



Determining motives of viral marketing in a company

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Abstract

The aim of the study is determining motives of viral marketing in a company. This study was a descriptive survey and the survey instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire. Statistical society was all of experts in export companies of Tehran. Sample size (140 persons) determination is based on the Krejcie and Morgan table and cluster random sampling method was used. After data collection, data analysis was performed using SPSS. Results showed that customer behavior, emotions and perceptual affinity are motives of viral marketing in Iranian companies.

Key Words: Viral marketing, Customer behavior, Emotions, Perceptual affinity

Introduction

The Internet advertising market, over the past few years, has gained an important position by providing more useful tools for marketers to influence their target customer than the traditional advertising like TV, radio, or print ads (Tran, 2014). One of the most challenging social media problems that marketers need to face is media advertisements are easily eliminated to being shown by consumers. To be successful in reaching target consumers in a great volume, marketers need to discover a way of reaching their customers without them knowing it is a method of advertising (Curran, K. , Graham. S., Temple, C., 2011). To deal with that, an advertising campaign needs to include innovative contents like surprise, entertainment, especially trustworthy messages which these advertising activities are called viral marketing.

According to Wolpponen et al. (2006), Viral marketing can be considered as part of internet word of mouth when the opinion leader shares a message with the group. Ferguson states that “successful viral marketing strategies will merge with loyalty marketing efforts to capture and identify prospects at the top of the funnel and build advocacy with high-value segments” (2008). In addition, viral advertising is believed to bring three main advantages for a company (Dobele, Toleman & Beverland, 2005). First, the expenditure is much less expensive than other media such as TV or newspaper. The second reason is it is more



persuasive and the last one is it provides a more effective targeting method. Therefore, it is absolutely vital to study how to build a successful viral marketing campaign.

However, viral marketing's constraint is being an unsolicited process, receiving viral advertising from another person can be considered as spam, virus or advertising clutter (Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). Hence, marketers have to analyze an effective way to eliminate clutter on the internet. To deal with this problem, this paper will introduce an Effective consumer making decision model to investigate which elements impacts on different stages of the effective consumer decision making process of forwarding viral advertising, thus providing a success viral marketing strategy. The present study proposes the effective-cognitive-behavioral model to explain the relationship among perceptual, tie strength, and emotion that, in turn, influence the success of viral marketing content. This conceptual paper will bring apply and provide professional knowledge to design effective viral advertising campaigns. Effective, cognitive and behavioral process are addressed as the three aspects of Effective consumer decision making process to build the theory and propositions concerning the means by which tie strength facilitates cognitive, perceptual affinity. These generate effective emotions which influence consumer behavior.

Viral marketing is an inexpensive method which has a tremendous impact on consumer purchasing behavior. However, literature about the cognitive, affective, and behavior of people that constitute the essential components of any such strategy is rare. Due to the importance of the topic, the purpose of the study is determining motives of viral marketing in a company

Methodology

The present study is a descriptive one. Theoretical bases of the study were collected by reputable sites, books and related articles. The information and data for hypothesis testing were gathered by a researcher-made questionnaire. Statistical society was all of experts in export companies of Tehran. Sample size (140 persons) determination is based on the Krejcie and Morgan table and cluster random sampling method was used. In this study, Validity and reliability of the questionnaire was approved. Validity of the questionnaire was accepted by expert opinion of university and reliability of that was calculated by Cronbach's alpha and the value of that was 0.84.

Before completing the questionnaire by the participants, basic description of the study and its objectives as well as additional details about the questions presented to them. Enough time to complete the questionnaire was provided to participants. Write the name and characteristics of participants for the questionnaire was not compulsory, so they can fully express their opinions. After gathering information from the questionnaires, the data were analyzed and results are discussed with the findings of previous studies. All of data were analyzed by SPSS software.



Results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of participants. As showed by the table, males with 62.9% participants are the highest sex of participants. Master participants with 50% make the most and participants with job experience Higher than 20 years are highest in the group of job experience.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of participants

Statistics						
Sex	Female			Male		
	52	%37.1		88	%62.9	
Education	Bachelor		Master		Doctorate	
	30	%21.4	70	%50	40	%28.6
Job Experience	Less than 10 years		Between 11-20 years		Higher than 20 years	
	35	%25	45	%32.1	60	%42.9
Age	25-35 years		36-45 years		Higher than 45 years	
	40	%28.5	45	%32.1	55	%39.4

- Does customer behavior is motives of viral marketing in Iranian companies?

Since the test statistics is lower than table critical value at 95 percent and corresponding confidence interval shows positive, this means customer behavior is motives of viral marketing in Iranian companies.

Table 2: The mean comparison based on the one-sample t test.

Variables	Average	SD	t	sig	Confidence intervals 95%	
					Lower bound	higher bound
Customer behavior	2.95	0.389	3.87	0.001	0.145	0.215

- Does emotion is motives of viral marketing in Iranian companies?

Since the test statistics is lower than table critical value at 95 percent and corresponding confidence interval shows positive, this means emotion is motives of viral marketing in Iranian companies.



Table 3: The mean comparison based on the one-sample t test.

Variables	Average	SD	t	sig	Confidence intervals 95%	
					Lower bound	higher bound
Emotion	3.25	0.189	1.78	0.001	0.102	0.178

- Does perceptual affinity is motives of viral marketing in Iranian companies?

Since the test statistics is lower than table critical value at 95 percent and corresponding confidence interval shows positive, this means perceptual affinity is motives of viral marketing in Iranian companies.

Table 4: The mean comparison based on the one-sample t test.

Variables	Average	SD	t	sig	Confidence intervals 95%	
					Lower bound	higher bound
Perceptual affinity	2.99	1.011	3.55	0.001	0.155	0.235

Discussion

Results showed that customer behavior, emotions and perceptual affinity are motives of viral marketing in Iranian companies. The firms' usage of online advertising is growing at phenomenal rates (Riasi & Pourmiri, 2015). Online advertising can help the companies to succeed in customer acquisition and to improve their competitiveness (Amiri Aghdaie et al, 2012; Riasi and Amiri Aghdaie, 2013; Riasi, 2015a). Viral advertising relies heavily on online marketing strategies and can help the companies to become more competitive in the market; this strategy is extremely beneficial for the companies in financial services industry (Riasi, 2015b) and tourism industry (Riasi and Pourmiri, 2016). Along with the emergence of the Internet, electronic word of mouth has become an important influence on consumers' product evaluation. Viral Marketing refers as the process by which a brand can gain new consumers by encouraging 'honest' communication. Prospective customers tend to search for more information before entering the behavioral phase (Doh & Hwang, 2009). Peer to peer communication in Internet viral marketing is totally valuable to information of networking,



enhancing audiences' beliefs, and eventually leading to the final buying decision (Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). According to Bruyn, tie strength and consumer perceptual play main roles in impacting the effectiveness of viral advertising. Furthermore, emotion is a critical feature in shaping how people process ads, including viral video ads through behavioral intentions (Ecklor & Bolls, 2011). Sutheerawong and Siripiyavatana (2014) stated that before making a buying decision, consumers are involved in the cognitive phase after being engaged in the affective phase of emotion. Prior research, however, has largely ignored how cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of viral marketing work together toward enhancing internet word of mouth message effectiveness. Cognitive is the thinking of the consumers; affective is the feeling of the consumers, while behavioral is the action that is taken by the consumers.

Sutheerawong and Siripiyavatana have stated that effective consumer decision making process followed by 'feel-learn-do' model is the most suitable for their prankvertising research. As prankvertising is a phenomenon of viral marketing (Roth, 2013), the particular viral marketing will be applied to the Affective consumer category, regardless of the product or service type. Moreover, in this paper we will stretch out the three most important factors that impact the success of viral advertising. The tie strength, and perceptual affinity are significant elements of word of mouth influence (Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). Furthermore, emotions play a key role in driving viral marketing campaigns (Tran, 2014). Specifically, perceptual affinity especially generates recipient's interest as an effective aspect, tie strength facilitates cognitive (Bruyn & Lilien, 2008) and emotions are related to forwarding behavior (Ecklor & Bolls, 2011). Those elements provide marketers with more important information in designing a way which would have an effect when it comes to deciding what the target is and how it would react to certain things. Hence, tie strength, perceptual affinity and emotions are the three main factors analyzed for the effectiveness of viral advertising of this paper. Different factors have an effect on different specific stages of the multistage model. Therefore, we propose the adapted Foote, Cone and Belding grid (Ratchford, 1987) and Tran model (2014) applied to viral marketing phenomenon. Figure 1 below, showing the Affective consumer category is the target for the viral marketing phenomenon. I will go in detail of this model to bring about a better understanding of how these elements affect the success of viral advertising to explain the hypotheses, I will go into detail of this model.

Viral marketing, which involves emotional content, as such quadrants, is fostered by 'feel' (Sutheerawong and Siripiyavatana, 2014). These groups of 'feelers' and 'reactors' will prioritize their decision making process on feeling before learning, and tend to base their buying decision upon their feeling emotion. Perceptual affinity is defined as the similarities in values, likes, dislikes and experience between two or more people (Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). Perceptual homophile, which is an important antecedent of word of mouth influence, refers about how people's beliefs and impressions are appropriate or go hand-in-hand (Chu & Kim, 2011). It correlates with how people understand homogeneity by Liu-Thompkins (2012) counted by the degree of shared interest among seed consumers. It is also likely to happen in an online environment (Liu-Thompkins, 2012). Perceptual elements such as attitudes and



beliefs can make it easier to give information to people when it comes to studying those (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Social network analysis is a data analysis technique founded on the principle of structuralism, where the pattern of relationships, among people, itself is presumed to have psychological impacts beyond individual differences or the nature of the relationships themselves. Those cognitive, affective, or behavioral bonds linking dyads in some manner such as friendship, form the network's structure, much like in chemistry, where the structure of bonds among elements forms compounds.

Before making a buying decision, consumers can involve in a cognitive phase after being engaged in the affective phase of emotion (Sutheerawong and Siripiyavatana, 2014). Cognitive responses include greater brand awareness (Ferguson 2008; Liu 2006; Sheth 1971). The diffusion speed of information can be significantly increased during the cognitive phase, hence, leading to the success of viral advertising. It is rather imperative when it comes to choosing consumers who would be the ones with the ability to spread information and build networks (Dobele, Adam, Michael, Joëlle, & Robert, 2007).

The success of viral advertising is based on the active participation of consumers in sharing messages with others; therefore, the contents tend to be more about the emotional connection rather than the product itself (Ecklor & Bolls, 2011). Emotional connection has a key impact on whether online data like videos, pictures, and articles is forwarded. It must be developed in a viral marketing message to guarantee that the virus gets spread (Dobele et al., 2007). However, people do not really care when it comes to how consumers would react to what they are offered (Berger & Katherine, 2011).

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