling approach through internet channels such as email and social media. Additionally, a small number of surveys were delivered discreetly. This study will be done in Vijayawada, using customers from the Krishna District of Andhra as the target respondents. They are targeted because their reply provides the greatest evidence that marketing is successful. For instance, customers who have used conventional marketing tools might compare their preferences for traditional marketing against viral marketing online marketing tools, as well as their views about viral marketing. Convenience sampling will be employed in this research and is deemed fairly broad since the target respondents are easily accessible. As a consequence, convenience sampling will be the most suitable sample technique for this study in order to save both time and money.

Sample Size

The research uses a 200-person sample plus a 20-person pilot test sample due to time and budget constraints. The survey's criteria may be met with the amount sample size and pilot test that were used. As a result, 200 sample sizes would be provided to customers around Vijayawada. Additionally, a total of 20 pilot test samples will be conducted prior to distributing a formal survey to responders. The goal of the protest is to elicit substantial comments or revisions from respondents, as they may assist in detecting any difficult or unclear terms included within the questionnaire.

LITERATURE REVIEW

People may access knowledge from all around the world thanks in large part to the internet (Mt. Caesar Union Library Association, 2007). Online clients may now interact with one another in a social network that is ever-evolving. People may connect and interact with one another through social networking sites and applications. When it comes to internet marketing, it has been more popular in recent years. Many companies may benefit from using social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter in order to quickly get millions of views (Pura, 2013). The use of social media in business is becoming more widespread Omega Group Corporation; it is possible that many businesses will gain from the use of social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter in order to swiftly get millions of views (Pura, 2013). Businesses may engage with their customers using social media marketing, which is a departure from the one-way communication of conventional media (Matthews,

2010). As a result, millions of individuals utilise social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and MySpace BlogSpot on a daily basis. In addition, a website may have discussion boards or a chat room to encourage visitors to participate and communicate with one another. As you can see, viral marketing makes extensive use of social media. A social network or social media platform may also be used to maintain customers for future purchases since it may enhance the user experience and so assist earn and retain customers (Yap, 2011).

When assessing the effectiveness of a marketing campaign, it is essential that it be informative (Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011). It is possible to define informativeness as a marketing message's ability to give relevant and useful information to consumers (Waldt et al., 2009; Ducoffe, 1996) and its power to boost consumer enjoyment. Perceived usefulness and currency of information are two further ways to describe perceived informativeness (Oh & Xu, 2006). The role of marketing in the distribution of information cannot be overstated (Ling et al., 2010). Customers' enthusiasm for online advertising is attributed to its informativeness, which helps them make purchase decisions (Tsang et al., 2004). Because of this, marketers want to disseminate instructional marketing messages through viral marketing (Gordon & Turner, 1997). The ability of marketing to give clients with information that is relevant to their needs may be operationalized as informativeness in the context of this study. Viral marketing tactics are often used to increase the usefulness, accuracy, and timeliness of information for customers (Siau & Shen, 2003).

Studies have shown, according to Varshney (2003) that people are more likely to respond positively to marketing messages when they see knowledge as a vital source of inspiration. The goal of an educational campaign is to keep customers informed about the current product while also introducing them to potential future offerings (Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011). It is important to provide timely, accurate, and valuable information in a viral marketing message in order to encourage positive consumer attitudes. Customer rage may ensue when marketers use tactics that anger, offended, or insulted them. Consumers will grow upset if viral marketing messages are too false, and they will acquire negative impressions of it (Palka et al., 2009; Haghirian et al., 2005). Viral marketing messages that incorporate material that is likely to confuse, distract, or overload recipients may also be unwelcome by consumers. Because they cause irritation, consumers' opinions toward promotional tools tend to worsen as the number of spam and other promotional messages rises.

An irritation is defined as a message that offends the consumer's values (Oh & Xu, 2006). In the marketing world, irritation is defined as tactics that annoy, offend, insult, or manipulate consumers unduly (Waldt et al., 2009; Ducoffe, 1996). Marketers' efforts to compete for the attention of consumers were frequently seen as unpleasant by consumers. As a result, clients are more likely to have a positive view of viral marketing if they get messages that are not bothersome (Saadeghvaziri & Hosseini, 2011; Muzaffar & Kamran, 2011). But if a client finds a marketing message to be too irritating, they are more likely to disregard it. Customers' perceptions of viral marketing will be affected if a person experiences embarrassment when being approached by advertising (Shavitt et al., 1998).

Data Analysis

		Consumer Purchase Intention	Consumer Attitude
Consumer Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	1	.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	200	200
Consumer Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.292**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	200	200

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.753 ^a	0.567	0.565	0.45707

R squares reflect how much variance in a dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables, according to Tables 1 & 2. Independent factors (Consumers' Attitude) have been demonstrated to explain 56.5 percent of the variance in the dependent variable (Consumer Purchase Intention). 43.5 percent of the conclusions of this research, on the other hand, remain a mystery. These data imply that other variables impacting customer purchase intention exist but were not discovered during this investigation. The correlation coefficient between the dependent and independent variables is also known as R. This study's R-value is 0.753, indicating that the independent and dependent variables are highly and positively associated.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54.232	1	54.232	259.591	0.000 ^a
	Residual	41.365	198	0.209		
	Total	95.597	199			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Consumers' Attitude.
- b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase Intention.

According to Table 3, a p-value of 0.000 is less than an alpha value of 0.01. The F-statistic is used in combination with it to assess if the variances of two variables' mean values are substantially different. Research does not need the use of F-statistics. However, establishing the p-value is essential if you want to know whether or not your results are meaningful. It is clear from the F-statistic that the model utilised in this study accurately depicted the connection between the two variables. A significant amount of variance in

Consumer Purchase Intention may be attributed to the independent variables (Consumers' Attitude), thereby supporting the alternative hypothesis.

Correlations			
		Consumer Attitude	Perceived Informativeness
Consumer Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	0.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.448
	N	200	200
Perceived Informativeness	Pearson Correlation	0.043	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.548	
	N	200	200

According to the findings in Table 4, there is no relationship between perceived informative value and customer attitude. There is no relationship between consumer sentiments and perceived informativeness since the p-value 0.000 is smaller than the alpha value 0.01. Perceived informativeness has a correlation value of 0.043 with the variable consumer attitudes. Customer attitude seems to be weakly associated with informational perceived usefulness, as shown by a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.043.

Correlations			
		Consumer Attitude	Perceived Incentives
Consumer Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	0.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	200	200
Perceived Incentives	Pearson Correlation	0.292**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	200	200

Table 5 showed a positive correlation coefficient between consumer attitude and perceived incentives, as revealed by the results. The association between perceived incentives and customer attitudes is significant since the p-value 0.000 is smaller than the alpha value 0.01. Using a correlation value of 0.292, the perceived incentive is linked to the customer's attitude. In this way, customers' attitudes rise when they perceive an incentive to be high. Additionally, according to convention, the correlation value of 0.292 is within the range of 0.210 to 0.040, showing a moderate link between consumer attitude and perceived incentives.

CONCLUSION

Similarly, this research determined consumers' attitudes regarding viral marketing and evaluated an output of consumer buy intent. To better identify customer purchase intentions, the paradigm of attitude assessment regarding viral marketing was extensively investigated. In summary, this research may aid firm executives in developing a thorough understanding of customers' views regarding viral marketing while also assisting them in determining how consumers' attitudes impact their buy intention. They will be able to effectively sell their goods or services over the Internet if they have this information. In today's digital world, many company marketers recognise the need of using internet-based resources. However, marketers are unable to employ viral marketing to its full potential because of a misunderstanding of client attitudes caused by a lack of information and expertise. Entrepreneurs are able to ascertain customers' views regarding viral marketing and use them to sell their goods and increase consumer buy intention.

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