

A Multi-dimensional Analysis of the Impact of Viral Marketing on Consumer Behavior

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Abstract: In the context of the digital era, the popularity of the Internet and social media provides an opportunity for the development of viral marketing. Through a comprehensive review and analysis of related studies, the article delves into the impact of viral marketing on consumer behavior from three aspects: word-of-mouth marketing, brand awareness and social platforms. In word-of-mouth marketing, consumer satisfaction prompts them to share product information, and the multidimensional value of brand marketing campaigns stimulates consumers to actively participate, thus influencing purchase decisions, which is a key element of viral marketing. Brand awareness has a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. Viral marketing can increase brand awareness, enhance consumers' trust and favor towards products, and at the same time, the improvement of brand awareness also contributes to information dissemination, and the two promote each other. The interactivity, browsing duration, and perceived ease of use of social platforms all have an impact on consumer behavior. Interactivity promotes information exchange, an increase in browsing duration affects purchase intention, and perceived ease of use improves the user experience and trust.

Keywords: Viral marketing, consumer behavior, word-of-mouth marketing, brand awareness, social platforms.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, the integration of the Internet and modern technologies has revolutionized the marketing landscape. The prevalence of social media has brought about a significant change in the way people obtain information, providing an opportunity for the development of viral marketing. Viral marketing is a tactic that allows individuals to exchange marketing messages on the internet. It is referred to as viral marketing as it spreads like a virus. Messages about the product and its brands or services are sent over the Internet to a prospective customer. This potential purchaser transfers this information to another potential purchaser in a way that generates a wide network [1]. Numerous studies have shown that viral marketing has a significant impact on consumer behavior. Katerina et al. indicated that when consumers are satisfied with the purchased products or the services received, they will share the information and products with their families via email, social media, etc., making the products a trending topic on social media and thus enhancing consumers' purchase intention [2]. Hamed's research confirmed that viral marketing can influence consumers' purchase decisions [3]. The research of Aminudin Azis also confirms that viral marketing has a significant positive impact on purchase intention and purchasing decision [4]. Artanti

et al.'s study found that viral marketing has a notable influence on online purchase decisions [5]. Haryani and Motwani, through discriminant model analysis, concluded that viral marketing can affect consumers' behavioral intentions [6]. Based on the above studies, it can be inferred that viral marketing can have some influence on consumer behavior. However, while the existence of this influence is well known, the specific mechanisms by which viral marketing affects consumer behavior remain unexplored in depth. Therefore, this review article will further explore the specific impact of viral marketing factors on consumer behavior and its underlying mechanisms. This paper aims to fill this gap by comprehensively analyzing the mechanisms through which viral marketing influences consumer behavior. By delving into these mechanisms, it can provide marketers with valuable insights that will enable them to design more effective viral marketing strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Viral marketing, as an emerging marketing approach, plays a crucial role in the contemporary digital era. Among it, word-of-mouth marketing is one of the key factors in viral marketing, which has a profound impact on consumer behavior while also having a significant impact on brand influence activities [7]. Dinh and Lee conducted a survey of 409 respondents in the US and used the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS - SEM) method to investigate the impact of viral marketing activities on Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRAs) [7]. The study found that the six values of brand viral marketing activities, including ease of browsing, hedonic value, functional value, aesthetic value, social interaction, and self-identity, significantly motivate consumers to actively participate in COBRAs. The ease of browsing viral brand campaigns is positively correlated with consumers' consuming, contributing, and creating behaviors, which means that consumers' perceptions of the hedonic and functional value of viral marketing content will motivate them to engage in consumption, contribution and creative activities. Thus, viral marketing influences consumers' behavior by affecting their perception and experience of the brand. Word-of-mouth marketing plays a role in transmitting brand information and shaping the brand image, and the word-of-mouth communication among consumers can enhance the brand's influence and credibility.

HAMADE conducted a survey of 599 participants in Lebanon to study the impact of viral marketing on consumers' purchase decisions [8]. The results showed that consumers often refer to the advice of friends and family when purchasing products and tend to share their product experiences and interests on social media. In addition, viral marketing influences consumers' purchase decisions through their ability to gather information from other consumers' comments. For instance, consumers read comments before purchasing and consider the number of likes and shares of posts. They are more likely to purchase products that are widely spread on social media. This indicates that word-of-mouth marketing plays an important role in viral marketing, and consumers' word-of-mouth communication can influence others' purchase decisions and promote the sales of products.

Moreover, Haryani and Motwani used the discriminant analysis method to survey 201 respondents to determine the factors that affect consumers' purchase behavior [6]. The study found that immense efficacy, professed security, and escalating brand are important predictors of consumers' purchase intention. The entertainment, informativeness, cost-effectiveness, and time-saving features of online viral marketing information can attract consumers to purchase products. The consumers' trust in the credibility of websites and information sources, as well as consumers' dependence (i.e., the extent to which consumers are willing to share information) are essential factors influencing purchase decisions. Thus, word-of-mouth marketing in viral marketing can influence consumers' perception and attitude towards products through information transmission and sharing among consumers, and thus affect their purchase behavior.

Through different research methods and objects, researchers have drawn the conclusion that the word-of-mouth marketing approach in viral marketing has an important impact on consumer behavior. Word-of-mouth marketing is closely related to viral marketing and is one of the core driving forces of viral marketing. In viral marketing, consumers share product or brand information through word-of-mouth communication, and this information spreads rapidly in social networks like a virus, thus influencing the behavior of more consumers.

2.2. Brand Awareness

Brand awareness plays a crucial role in consumers' purchasing decisions and is also closely related to viral marketing. Mustikasari and Widaningsih conducted a survey of Indonesian social media Instagram users and used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to study the impact of viral marketing on brand awareness and purchasing decisions [9]. The research found that viral marketing can enhance the brand awareness of products, which in turn influences consumers' purchasing decisions. Promotional information spread through social media can increase consumers' awareness of the brand, thereby prompting them to purchase the product. In addition, the improvement of brand awareness can also enhance consumers' trust and favor towards the product, further promoting the purchasing decision.

Artanti et al. adopted a quantitative research method and conducted a questionnaire survey of users of the Indonesian online shopping website Kaskus to analyze the impact of viral marketing and perceived ease of use on online purchasing decisions [5]. The research results showed that brand awareness has a significant impact on purchasing decisions. When choosing products, consumers tend to give priority to those with high brand awareness because they believe these products are more reliable and of better quality. In addition, brand awareness can also affect consumers' evaluation and attitude towards the product, thereby influencing the purchasing decision.

Amperawati, Haerofiatna, and Rusmawan used questionnaire surveys and the Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB - SEM) to study 720 online store customers in Indonesia [10]. The results showed that brand awareness has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions. Products with high brand awareness are easier to be recognized and recalled by consumers, thus playing an important role in the consumers' purchasing decision process. Consumers usually prefer to choose brands they are familiar with because these brands bring them a sense of security and trust [10].

Haryani and Motwani conducted a survey of 201 respondents and used discriminant analysis to study the factors influencing consumers' purchasing behavior [6]. They believed that brand familiarity is the level of consumers' direct and indirect experience with products or brands. If consumers are familiar with and trust a certain brand, they are more likely to respond to the advertisements of this brand. In viral marketing, the escalation of the brand can connect enthusiastic online brand advocates with the company's product development cycle, thereby influencing consumers' behavioral intentions.

Researchers such as Shatnawi et al. conducted a study with 479 customers of online fashion retailers in Jordan, using the Structural Equation Modeling [11]. The results showed that several dimensions of viral marketing, such as identity, interactivity, insight, instantaneity, invisibility, innovation, and integration, have a significant positive impact on the purchase intention, among which the identity dimension has the most prominent influence. When consumers have a high awareness of the brand, they are more likely to be influenced by viral marketing and thus form a purchase intention. In viral marketing, the unique identity of the brand can attract consumers' attention, making it easier for them to remember and recognize the brand. When the brand identity matches the consumers' self-image or values, consumers will be more inclined to choose this brand because they believe that the brand can represent their personality and taste.

These studies indicate that brand awareness has an important impact on consumers' behavior. Brand awareness can affect consumers' purchasing decisions, product choices, and brand evaluations. In viral marketing, the improvement of brand awareness can promote the spread and diffusion of information because consumers are more willing to share brands they are familiar with and trust. At the same time, viral marketing can also enhance brand awareness by increasing brand visibility, thereby further influencing consumers' behavior. Conducting viral marketing through social media and other channels can enable more consumers to understand and recognize the brand, improve the brand's exposure and reputation, and further promote consumers' purchasing behavior.

2.3. Social Platforms

As an important place for information exchange and sharing, the characteristics of social platforms have a significant impact on consumer behavior. The interactivity of social platforms can promote the information exchange among users, thus influencing purchasing decisions. An increase in browsing duration will make consumers more easily affected by the information on the platform, which may then change their purchasing behavior. A platform with high perceived ease of use can improve consumers' use experience, increase their trust and satisfaction with the platform, and thus promote purchasing behavior.

Artanti et al. conducted a study on users of the Indonesian online shopping website Kaskus [5]. They used the judgment sampling method in non - probability sampling, collected questionnaire data from 110 respondents, measured it using the Likert scale, and finally analyzed it using multiple linear regression. The study found that the interactivity of social platforms plays an important role in consumer behavior. The discussion forum on the Kaskus website can promote the exchange of information among users, thus influencing purchase decisions. Davis pointed out that perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which users believe that using a certain system can reduce their efforts in doing things in the technical world [12]. In the study by Artanti et al., perceived ease of use was considered to have a significant impact on online purchase decisions [5]. Specifically, a platform that is easy to use, clear and understandable, low - cost, and can meet user needs can increase consumers' purchase intention.

Haryani and Motwani conducted a survey and discriminant analysis on 201 respondents [6]. They believed that the information dissemination on social platforms can influence consumers' purchase intention. Among them, factors such as the effectiveness, entertainment, source credibility, and incentive of the information are closely related to consumers' purchase intention. In terms of the browsing duration on social platforms, the more time consumers spend on social platforms, the more easily they are affected by the information on the platform, which may lead to a change in purchase behavior. When consumers browse social platforms, they may be exposed to more product information and recommendations, thereby increasing the possibility of purchase. In addition, a long browsing time may also enhance consumers' familiarity and trust in the brand, further promoting the purchase decision.

In general, the interactivity, browsing duration, and perceived ease of use of social platforms all have an important impact on consumer behavior. Social platforms provide a space for information exchange and sharing for consumers. The interaction and browsing behaviors of consumers on the platform can affect their perception and attitude towards products, and then influence purchase decisions. At the same time, a platform with high perceived ease of use can improve consumers' use experience, increase their trust and satisfaction with the platform, and thus promote purchase behavior.

3. Discussion

Word-of-mouth marketing is one of the core drivers of viral marketing. Consumers share information after they are satisfied with a product or service, which will inspire more consumers to participate, thus directly affecting the purchase decision. This consumer-based information dissemination model not only effectively spreads brand information, but also shapes brand image and enhances brand influence and credibility.

Between viral marketing and brand awareness, viral marketing campaigns can significantly increase the brand awareness of a product while enhancing consumer trust in the product, thus further influencing consumer evaluation and attitude towards the product. On the other hand, increased brand awareness in turn promotes information dissemination and diffusion, as consumers are more willing to share brands they know and trust, thus creating a virtuous cycle that continually strengthens the brand's market position.

In addition, the interactivity of social platforms facilitates the exchange of information between users, which directly affects consumers' purchasing decisions. As consumers spend more time browsing on social platforms, they are more likely to be influenced by the platform's information, which leads to changes in purchasing behavior. At the same time, social platforms with high perceived ease of use provide consumers with a better user experience, increasing their trust and satisfaction with the platform, which in turn facilitates purchasing behavior.

It is necessary for enterprises to fully recognize the value of these factors and integrate them into their marketing strategies. Enterprises should focus on product quality and service level, strengthen brand building and further enhance brand awareness. At the same time, they should also make good use of social platforms to increase interaction with consumers and improve their participation and experience, so as to ensure brand awareness and reputation, and ultimately achieve the goals of product sales and enterprise development.

In addition to focusing on the functions and features of the product itself, companies can also pay more attention to the creation of emotional resonance in viral marketing. By tapping into the emotional needs of consumers, create marketing content that can move people's hearts and trigger their emotional resonance, thus increasing their participation and willingness to share. In addition, on the basis of social platforms, it is also crucial to further strengthen the role of community marketing. Enterprises can establish exclusive brand communities, gather consumers with common interests and needs, carry out interactive activities within the community, provide exclusive offers, and enhance consumers' sense of belonging and loyalty to the brand. At the same time, word-of-mouth communication among community members will be more efficient and conducive to the sustainable development of the brand.

4. Conclusion

This paper reveals the importance of various factors in viral marketing and the complex mechanisms that act on consumers through a review of research on three core aspects: word-of-mouth marketing, brand awareness and social platforms.

By studying the relationship between the various factors of viral marketing and consumer behavior, and establishing an accurate consumer behavior prediction model, it will help companies understand consumer needs more accurately, plan marketing strategies in advance, and improve marketing effectiveness. Consumers' word-of-mouth after increased satisfaction with a product or service will directly affect consumers' purchasing decisions, help companies shape their brand image, and enhance their brand influence. The interactivity of social platforms facilitates the exchange of information between users, and brand awareness and user satisfaction will also affect more consumers as they spread on social platforms. Therefore, enterprises make full use of different marketing

strategies to broaden their marketing methods and effects, so as to experiment the development of enterprises.

However, with the development of globalization, consumers from different cultures may react differently to viral marketing, and future research can compare consumer behaviors in different countries and regions to provide more targeted suggestions for multinational enterprises' global marketing. In addition, thanks to the continuous development of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, future research can also examine how these technologies can be integrated into viral marketing to create more attractive and impactful marketing results. For example, immersive brand experiences can be provided through virtual reality.

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