

Social Media Network for Effective Marketing Communication- A Special Reference to Viral Marketing

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Abstract: *Zippping and zapping has become greater challenge for advertising agencies to achieve the effective reach. This competition coupled with increasing media cost has pushed the marketers towards alternative channel for effective reach at low cost. Information technology connectivity has paved way for viral marketing. Many marketers are successfully optimizing their communication through viral marketing tools.*

Keywords: Viral marketing, Marketing Communication, Social media network, Zippping and zapping, relationship building

1. Introduction

The proliferation of marketing and advertising, coupled with the onslaught of millions of media channels in today's world, has given cause for consumers to tune out and effectively avoid a marketing message. The creation of technologies such as PVRs, satellite radio and Internet ad blocking software are driving a fundamental shift in the way the public consumes media and the advertising often tied to it. Zippping and zapping has become greater challenge for advertising agencies to achieve the effective reach. This competition coupled with increasing media cost has pushed the marketers towards alternative channel for effective reach at low cost. Information technology connectivity has paved way for viral marketing. Many marketers are successfully optimizing their communication through viral marketing tools.

In the last decade there has been a major shift from traditional media to new age media. The second generation of Internet-based application era or what Shih (2009) calls the fourth revolution, where in users generate and control communication, holds great promise to significantly enhance marketing efforts with viral marketing campaigns (Thackeray et.al. 2008:2) This technology presents opportunities for relationship building, not only peer to peer but also between person and company.

2. Literature Review

Amanda (2015) 24% of teens go online "almost constantly," facilitated by the widespread availability of smartphones. Aided by the convenience and constant access provided by mobile devices, especially smart phones, 92 percent of teen report going online daily- including 24 percent says they go online "almost constantly" Teens are diversifying their social network site use. A majority of teens — 71% — report using more than one social network site. 66% use Facebook, 13% use Google+, 13% use Instagram and 3% use Snapchat.

Kaplan (2001) suggests the transition of social media to a significant marketing communications medium is due to a combination of; technological drivers such as bandwidth; economic drivers such as user access to more tools to develop User Generated Content (UGC); and social drivers like IT savvy youth with greater purchasing power. (Kaplan, 2010). However, the social media are no longer the domain of Generation Y; older generations are heavy socialnetworkers with Facebook's largest demographic now women aged 55 and older (Angel & Sexsmith 2009,)

Consumers searching online for information about a product, or brands, not only gain access to corporate marketing materials, they now also have access to product reviews, opinions and commentary from other consumers (Smith, 2010).

Studies (Brown and Reingen 1987) (Granovetter 1973) (De Bruyn and Lilien 04) found that strong ties, those between family or friends, were more likely to be activated for information flow and were also more influential than weak ties between acquaintances. Further studies also made in the context of electronic referrals. They found that characteristics of the social tie influenced recipient's behavior but had different effects at different stages of decision making process: tie strength facilitates awareness, perceptual affinity triggers recipients interest, and demographic similarity had a negative influence on each stage of the decision-making process.

According to Rosen (2000), "Purchasing is part of a social process.... It involves not only a one-to-one interaction between the company and the customer but also many exchanges of information and influence among the people who surround the customer."

Diffusion occurs when an innovation is communicated through certain channels among members of a social system. An innovation is an idea, practice, or object that an individual or unit of adoption perceives as new (Rogers, 1995).

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Some of the interesting observations of the study are:

Viral marketing provides the following advantages

- 1) Cuts through the media clutter of traditional advertising, allowing marketers to effectively reach the audience.
- 2) Doesn't require a product with a wow factor in order to raise awareness, generate buzz, and kick-start peer-to-peer spread. Instead, the viral campaign's communication agent is the element that needs a wow factor or element of interest.
- 3) Viral campaigns work the Internet to deliver exposure via peer-to-peer endorsement. Viral campaigns, whether ultimately liked or disliked, are often welcomed by the receiver. The focus is on campaigns with material that consumers want to spend time interacting with and spreading proactively.

The most commonly used social networking sites: Facebook, Whatsapp, and Google plus have emerged as greater effective media reach for marketing communication. With increasing usage of mobile phone Whatsapp has popped out as leader.

3. Research Objectives

- 1) To study the relationship between social media and viral marketing
- 2) To study the role of viral marketing in business communication

4. Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Bangalore city during June-July 2015. Sample of 200 youngsters between the age group 20-25 years, exposed to social media have been selected as sample for the study.

For the purpose of the study social network media such as Facebook, Googleplus and Whatapp was been considered. Attempt is made to find out whether the respondents are using these media for the product information search and for product information communication purpose.

Primary data collected through questionnaire method. Data was been analyzed using SPSS tool. Chi square technique is used to find out the relationship between social media and marketing communication.

5. Research Findings

	I use FB to discuss product information	I use Whatsapp application to discuss product information	I use Google plus application to discuss product information
Chi-Square	8.400 ^a	10.300 ^a	11.900 ^a
df	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.028	0.036	0.018

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 20.0.

The study as indicated in Table 1 reveals that there is significant relationship between social networking media and marketing communication. The study findings are:

- 1) Face book is the most popularly used social networking site. All the respondents to the study have reposted they use face book to share their experiences, pleasure trips, shopping experiences etc. The study shows there is significant relationship between browsing Face book and sharing/participating in product related information communication.
- 2) Smart phone is the trend among the youth. The reducing prices have further boosted the greater adoptability and acceptance of product. 84 percent of the respondents use smart phones of which 69 percent hang on to Whatsapp almost every day. They become the mode of message diffusion for most of the quotes/good jokes/ video. The study shows there is significant relationship between Whatsapp and sharing/participating in product related information communication.
- 3) The study shows there is significant relationship between Googleplus and sharing/participating in product related information communication.

6. Further Scope for Study

With increasing media clutter marketing communication becoming more challenging task for marketers. The participative viral marketing can have better tool to reach target audience. Information technology is providing scope for business communication. But still the effective utilization has not yet achieved. There is scope to study how best one can infuse the message, how to increase the diffusion for greater reach.

7. Conclusion

Viral marketing, like all marketing is hit or miss. However, viral marketing by nature is often more risky or controversial than traditional marketing. If done improperly viral marketing can backfire and create negative buzz.

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