



International Journal of Engineering, Business and Enterprise Applications (IJEBEA)

www.iasir.net

Harnessing the power of Viral Marketing through Social Media– A study on IT industry

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Abstract: Marketers are mainly concerned with tactics, which is followed by concern investment. Currently tactics have moved lower in priority and the return on investment is the main concern. There is no concern about if the social media works or not. It's not the issue on chats now because Viral marketing campaigns having online presence has give birth to the jargon "Go viral". This includes non-interactive media like videos, podcasts, articles or blog posts, as well as interactive content like tools, web-based games. However the most viral type of campaign is an idea of virus that is divorced from its original media and spreads by discussion. Individual contents can be viral content, while the concept of the content genre is a meme people talk about them and make their own rather than refer or link to one specific instance. The first step for going viral is to design strategy for marketers interested in creating a viral promotion. There are certain challenges like business goals which leads to lead of business the effective way to find potential target audience and then define a way/medium to reach those potential buyers. In the research here Researcher tried to analyze how marketers use social media to market, promote and grow their businesses. It will be of help to marketers who are just starting to build on Social media or seeking support on it. It also compares other tools used to gain business. The research lays emphasis on how B2B and B2C is using affiliate programs to promote their brand. Design and develop strategy for displaying logo along with relevant information on thousands of sites for free which creates a viral world.

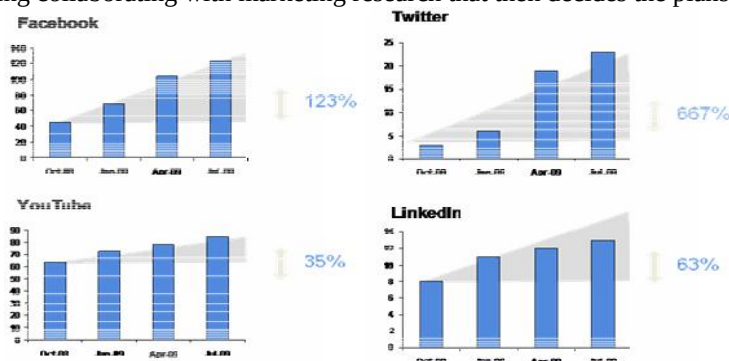
Key words: Viral marketing, marketers, strategy, media, online promotions

I. Introduction

Viral marketing and viral advertising are buzzwords referring to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks increases brand awareness through self duplicating viral processes, that is analogous like virus / computer viruses. It can be word-of-mouth delivered and getting escalated by the various effects on Internet. It can be done in the form of video clips, interactive Flash games, adv-games, e-books, brand able software's, images, or even text messages.

The main task of marketers is to know such people who generally do social networking and create viral messages that can generate interest in such target customers which would help in generating the WOM. This technique is also quiet similar to stealth marketing campaigns—the unscrupulous use of astro-turfing which is on net and combined along with such techniques that market in store to create environment of WOM.

Social media marketing has been recent upgrade to integrated marketing communications. It is a principle that organization's follow to reach their target markets. It coordinates and mixes the various elements of promotional mix, advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing, and sales promotion. Viral marketing campaigns also form a part of this integrated group. As a part of traditional marketing communication, various parts-content, frequency, timing, and medium of communications are in collaboration with plans of advertising collaborating with marketing research that then decides the plans for public relations.



Source: Journal of Social Media Marketing

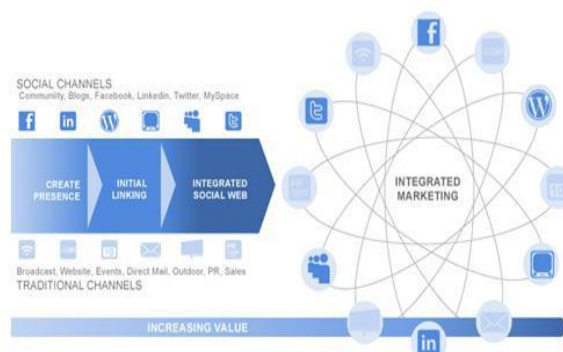
Social media's main aim is to maintain such data that people would be interested and would get attracted to generate WOM. Generally WOM is maintained when the data is created by a person trusted in the network and also then spreads faster compared to others. Anyone can login to Social Media from anywhere irrespective of location. Due to better interaction with target customers, the organizations are able to cater to needs of that target. The overall cost being low for the same. In the past two years, a number of marketers have experimented with social media by hiring an intern to simply set up a Face book fan page or establish a Twitter account. In 2013, however, the experimentation phase is over and social media is ready for prime time. A March further more, social media is increasingly being used by both B2B and B2C marketers. Although B2B has lagged B2C, it is catching up and innovating new applications of social media. Both B2B and B2C businesses are using social media to engage with their customers for:

Indian Co's on Social Media

Seeking Feedback – Titan	Hiring New Talent – E&Y	Customer Support- Kingfisher Airlines, PVR Cinemas
Brand Awareness Apollo Hospitals	Brand Promotion- Tata's Nano	Brand Promotion- MTV India

Source: Can Knowledge Management be Open Source?, IFIP International Federation for Information Processing, Open Source Development

- Influence – increase and drive awareness
- Customer Acquisition – drive sales of products and services
- Ideation – solicit input into product development
- Customer Service – provide a competitive edge to customer service
- Customer Loyalty – build and strengthen brand loyalty



Source: Journal of Marketing -Web2.0

In order to maximize social media and marketing ROI, recommendations are for using a five-step approach to campaign planning and design

- Step 1—Define Business and Marketing Goals
- Step 2—Strategic Solutions
- Step 3—Design and Build
- Step 4—Activate and Distribute
- Step 5—Measure and Optimize

II. Research Objective

1. To analyzes the various components of viral marketing and various factors leading to its growth and profit.
2. To find out how marketers are benefit with the media using viral marketing.
3. To find out how IT companies harnesses Social Media Marketing to target potential customers
4. To find out how Companies can utilize viral elements in integrated marketing plan for their benefits.

III. Research methodology

Social media was utilized for this survey and research was focusing only on the industry people. And the links of LinkedIn, facebook and other social media channels were given utmost importance.

As per the survey when marketers were asked for their experience using social media marketing, 65% of marketers have either just started harnessing social media or have been marketing using Social media for a shorter time frame. 79.5% of survey participants have used Social Media Mainly for B2B whereas only 68.7% have actually used it for B2C marketing purpose.

Maximum people use social media for at least 1 to 5 hours on a weekly basis. As per analysis only 43% among marketers utilize this Social media for more then 4 or 5 hours on a weekly basis on social media activities.

Among Marketers, 76% utilize Social Media for marketing for 4 hours weekly for marketing their business. Most important benefit of Social Media marketing is to generate awareness about the brand or the business. Among the marketers surveyed, 85% affirm that the Social Media efforts have given their business a good exposure in terms of target customers it also helped in increasing the visits to company websites. Major changes that took place in Social Media world with viral marketing is that all the major categories benefited and grew at the rate of 56%. The number of marketers who felt Social media helped reduce their expense grew from 35% to 48%. Marketers have been concerned if they can benefit by putting in more time can they benefit or would it increase their profit.

IV. Results

Most of surveyed marketers (almost 2/3rd) have utilized social media marketing websites as well as the necessary tools for event marketing etc. Quite a few have moved to social sites like the ones Facebook whereas quite a few consider blogs, Twitter and LinkedIn as a far better option. They even utilize blogs and micro-blogging sites established for internal and external use.

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 3					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Personalization of search results	-47.911	97	.000	-1.717	-1.79	-1.65
Rise of mobile internet	-16.146	97	.010	-.623	-.70	-.55
Real Time search	-9.849	97	.000	-.585	-.70	-.47
Behavioral Targeting	-2.229	97	.020	-.132	-.25	-.02
Day part/time of day marketing	-42.700	97	.000	-1.635	-1.71	-1.56
Rise of local search	-10.250	97	0.18	-.562	-.30	-.03

This shows Trends and Technologies do affect companies' Social Media Activities. It has a positive relation. Almost around 31% marketers utilized these tools for their exhibits to be marketed whereas around 24% need it and utilize it for the B2B Marketing as well as attracting B2C Customers. Quite a lot of these marketers (57%) utilized these tools for normal brand marketing. Very little marketers were such that they had established proper success rules/mantras for judging these social media campaigns (around 1/3rd). Social media tools actually overperformed crossing expectations of over 9/10 people.

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 3					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Registering Branded Usernames on Important websites	-8.354	97	.000	-.736	-.91	-.56
Researching how brand competitors And Key stakeholders utilize it	-4.020	97	.002	-.377	-.56	-.19
Setting Metrics to measure ROI	-5.743	97	.000	-.553	-.74	-.36
Allocating Resources	1.029	97	.001	.113	-.10	.33
Specifying the proper configuration of Account settings -Important Websites	3.650	97	.000	.396	.18	.61
Planning for ongoing Monitoring of Brand reputation	-3.911	97	.000	-.409	-.62	-.20
Preparing and distributing protocols/policies for ongoing communications	.882	97	.004	.094	-.12	.31
Uploading of Photos, Videos and comments	-3.003	97	.003	-.321	-.53	-.11

Whereas only 32% of marketers consider social media to be an immense potential too, most marketers (around 58%) consider it to have not much of the spark of generating profit.

More time needed for making successful social media plan is the one effecting business. Almost around 32% refuse to use it because they have shortage of time

The below table shows how Effective activities in Company's social media communications plan do help in increasing ROI.

The 34% of respondents to this survey who indicated that they do not use Social Media for Marketing cite a less time for social media marketing efforts (22.1%) and lack of social media marketing knowledge (20.1%) as the top two reasons for not incorporating Social Media into their marketing efforts.

80.1% of those using Social Media for Marketing claim increased brand awareness as a direct result. In Other important get-backs are improving relationship on clients, prospects (54.9%), Coverage by Media (49.6%), increased event attendance (21.2%) and booth traffic (19.9%) and, increased or incremental increases in sales (16.5%).

Companies generally utilize Social tools like face book, to connect to the consumers regularly and get their views and feedbacks on company's performance, wherein two-thirds of IT company follow. Higher then 50% IT companies are regular on networking sites and blogs.

Technologies and Trends ' Impact on Social media Plan

		Impact on Social media Plan		Total
		No	Yes	
Technologies	Count	55	43	98
	% within of Respondent	55.9%	43%	98%
Trends	Count	44	56	99
	% within of Respondent	44.1%	56%	99%
Total	Count	99	98	98
	% within of Respondent	99%	98%	98%

Chi-square = 8.10; df=1; $p < .05$

Usage of latest Technologies and Trends does impact Social Media Plan' success.

Nearly half of companies who've used social media for their events, report that following the event, their company tracks or reports metrics related specifically to the use of social media as a marketing tool.

V. Discussion/Conclusion

Organizations Having proper Planning for Social Media

Some of the marketers surveyed said, around 41% of Organizations have a properly and strategically designed Social media Marketing plan. Among the rest of the Marketers from the 78% who use Social Media, organizations had no plans defined for utilizing Social Media effectively

Parts of Organization Involved in Social Media Plan

Marketers surveyed said marketing activities were the major chunk of the Social media planning and hence the team taking care of it as a whole was also marketing team of the organizations(almost around 71% had this view) . Almost around 83% of surveyed marketers said PR was also a good part of the social plan, whereas quiet a 55% expressed having concern on sales acts and hence including it in Social media plan.

Having no Social Media Planning

Most marketers who expressed that their organization didn't have any such social media plan for marketing, also expressed that they did realize the need of one(almost around 80%) . Marketers said that most companies have a closed and a kind of cohesive marketing program and hence they fail to integrate Social Elements into it.

VI. Trouble with Employee Migration to Social Technology

Majority of marketers said that though their company has a proper social media plan in place, employees are not updated about it with any details, which leads to giving incorrect information to customers. Main teams taking part in Social Media transition is marketing team and PR team.

Maximum of the organizations do not have a detailed plan in written mode or do not have any particular metrics tracked for success evaluation, which adversely affects the business reputation and its survival. Organizations should necessarily plan in a way that incorporates all effective teams in designing the social media plan. They should always keep employees updated on recent social media activities so that they are proactive rather reactive when need arises. It also helps in generating confidence in employees as well as communicating at proper levels with consumer.

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