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# VIRAL MARKETING: A TOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

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**Abstract** Viral Marketing is one of the strongest tools used for online marketing. I have taken Orkut.com which had used Viral Marketing as the tool for marketing their website at international level. Viral Marketing has many advantages and disadvantages for usage. Viral Marketing is a very effective tool for quick promotions, web communication, bringing out all customers at one place and making easy communication with the company and consumers using its products and services.

**Keywords:** Viral Marketing, Social Networking, Orkut.Com, Google.Com, Web Communications Etc.

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**Introduction: Definition of Viral Marketing:** A marketing technique whereby information about a company's goods or services is passed electronically from one Internet user to another.

**History of Viral Marketing:** The term viral marketing was made popular by Tim Draper and Jeffery Rayport. The term gained its popularity when Fast Company in 1996 published article on Viral Marketing. Tim Draper and Steve Jurvetson of the venture capital firm Draper Fisher Jurvetson in 1997 to describe Hotmail's practice of appending advertising to outgoing mail from their users. The concept of viral marketing gained popularity in 1990s. Media critic Doug Rushkoff was the first to write about viral marketing on internet.

**Methods and Metrics:** According to marketing professor Andreas Kaplan and Michael Heinlein, to make viral marketing work, three basic criteria must be met, i.e., giving the right message to the right messengers in the right environment.

**1. Messenger:** There is a need of 3 types of messengers which can convert a normal message into viral and these are as follows:

- a. Market Maven;
- b. Social Hubs;
- c. Sales People.

Market mavens are individuals who are continuously 'on the pulse' of things (information specialists); they are usually among the first to get exposed to the message and who transmit it to their immediate social network.

Social hubs are people with an exceptionally large number of social connections; they often know hundreds of different people and have the ability to serve as connectors or bridges between different subcultures.

Salespeople might be needed who receive the message from the market maven, amplify it by making it more relevant and persuasive, and then transmit it to the social hub for further distribution.

Market mavens may not be particularly convincing in transmitting the information.

**2. Message:** Only messages that are both memorable and sufficiently interesting to be passed on to others have the potential to spur a viral marketing phenomenon. Making a message more memorable and interesting or simply more infectious, is often not a matter of major changes but minor adjustments.

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It should be unique and engaging with a main idea that motivates the recipient to share it widely with friends - a "must-see" element.

**3. Environment:** The environment is crucial in the rise of successful viral marketing – small changes in the environment lead to huge results, and people are much more sensitive to environment. The timing and context of the campaign launch must be right.

To clarify and organize the information related to potential measures of viral campaigns, the key measurement possibilities should be considered in relation to the objectives formulated for the viral campaign.

In this sense, some of the key cognitive outcomes of viral marketing activities can include measures such as the number of views, clicks, and hits for specific content, as well as the number of shares in social media, such as likes on Facebook or retweets on Twitter, which demonstrate that consumers processed the information received through the marketing message.

Measures such as the number of reviews for a product or the number of members for a campaign webpage quantify the number of individuals who have acknowledged the information provided by marketers.

Besides statistics that are related to online traffic, surveys can assess the degree of product or brand knowledge, though this type of measurement is more complicated and requires more resources.

Related to consumers' attitudes toward a brand or even toward the marketing communication, different online and social media statistics, including the number of likes and shares within a social network, can be used. The number of reviews for a certain brand or product and the quality assessed by users are indicators of attitudes.

Classical measures of consumer attitude toward the brand can be gathered through surveys of consumers. Behavioral measures are very important because changes in consumers' behavior and buying decisions are what marketers hope to see through viral campaigns.

There are numerous indicators that can be used in this context as a function of marketers' objectives. Some of them include the most known online and social media statistics such as number and quality of shares, views, product reviews, and comments. Consumers' brand engagement can be measured through the K-factor, the number of followers, friends, registered users, and time spent on the website.

Indicators that are more bottom-line oriented focus on consumers' actions after acknowledging the marketing content, including the number of requests for information, samples, or test-drives.

Nevertheless, responses to actual call-to-action messages are important, including the conversion rate. Consumers' behavior is expected to lead to contributions to the bottom line of the company, meaning increase in sales, both in quantity and financial amount.

However, when quantifying changes in sales, managers need to consider other factors that could potentially affect sales besides the viral marketing activities. Besides positive effects on sales, the use of viral marketing is expected to bring significant reductions in marketing costs and expenses.

Methods

**Viral Marketing Often Involves and Utilizes:**

1. Customer participation and polling services
2. Industry-specific organization contributions
3. Internet search engines and blogs
4. Mobile smartphone integration

5. Multiple forms of print and direct marketing
6. Target marketing web services
7. Search engine optimization (SEO)
8. Social media optimization (SMO)
9. Television and radio

**Viral Target Marketing is Based on Three Important Principles:**

1. Social profile gathering
2. Proximity market analysis
3. Real-time key word density analysis

By applying these three important disciplines to an advertising model, a VMS company is able to match a client with their targeted customers at a cost effective advantage.

The Internet makes it possible for a campaign to go viral very fast; it can, so to speak, make a brand famous overnight. However, the Internet and social media technologies themselves do not make a brand viral; they just enable people to share content to other people faster. Therefore, it is generally agreed that a campaign must typically follow a certain set of guidelines in order to potentially be successful.

1. It must be appealing to most of the audience.
2. It must be worth sharing with friends and family.
3. A large platform, e.g. YouTube or Facebook must be used.
4. An initial boost to gain attention is used, e.g. seeding, buying views, or sharing to Facebook fans.
5. The content is of good quality.

**Social Networking:** The growth of social networks significantly contributed to the effectiveness of viral marketing. As of 2009, two thirds of the world's Internet population visits a social networking service or blog site at least every week. Facebook alone has over 1 billion active users. In 2009, time spent visiting social media sites began to exceed time spent emailing. A 2010 study found that 52% of people who view news online forward it on through social networks, email, or posts.

**Notable Examples:**

1. Orkut.com a social networking site is one of the very famous examples of viral marketing. By using viral marketing Orkut became very famous. In year 2008 it had 53% of Brazilian users and about 17% Indian users. It covered by end of 2007 it had 67 million users across the world.
2. The Ponzi scheme and related investment pyramid schemes are early examples of viral marketing. In each round, investors are paid interest from the principal deposits of later investors. Early investors enthusiastically recruit their friends, generating exponential growth until the pool of available investors is tapped out and the scheme collapses.
3. The television show *Mystery Science Theater 3000* had limited distribution. The producers encouraged viewers to make copies of the show on video tapes and give them to friends in order to expand viewership and increase demand for the fledgling Comedy Channel network. During this period the closing credits included the words "Keep circulating the tapes."
4. Hotmail was one of the first internet businesses to become extremely successful utilizing viral marketing techniques by inserting the tagline "Get your free e-mail at Hotmail" at the bottom of every e-mail sent out by its users. Hotmail was able to sign up 12 million users in 18 months. At the time, this was historically the fastest growth of any user-based media company. By the time Hotmail reached "66 million users", the company was establishing "270,000 new accounts each day".
5. Burger King has used several marketing campaigns. It's the Subservient Chicken campaign, running from 2004 until 2007, was an example of viral or word-of-mouth marketing.
6. In 2007, World Wrestling Entertainment promoted the return of Chris Jericho with a viral marketing campaign using 15-second cryptic binary code videos. The videos contained hidden messages and biblical links related to Jericho, although speculation existed throughout WWE fans over whom the campaign targeted. The text "Save Us" and "2nd Coming" were most prominent in the videos. The

campaign spread throughout the internet with numerous websites, though no longer operational, featuring hidden messages and biblical links to further hint at Jericho's return.

7. The Big Word Project, launched in 2008, aimed to redefine the Oxford English Dictionary by allowing people to submit their website as the definition of their chosen word. The project, created to fund two Masters Students' educations, attracted the attention of bloggers worldwide, and was featured on Daring Fireball and Wired Magazine.
8. Between December 2009 and March 2010 a series of seven videos were posted to YouTube under the name "iamamiwhoami" leading to speculation that they were a marketing campaign for a musician. In March 2010, an anonymous package was sent to an MTV journalist claiming to contain a code which if cracked would give the identity of the artist.

The seventh video, entitled 'y', appears to feature the Swedish singer Jonna Lee.

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