

A STUDY ON CUSTOMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS VIRAL MARKETING WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

A company always looks forward to reach their target audience in different ways to make an impact on them, generate sales and accomplish their goals. Viral marketing is that tool which has proven to be effective in attaining these goals of an organization. Therefore, this research study gives an overview of this powerful tool called viral marketing. The researcher made a questionnaire to collect responses of the consumers and understand their perception towards digital viral marketing. The questionnaire was made through google form consisting of questions related to the medium and factors that were associated with digital viral marketing. This research study tries to examine which digital platform is most effective for viral marketing and what are the attributes which helps the marketing go viral, along with how effective is advertisement in comparison to sales promotion measures for viral marketing.

Keywords- Digital, social media platform, marketing, consumer.

INTRODUCTION

The legendary Greek philosopher Aristotle has said, "Man is by nature, a social animal", which means he shares and communicates. Viral Marketing is hugely based on this concept.

It means passing on a message from one person to another. It has been explained in Viral Marketing Online (2001) that it is a form of advertising that spreads itself like a virus. Therefore, it can be viewed as a concept that refers to an information or a message that disseminates to other people because the first receiver liked it and decided to send it to others. A.Abbas(2020) stated in his research paper that viral marketing is one of the most important strategies that a brand or a company can rely on and also stated that viral marketing is a consumer-driven marketing.

Reaching of a brand message to the target audience can be made simpler through viral marketing. In these times, when new companies are emerging with various product concepts and ideas, and also alternatives of existing products, connecting and engaging with target audience is quite necessary for the brand.

Objective of viral marketing is to motivate people to share a marketing message to friends, family and others to create a high growth in numbers of its recipients. Larger the audience, more chance to leave an impact. Here the users themselves advertise the product or the service along with the brand. The eventual goal of the marketers interested in creating successful viral marketing programs is to create content that garners interest of people that spread the brand's message to others.

The marketing landscape is rapidly becoming more digital, largely due to improvements in digitalization sector; marketing has dramatically changed. The right medium of marketing is critical to manage. For something to get spread and be talked about, it must be creative and engaging enough to garner and hold the attention of the consumers. Consumers are the biggest advertisers and an important element of viral marketing, so the medium to reach them and the marketing done for them should be right. Increasing competition and new techniques has made it necessary for brands to not only reach out to their target audience but also leave an impact on them. Hence the correct medium is very necessary for a brand to be impactful.

Viral Marketing requires a medium just like any other form of communication and advertising. The two most basic mediums are Word of Mouth and Word of Mouse.

Word of mouth is passing of information from one person to another through oral communication. Before internet existed, word of mouth was one of the very few mediums of viral marketing but with ever evolving internet and digitalization, marketing has taken a turn.

Word of mouse means passing of a message about a company through digital means. It includes digital platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and E-mails. These are some of the fastest means, by a message can spread to a large audience. Though word of mouth is also effective, word of mouse engages large number of people at the same time.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Jonah Berger, a Wharton Professor in his book *Contagious: Why Things Catch On* (2010) stated that the products get viral when STEPPS are followed which stands for Social Currency, Triggers, Emotions, Public, Practical Value and Stories. According to him these six factors are key to make anything go viral.
2. Duncan J. Watts, Jonah Peretti, and Michael Frumin in their research paper *Viral Marketing for the Real World* (2007) have pointed that large organizations should not rely on Viral Marketing to disseminate the word about their products or brands. They instead proposed a new model "Big Seed Marketing."
3. *The Dynamics of Viral Marketing* (2008) by Jure Leskovec, Lada A. Adamic and Bernardo A. Huberman has explained Viral Marketing as diffusion of information about the product or the service and its adoption over the network. The conclusion of this paper says that marketers hoping to develop marketing strategies for word-of-mouth marketing should analyze the topology and interest of their target audience.
4. JYC Ho, M Dempsey in his research paper *Viral Marketing: Motivations to Forward Online Content* has detailed with conclusion that e-Word-of-mouth; that is word-of-mouse is the most relevant to current practices of viral marketing.
5. Rohan Miller and Natalie Lammas in their research paper- *Social Media and its implications for viral marketing* (2010) has explained that social media is a powerful medium for finding key consumer influencers, engaging them and generating brand awareness. But to implement viral marketing using online word-of-mouth trust must be established and then reinforce in order to overcome any hesitation in the would-be consumer.

OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize and identify the factors that facilitate viral marketing.
2. To evaluate the effect of internet on viral marketing
3. To analyze the most effective medium for viral marketing.
4. To study its impact on brand.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Source of data collection-

1. **Primary data-** A structured questionnaire was prepared in Google Forms with most questions based on Likert scale. It was conducted in reference to Mumbai. The questionnaire consisted of questions, including three demographic questions. The data collected 207 responses.
2. **Secondary Data-** The researcher collected secondary data through journals, research papers, books and articles.

Significance of the Study-

- The study undertaken by the researcher is to understand the digital ways of viral marketing by collecting data directly from the consumers.
- This study will show how much different attributes of marketing are responsible for it to go viral.
- The research study signifies how important viral marketing and how it can be implemented with the right medium.

Limitation of the Study-

- The study conducted by the researcher is limited only to city of Mumbai.
- The responses collected for this research paper are only 207.
- The respondents may or may not be genuine, which could have affected the study.

Scope of the Study-

- This research study has taken various factors and more than 200 respondents gave their perception, which can be beneficial for organizations looking for creating marketing campaign that may help in getting them viral.
- Since the scope of this research study is limited to the factors and medium for viral marketing in reference to Mumbai. For future study, more factors can be taken into consideration with a wider area.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table No.1 Demographic Profile

Parameters	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	14 – 20	91	44%
	21- 27	40	19.3%
	28- 34	28	13.5%
	35- 42	26	12.6%
	43- 49	21	10.1%
	50 and above	1	0.5
	Total	207	100
Gender	Female	118	57%
	Male	89	43%
	Total	207	100

Source: Primary Data

Table no.1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents, it indicates that out of 207 respondents 91 fall in 14- 20 age group, 40 between age group of 21- 27. About 28 respondents fall in the age group of 28- 34, 26 between the 35- 42 age group, 21 respondents fall in the age group of 43- 49 and only 1 respondent in category of 50 and above. Along with it this table also indicates that out of 207 respondents 57% are females and 43% are males.

Table no. 2 Familiarity and engagement

Parameters	Category	Frequency	Percentage
How familiar are you with the term 'Viral Marketing'?	Not at all familiar	5	2.4%
	Slightly familiar	34	16.4%
	Moderately familiar	102	49.3%
	Very Familiar	59	28.5%
	Extremely familiar	7	3.4%
	Total	207	100
How often do you engage or participate in viral marketing by talking or forwarding?	Never	8	3.9%
	Rarely	30	14.5%
	Sometimes	86	41.5%
	Often	77	37.2%
	Always	6	2.9%
	Total	207	100

Source: Primary Data

Table No.2 explains familiarity and engagement of consumers in and about viral marketing. In respect to the parameter of familiarity with the term 'Viral Marketing', out of 207 respondents – 2.4% are not at all familiar, 16.4% are slightly familiar whereas 49.3% respondents are moderately familiar, 28.5% are very familiar and only 3.4% are extremely familiar. Summarizing this data, we can interpret that more than 50% of the respondents are familiar with the term 'viral marketing'.

In respect to how often the consumers engage or participate in viral marketing, out of 207 respondents- 3.9% of them have never engaged in viral marketing, 14.5% of them have rarely engaged, 41.5% have sometimes engaged whereas 37.2% of respondents have often engaged in viral marketing and 2.9% of them have always engaged in it.

Table No. 3 Social Media for Viral Marketing

Parameter	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Viral Marketing is more effective if done through social media (digitally)-	Strongly Disagree	1	0.5%
	Disagree	5	2.4%
	Neutral	48	23.2%
	Agree	117	56.5%
	Strongly Agree	36	17.4%

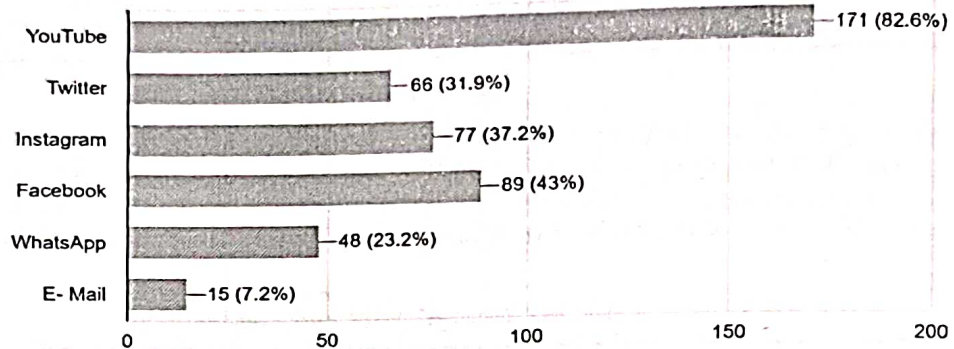
	Total	207	100
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Source: Primary Data

Table No. 3 indicates the number of respondents that agree or disagree with viral marketing being more effective if done through social media. Out of 207 respondents, 0.5% of them strongly disagree, 2.4% disagree, 23.2% remain neutral on this whereas 56.5% agree and 17.4% strongly agree that when done through social media, viral marketing is more effective.

Figure No. 1 Digital Platform with most appealing marketing related message

On which digital platform do you find the most appealing marketing message ?
 207 responses

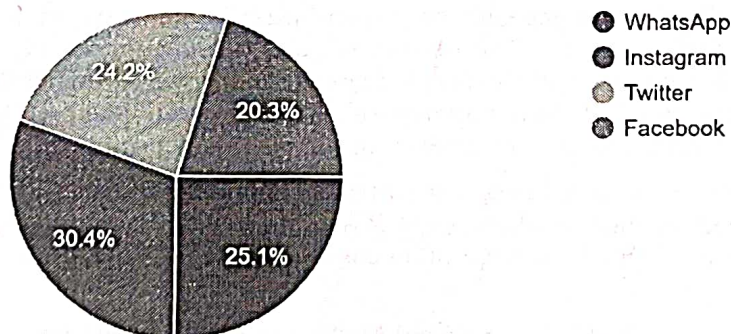


Source: Primary Data

The objective of the question in the Figure No. 1, was to know which digital platform according to the respondents has the most appealing marketing message. In this horizontal bar graph, the x-axis represents the number of respondents and y-axis represents the digital platforms. Here the respondents could select more than one option. According to the data with 171 respondents, YouTube has the most appealing marketing message, followed by Facebook with 89 respondents selecting it. Further, 77 respondents have selected Instagram, 66 of them selected Twitter, 48 respondents selected WhatsApp and 15 respondents selected E-Mail.

Figure No. 2

Which social media platform do you prefer to use more to pass on a marketing message?
 207 responses



Source: Primary Data

The pie chart in Figure No. 2 represents which social media platform does the consumer prefer to use more to pass on a marketing related message. Out of 207 respondents, 30.4% agreed on using Instagram, 25% agreed on using WhatsApp, 20.3% chose Twitter whereas 20% responded with selecting Facebook as their preferred medium to pass on a marketing related message.

Table No. 4

Parameter	Category	Frequency	Percentage
What attribute of the marketing message or the advertisement makes you pass it on ahead?	Emotion	77	37.2%
	Usefulness	50	22.7%
	Humor	19	9.2%
	Story shown in the advertisement	64	30.9%
	Total	207	100

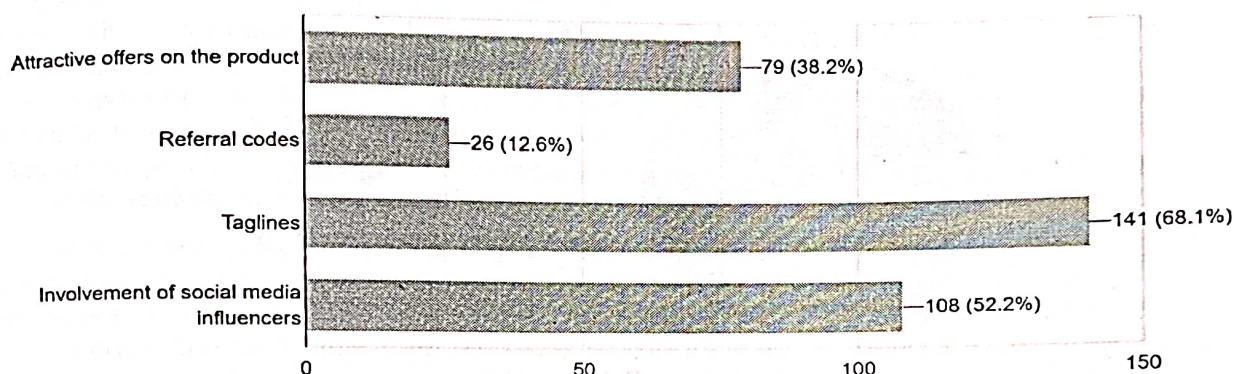
Source: Primary Data

The above Table No.4 indicates which attribute of the marketing message makes them pass it on ahead. Out of 207 respondents, 77 of them agreed on emotion as that attribute, 50 of them selected usefulness of the message as that attribute, 19 of them agreed upon humor as that attribute and 64 of them selected story shown in the advertisement as that attribute.

Figure No. 3

Which attribute of the marketing campaign other than the advertisement according to you is responsible for viral marketing?

207 responses



Source: Primary Data

The above Figure No. 3 is a horizontal bar graph that shows which attribute of the marketing campaign other than advertisement is responsible for viral marketing, according to the consumer. In this question, respondent could select one or more option. The x- axis represents the number of respondents and y- axis represents the attribute other than advertisement responsible for viral marketing. According to the data, tagline is the most responsible attribute of marketing other than advertising, with 141 respondents choosing it. The next one is involvement of social media influencers, 108 respondents agreed on it. Attractive offer on the product was selected by 79 respondents and referral codes was chosen by 26 respondents.

Table No. 5

Parameter	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Advertisement is a stronger influence on viral marketing than sales promotional measures-	Strongly Disagree	6	2.9%
	Disagree	31	15%
	Agree	129	62.3%
	Strongly Agree	41	19.8%
	Total	207	100

Source: Primary Data

The above Table No. 5 represents the frequency and percentage of respondents that agree or disagree with the statement- 'Advertisement is a stronger influence on viral marketing than sales promotional measures.' Out of 207 respondents, 2.9% strongly disagree with this statement, 15% disagree, 62.3% agree and 19.8% strongly agree with this statement. Interpreting this data it can be said that more than most respondents do agree the above statement.

Table No. 6

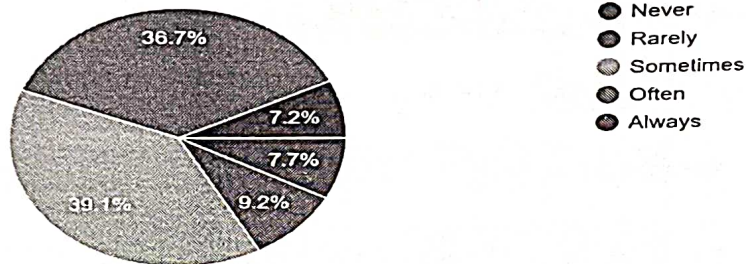
Parameters	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Has viral marketing of a product changed your perspective towards it?	Never	10	4.8%
	Rarely	18	8.7%
	Sometimes	78	37.7%
	Often	88	42.5%
	Always	13	6.3%
	Total		207

Source: Primary Data

The Table no. 6 represents the frequency and percentage of consumers whose perspective towards a product changed because of its viral marketing. Out of 207 respondents, for 4.8% viral marketing never changed their perspective towards a product, for 8.7% viral marketing rarely changed their perspective towards a product. At the same time, for 42.5% for 37.7% viral marketing sometimes changed their perspective towards it and for 6.3% respondents viral marketing of a product often changed their perspective towards it.

Figure No. 4

Do you actually purchase the product which has been advertised through viral marketing?
 207 responses



Source: Primary Data

The pie chart in the Figure No. 4 represents the number of respondents that actually purchase the product which has been advertised through viral marketing. 7.7% respondents never purchase the product which has been advertised through viral marketing, 9.2% respondents rarely purchase the products which has been advertised through viral marketing, 39.1% respondents sometimes purchase the products which has been advertised through viral marketing whereas 36.2% respondents often purchase the products which has been advertised through viral marketing and 7.2% respondents often purchase the products which has been advertised through viral marketing.

Table No. 7

Parameters	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Are you satisfied from the product you purchased through viral marketing?	Not Satisfied	5	2.4%
	Slightly Satisfied	27	13%
	Moderately Satisfied	66	31.9%
	Satisfied	71	34.3%
	Completely Satisfied	21	10.1%
	Not applicable	17	8.2%
Total		207	100

Source: Primary Data

The Table No. 7 indicates the satisfaction level of consumers in respect to the products purchased through viral marketing. Out of 207 respondents, 2.4% were not satisfied at all, 13% were slightly satisfied, 31.9% were moderately satisfied, 34.3% were satisfied, 10.1% were completely satisfied and for 8.2% respondents this question was not applicable as they never purchased any product through viral marketing.

FINDINGS-

1. It is found that most people are familiar with Viral Marketing, in fact most of them also participate in it.
2. It has been observed that Viral Marketing is quite effective if done through social media.
3. The study shows that among the digital platforms - YouTube has the most appealing marketing related messages followed by Facebook.
4. According to the data collected, Instagram is used by many respondents to pass on a marketing related message, followed by WhatsApp.
5. This study reveals that emotion in the marketing message is that attribute which makes it pass it on ahead.
6. It has been found that other than the advertisement, taglines of the product are responsible for the marketing to go viral.
7. The study also indicates that advertisement is a stronger influence on viral marketing than sales promotional measures.
8. Analysis the data collected; it can be said that viral marketing of a product does change the perspective of the consumers towards it.
9. The data indicates that most of the consumers do purchase the product which has been advertised through viral marketing and most of them are satisfied from the product.

CONCLUSION-

This study's aim was to understand the right medium for doing viral marketing digitally and to identify the attribute which makes it go viral. The right medium and the right attribute is the key to make the marketing go viral. The purpose of this research paper has been completed. It can be concluded that viral marketing when done digitally is quite effective. Social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp are major platforms where most appealing marketing related message are found. Most consumers use Instagram to forward the marketing related message or talk about it.

To conclude, the research has shown that viral marketing of a product can change how an individual perceives it. Along with this it can also help the company generate sales because change in perception of a product leads the consumers to purchase it. Most of the times consumers are satisfied too with the product which has been purchased through viral marketing. Viral marketing is quite effective in making the consumers aware about the product and can also help in the changing their perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to understand that viral marketing when done in a correct way, turns about to be effective and helps consumer identify the products.

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