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PRACTICES ON VIRAL MARKETING AMONG MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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Abstract

Viral marketing has given rise to the evolution of many electronic marketing strategies. The marketing practice that encourages the idea or practices of an individual to spread through internet has been defined as viral marketing. The objective of this paper is to investigate the practices of on viral marketing among management students. The study analyses the practices of the one hundred select respondents on the five different components of viral marketing-E-mails, Videos, Blogs, Social networks and Forums. The study analyses how viral marketing helps raise the awareness among the consumers, its reach among the consumers and how it is used to share information on the features and prices of the products. Consumers attach different levels of trust to each of the five components of viral marketing. The study helps marketers and consumers to better understand and use the critical components of viral marketing to their advantage.

Keywords: Viral Marketing, E-mails, Blogs, Social networks, and Forums.

INTRODUCTION

Viral Marketing refers to a marketing technique that is intended to spread like a virus through a social network. The attractive part of viral marketing makes it easy and compelling for people to pass it on to their peers. Viral marketing is usually referred as the new way to increase market penetration and build brand awareness in the internet space among the consumers. Viral marketing is one of the most effective and fastest ways of spreading products globally.^[1]

Today, viral marketing has become more popular due to three reasons. First, the entire social networks have migrated to the web. Secondly, an individual's contact on the web is virtually cost-free and finally, the network effect plays an important role. Viral marketing

may take the form of E-mails, Videos, Blogs, Social Networking's, Forums, etc.

E-mail marketing is the hottest and effective mode of marketing because this would give a perfect forum to inform the consumers about latest developments and upcoming trends. Blogs can help the consumers in order to promote and increase visibility of the site in search engines more often. When viral marketing is undertaken on the Internet, a message may go "viral" due to people forwarding email messages with links to friends or otherwise encouraging others to visit specific websites or pages on the Internet. Google's YouTube is probably the best example of Internet viral marketing.^[2]

If a video is very funny, unusual or provokes certain emotions, it's likely that the video will become popular

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quickly. Links to the video will quickly multiply as viewers share the video with others. Many may even decide to embed the video (if permitted) in various places on the Internet, drawing even more attention. Social networking websites promote online business, which mostly attracts the consumers/buyers through viral marketing. Among them Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace are excellent platforms for viral marketing campaigns.

The other tool of viral marketing is the Forum. Forums are powerful tools to use in your viral marketing efforts. Social websites and forums connect people like no other websites and this word of mouth is one of the secrets to viral success. Forums are among the best tools used for viral marketing. Forums can be found on a wide variety of websites, not just ones designed for social networking. Hence, to create a successful viral marketing campaign the marketer needs to identify individuals within their market segment with a large social network. They must then create attractive and convincing content that appeals to this audience.

Hence, there arises a need to analyze the level of individual practices of consumers on viral marketing and how the various factors like e-mail, videos, blogs, social networking's and forums will influence the practices of consumers. An attempt has been made by the researcher under the title **“PRACTICES ON VIRAL MARKETING AMONG THE MANAGEMENT STUDENTS”**.

VIRAL MARKETING – A REVIEW

The following studies have been referred by the author for developing the research problem and the research design:

The article entitled, **“Influence of Viral Marketing on Brand Equity Building with Reference to Online Social Networking Sites”** by **Dr. Ashutosh Nigam** (2012), examined the parameters of viral marketing effecting media (e-discussion, websites, online chat, email etc) parameters that have effect over the brand equity of different products and services. The result of the study indicated that the viral marketing has a positive and significant relationship with brand equity dimensions. Positive word-of-mouth about brand helps in reducing distribution of free products to target consumers as networking sites give facilitating platform to build positive brand building practices. [3]

Rebecca J. Larson, (2009), in his paper **“The Rise of Viral Marketing through the New Media of Social Media: An Analysis and Implications for Consumer Behaviour”** has established the rationality of the corporate presence in social media. The study found that there is no one approach common to all strategies of viral marketing and social media. [4]

The thesis entitled, **“Advertising amongst Ourselves: A Qualitative Study of Viewer Attitudes towards Viral Marketing”**, by **Steven C. Kulp** (2007), analysed the attitudes of consumers towards viral marketing. The study used to explore the motivation to share content, specifically, videos found on YouTube.com. The study also found that the several factors functioning as filters in the decision to forward content. Finally, the extent to which content was new was found to be a major factor. [5]

The article entitled, **“Viral Marketing: A New Branding Strategy to Influence Consumers”** by **Xiaofang Yang** (2012), examined how rapid penetration of the internet and the predominance of various social media have influenced the consumers by facilitating the new technologies that provide new opportunities for the development of marketing techniques. The study suggested that viral marketing achieves better advertising effects when compared to traditional advertising Professionals from the market focus group regarded integrated communication as the more effective marketing strategy. [6]

In **“The Dynamics of Viral Marketing”** **Jure Leskovec, Lada A. Adamic, and Bernardo A. Huberman** (2007) have explored variations in the behaviour of users within their communities. The study found that marketers, hoping to develop normative strategies for word-of-mouth promotion, should ascertain the structure and interests of the customers of the social network. [7]

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has been carried out focusing on the following objectives:

1. To study the practices of viral marketing among management students.
2. To analyses the inter-relationship between the factors concerned with the viral marketing practices, influencing the practices of viral marketing among management students.

3. To highlight the difference between the demographic profile of management students and the practices of the respondents on viral marketing.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Research hypothesis

The study has been carried out with the following research hypothesis;

H₁: There is a significant difference between the gender, age, domicile, educational qualification, marital status of the respondents and their practices on viral marketing.

Null hypothesis

The study has been carried out with the following null hypothesis;

H₀: There is no significant difference between the gender, age, domicile, educational qualification, marital status of the respondents and their practices on viral marketing.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study has been carried out as follows;

The study covers the students who are pursuing the degree of Master of Business Administration offered by the colleges and institutes located in Tiruchirappalli District. The study analyses and evaluates the practices of viral marketing among the M.B.A students in Tiruchirappalli District. The study has been conducted for a period of four months from March 2016 to June 2016.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research design based on the sound principles on

- A) Universe,
- B) Sampling,
- C) Data and
- D) Statistical tools has used for this study.

A) Universe

All the students who are pursuing the degree of Master of Business Administration offered by the colleges and institutes located in Tiruchirappalli District, numbering 983 in total, has been taken as the universe of the study.

B) Selection of Samples

From the universe, 100 students were selected as the sample through stratified random sampling.

C) Data

While the primary data of this study has been collected using an interview schedule, the secondary data were collected from books, journals, previous studies and World-Wide Websites.

D) Statistical tools used

The researcher has applied relevant statistical tools such as Percentage table, Student -'T' test, Chi-Square test and Anova test to analyze the data collected.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study contains the following limitations.

The study has been conducted among the 100 student-respondents who are pursuing the degree of Master of Business Administration offered by the colleges and institutes located in Tiruchirappalli District. The study is confined to the period from March 2016 to June 2016. The data has been collected during the period of April 2016 to May 2016. Hence the result cannot be applied for any period other than the study period. The Findings, Suggestions, and the Conclusion will be applicable only to the students who are pursuing the degree of Master of Business Administration offered by the colleges and institutes located in Tiruchirappalli District.

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

The analyses of the study, focused on measuring the level of practices on viral marketing among management students, have been ascertained with help of the Statistical tools like Percentage table, Student -'T' test, Chi-Square test and ANOVA test.

TABLE - 1 Various Dimensions of Consumer Practices on Viral Marketing

Sl. No	Practices	General Parameters	E-mails	Videos	Blogs	Social Networking Websites	Forums
1.	Low (in %)	51	48	50	58	41	47
2.	High (in %)	49	52	50	42	59	53

%-Percentage

Source: Field Data.

Findings

The Table-1 explains the various dimensions of consumer practices on viral marketing. It could be inferred that, 51 per cent of the respondents have a low level of practices and 49 per cent of the respondents have a high level of practices on the general parameters. While 48 per cent of the respondents have low level of practices with regard to E-mail, 52 per cent of the respondents have high level of practices. While measuring the practices of respondents on the videos, 50 per cent of the respondents have a low level of practices and the remaining 50 per cent have a high level of practices. On measuring the practices on Blogs, 58 per cent of the respondents have a low level of practices and 42 per cent of the respondents have a high level of practices. While 41 per cent of the respondents are found to be having a low level of practices, 59 per cent of the respondents are having a high level of practices with regard to the Social networking Websites as the tool for viral marketing. Finally while measuring the practices of consumers on Forums, it is found that 47 per cent of the respondents have a low level of practices and 53 per cent of the respondents have a high level of practices.

TABLE - 2 Student 'T' Test Difference between Gender of Respondents and Practices of Viral Marketing

S. No.	Practices of Viral Marketing	Mean	S.D	Statistical Inference
1	General			t=-.042 .966>0.05 Not Significant
	Male (n=62)	39.56	4.438	
	Female (n=38)	39.61	5.086	

2	E-mail			t=-.847 .399>0.05 Not Significant
	Male (n=62)	21.52	3.775	
	Female (n=38)	22.11	2.587	
3	Videos			t=.446 .657>0.05 Not Significant
	Male (n=62)	14.87	2.412	
	Female (n=38)	14.63	2.898	
4	Blogs			t=1.842 .068<0.05 Not Significant
	Male (n=62)	9.73	2.234	
	Female (n=38)	8.84	2.477	
5	Social Networking Websites			t=-.135 .893>0.05 Not Significant
	Male (n=62)	15.66	2.469	
	Female (n=38)	15.74	3.082	
6	Forums			t=-.362 .718>0.05 Not Significant
	Male (n=62)	10.53	2.201	
	Female (n=38)	10.71	2.670	
7	Overall Practices			t=.099 .922>0.05 Not Significant
	Male (n=62)	111.87	11.622	
	Female (n=38)	111.63	12.073	

Df=98;

Source: Field Data.

Findings

The Table - 2 explains that, there is no significant difference between gender of the respondents and practices of viral marketing. Hence, the calculated value greater than table value. So the research hypothesis rejected and the null hypothesis accepted.

TABLE - 3

Association between Age of the Respondents and Practices of Viral Marketing

S. No.	Practices of Viral Marketing	Age			Statistical Inference
		20 to 22yrs (n=72) (100%)	23 to 25yrs (n=26) (100%)	26 to 28yrs (n=2) (100%)	
1	General				X ² =2.170 Df=2 .338>0.05 Not Significant
	Low	35 48.6%	14 53.8%	2 100.0%	
	High	37 51.4%	12 46.2%	0 .0%	
2	E-Mail				X ² =2.887 Df=2 .236>0.05 Not Significant
	Low	32 44.4%	14 53.8%	2 100.0%	
	High	40 55.6%	12 46.2%	0 .0%	
3	Videos				X ² = .209 Df=2 .901>0.05 Not Significant
	Low	37 51.4%	12 46.2%	1 50.0%	
	High	35 48.6%	14 53.8%	1 50.0%	
4	Blogs				X ² =1.759 Df=2 .415>0.05 Not Significant
	Low	40 55.6%	16 61.5%	2 100.0%	
	High	32 44.4%	10 38.5%	0 .0%	
5	Social Networking Website				X ² =5.361 Df=2 .069<0.05 Significant
	Low	32 44.4%	7 26.9%	2 100.0%	
	High	40 55.6%	19 73.1%	0 .0%	
6	Forums				X ² =3.194 Df=2 .202>0.05 Not Significant
	Low	31 43.1%	14 53.8%	2 100.0%	
	High	41 56.9%	12 46.2%	0 .0%	

7	Overall Practices			X ² =2.799 Df=2 .247>0.05 Not Significant
	Low	34 47.2%	15 57.7%	
	High	38 52.8%	11 42.3%	0 .0%

Source: Field Data.

Findings

The Table – 3 explains that, there is no significant association between age of the respondents and practices of viral marketing. Hence, the calculated value greater than table value. So the research hypothesis rejected and the null hypothesis accepted.

TABLE - 4

Student 'T' Test Difference between Domicile of Respondents and Practices of Viral Marketing

S. No.	Practices of Viral Marketing	Mean	S.D	Statistical Inference
1	General			t=.505 .614>0.05 Not Significant
	Urban (n=67)	39.75	4.832	
	Rural (n=33)	39.24	4.373	
2	E-Mail			t=-1.303 .196>0.05 Not Significant
	Urban (n=67)	21.43	3.500	
	Rural (n=33)	22.36	3.050	
3	Videos			t=-.675 .501>0.05 Not Significant
	Urban (n=67)	14.66	2.556	
	Rural (n=33)	15.03	2.698	
4	Blogs			T=.890 .376>0.05 Not Significant
	Urban (n=67)	9.54	2.439	
	Rural (n=33)	9.09	2.185	
5	Social Networking Websites			t=.295 .768>0.05 Not Significant
	Urban (n=67)	15.75	2.566	
	Rural (n=33)	15.58	3.000	

6	Forums			t=1.056 .294>0.05 Not Significant
	Urban (n=67)	10.78	2.473	
	Rural (n=33)	10.24	2.166	
7	Overall Practices			t=.140 .889>0.05 Not Significant
	Urban (n=67)	111.90	11.827	
	Rural (n=33)	111.55	11.724	

Findings

The Table – 4 explains that, there is no significant difference between domicile of the respondents and practices of viral marketing. Hence, the calculated value greater than table value. So the research hypothesis rejected and the null hypothesis accepted.

Df = 98

Source: Field Data.

TABLE - 5

One Way ANOVA Difference between Educational Qualification of Respondents and Practices of Viral Marketing

S. No.	Practices of Viral Marketing	Mean	S.D	SS	Df	MS	Statistical Inference
1	General						F=1.951 .108>0.05 Not Significant
	Between Groups			163.806	4	40.951	
	B.Com (n=25)	37.88	4.631				
	BBA (n=35)	39.34	4.524				
	B.Sc (n=10)	42.20	6.494				
	BA (n=2)	41.00	2.828				
	BE (n=28)	40.36	3.832				
	Within Groups			1994.55	95	20.995	
2	E-Mail						
	Between Groups			44.061	4	11.015	
	B.com (n=25)	21.20	4.349				
	BBA (n=35)	22.23	3.191				
	B.Sc (n=10)	20.60	3.307				
	BA (n=2)	19.50	6.364				
	BE (n=28)	22.18	2.294				
	Within Groups			1081.17	95	11.381	
3	Videos						F=.994 .415>0.05 Not Significant
	Between Groups			26.793	4	6.698	
	B.com (n=25)	14.24	2.818				
	BBA (n=35)	14.51	2.954				
	B.Sc (n=10)	14.80	2.440				
	BA (n=2)	15.50	.707				
	BE (n=28)	15.54	1.915				
	Within Groups			640.367	95	6.741	

4	Blogs						F=.284 .888>0.05 Not Significant
	Between Groups			6.497	4	1.624	
	B.com (n=25)	9.20	2.345				
	BBA (n=35)	9.29	2.408				
	B.Sc (n=10)	9.40	2.989				
	BA (n=2)	8.50	.707				
	BE (n=28)	9.75	2.222				
	Within Groups			543.293	95	5.719	
5	Social Networking Websites						F=2.327 .062<0.05 Significant
	Between Groups			64.540	4	16.135	
	B.com (n=25)	14.80	2.179				
	BBA (n=35)	15.43	2.873				
	B.Sc (n=10)	17.20	3.190				
	BA (n=2)	14.00	7.071				
	BE (n=28)	16.39	2.132				
	Within Groups			658.850	95	6.935	
6	Forums						F=1.616 .177>0.05 Not Significant
	Between Groups			35.669	4	8.917	
	B.com (n=25)	10.56	1.530				
	BBA (n=35)	10.29	2.244				
	B.Sc (n=10)	12.30	3.498				
	BA (n=2)	11.50	3.536				
	BE (n=28)	10.36	2.542				
	Within Groups			524.331	95	5.519	
7	Overall Practice						F=1.568 .189>0.05 Not Significant
	Between Groups			844.420	4	211.105	
	B.com (n=25)	107.88	11.830				
	BBA (n=35)	111.09	11.014				
	B.Sc (n=10)	116.50	15.799				
	BA (n=2)	110.00	18.385				
	BE (n=28)	114.57	10.039				
	Within Groups			12788.7	95	134.618	

Source: Field Data.

Findings

The Table – 5 explains that, there is no significant difference between educational qualification of the respondents and practices of viral marketing. Hence, the calculated value greater than table value. So the research hypothesis rejected and the null hypothesis accepted.

TABLE – 6

Student 'T' Test Difference between Marital Status of Respondents and Practices of Viral Marketing

S. No.	Practices of Viral Marketing	Mean	S.D	Statistical Inference
1	General			t=-1.129
	Married (n=4)	37.00	6.683	.261>0.05
	Unmarried (n=96)	39.69	4.584	Not Significant

2	E-Mail			t=-.749
	Married (n=4)	20.50	3.109	.456>0.05
	Unmarried (n=96)	21.79	3.387	Not Significant
3	Videos			t=-.808
	Married (n=4)	13.75	4.646	.421>0.05
	Unmarried (n=96)	14.82	2.509	Not Significant
4	Blogs			t=1.401
	Married (n=4)	11.00	2.160	.164>0.05
	Unmarried (n=96)	9.32	2.351	Not Significant
5	Social Networking Websites			t=2.161
	Married (n=4)	18.50	2.380	.033<0.05
	Unmarried (n=96)	15.57	2.663	Significant
6	Forums			t=-1.379
	Married (n=4)	9.00	4.546	.171>0.05
	Unmarried (n=96)	10.67	2.265	Not Significant
7	Overall Practice			t=-.352
	Married (n=4)	111.86	11.837	.726>0.05
	Unmarried (n=96)	111.55	11.724	Not Significant

Df=98

Source: Field Data.

FINDINGS

The Table - 6 explains that, there is no significant difference between marital status of the respondents and practices of viral marketing. Hence, the calculated value greater than table value. So the research hypothesis rejected and the null hypothesis accepted.

SUGGESTIONS

From the analyses and findings of the study the following suggestions were proposed:

It may be suggested to the **Corporates** that by displaying a new viral marketing idea on a web site through any viral marketing tool like face book and

other social networking sites, business can reach out to customers effectively. And providing proper Advertisement plays prime role in communicating, connecting people and promoting business. It provides minimum cost and effective marketing strategies for better awareness of products and increased sales. By increasing useful content in newsletter, it increases the number of viewers in websites. Introducing an interesting and attractive video recording clip on the website not only captures the attention but also generate more viewers. In order to facilitate the bloggers-consumers to interact with each other, tagging information in blogs is the best medium of spreading the message about the product and services.

It may be suggested to the **Consumers** that, by using viral advertising techniques in social networking, the consumers are exposed to several products and services offered by various sources and it is very convenient and easy to access on any viral messages from internet. By utilizing free services, the consumers can make use of utmost resources provided on the internet, which encourages the consumers to retain loyalty towards the particular products and companies by identifying their logos & brands. And also, it gives the ability to capture the attention of consumer by their opinion and adding touches of humor into advertising.

It may be suggested to the **Government** that, they must be aware of the misleading information about the product and services available in viral marketing. And, they should concentrate in Cyber laws and it must be enforced in viral marketing campaigns, for reducing malpractices, fraud, and misuses.

CONCLUSION

The success of viral marketing relies on a solid understanding of the social media. Most viral marketing messages are hosted, shared and even created with the tools of social media. Viral marketing can increase the links to a web site. Based on the advantages of internet, using viral marketing with the help of internet can make the important component of marketing – ‘the promotion’ effective like a nuclear bomb. Internet can make the information deliver very fast, even it may exceed the expectation of a consumer. These aspects which are analyzed in the present study through the practices level of consumers reveals that the potentials of viral marketing have efficiently reached out to a

wide set of potential users. It is also made significant that the level of individual practices of consumers on viral marketing on various factors like e-mail, videos, blogs, social networking's and forums has influenced the own practices of consumers on the effectiveness of viral marketing strategies in promoting a product or service.

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