



Going Places: Unleashing Potential of Viral Marketing

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ABSTRACT

As the tourism industry becomes increasingly competitive, leveraging the power of Viral Marketing has emerged as a transformative energy for destinations and businesses seeking to capture the attention of a global audience. The digital era has significantly impacted the tourism sector, redefining consumer behavior, marketing strategies, and destination management. The research delves into the various aspects of virality, including the impact of user-generated content on social media platforms, online reviews, and how travel decisions are influenced by trends. This article explores the potential of becoming viral that can be used in the tourism industry to increase brand awareness through viral marketing strategies, based on previous literature. The article also discusses the potential challenges and controversies that may arise when promoting tourism virally, offering insights into mitigating negative impacts. Through case studies of successful viral marketing campaigns in the tourism industry, the article identifies patterns and best practices. In conclusion, this article provides a comprehensive guide for tourism professionals, marketers, and stakeholders aiming to unlock the suit of viral potential of their destinations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, attention is the most valuable resource and information spreads at lightning speed. As a result, businesses in the tourism industry are facing a complex and challenging environment. However, destination marketers have identified viral marketing as a powerful tool for success amidst this digital chaos. The term "going viral" is not just a buzzword; it refers to the ability of a marketing campaign to capture attention, connect emotionally, and spread rapidly across the vast online world. Nowadays, it is common to see things rapidly gaining popularity and spreading across the internet. This phenomenon often attracts large masses of people in a short period of time, and it has a significant impact on social media users. Depending on how it is utilized, it can either be beneficial or harmful to them.

The purpose of this study is to examine the advantages of viral marketing, with a focus on its application in the tourism industry. This article delves into the fascinating world of viral marketing, delving into the factors that can transform a run-of-the-mill campaign into an online sensation. By exploring the science behind shareability and the craft of creating contagious content. Through real-world examples and the analysis of successful viral campaigns, you will gain valuable insights into the psychology of sharing and learn how to leverage the exponential reach that comes with virality.

This paper presents a literature review where we have used descriptive research methods to analyze the findings of various important research papers, articles, and other sources related to our research objectives. The paper provides a theoretical framework for the concepts of viral marketing and its effectiveness as a marketing medium. To achieve this, the authors conducted a literature review of various articles about the tourism industry. This enabled the researchers to assess the alignment between the theoretical foundations outlined in the literature and the practical implementation of viral marketing in the tourism business industry.

Several authors have documented the significance of viral marketing for the tourism and hospitality industry and have noted that viral marketing is the most effective way for tourism organizations to communicate with and influence tourists (Zhang & Huang, 2022). The rise of social media has led to the increased speed and reach of viral marketing, providing an opportunity for the tourism industry to effectively promote and advertise their business (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020).

With the advancement of communication technology, a new form of word-of-mouth marketing has emerged - Viral Marketing Communication (VMC). This approach encourages individuals to share marketing messages with others using the internet. VMC is an extension of word-of-mouth communication, which involves the principle of passing on news, information, or entertainment to another person (Yung et al., 2021). Generally, a message spread by word of mouth is a result of a positive experience between a consumer and a brand. However, in viral marketing, the message is a promotional technique used by marketers to make consumers aware of the brand and its products and to encourage them to pass on the message to other users (Buhalis et al., 2023). The unique features of tourism products can affect the effectiveness of traditional marketing tools such as advertising and exhibitions when promoting popular tourist destinations. Alternatively, modern marketing trends and tools may be preferred nowadays over traditional marketing.

Viral marketing is similar to word-of-mouth marketing. The message is passed from one person to another in both cases. With viral marketing, the aim is for the message to spread exponentially. This means that one person who receives the message can forward it to dozens or even hundreds of other internet users. The goal is for the message to multiply and spread

to a large audience. Influencer marketing are popular destination marketing strategies in the tourism industry. They allow destination marketers to promote products and services using social media and online platforms (Tenghao Zhang, Xinli Huang, 2021). According to several researches, these strategies have become effective ways of promoting tourism destinations (Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020; Deb et al., 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 Viral Marketing

Viral Marketing refers to the use of pre-existing social networks to increase brand awareness or achieve other marketing goals (such as product sales). This is done through self-replicating viral processes, similar to how pathological and computer viruses spread. Examples of viral promotion include video clips, interactive Flash games, advergames, ebooks, brandable software, images, or even text messages. It can be delivered through word-of-mouth or enhanced by the network effects of the Internet.

Viral marketing is a type of marketing that relies on word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations using internet media. It aims to encourage internet users to share their positive experiences of trying something new and different with others. While both WOM and viral marketing rely on recommendations, they differ in the way they are communicated. Word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing involves direct communication between individuals, whereas viral marketing uses electronic media to spread the message. However, both aim to spread messages from one person to another. The internet facilitates the rapid and massive spread of messages, making social networking sites a prime target for marketers to promote products and services in the business sector and beyond (Hartanto et al., 2022).

Viral marketing is a modern marketing communication tool that belongs to the current trend (Subawa et al., 2021). Viral marketing impacts customer attraction, reviews, and social sharing for likes interior decorating cafes (Yuniati et al., 2021; Nadzari et al., 2021). According to (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020) Which is the concept of viral marketing and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) can be divided into two categories: company-created viral and e-WOM, and viral content that spontaneously gains popularity among netizens. Negative viral content tends to occur suddenly, while companies may intentionally create positive viral content.

2. 2 Application Strategy of Viral Marketing in the Tourism Sector

The concept of content virality on social media has been adopted by marketers as a marketing communication strategy. This practice is known as viral marketing. Marketers often collaborate with influencers or opinion leaders to promote their brand or product. However, this approach can be costly, since every influencer has their rates (Berger and Milkman, 2018). Nonetheless, there are cases where virality happens organically, and marketers can take advantage of this opportunity to generate profits (Agustina, 2020).

Viral marketing has two main aspects. The first one is the growth or content reproduction aspect, which enables the content to be shared with more than one person. The second aspect is social media. It has become easier for users to share content with others due to the rise of social media and user-generated content, which has led to the growth of viral marketing (Boediman et al., 2021).

Several previous studies stated that content can go viral because the content has an emotional aspect, so social media users who consume the content can feel the emotions conveyed. The emotions that can be included in content to make it go viral can be positive or

negative. The phenomenon of content virality not only makes content known to many people, but also has an impact on various aspects, one of which is the aspect of developing marketing communication strategies. The term viral marketing is starting to be known and used by marketers as one of their marketing communication strategies (Agustina, 2020).

Viral marketing is a type of electronic word-of-mouth that has the potential to grow exponentially and make the content go viral. To create a successful viral marketing campaign, the content must have an emotional aspect that can establish a connection between the brand and consumers. The emotions that can be leveraged in viral marketing campaigns can be either positive or negative, depending on the objectives of the campaign.

3. METHODS

This paper presents a literature review that uses descriptive research methods to analyze various research papers, articles, and other sources related to our research objectives. Specifically, the paper provides a theoretical framework for understanding the concepts of viral marketing and its effectiveness as a marketing medium. This research proposes a sequential approach to guide systematic literature reviews, increasing the research's validity and rigor.

Systematic Literature Review involves collecting relevant evidence that meets pre-specified criteria to answer research questions. Systematic Literature Review is a process that enables the collection of relevant evidence on a given topic that fits pre-specified eligibility criteria, in order to answer formulated research questions (W. Mengist, T. Soromessa, G. Legese, 2020).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Viral marketing may not always be easier as a marketing strategy. To achieve success in marketing, it is not enough to simply promote a product. However, if a marketer can captivate their audience with a funny, memorable, and thought-provoking campaign that generates excitement and buzz, the product may become entrenched in the minds of consumers for an extended period of time. Various studies suggest that viral marketing helps companies to make the consumer aware of the products and their benefits. Monetary incentives motivate consumers to spread messages but the most powerful motivator is the content of the message. A viral message can make or break the brand image of a company. So marketers have to be careful about the content that goes viral.

Viral marketing is an undeniable concept. People are happy to share funny things or recommend new products to their friends. However, they are just as quick to share bad news about a product. Therefore, companies must be able to manage both the positive and negative aspects of viral transmission. Viral marketing can have a positive impact, but it can also have a negative impact if negative content about a company goes viral. This can result in a decrease in sales turnover (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020). Effective viral marketing requires strong branding and strategy on the company's social media to ensure rapid spread via the internet and a positive impact on the company.

It is found that consumers rely more on blogs for their purchase decisions as they consider bloggers as opinion leaders. Consumers now want to be more involved in the buying process, so to gain more information and evidence of the positive results of the product they turn to the internet. It will be a good idea for the companies to start their own blogs where consumers can share their experiences, and complaints, and give recommendations for the improvement of the product. This could help companies get instant feedback about the product and help consumers know more about the product.

It is essential for businesses to effectively target consumers before generating a viral campaign because viewers spread only those messages to which they can relate. It is also found that viral marketing is still not used effectively on the internet which is why businesses are not able to reap enough benefits out of their campaigns. Effective targeting of users will help a company generate more sales. The effect of targeting the right consumers can be known from an example a friend of ours bought a jacket from an online store because she saw her friend (whom she considers to be of a good social status and has a good sense of clothing) promote the store on Instagram. There are so many people who buy a product when they see their friends, who influence them positively, and promote the brand in various communities on social networking sites.

5. CONCLUSION

Viral marketing is a relatively new concept in the domain of marketing. Many researchers conclude that viral messages do not have a significant positive effect on consumers buying behavior, but they do help consumers to register the brand name in their minds. Viral messages can also help create a need for certain products and services in consumers. This need might influence them to buy the product. Consumers often forward viral messages to people they know and listen to satisfied and dissatisfied consumers before making a purchase decision.

For a viral message to be successful, it should be funny, quirky, and something that the consumer can relate to. Marketers need to be innovative and use different effects in their advertisements to create a "wow" effect in the minds of viewers. The business environment is fast-changing, and social media has a significant impact on consumer's minds. Therefore, using effective viral marketing campaigns can be the best bet for marketers in the future. Companies need to keep themselves updated about new technologies being used and adapt to changes to gain advantages.

6. RECOMMENDATION

It is hoped that this research can be a reference for future researchers for examining the characteristics of travel-related content that tends to go viral, emphasizing the significance of captivating visuals, relatable narratives, and the travel experiences through out of destinations.

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