Challenges Of Viral Marketing With Respect To Brand Reputation

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Abstract
Viral marketing is the technology that creates a positive or negative buzz around a brand, product, or service. It can be delivered by word of mouth or can be enhanced by the effects of the internet and mobile networks. This paper discusses the process and methods of viral marketing and focuses on the challenges of viral marketing in brand reputation. This paper is conceptual in nature. The study analyses that successful viral marketing campaigns are comprised of an engaging message that involves imagination, fun, innovative, useful and encourages ease of use and the visibility targets credible sources. The conclusion shows that successful viral marketing campaign should perceive value in the transmission and consider it worthy of passing the importance of brand message to others. Key words: Consumers, Brand Reputation, Network, Viral marketing. Word of mouth.

INTRODUCTION
Viral marketing is any strategy that delights individuals and prompts them to enthusiastically pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure and influence. Like viruses, viral marketing strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands, to millions (Kirby& Marsden, 2006). Viral marketing has also been referred to as "word-of-mouth or “buzz marketing. Viral marketing the technology creates a positive or negative buzz around a brand, product, or service. Marketing a brand through various channels on the Internet is some of the easiest and most cost-effective strategies any business owner can undertake. As inexpensive and easy as some of the methods of online marketing can be, business owners still need to move forward with a plan to get the best results. Part of any business/brand building campaign must include video content, and the prospect of that video going viral. A consumer invites other consumers to visualize the viral message and also the products/services it illustrates, if consumers accept they will perform the same action of the initial consumer by spreading the message to other consumers. This aspect represents an important advantage for companies to increase their sales and brand awareness or generate long time consumer’s dialogue. So it is very important for companies that want to spread their business among the target audience to plan a good on-line viral marketing campaign.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:
According to Patrizia Grifoni (2012) a mix of methods (M-marketing, social networks, viral marketing etc) to create awareness for the company’s brand, products and services. It provides a theoretical framework involving elements and factors important for the planning of an on-line viral marketing campaign.

Dr.Ralph.F.Wilson, (2005) stated that the effective viral marketing strategy consists of six elements. They are Gives away products and services, provide for effortless transfer to others, scales easily from small to very large, exploit common motivations and behaviors, utilizing existing communication and networks, takes advantage of other resources.

In the view of Angela Dobele (2005) the successful viral marketing campaigns are comprised of an engaging message that involves imagination, fun and intrigue encourages ease of use and visibility, targets credible sources and leverages combinations of technology.
According to Maria Woerndl, (2008) five type of viral marketing factors that may critically influence the success of viral marketing campaigns are identified. These factors are the overall structure of the campaign, the characteristics of the product or services, the content of the message, the characteristics of the diffusion and the peer-to-peer Information contents.

Lance Porter and Guy J. Golan, (2010) stated that More than traditional advertising, Viral advertising relies on provocative content to motivate unpaid peer-to-peer communication of persuasive messages from identified sponsors. While emotive content has always been the key to capturing audience’s attention in advertising, viral advertising relies on increasingly raw content for actual distribution.

According to Abed Abedniya and Sahar sabbaghi mahmouei, (2010) the role of social network websites which has influence on viral marketing, and the characteristics of the most influential users to spread, share viral content. Structural equation modeling is used to examine the patterns of inter-correlations among the constructions and to empirically test the hypotheses.

V.Antony Joe Raja (2012) stated that how viral marketing spreads rapidly with a zero cost technique of social network and the significance of employing e-commerce strategy to it. The basic characteristics includes effortless transfer to others, scales easily from small to very large, exploits common motivations and behaviors, utilizes existing communication networks, takes advantage of others resources.

ELEMENTS OF VIRAL MARKETING:
FIG 1: ELEMENTS OF VIRAL MARKETING


The above figure illustrate that most viral marketing programs give away valuable products or services to attract attention. A viral marketing message must be easy to transfer and replicate via email, website, graphic, or software downloads. It spread like wildfire; the transmission method must be rapidly scalable from small to very large. Clever viral marketing plans take advantage of common human motivation. The most creative viral marketing plans use others resources to get the word out. Utilizing existing communication networks person’s broader network may consist of scores, hundreds or thousands of people, depending upon his or her position in society.
BENEFITS AND RISKS OF VIRAL MARKETING:

One important benefit of viral marketing is that viral marketing is relatively inexpensive in comparison to many other forms of advertising and marketing campaigns. The other major benefit of viral marketing is it reaches the audiences within a short period of time as messages spread exponentially at a fast speed. This rapid diffusion can significantly boost the speed of the adoption of the marketed product or service. Viral marketing makes use of peer-to-peer transmission. In addition, viral marketing can help achieve substantial audience reach as marketers get access to diverse audiences through social contacts and can profit from effective targeting.

Table 1: Potential benefits of Viral Marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Inexpensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Diffusion speed</td>
<td>Reaches audience within a short period of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rapid, fast diffusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boosts adoption speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exponential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peer-to-peer transmission</td>
<td>Voluntary transmission by sender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Audience reach</td>
<td>More effective targeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Access to diverse audience through social contacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Internet-induced marketing techniques

There are risks and challenges that marketers have to face when engaging in viral marketing campaigns. Probably the biggest risk is the lack of control associated with viral marketing campaigns: organisations have no means of controlling the spread of the message and the content of the transmission. The receivers of a message may even consider the transmission as ‘spam’. With this lack of control comes the potential of a negative impact from a viral campaign. Negativity can occur through backlash and unfavorable word-of-mouth, and may result in a negative brand image, product or service boycott, unfavorable attributes associated with the organization and its products and services, hate sites etc. A lack of legal standards in terms of viral marketing is another potentially risky issue. The dependency on the consumer for message transmission is a further risk as consumers, for example, may want a return from the organization for passing on a viral message. The final risk to be considered when engaging in viral marketing campaigns is the lack of ethical standards consumers may feel exploited, cheated, and used and may view viral messages as an invasion of their privacy.

Table 2: Risks associated with viral marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Potential Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of control</td>
<td>• Uncontrollable in nature, only few possibilities to measure success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Total loss of control in particular content and timing &amp;audience reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of control mechanisms: No control over distortion processes. E.g. information passed by consumers might be filtered, incomplete, and biased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Adverse selection of customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential negative impact</td>
<td>• Risk of backlash and negative brand impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negative word-of-mouth can happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negative WOM leading to boycott, ruin, unfavorable attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May lead to negative perceptions of brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer dependency</td>
<td>• Consumers unwilling to provide referrals unless there is some return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of legal standards</td>
<td>• Emerging legal issues have to be considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ethical standards</td>
<td>• Consumers may feel exploited, cheated, used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emerging ethical issues have to be considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumer privacy invasion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Internet-induced marketing techniques, 2008
SOCIAL NETWORKS

Companies want to use social media to create more awareness around a brand or product. But one pitfall is thinking that just because promoting a campaign online, it will “go viral.” While YouTube has been around since 2005, it didn’t become a huge marketing tool until much more recently. Social networks evolved quickly over a short period of time. They began in the 1970s with bulletin board systems, but did not really start to take off until the early 2000s. They are valuable to marketers as a means of building relationships with customers, providing product information, and learning about consumer needs. As online social networking expands in popularity, marketers are using the venue to contact new target markets—especially the difficult-to-reach teen and young adult market. Online social networks are popular around the globe. The Internet and the World Wide Web have become two key components in today’s technology based organizations and business. As the internet becoming more and more popular it is starting to make a big impact on people’s day to day life. As a result of this revolutionary transformation towards the modern technology, social networking on the World Wide Web has become lives. Social networks are websites which allow users to communicate, share knowledge about similar interests, discuss favorite topics, review and rate products/services, etc. These websites have become a powerful source in shaping public opinion on virtually every aspect of commerce.

FIG: 5 TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Source: www.social media.com

**Face book**
Became the largest social networking site in the world in 2008, with a third of all Internet users having visited the site. Appeals to a broad demographic, making it a great resource for marketers. The fastest growing demographic on Face book is women over 55. Users can become a “fan” of products and companies they like. Encourages consumer interaction with companies. Good resource for small companies because it is an economical way to advertise

**MySpace**
Predates Face book was once the largest social networking site until Face book surpassed it. It has a reputation for being more of a dating network than Face book. It is available in many different languages.
LinkedIn
A social networking site for professionals is the fifth-largest social networking site. A profile resembles a résumé. Facilitates job searches and recruiting. Companies use the site to familiarize users with their business.

Twitter
Is a hybrid social networking and micro-blogging site. Companies use Twitter to announce sales, promotions, and updates on products and services. It can help to (re)build customer relationships. It can give companies a competitive advantage.

Blogs
*Blogs* (web-logs) are web-based journals through which authors can editorialize and interact with other Internet users. Two-thirds of Internet users read blogs, and over half of bloggers say that they will blog about products they strongly like or dislike. Blogs give consumers power over companies because companies cannot control what bloggers write. Blogs represent a marketing opportunity, as they give firms an opportunity to address consumer concerns or to defend their corporate reputations.

Photo Sharing
Flicker is the most popular photo sharing website, but there are many. Photo sharing provides an opportunity for companies by enabling them to display snapshots of company events, staff, and products. Photo sharing sites allow users to upload, edit, and share photos. Helps to add a “personal touch” to businesses

Video Sharing
Video sharing allows anyone who wishes to upload videos to the Internet to do so. YouTube is the most popular, but hundreds of other video sharing sites exist. Viral marketing is a marketing tool that utilizes the Internet, especially video sharing and social networking sites, to spread a message and create brand awareness. Campaigns that successfully go viral are transmitted rapidly around the Internet with no help from the marketer. Marketers increasingly use consumer-generated content for ad campaigns, rather than for hiring ad executives.

**BRAND REPUTATION THROUGH VIRAL MARKETING**
Any advertising campaign to increase brand awareness especially with the introduction of new brands, target markets being exposed to a new brand is an important step for the product life cycle. It is actually the first step because only after brand awareness unaided brand recall, brand recognition, and then finally, after people become repeat users, brand loyalty. One interesting and fairly new way of increasing brand awareness is through viral marketing. Viral marketing has been around for a long time in the form of word-of-mouth marketing, but has transformed with the introduction of the internet. Now it can be defined as a technique to encourage a large amount of people to pass on a marketing message. Viral marketing comes in many forms including videos, emails, gossip, and can even be found in social media sites. In order to make any viral marketing campaign successful, it must contain relevant information that people think is interesting enough to pass on to friends or family. Advertising companies have accomplished this by adopting techniques such as incorporating humor, using current events, using unique content, and using content that can be helpful to people. Viral marketing campaigns that include this kind of information will not only encourage people to pass it along, but will help the consumer remember the marketing message. Because of viral marketing, we aware of brands such as Jack Link’s Beef Jerky, the International Music Festival (IMF), and Dove. Viral marketing not only makes people aware of your brand, it helps shape the brand’s personality and it helps people form opinions about the brand. This is important because brand loyalty can only occur after someone forms an opinion. And, a brand having a unique or highly developed personality will help it to be the prominent choice for consumers. Viral marketing is a great tool for companies to use to get the word out about their brand and their line of products. This
form of marketing helps to get people acquainted with the brand and helps people to recognize the brand in the future.

**Example:**
The Ice Bucket Challenge, sometimes called the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, is an activity involving dumping a bucket of ice water on someone's head to promote awareness of the disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and encourage donations to research. It went viral on social media during July–August 2014. In the US, many people participate for the ALS Association, and in the UK, many people participate for the Motor Neurone Disease Association, although some individuals have opted to donate their money from the Ice Bucket Challenge to other organizations. The challenge encourages nominated participants to be filmed having a bucket of ice water poured on their heads and then nominating others to do the same. A common stipulation is that nominated participants have 24 hours to comply or forfeit by way of a charitable financial donation. Startups, established firms and marketers of all types can learn from the success of the Ice Bucket Challenge. Those trying to develop a viral campaign can take the following steps:

1. **Identify the goal or cause.**
The goal of the Ice Bucket Challenge has been to spread awareness and raise funds for ALS research and its success has exceeded initial expectations. The objective is simple and clear and the challenge doesn’t require much effort from participants: going online to donate or pouring a bucket of ice water over the head, or both. Today’s consumers like simplicity and direct messaging. They typically won’t take the time to read through an entire article, newsletter or web page to understand a message.

2. **Make it fun and easy.**
Few things are funnier than seeing people have ice poured all over them and watching them cringe, scream or freeze in place. The web has been flooded with comical videos and images of those who have accepted the challenge. People like to laugh, so keep members of the audience entertained with a video or photo that they would enjoy viewing. Keeping things lighthearted lets people connect with an organization on a human level and can encourage further engagement in an authentic way.

3. **Add immediacy.**
Those asked to take the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge have only 24 hours to do so. If we want an idea to flourish, keep the window of time brief to propel the process forward rapidly. By giving the audience a deadline, the initiative will become a greater priority.

4. **Understand the power of multiplication.**
The ALS challenge calls on participants to encourage three additional people to participate, thus creating a multiplier effect. When possible, let consumers involved in an initiative have a chance to engage with their network so as to experience the joy of others joining in. The bonus for a marketer is bringing increased exposure to a company's brand.

5. **Share on many platforms.**
News of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge is being shared on many social-media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Hoping for an idea or campaign to go viral, make it easy for others to share updates across multiple platforms. Don’t give people a reason to not become involved.

6. **Give participants a chance to feel good.**
Everyone loves to feel a little better about himself (or herself). The Ice Bucket Challenge raises funds for a medical cause, and no matter the size of a donation, participants can feel good because they're helping others in need. Plus, the challenge gives participants a sense of unity: They are sharing positive feelings and a goal with the rich and famous. Setting up an initiative like this lets participants also allow for an emotional connection with an organization and opens up an opportunity for conversation.

**CONCLUSION**
Today’s consumers like simplicity and direct messaging. They typically won’t take the time to read through an entire article, newsletter or web page to understand a message. People like to laugh, so keep members of the audience entertained with a video or photo that they would enjoy viewing. By giving
the audience a deadline, the initiative will become a greater priority. It will increase the brand awareness for the particular product or service. Nowadays Flipkart is using Viral marketing technique for selling huge volume of products and getting more profit. Pre-owned products are selling by various online marketers like OLX.in and Quikr.in. Entertainment sectors, Tourism sectors, Food and Beverages, Retail marketers, service sectors like Health care, Education sectors, Hotel, are vibrant in viral marketing for making profit. News of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge is being shared on many social-media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, sharing positive feelings and a goal with the rich and famous. Setting up an initiative like this lets participants also allows for an emotional connection with an organization and opens up an opportunity for conversation

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