Research Paper

Investigating the Relation between Factors Effecting Viral Marketing and Consumers' Buying Intention

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to first identify the factors related to viral marketing and then explore consumer buying intention to this relatively new marketing strategy.

Design / Methodology / Approach: The study was done on primary data collected through self structured questionnaire based on five point Likert Scale. Non probability judgmental sampling was used. Seven factors were identified using exploratory factor analysis. Using structural equation modeling through smart PLS software, effect of these seven factors was studied on buying intention of consumer.

Findings: Our study shows that Immense Efficacy, Irrepressible and Professed Security factors are not associated with the buying intention of consumer due to viral marketing while Supportive Access, Consumer Dependency, Escalating Brand and Message Clarity are main factors associated with buying intention of consumer due to viral marketing.

Originality / Value: Advancements in communication technology have given rise to the evolution of a new electronic form of word-of-mouth i.e. viral marketing communication. Internet has extraordinarily changed the marketing gimmick and viral marketing is a very effective tool available to the marketers today. It is helping organizations to grow their business by adopting strategies to reach out to their customers. This research paper is our original research and respondents were belonging to India and US only. However, it will be interesting to examine these factors in a different cultural context. Marketers should utilize these results in marketing to support a measurable business goal.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, e-mail marketing, Internet marketing, Viral marketing.

1. Introduction

The proliferation of marketing and advertising, coupled with the onslaught of millions of media channels in today's world, has given cause for consumers to tune out and effectively avoid a great deal of traditional supplier driven messaging. Besides, Television ads, radio

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spots, online ads and even emails are facing increasing competition for effectively capturing the viewer's attention. This competition, coupled with the rising cost of media buys, has caused marketers to search for an alternative means to reach the customer. Viral marketing is an attractive solution because it utilizes the free endorsement of the individual rather than purchase of mass media to spread the word. Also, since the distribution model is free, viral can potentially be lower cost and more effective than traditional media.

Besides, Internet has radically changed the concept of word-of-mouth, so much so that the term "viral marketing" was coined by venture capitalist Steve Jurvetson in 1997. The term was used to describe Hotmail's email practice of appending advertising for themselves to outgoing mail from their users. The assumption is that if such an advertisement reaches a "susceptible" user, that user will become "infected" (i.e., sign up for an account) and can then go on to infect other susceptible users. Viral marketing is applicable when someone using online communication, distributes the positive or negative comments or information with regard to certain product or brand names.

According to Vilpponen *et al.* (2006), viral marketing is a consumer-to-consumer process, and that it is related to word-of-mouth communication, however they differ in all other aspects. As the internet has grown, so has web-advertising research. Nonetheless, few studies have examined how email affects consumer behavior. A renewed emphasis on interactive word-of-mouth advertising is emerging among marketing practitioners and may correct this oversight.

According to Ridings, Gefe and Arinze (2002) and Bruyn and Lilien (2008) in the small world concept, the demand for information, the good intention to share the experience or ideas about the products and services, the capability of the customer-to-customer (C2C) communications as the electronic peer-to-peer referrals on Internet and the potential for getting recommendations from mutual acquaintances have raised a considerable potential for viral marketing (VM) which is the effective mixture of the traditional idea called word of mouth(WOM) .The advent of social networks, online communities, online videos and emails, blogs ,forums etc provide the ability to distribute information faster than ever before. Viral Marketing can spread any message to millions of people in a short span of time in an effective way. Viral marketing is applicable when someone using online communication, distributes the positive or negative comments or information with regard to certain product or brand names. Due to the extensive use of internet in sharing information among young adults, marketers should focus on viral marketing as one of the new sources of marketing. Modzeiewski (2000) argue that viral marketing is not merely an internet-era replacement for word-of-mouth advertising, but it is turning customers into a marketing force who will initiate and pass along positive messages concerning about product or service. It is the process of creating interesting, entertaining, appealing or informative messages, articles or videos designed to be passed on by each recipient. It spreads like an epidemic, often by e-mail or SMS. Advertisers can post to YouTube and advertise their information, can let the consumers do the viral job by transmitting the information forward, or can even let posts occur organically, through fans that capture video and post it the site (Riegner 2007; Tuten 2008).

Knight (1999) says that viral marketing is similar to a "digitalized sneeze", one characterized by the release of "millions of tiny particles that can infect others who come into contact with them". Welker (2002) emphasizes on the contagious power of a virus and

suggests that a "virus replicates with geometrically increasing power, doubling with each interaction". Viral marketing communication is seen as a vital electronic extension of word-of-mouth (WoM) communication, which involves the principle of passing on or referring news, information or entertainment to another person. Where WoM has occurred, it simply implies that informal, ad hoc communication between individuals concerning products and services has taken place (Bayus, 1985). WoM communication is widely perceived as a dominant force in the marketplace where information is filtered out and passed on by friends or family who are seen as free, unbiased sources of advice (Cruz and Fill, 2008; Carl, 2008).

Viral Marketing is the word today, which is used to describe the revolutionary way by which any information proliferates across a million people rapidly within a short period of time. Marketers are now increasingly looking forward to tap this opportunity to deliver any kind of a marketing message because of its ability to make it contagious. Viral Marketing is not so easy and uncomplicated. It has been seen in the past that all such marketing campaigns have not been always successful, barring a few exceptions. The complexity of viral marketing campaigns arises from the understanding of how consumers react or respond to online marketing messages. It is extremely important to tap the right kind of consumer behavior and attitude to leverage the opportunities available with the marketers. The effectiveness of viral marketing as a promotion relies on the types of social interactions and to identity the most active media in viral marketing campaigns. Currently, viral marketing is still considered to be at a premature phase of development, therefore information about its behavior and magnitude has yet to be clearly set upon and determined. In addition, limited research has been done on consumer perception and response to such marketing techniques. For this study, we will consider viral marketing as a technique which utilizes the internet to transmit and spread messages among individuals who will filter and forward the messages to their peers, who may be potentially interested in the message's content. The purpose of the study is to first identify the factors related to viral marketing and then explore consumer behavioral intention to this relatively new marketing strategy.

2. Literature Review

A study by Zimmerman (2001) found that 81% of recipients will forward a message to at least one other person and 49% will send it to two or more others. When considering those percentages, it becomes clear how quickly these viral messages spread, and therefore why businesses need to harness them to aid their marketing objectives. Spero and Stone (2004) suggest that the digital world is the place in which a brand communicates with its young market. Dobele *et al*. (2007) suggested that it is evident that businesses can use the internet to reach this younger audience, but this is too often overlooked and undervalue by most companies. If these companies have executed it effectively, viral marketing campaigns can create an instantaneous buzz and help to boost the promotion of brands, products and services. According to Sheikhahmadi *et al*. (2017), high spreading power nodes is an interesting problem in social networks and finding super spreader nodes becomes an arduous task when the nodes appear in large numbers, and the number of existing links becomes enormous among them. Akpinkar *et al*. (2017) shows that different types of advertisement affect shares and brand related outcomes differently. He demonstrated how

advertising types (emotional vs. emotional not integral vs. informative) shape valuable viral effect.

Frost (2007) suggested that 82% of the fastest growing private companies use word-of-mouth techniques, which is why viral marketing is becoming more popular. According to Cruz and Fill (2008), viral marketing is still at an early stage of development and much of the current literature research is concerned with understanding the motivations and behaviors of passing on e-mail messages. Research into viral marketing has attempted to measure specific aspects of Word of Mouth. For example, Godes and Mayzlin (2004) and Gruen *et al.* (2006) made use of online conversations to study Word of Mouth. Vilpponen *et al.* (2006) employed a "whom-told-whom" methodology to trace the information flow of internet campaigns. Recently, Cruz and Fill (2008) conducted pioneering research and developed a broad based evaluation framework which can be used to assess the effectiveness of viral marketing campaigns.

Krizanec (2016) expressed that a good viral marketing is a story that requires innovation, creativity and quality of what is offered and to make viral marketing successful, it is necessary to devise quality content and the same content focus to a particular demographic group for which the content is created. Businesses can achieve more effective targeting for their products due to viral marketing. The is because, as Moore (2003) explains, individuals who are forwarding forms of viral marketing to friends and acquaintances are most likely to forward it to people who they think will be interested in the content. Peachy (2008) if demand for a particular product or service exceeds supply then instead of strengthening a business, the viral marketing campaign may end up destroying it. Knossenburg *et al.* (2016) analyzed 641 cases using SEM and found that engagement and surprise were content characteristics that distinguish successful from non successful online viral video advertisements. Dobele *et al.* (2015) explored the effect of a company who manages points of connection, blogs and viral marketing, on customer relationships and presented seven critical success factors for utilizing blog marketing to maximize effect. Chaffey (2003), receiving emails in this way is often annoying for the recipient as they only pass along a link and no extra information. In order to execute viral marketing campaigns efficiently and effectively, Sohn *et al.* (2017) expressed that variety of growth patterns are apparent and advertisers should recognize the growth pattern changes.

In the study by Moore (2003), it is suggested that viral marketing results in effective targeting, due to the theory that friends are more likely to target individuals who will be interested in the content. It may be concluded from this that as long as users are able to control what information is sent to them and their friends, they feel that viral marketing is acceptable. This conclusion is supported by the findings of Scott (2007) who suggested that people don't respond well when companies enforce control over them.

3. Research Methodology

The study is exploratory in nature and intends to discuss the factors affecting perception of consumers regarding viral marketing. This study proposed an integrated theoretical framework of factors effecting viral marketing and behavioral intention of users. The objective of the study was to analyze the relationship of behavioral intention of consumers towards viral marketing with selected constructs and to develop a general linear structural

model of acceptance of viral marketing by consumers in India and USA. Non probability judgemental sampling method was used for the collection of data.

To ascertain and measure the relevant dimensions of our model, this process proceeded in four stages: development of the survey instrument, development of measurement scales, pretesting to assess validities of the survey instrument using a sample of 110 consumers and data collection from a sample of 250 consumers to test the proposed model. Given the lack of pre-validated instruments for this study, an extensive literature review was done to create an indigenous questionnaire consisting of 26 questions based on five point likert Scale. After the interviews with experts and discussion with six senior information system or business managers who were closely associated with viral marketing, the survey instrument was finalized consisting of 24 questions and small modifications.

After their review, a total of 110 respondents were administered this questionnaire and responses were generated. After ensuring the content of the items selected, the reliability of the tool was determined by Cronbach's alpha method and as a general rule a coefficient greater than or equal to 0.7 is considered acceptable and is a good indicator of reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire was found to be 0.893 which proves that it is reliable and can be used for further analysis (Annexure 1).

For determining the factors of viral marketing, the data was then tested for Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. High value of KMO (0.779>.05) indicate that sample is sufficient for factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity is .000 which is less than .05 indicating that there exists significant relationship among the variable (Annexure 2). Further, the inter item correlation of one of the item was found to be less than 0.196 which is insignificant, and thus was not considered in analysis. The remaining 23 items were accepted for the final scale and subjected to Principal Component Method of Factor Analysis using Varimax Rotation. As a result of factor analysis, 7 factors were extracted namely Immense Efficacy (% of Var. = 19.69), Supportive Access (% of Var. = 13.17), Professed Security (% of Var. = 10.28), Message Material (% of Var. = 10.18), Irrepressible(% of Var. = 6.5) Consumer Dependency (% of Var. = 6.02) and Escalating Brand(% of Var.=5.14). Eigen values for factor was more than one. The details of these factors are provided in Annexure 3.

4. Construct development and framing of hypothesis

Immense Efficacy was a construct which was formed by the following six items (Detailed information about the product can be assessed anytime; It saves time; It is cost effective; Wide range of products can be displayed; It is entertaining and Relevant information is provided). Saadeghvaziri and Hosseini (2011) also considered information as an important factor in determining the effectiveness of advertisements and expresses that it has an impact on consumers' attitude as it helps them in making purchase decisions (Tsang *et al*., 2004). Haghirian *et al*. (2005) opinioned that information provided to the consumers by means of mobile phones should consist of the features like accuracy, timeliness, and usefulness for generating positive consumers' attitude. Prior research on benefits of viral marketing has suggested that because it does not require any additional cost, they are relatively inexpensive in comparison to many other forms of advertising and marketing campaigns (Dobele, *et al*., 2005, Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004, Welker, 2002). Consumers are interested

in receiving messages that are relevant for them. Tsang *et al*. (2004) and Bauer *et al*. (2005) suggested that entertainment is the most important feature that affects consumers' attitude towards mobile advertising Entertainment is a significant factor of the value of web-based advertisements hence, determines their efficiency and specifically interesting and pleasing ads have a positive impact on consumers' attitude towards brands. Therefore the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_1: *Immense Efficacy factor of viral marketing have an association with buying intention of the user.*

The second factor was framed as Supportive Access and was based on the following 5 items (Wide reach ability; Rapid diffusion of information; No geographical boundaries for promotion; Provides easy navigation on web; Enlarged images of products can be assessed). The major benefits of VM are related to the positive diffusion characteristics: viral marketing can reach audiences within a short period of time (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004) as messages spread exponentially at a fast speed (Helm, 2000, Welker, 2002). This rapid diffusion can significantly boost the speed of the adoption of the marketed product or service (Dobele, *et al*., 2005). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there is a relation between supportive access and buying behavioral intention of the user which leads to the following hypothesis:

H_2: *Supportive access factor of viral marketing have an association with buying intention of the user.*

Professed Security construct was framed of following 5 items (It Can lead association to unauthorized companies; the site which gives the information is virus free; information is provided by credible sources; it is trustworthy and the information which is downloaded is free of viruses). Kelly *et al*. (2010) expressed that many of the users show a lack of trust in terms of the credibility of the medium, thereby, considering the material as spam and are reluctant to provide their personal information to companies as they often think of advertisers as dodgy. Higher source credibility results into more favorable consumers' response towards the SMS advertisements (Muzaffar and Kamran, 2011). The credibility and trustworthiness of viral message source is also closely linked with the perceived risk. If the viral marketing message comes from a trusted source, the perceived risk associated with the message is low. The message recipients express no security and privacy concerns, when they receive viral message from their social network (Palka *et al*., 2009). According to Chu and Kamal (2008) if the blogger's trustworthiness is high the blog readers will be willing to trust the information provided on blog and would read the arguments made and vice versa. Therefore, one would expect the relationship between professed security and buying behavioral intention of the user. Hence it is proposed that:

H_3 – Professed Security factor of viral marketing have an association with buying intention of the user.

The fourth factor was named Message Clarity which was framed by 2 items namely Sufficient information is provided and message is clearly understood. Reyck and Degraeve (2003) maintain that advertisements containing interesting and customized information that matches customer preferences will result into their positive attitude towards mobile advertisements. Furthermore, message variety, appropriate message delivery timings with a right message frequency could also result into a positive customers' attitude toward mobile marketing messages. It is necessary that viral marketing messages contents are concise and, are able to capture consumers' attention. . Moreover, if the message contents become excessively manipulative, it also irritates message recipients and results into a negative consumers' attitude (Palka *et al*., 2009; Haghirian *et al*.,2005). It has found that message clarity was considered as a significant factor to the success of advertising particularly in the context of digital advertising (Taylor *et al*., 2006) which influence the consumer's attitudes in the area of viral advertising. Therefore, the hypothesis formulated is:

H_4: Message clarity factor of viral marketing have an association with buying intention of the user.

Fifth factor was named irrepressible which constituted 2 items namely the communication go out of control and frequent messages can lead to mail box traffic. Little control occurs over information as social media sites are represented as "anything goes" communication channels because, anyone can post anything. Hence, people neither trust these posts nor the people posting those messages (Kelly *et al*., 2010). Yet, besides these significant benefits, there are risks and challenges that marketers have to face when engaging in viral marketing campaigns. Probably, the biggest risk is the lack of control associated with viral marketing campaigns, since organizations have no means of controlling the spread of the message and the content of the transmission (Dobele, *et al*., 2005; Helm, 2000; Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004; Welker, 2002). Thus, prior studies suggested that the effect of Irrepressible factor on buying intention of the user needs to ne determined. Based on this argument, it is proposed that:

H_5: Irrepressible factor of viral marketing have an association with buying intention of the user.

Consumer Dependency was framed the sixth factor which constituted of two items namely People share the information when some incentives are offered and It is effective only when consumer share it with others. It is generally agreed that viral marketing involves the spreading of a marketing message via 'word of mouse,' ensuring that the receivers have the interest to pass along the message to their acquaintances (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004). The dependency on the consumer for message transmission is a further risk as consumers, for

example, may want a return from the organization for passing on a viral message (Helm, 2000). Thus, it is predicted that:

H_6: Consumer dependency factor of viral marketing have an association with buying intention of the user.

Escalating Brand was framed the last factor which had only one item namely It is a useful marketing tool for creating brand awareness Brand familiarity has been identified, by Alba and Hutchinson (1987), Hoch and Deighton (1989), and Kent and Allen (1994), as the consumers level of direct and indirect experience with products or brands. It is clear that consumers are likely to respond to ads if they are sent from the company that they know or are familiar. Another area of opportunity for social marketing is "brand building" - connecting enthusiastic online brand advocates with the company's product development cycle (Ferguson, 2008). Here, research becomes marketing; product developers are now using social forums to spot reactions after they modify an offer, a price, or a feature in a product or service. Such brand managed communities can have real success. Thus, it results to seventh hypothesis:

H_7: Escalating brand factor of viral marketing have an association with buying intention of the user.

Using structural equation modeling, effect of these seven factors which were identified using exploratory factor analysis, was studied on buying intention of consumer through smart PLS software. PLS was used to test the hypothesized relationships among the study variables. The choice was motivated by several considerations. PLS is a non-parametric estimation procedure (Wold, 1982). Its conceptual core is an iterative combination of principal components analysis relating measures to constructs, and path analysis capturing the structural model of constructs. The structural model represents the direct and indirect causal relationships among constructs. It is more appropriate for analyzing moderating effects because traditional techniques cannot account for measurement error in exogenous constructs (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982) allows for modeling latent constructs under conditions of non-normality, and is appropriate for small to medium sample sizes (Chin, 1998a,1998b ; Chin and Newsted, 1999).

5. Results and Discussion

To assess the psychometric properties of measurement model, individual item loadings, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were examined of the reflective first-order factors.

As shown in Figure 1, the internal consistency of all reflective constructs clearly exceeded 0.70, suggesting strong reliability. For the average variance extracted by a measure, a score of 0.5 indicates acceptability (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). It was found that average

variance extracted by all reflective measures is higher than 0.5, which is above the acceptability value.

Figure 1: Internal Consistency of Reflective Constructs
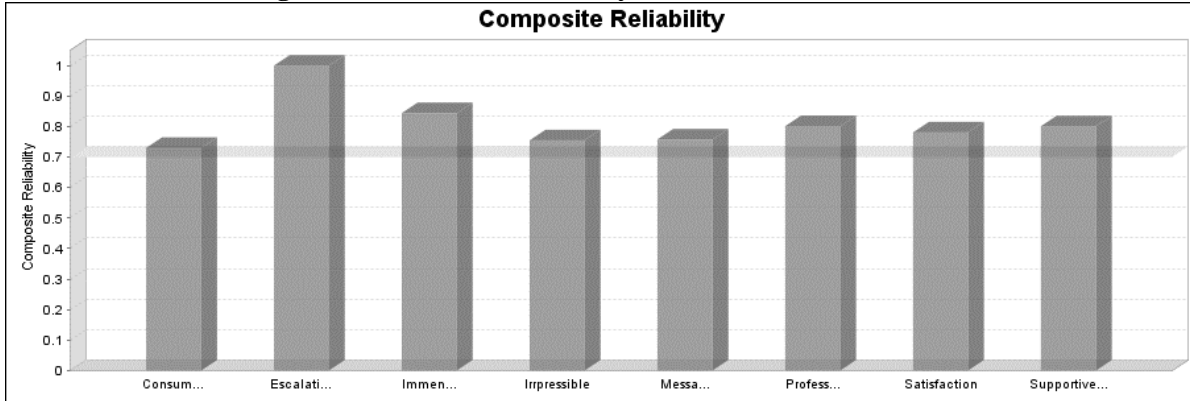
Source: Author. Chart taken from smart pls software. Composite reliability greater than 0.7is acceptable.

Finally, the study verified the discriminant validity of the instrument by comparing the average variance extracted (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). It is clear from the Table 1, that the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct (in bold) is greater than the levels of correlations with other constructs. The results of the inter-construct correlations also show that each construct shares larger variance with its own measures than with other measures.

Table 1: Verification of Discriminant Validity

	CD	EB	IE	I	MC	PS	SA
Consumer Dependency	**0.73**						
Escalating Brand	0.312	**1**					
Immense Efficacy	0.434	0.262	**0.70**				
Irrpressible	0.117	0.167	0.568	**0.77**			
Message Clarity	0.377	0.181	0.621	0.445	**0.77**		
Professed Security	0.363	0.237	0.560	0.396	0.502	**0.71**	
Supportive Access	0.447	0.268	0.731	0.483	0.593	0.692	**0.70**

Source: Author.

The model was designed to study the effect of seven factors of viral marketing that emerged from pilot study on over-all satisfaction of the user related to viral marketing. The loadings of the measurement items on their respective factors were examined. Finally, the model included the items whose loading were above the threshold value of 0.60 on their respective factor and were statistically significant at the 0.001 level, which provides support for convergent validity (Figure 2). One item of professed security factor (The information which is downloaded is free of viruses) was deleted since it had very less factor loading.

Figure 2: Model Displaying Relationship Different Factors of Viral Marketing with Over-all Satisfation of the User after Removal of Some Items
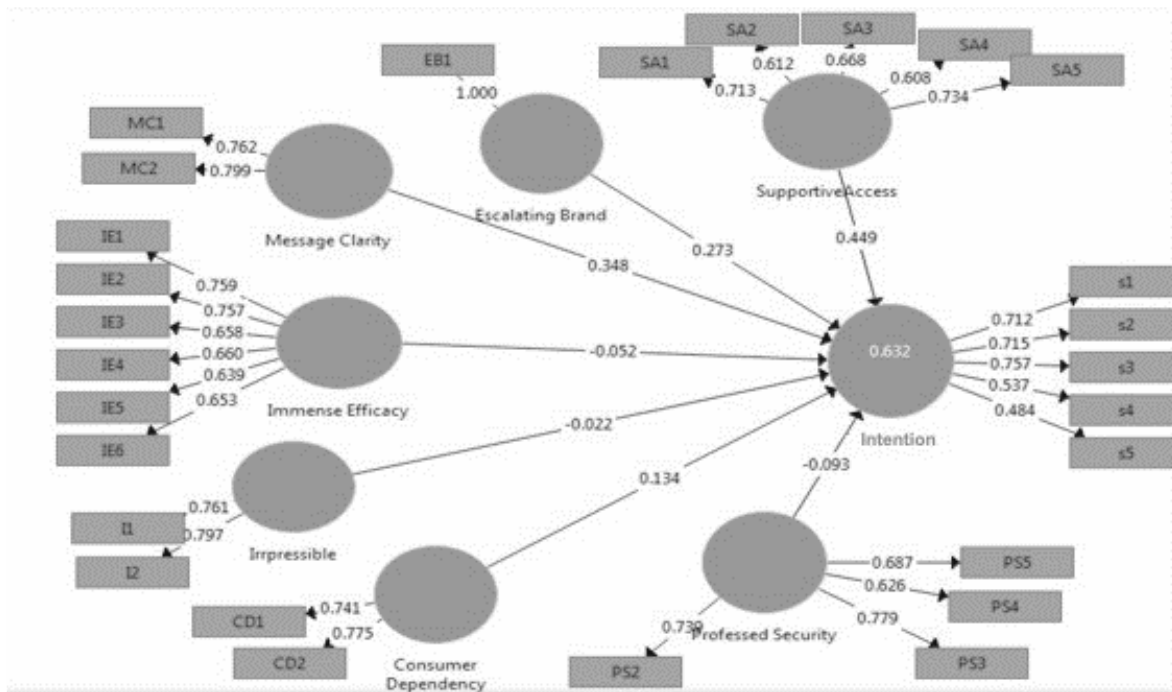
Source: Author. Analysis on PLS software.

The PLS modeling approach involved two steps - validating the measurement model and then fitting the structural model. The former is accomplished primarily by AVE, CR and discriminant validity, followed by a test of the explanatory power of the overall model by assessing its explained variance, and the testing of the individual hypotheses (structural model). The model shows that the explanatory power of the model is 63.2%. For testing the individual hypotheses, a bootstrap re-sampling procedure was conducted and coefficients were estimated.

Table 2: Relationship between factors of Viral marketing with Buying Intention of the user.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Error (STERR)	T Statistics (|O/STERR|)	P value
Immense Efficacy -> Intention	-0.052	-0.053	0.064	0.811	0.417
Supportive Access -> Intention	0.449	0.450	0.065	6.92	0.000
Professed Security -> Intention	0.093	-0.093	0.065	1.42	0.156
Message Clarity -> Intention	0.348	0.339	0.061	5.72	0.000
Irrepressible -> Intention	-0.022	-0.010	0.062	0.36	0.716
Consumer Dependency -> Intention	0.134	0.142	0.052	2.58	0.010
Escalating Brand -> Intention	0.273	0.273	0.044	6.21	0.000

Source: Author. Analysis done in smart PLS.

From the table 2, the results revealed that hypothesis H_1, H_3 and H_5 stands rejected at 5 % level of significance since p value is > 0.05 for these hypotheses. This means that there is no effect of Immense Efficacy, Professed Security and Irrepressible factor on buying behavior of the consumer.

The study shows that hypothesis H_1 was rejected which means that immense efficacy factor of viral marketing did not had any effect on the buying behavior of the user. This really seems to be a contradiction to general perception of viral marketing, but, it might have changed with prevailing dynamic environment. However, with respect to controversial taboo ads, Sabiri(2017) found that the viral medium context does not lead to a more positive attitude toward the embedded brand or to more positive purchase intentions The result shows that we failed in rejecting hypothesis H_2 which means that supportive access factor of viral marketing affects the buying behavior of user. Easy navigation, fast circulation, wide reach, anytime anywhere access, no geographical boundaries for circulation are the important characteristics of viral marketing message that impact the buying decision of the customer. The study is supported by previous research by Zamri and Idris (2013), which investigates on the consumer's purchasing intention of buying the product using six different independent variables of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, information privacy and security, product and service quality, social influences and role of experiential online shopping motives.

The result indicate that hypothesis H_3 was rejected. This means that professed security is not associated with satisfaction related to viral marketing. This does not supports the assumption that these sites are trustworthy and provides information from credible sources also people believe that these sources does not lead to unauthorized association.

Our study shows that we failed to reject hypothesis H_4. This means that message clarity affects the buying behavior of the consumer. This seems to be true, since, if the online viral marketing message is effective and of sufficient informative, then it attract customers to buy the product. The results of the current research are consistent with the results of the previous researches conducted by Tsang et al. (2004), Haghirian et al. (2005), Saadeghvaziri and Hosseini (2011) and Muzaffar and Kamran (2011) who also suggested that information is an important predictor of the value of viral marketing and plays a significant role in determining consumers' attitude.   . In accordance to our study, Knossenburg et al. (2016) concluded that marketing agents should focus on including at least Engagement and Surprise in their video advertisements in order to increase the chance of it going viral. This can be translated into having elements that attract the viewer's attention (surprise), retain it and make people to share it (engaging) (Teixeira, 2012). Esmaeilpour and Aram (2016) also showed that the viral message appeal and credibility of the message source impact the consumer attitudes toward the brand

We reject H_5 indicating that Irrepressible is not associated with satisfaction related to viral marketing. This shows that people do not think that online marketing circulate beyond limits and the reviews and comments by the consumer can create disaster. We also failed to reject hypothesis H_6 and H_7 indicating that consumer dependency and escalating brand affects over-all satisfaction related to viral marketing. The study supported the arguments that the viral marketing is dependent on the consumer as it is successful only when someone forward or share the information with peer group. Also, people are willing to forward or share the information if they are given some incentives. The information age has

enhanced and accelerated the ability for internet users to communicate and spread the word about brands, products, experiences, and events. While digital media make sharing information and content more accessible, the motivation to share is essential for the viral effect of a message to take place. Thus, viral success is dependent on a consumer's willingness to share a message to others within his or her social circle (Tang, 2006). .

6. Conclusions

Our study shows that Immense Efficacy, Irrepressible and Professed Security factors are not associated with the buying intention of consumer due to viral marketing while Supportive Access, Consumer Dependency, Escalating Brand and Message Clarity are main factors that associated with buying intention of consumer due to viral marketing. Marketers should utilize these results in marketing to support a measurable business goal.

7. Suggestions and limitations

As with any research, this study also has several limitations. The first limitation is that, the survey concentrates on respondents from India and US only. The study could have more reliable and would have yield different results if the target demographic was broader than now. It will be interesting to examine these factors in a different cultural context and in other countries. Cross-cultural studies are also necessary to validate the conceptual model.

Research is strongly encouraged for examining more determinants such as social tie strength, perceived social benefits, reward, perceived enjoyment, personality strength, opinion leadership etc.

Our research model is based on seven factors and this model explains only some portion of the variance (63.2%) of buying intention. The unexplained variance suggests that other constructs could be included in this model. Further research should be conducted by creating a better comprehensive model of more factors of viral marketing.

Companies launch new methods at a very fast pace and every new edition tries to enhance. This can strongly affect the consumer's perception. Hence, longitudinal data gathered after a satisfactory time frame by surveying the same respondents, will reveal whether perception has changed and which factors, if any, contributed to this change.

This study was based on a self-administered exploratory survey, where only closed ended questions were used in the response sheet. This restricted the ability of researcher to ask open-ended questions, which may have assisted in offering a better understanding of the factors of viral marketing.

8. Implications

This comprehensive survey regarding the perception of customers regarding viral marketing, will be of great use for those companies, which are intending to adopt viral marketing or have still not fully adopted viral marketing. They can concentrate on relevant factors for increasing the usage as per the requirements of the customers. Customers are likely to be satisfied with viral marketing, when they find an informative and effective

system. The e-mail content must be customized and sent only after demographic and psychographic segmentation. This study will be more useful for the planners, policy makers, online industry and those who are interested in viral marketing.

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Attachments

Attachment 1 - Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.893	.892	24

Source: Authors.

Attachment 2 - KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.779
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1.350E3
	Df	276
	Sig.	.000

Source: Authors.

Attachment 3 - Factor Details

Factor	Items	Factor load	Initial Eigen values	% of variance
Immense efficacy	Detailed information about the product can be assessed anytime	.783	7.294	19.693
	It saves time	.746		
	It is cost effective	.717		
	Wide range of products can be displayed	.616		
	It is entertaining	.609		
	Relevant information is provided	.607		
Supportive access	Wide reach ability	.735		
	Rapid diffusion of information	.694		13.170
	No geographical boundaries for promotion	.683		
	Provides easy navigation on web	.653	2.554	
	Enlarged images of products can be assessed.	.582		
Professed security	It can lead association to unauthorized companies	.703		
	The site which gives the information is virus free	.619		
	information is provided by credible sources	.611	2.358	10.289
	It is trustworthy	.610		
	The information which is downloaded is free of viruses	.500		
Message clarity	Sufficient information is provided	.778		
	Message is clearly understood	.743	1.509	10.180
Irrpressible	The communication can go out of control	.741	1.204	6.503
	Frequent messages can lead to mail box traffic	.659		
Consumer dependency	People share the information when some incentives are offered	.805		
	It is effective only when consumer share it with others	.518	1.090	6.029
Escalating brand	It is a useful marketing tool for creating brand awareness	.821	1.032	5.142

Source: Authors.