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USING VIRAL MARKETING TO DRIVE SALES: CASE STUDY OF OLD SPICE

Master's thesis

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ABSTRACT

Today, marketers and advertisers now utilize internet social media networks as an effective channel to reach consumers. One of the marketing techniques that have been adopted to reach marketing objectives (such as brand awareness as well as reach consumers) is viral marketing. Although viral marketing now seems like a cliché, it has recently generated a lot of buzz, in part because it seems easy, cheap and massively effective, and it fits as an ideal replacement for traditional advertising.

Increasing sales is at the centre of all company's agenda otherwise they will be out of business. Most businesses are striving to reduce the cost of running their business and increase their profit. This includes cutting down costs on running the traditional marketing campaigns. Hence, finding ways to increase sales is more often an issue that is consistently reviewed to keep the business running. This study examines the potency and effectiveness of viral marketing in driving sales by observing the correlation between marketing and sales. The study adopts the quantitative research approach to examine why viral marketing can be used in today's multi-diverse and multicultural society.

Many marketers are probably overspending on the traditional marketing campaigns, whereas, small companies are capturing huge market margin in the demand-driven environment. This study aims to evaluate and describe the benefits and drawbacks of viral marketing campaigns adopted by some businesses and why a successful viral message does lead to increase in sales.

Keywords: viral marketing, advertising, traditional marketing campaigns, increasing sales.

INTRODUCTION

With the increased usage of the internet and mobile devices among people in the present technological age, lesser attention is being drawn towards traditional advertising, thereby making advertisers and marketers adopt a more innovative strategy for targeting their respective audiences. One of such strategies frequently used is referred to as viral marketing. According to Stephanson (2009), the rapid penetration of the internet coupled with the prevalence of the various social media has created a new opportunity for how marketing techniques are developed and refined. These technological and communication advancements seem to have created some kinds of enormous opportunities for business marketing strategists to appeal to a much larger audience than ever imagined, developing new marketing units purely working in the online area; new marketing strategies; market shifts, and subsequently new customers.

With consumers getting more sophisticated through the accessibility of the internet, organizations too cannot afford to be left behind and as such have to take the awareness of their products and services online where they can arrest the minds of customers individually as well as collectively. This is resulting in developments in online advertising, with organizations identifying the potential in targeting this new online market (Nunny, 2000). While brand awareness was done mainly through television and outdoor media in the times past, there arose a growing need to switch to a unique technique of marketing which can be used to create brand awareness among a very large population within a very short duration. As Meerman-Scott (2008) pointed out, a new technique being implored by some businesses is the use of viral marketing which can be used to generate brand awareness among a large population extremely quickly and uses the consumers themselves to encourage product preference to others.

Viral marketing has been established within the context of the world wide web culture of participation, whereby consumers share individual knowledge about a particular product or service (as well as information about the company), voicing their respective opinions and experiences across a wide range of platforms on the internet. Steenburgh & Avery (2008) stated that people are

most times motivated to transmit messages and share views through viral marketing due to their altruism and sense of obligation towards the society. People are in the habit of sharing their purchase preference with others. It doesn't just end there; they also have the tendency to make known their views about a product and/or service in order to make others make a meaningful choice with regards to such products and services. It is becoming more and more observable that people have stepped away from the deluge of corporate advertising and marketing which, overtime, have come to be seen more like propaganda or outright falsehoods by opting for direct information through social networking. Even in the times past, the traditional word of mouth gained prominence as a form of non-commercial form of communication among consumers.

This has been accelerated by the internet, taking the form of electronic word of mouth. Electronic word-of-mouth communication simply refers to any statement, either positive or negative, that is made by actual, potential, or former customers about a product or a company with the internet being the medium. (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremlin, 2004).Since human beings are social animals with a great tendency to influence one another, the word of mouth concept is always the first source of information whenever there is a need to evaluate consumers' alternative before purchasing a particular product or service.

The fastest growing section of the internet is the social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and other social media platforms. These sites rely majorly on user-generated contents to remain relevant and maintain continuous revenue from the sale of online display advertising from various companies. According to Trusov, Buckin, & Pauwels (2008), these sites also accumulate user information that is of value to companies for marketing purposes.

There are well over 200 social networking sites that cater to the needs of a wide range of people who are differentiated by language and geographical location. While the popularity of these social networking sites varies from country to country, the most popular, without doubt, is Facebook. The popularity of this social networking site has grown exponentially over the recent years, from 5.5 million active users in 2005 to around 1.3 billion users across the globe (statisticbrain.com, 2014). Indeed, a research showed that an average of 15 hours a day is being used by more than 90% of university and college students to access Facebook and Twitter combined. Numerous companies, therefore, have come to know that there is the need for them to also take up their places on these social networking sites in order to enjoy the immense benefits it offers. Instead of tossing away

millions of funds on billboards and the likes, companies are now trying to catch consumers' attention through relatively new marketing strategies such as blogging and electronic word of mouth communications.

The combination of the strengths of internet marketing and word-of-mouth communication makes viral marketing the latest online customer-centred advertising that is prevailing over traditional advertising channels. Dobele et al. (2005) believes that viral marketing harnesses both the internet and social networking, reaching the prospective consumers as well as transmitting advertising messages rapidly, inexpensively and exponentially. As an extension of the famed word-of-mouth communication, which is being mediated by the internet and social networking, viral marketing has the capacity to acquire new consumers for a particular product or service with effectiveness, thereby leading to a quick adoption by the market with cost-effectiveness.

Through viral marketing, marketers are able to expand their companies' brand awareness, position such brands, influence purchase attitudes and decisions toward their products and/or services rapidly with relatively lesser investment. Specifically, viral marketing effectively diffuses information throughout a wide network of consumers with inexpensive transmission, exponential referrals as well as promotions related to a product or service (Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005). Organizations can further target consumers' needs effectively, through the consumers' online opinions and insights with appropriate innovation, thereby increasing consumers' satisfaction and also growing the business considerably.

In 2003, Sony launched a viral marketing campaign blending humour and music to form a viral content. Any individual who enjoyed the content is asked to email his friends the content with the use of an 'email-a-friend' button. Site visitors that found the content amusing enough did forward the site to friends and thus spread the message of the company's new product to potential new customers (Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005). Viral marketing, though it has been on for several years now; is still a relatively new marketing technique. Therefore, the marketing world's understanding of viral marketing concept is still at the developmental stage.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The study is aimed at understanding the relationship that exists between viral marketing campaigns and actual sales. This will be arrived at by further looking into the effects of viral marketing on brand perception and image, the impact of viral marketing campaigns on consumers' preference as well as why a successful viral marketing campaign often leads to increase in sales. This will be done through the use of standardised interview in the form of self-administered questionnaires as the primary source of data.

Research Questions

The study seeks to provide answers to some basic questions that would further provide a holistic view of the impact of viral marketing as it relates to driving sales. The central research question was adopted for the thesis to examine how viral marketing drives sales. Additionally, the following research questions would be answered in the course of the study:

- Does viral marketing affect brand perception and image?
- Does viral marketing impact on consumer preference?
- Does a successful viral message lead to increase in sales?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter brings to the fore the concept of viral marketing, the context of its existence and the underlying advertising benefits and challenges that go with the adoption of viral marketing campaigns. It starts with the identification of viral marketing and elucidates the relationship between viral marketing and word-of-mouth communication. In the subsequent section, a holistic description of the traditional word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth is provided, while the third section examines the effects of viral marketing campaigns and further illustrates how viral marketing strategies target consumers' needs as well as how it helps in the growth of a business effectively. The fourth section is dedicated to explaining the importance of the social networking sites. It is followed by identifying the main tactics and the basic steps needed for the development of an effective viral message. The last section talks about the challenges faced by companies in the adoption of viral marketing campaigns.

Literature review

The concept of viral marketing is a phenomenon that involves the passing along of messages similar in nature to spreading viruses from one person to another within a network framework (Gil-Or 2010). In viral marketing campaigns, the customers are the transmitters and as well the receivers at the same time, with each customer encouraged to pass on the message to others. The strength of any viral marketing campaign lies in the power of the message and the willingness of the customer receiving it to subsequently share.

Wilson (2000) defined viral marketing as any of various strategies that encourage individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, thereby creating the potential for an exponential growth in the exposure and influence of the message. Advertising messages are often transmitted in viral marketing through interpersonal communication and contact so that invariably, viral marketing can also be called word-of-mouth marketing, in which a person forwards a marketing message to others

and also refers to an interesting or satisfying product and/or service. Laudon and Traver (2009) also defined viral marketing as the process of consumers being involved with disseminating a company's marketing information to their colleagues, friends, and family.

This indicates that viral marketing takes the form of informative messages that are usually electronically transmitted from person to person. Moore (2003) is of the opinion that viral marketing as the name implied is used to refer to a group of family resembling marketing strategies using network-enhanced word-of-mouth. This peculiar marketing technique encourages individuals to pass on information that they receive in a media environment to their friends and families. The manner by which this information is sent amongst individuals in viral marketing creates a chain effect with a tendency to spread the message, or purpose, of the sent content onto the next person, thereby creating a continuous cycle that goes from user to user.

Viral marketing as an advertising tool mimics the operations of viruses, the only difference being that in the case of viral marketing; the digital media is wholly involved. Therefore, the concept of viral marketing refers to a set of messages being spread to others simply because the first person liked it and decided to pass on the message to others who subsequently liked it and also passed it on further. Mohammed and Fisher (2003) suggested that viral marketing campaigns generate buzz around a product or service, thus creating user-to-user recommendation. It has been observed that potential consumers are more likely to trust in the recommendations made by friends or acquaintances with regards to a product or service than the company themselves. This is seen as the main reason why products that are part of a viral marketing campaign are more likely to take off in popularity very quickly.

Viral marketing has been proven to be cost effective when it comes to online promotion that aims to target audience within the social media. But as we would later see, some form of viral marketing doesn't necessarily entails using the social media as some viral marketing campaigns in the past have been done off-internet where people spread words about a product through physical interaction between themselves. This is called word of mouth.

1.1. Origin of Viral Marketing

Historically, the majority of online viral marketing activities were never generated by design, but rather more by accident. So, as with so many other activities on the internet, the practice appears to have developed before the theory. Indeed, Wilding (2001) believed that the better known viral successes have required good business people to spot and develop the activity, rather than initiating it. Shukla (2010) reported that the term viral marketing was coined by the Harvard Business School Professor Rayport in 1996. Being among the leading pioneers of the technique of viral marketing, Douglas Rushkoff in his 1994 book *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture,* created the term and concept of media virus or viral media. He went on to describe the media like viruses is mobile, easily duplicated and spread as non-threatening.

Viral marketing as an advertising tool was brought into recognition in 1997 following the rapid growth of the Hotmail email service through the creation of the 'invite friends' request. Hotmail is seen as a key example of how quickly a business, by using elements of viral marketing techniques, may become successful. As Simonsen (2008) states, the number of Hotmail users grew from 500,000 in 1996 to 12,000,000 users just a year later. Viral marketing was further popularized as an internet network-enhanced word-of-mouth advertising by the venture capitalist Steve Jurvetson (1997), who went on to describe Hotmail's email culture of attaching company advertisements with outgoing mail from its users to the recipients. Hotmail went on to become one of the pioneers to exploit the online viral marketing since its email service was launched in the late 1990s. Then a short message is added to the bottom of every outgoing mail with a link for people to click and sign up for the company's email services.

Other major progenitors of the viral marketing campaign were the producers of the Hollywood film, The Blair Witch Project. By covertly pushing leaked cut videos of the film on the internet, it spurred a lot of movie watchers to transfer the cut videos amongst themselves which subsequently made them more willing to buy copies of the film to watch. Marketing of this nature had not yet been a norm on the Internet. Previously, companies who decided to utilize the internet for advertisements seldom produced materials that have the tendency to create a viral buzz. As Stern (2001) pointed out, snippets of a Managing Directors Speech may just be uploaded. However, these sorts of content do not readily appeal to viewers and potential consumers and as such can rarely induce them to patronize the company and convince others to do the same.

1.1.1.   Word of Mouth Communication

The word of mouth communication was described by Cruz and Fill (2008) as a person-to-person communication among consumers concerning their personal experience with a product or firm.

According to Westbrook (1987), word of mouth is defined as informal communication that is geared towards other consumers about the ownership and characteristics of a particular product or service. There exist two kinds of word of mouth marketing: organic and amplified. According to Thorne (2008), organic word of mouth marketing is always embarked on unconsciously when people just by their generic nature feel disposed to tell others about the experiences of using a particular product or service, while amplified word of mouth marketing occurs as a result of a company encouraging people's conversation about its products or service through the provision of rewards.

1.1.2.   Internet-based Word of Mouth Marketing

The coming of the internet has brought about newer opportunities both for companies and their prospective customers to pass messages across themselves with regards to a product and/or service. The internet is believed to have provided a better platform for the usage of traditional word of mouth communication. As many scholars have identified, viral marketing has seemingly made use of the internet as a vibrant word of mouth marketing tool as well as an online advertising phenomenon. As demonstrated by Juvertson (2000), the identity of viral marketing, when embarked on offline is traditionally referred to as word of mouth communication. But when this word of mouth communication is used through any online social media platform, it develops into what is called viral marketing. Woerndl, Papagiannidis, Bourlakis and Li (2008) regarded viral marketing as a new interpretation of the traditional word of mouth paradigm.

1.1.3.   Electronic Word of Mouth Communication

This often is used to refer to any negative or positive stamen, made by either a potential, actual or former consumer with regards to a particular product and/or service or the company manufacturing such product or service, which is mostly transmitted to a multitude of other potential consumers and institutions through the internet (Datta, 2005). In details, electronic word of mouth communication exploits the usage of an effective platform of the electronic medium to disseminate information relating to a product and/or service in an exponential manner. Viral marketing is the manifestation of the electronic word of mouth communication that is mediated by the internet for online users in order for them to develop content about a product or service or a company as the case may be.

Viral messages can be in form of electronic or text messages, videos or images that are interchanged within a particular social network through the use of the internet. Laudon and Traver (2009), referred to viral marketing as abroad array of online word of mouth strategies that are designed for encouraging peer to peer communication about a product or service with the aim of passing along a company's marketing message to friends and family as well as colleagues. Looking at this from a marketing perspective, this process is hinged mainly on encouraging individuals to pass along marketing information, either by design or by accident, in a social media environment.

1.2.   Viral Marketing techniques

The techniques being used for viral marketing campaigns can be categorized broadly into four.   As described by Smith and Chaffey (2005) identified four viral marketing techniques which are available for companies to use in order to further boost their brand awareness on the internet. And it is important to note that email plays a very important role for any of these techniques to be successful.

Pass-along email: this is a situation where one email is sent containing a link or attachment to view the marketing material a company wishes you to. The recipient of such message on opening the

email will invariably have the benefit of further accessing the material sent as an attachment if he or she so desires. The recipient is then prompted to email a friend, thereby spreading the message in the link or attachment to other parties.

Web-facilitated viral content: this involves the company embedding a link where visitors can be prompted to email their friends and families in order for the company to further gather email database for subsequent marketing campaigns. For this to work effectively, the first recipient must have been able to access the website of the company before coming across the web facilitated content.

Incentivized viral content: this operates in the manner of an award, recognition or offers being made to an individual once such individual has been able to provide the company with his or her personal email address as well as those of his friends and colleagues. This technique is often very effective as individuals are more likely to participate if there is an incentive involved as this can induce them.

Web-linked viral content: This is a situation whereby links in articles and social networking sites which are sent by friends or colleagues direct the viewer to a business website. This technique relies more on the word-of-mouth of the everyday web user, and as such is much harder for manipulate it to manipulate in their favour; meaning that if the company's products and services are good enough, then people will advocate for it.

1.3. Elements of Viral Marketing

According to Rasmusson (2000), if marketers are attempting to embark on a viral marketing campaign, they must measure the efforts of the campaign through setting targets for such viral marketing campaigns and also take baseline reports before embarking on it. He further stressed the importance of making sure that the marketing campaign is solidly fused with other marketing efforts so as to get better results. Wilson (2000) is of the opinion that any effective viral marketing campaign must have the following characteristics:

Free product giveaways: while a cheap and inexpensive product or service may generate a lot of interest, free products will most times get better results. The rationale behind this is that free things attract people much more than paying a lump sum for it. Therefore, marketing managers must always make it a point of duty to provide free products as gifts for any intended viral marketing campaign.

Provision of effortless transfer to other people: from a marketing point of view, it is important that the viral message is simplified so that transmitting such messages will be easy and clearly accessible. A complex message that is hard to understand will reduce the morale of the audience with regards to understanding and subsequently telling others to follow suit.

Easy Scalability from small to large*: in order for viral contents to spread like wildfire, the method of transmission must a path that will accord the content the capacity to rapidly scale from small to very large. Marketing managers must realise that when the viral message multiplies only to kill the host spreading the message, then the essence of what to be accomplished is nullified.

Exploitation of common motivations and behaviours: greed is a human trait that drives people to better heights so also other human traits that accords human beings the need to gain popularity and also be understood. This specific urge to communicate produces millions of websites and emails as well as other electronic messages. Therefore, an effective viral marketing campaign must take advantage of these common human motivational traits to get better results in the viral marketing campaign.

Usage of pre-existing communication networks: in the course of history, people have always been in the habit of forming communities in which the networks of human interrelations tends to convey social values, events and plans for activities that often assist the betterment of persons within such community, while the community, in turn, is within a much larger environment. Marketing managers and market leads must try as much as possible to place viral messages within the network of communications existing between individuals simply because the digital environment has the capacity to develop networks of relationships. Exploiting these networks can easily allow marketers to spread viral contents in a much cheaper manner.

Take advantage of other resources: making use of affiliated programs such as placing texts and graphics on other people's website is also an effective element of a viral marketing campaign. The

fact that other companies' websites relay the marketing message shows long enough that they support the consumption of the product the message is promoting.

Wilson (2000) further stated that most successful viral marketing campaigns make use of a combination of any of the six principles outlined above. The most probable way marketers can make their advertisement or promotional content go viral is to use a differentiated product that encapsulates anyone who comes in contact with such content to develop an affinity for the product or service being advertised or promoted. The South African company, Pro Shop, as a good example of a successful viral marketing content creation, developed a screensaver that can be downloaded free in order to achieve their brand awareness goals. It was regarded as a successful viral marketing campaign as many golfers downloaded the screensaver without any persuasion from Pro Shop.

1.4. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis deals with providing a link between the problem and the purpose of engaging in the study. It will attempt to explain the theory and models that are used to provide the framework of the thesis. It is very pertinent to understand that the main intention or organizations embarking on any form of marketing is to improve sales. The reasons for organizations embarking on viral marketing campaigns are not different too. It is aimed at convincing consumers to make actual purchase (Perner 2010).

There exists a direct correlation between the customer-to-customer propagation of a viral message and the transmission of a contagious disease within a densely populated environment. As it is known, there is already a mass body of literature on the epidemic theory which focuses on the transmission of viruses (Matter & Crofts, 1999). Thus, it is important to begin by explaining the concepts inherent in epidemic theory which can also be applied to the context of viral marketing campaign. The epidemic theory describes the various transitional states individuals find themselves as a particular contagion traverses the population. These states are termed as susceptible, infective and immune. From the onset of the viral contagion, people are susceptible to receiving the virus since they are within the environment where the virus is traversing. From there, it moves on to the

infective state where individuals within the environment are being infected with the virus moving around from person to person. It gets to a time that at the peak of the infection state, people either fall to the hold of the virus while the population is forced to find ways to be immune against the virus.

These three transitional states can also be applied directly to the concept of viral marketing campaigns where an individual within the target population is initially susceptible (receptive) prior to the time of receiving the viral marketing message. The said individual becomes infected (reached) with the virus (viral message) upon contact with an already infected individual. The third state comes after the infected individual becomes so attuned to the viral message that he or she becomes immune (removed) to the viral message by choosing not to play any further role in transmitting the message again, thus terminating his or her own attachment to the epidemic (viral marketing campaign).

In exploring the transmission of a message from one person to another through the life cycle of a viral message, Bampo et al (2008), made use of the generation concept which is mostly used in epidemic modelling as a more appropriate index when relating it to a viral marketing campaign. For instance, a lengthy campaign may be as a result of the members of the target audience taking a long time before passing the message to others. Thus, is it is important to note that the campaign duration is not an indicator of the success of the marketing campaign. A generation is defined in the context of a viral marketing campaign as the number of transmissions required to reach a member along a chain of command initiated by a single seed (Bampo et al, 2008).

Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that while there are correlations between the epidemic modelling and viral marketing, a number of fundamental differences also exist. The major difference stems from the fact that the incidence of viral marketing, unlike the medical epidemic is a conscious managerial objective aimed at facilitating the spread of a marketing message among a target audience. Also, the potency of a viral marketing campaign can only be accessed through how cost-effective it is in design.

1.4.1. Creating viral marketing campaigns

The creation of any viral marketing campaign is not always an easy scheme. As Scott (2008) claims, it is virtually impossible to establish an internet marketing project that has a high degree of assurance of going viral. First and foremost, the major success of any viral marketing campaign starts with the ability to encourage the initial audience to spread it further. For example, the diamond manufacturing company, De Beers' website gives customers the capacity to create their own unique ring designs and send it to their family and friends.

The fictional documentary film, The Blair Witch Project produced in 1999 is another notable example of a successful viral marketing campaign. The producers of the film created a website, www.blairwitch.com, before the premiere of the film which generated a lot of buzz around the film. The website uploaded some real footage of the disappearance of three student filmmakers in Black Hills. Alongside this, the website also posted police reports which resembled a realistic recreation of the 18th-century legend about Blair Witch. Most of the people that had access to the footages actually believed what they saw and heard were real, this phenomenon made a lot of people get more interested in the film. The website became popular and had two million hits a day (Thevenot & Watier, 2001).

Another one is Procter and Gamble, a leading manufacturer of consumer goods displaying on their website a chance for a visitor to win a year supply of styling shampoo by entering into a competition and subsequently sending invites to 10 friends. This marketing campaign was established to promote the new styling shampoo called Physique by the company. It was really a success as this shampoo went on to become one of the most sought-after shampoos in the United States of America (Dobele, Toleman and Beverland, 2005).

Dobele et al (2005) believe that customers will spread content if the following conditions are innate to the campaign: Firstly, promoting the content is amusing and interesting. Any content that is intended to go viral must attract people's attention so much more that it will make them continue talking about it for a long period of time. Secondly, the content must be rightly targeted. This goes on to say the marketers must release the content at the right place and time. Thirdly, the marketers should use a wide variety of social media platforms that are available for the viral campaign. Lastly, the content must be tied to a visible product.

For any promotional scheme to be a success, it must be believable. Marketers are expected to have the knowledge of the opinions of stakeholders in the target segment in order to provide the right message. A consumer or end user is more likely to forward a received content when he or she believes that receiving such content is not a conscious attempt by the marketers to make him or her a willing tool. Bearing this in mind, the marketers of Sony Play Station Portable in 2006, created a fake blog titled 'All I Want for Christmas is a PSP'. The aim was for the fictional author of the blog to convince his friend's parents to buy their son (his friend) a Sony PSP. In order to make it look even more realistic, the Sony PSP marketing team made use of informal language in the blog, making sure to consciously inject the write up with typographical errors. Also, to engage more teenagers they created a Cousin Pete, who was hip and posted videos of himself on his blog (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). After the hoax was exposed, Sony initially denied any form of involvement with the blog but the admitted and subsequently deleted it when facts emerged that the blog was registered by Zipatoni, one of Sony's advertising agencies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Porter and Golam (2006) investigated numerous advertisements in order to understand what made them go viral. Their investigations showed that most of the advertisements that went viral included one or more scenes of humour, violence, nudity and sexuality. Sometimes a viral marketing campaign may necessitate a change in the existing marketing strategies of a company (Kaplan &Haenlein, 2010). A flashback to the subservient chicken by Burger King followed this assertion. The company, after witnessing the success of the promotion decided to design a whole new set of uniforms for the employee.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also opined that the buzz generated by any viral marketing campaign can only last for a short while. It suffices to say therefore that any viral marketing success should immediately be accompanied by a supplemented advertising through the traditional means. This is evident in the issue of Wilkinson's Fight for Kisses promotional video which involves a man and his son fighting to be kissed by the only female around, the wife who also happens to be the mother in this scenario. The advertising team immediately after the launch of the short video followed it up with press announcements, radio-sponsored shows as well as sponsoring France vs. Ireland rugby match. They should not control it and ask customers to spread it around (Kaplan &Haenlein, 2010). This is because a true viral marketing content should not be consciously controlled by asking the customers to spread it. The content should have the capability to spread itself.

However, adequate planning is important before the launch of any viral promotion. The marketing team should make sure it gives the viral content adequate space and time to actually spread. A successful viral marketing content should have an interesting component that will make it unforgettable. Advertising teams should be careful with regards to using provocative messages. Lastly, it should be understood that successful viral marketing campaigns require some element of luck. There is also the possibility of failure simply because what works for Mr. A might not necessarily work for Mr. B.

1.4.2.   Developing an effective viral marketing campaign

A viral marketing campaign, as spontaneous as it sometimes looks, does not just happen by chance. Rather it has been observed to be the result of conscious strategic marketing programs that are managed by a company's marketing team. Marketing managers are often saddled with the responsibility of assembling a right tactic in order to generate and ultimately sustain a viral content. As elucidated by Dye (2000), the following describes the models used by marketing managers to develop an effective viral marketing campaign:

Vanguard seeding: since it is a known fact that customers are unique, and their perception differs, some of them have an innate predisposition and ability to influence public opinion. By identifying such individuals, marketing leads can find a way of getting their products to these set of individuals in order to use their influence to kick-start the viral content. This tactic has been seen to pay off very well resulting in a mass market response.

Artificial scarcity: this is also known as ration supply. This tactic has long been used majorly in the luxury goods industry. Viral marketing campaigns based on this strategy seek to generate demand and ignite short-term sales by limiting the availability of the product. In the implementation of this strategy, the company tends to increase its ability in managing the brand image of the product under consideration. When one customer buys the product, the scarcity of product will spur others to also find a means of laying their hands on the product.

Tapping the lists: lists are important tools in the creation of any viral marketing content. They serve as effective road signs for consumers who are besieged by information glut, which puts them in a dilemma in deciding where to focus their attention.

Celebrity exploitation: this tactic involves making use of known figures in a society to promote a particular product or service. Since these known figures are seen as role models to a lot of people, their preference for a particular product has the tendency to generate a mass appeal for such product. We have seen advert campaigns featuring famous musicians, actors & actresses, politicians and so on. These adverts go viral as a result of the celebrity in concern.

Grassroots Nurturing: this is quite similar to vanguard seeding in the sense that it focuses mainly on identifying the first set of recipients to make the product available to. The major difference is that while vanguard seeding focuses all efforts on the vanguard that is given the exclusive right of being the first recipient of the product, the grassroots strategy relies more on those that adopt the product very early being made to convert other people to users of the product too.

While it can be said that the strategies explained above are the most common of strategies used by marketing managers in order to create an effective viral marketing campaign, the incidence of innovation cannot be overemphasized when it comes to developing an effective viral marketing campaign.

1.4.3.   Spreading viral marketing content

Viral contents have two distinct pathways that majorly lead to being a successful viral message. According to Laskovec (2007), the two paths leading contents into virality without any form of investment are through consumer-initiated viral marketing of business-initiated viral marketing. While consumer-initiated viral marketing entails consumers making reference to the content or product through social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest as the case may be, business-initiated viral contents often come through internet-based sellers like Amazon.com or iTunes store.

Furthermore, there are a variety of ways companies can make a content go viral, especially with the internet having more than a thousand websites that could be exploited by these companies. One major way is the creation of videos to be uploaded to YouTube. YouTube, being a free service

online platform that accords individuals and companies to upload videos and share them with a wide range of people across different regions, its major advantage is the capability to send the links to the purported videos to others thereby increasing the number of viewers. It is important to note that while the idea of creating a video for web marketing is still a new idea, it is not really cumbersome to indulge in. all that is needed is a video camera and a YouTube account. According to David Meerman Scott, creating a viral video entails:

A person to shoot the video using a digital camera or a phone. It is possible to enhance the videos to look more appealing. It is not really important to hire the services of a professional as it has been observed that some poorly recorded videos give better viral marketing results than quality TV commercials.

The video shoot should not be longer than necessary. The shorter the video is the better. A short video of 3 minutes is more than enough to send a message and make a content go viral.

Another major element is the name tag of the video. The name tag should be amusing, interesting and eye-catching as these are the features that give the content the necessary audience it requires.

There should be someone that would notify others about the video content. The initial buzzer most times might even be a low-level staff of the company who will direct the buzz intentionally through his group of friends and family. Finally, the links to such video contents should be sent to bloggers thereby increasing the audience.

Viral marketing contents can also be spread on social community sites. De Valck (2009) is of the opinion that viral marketing can be embarked on through a number of people that make use of discussion forums, bulletin boards, social networks and blogs. These platforms serve as effective avenues for companies to use for viral marketing simply because most are free to use and have the tendency to reach a much larger number of people within a short time. An example of such is Grey Poupon's Society of Good taste viral content. The company, a mustard production firm launched of the most widely acclaimed successful promotions in the early 1980s. After going to the background for up to three decades, the company bounced back with a new promotion using the Facebook portal.

The company first created a Facebook page titled Society of Good taste which is only accessible to very special sets of individuals. In order to qualify for entrance into the selected special individuals, the intending member needs to like the Poupon's Facebook page. Upon applying, the person's Facebook profile is checked along with his grammar, check-ins, and booklist and if the individual is rated highly, he would be accepted into the fold. Olson (2012) believes the idea behind it was to make sure person applying vividly sits the brand story of the company. As Carter (2013) reported, the company ended up having a hundred million likes while garnering a 3000% increase in fan base.

Another thing to note here is the fact that various social communities are centred on unique topical discussions. De Valck (2009) examined several of such social communities in order to create a model that would focus viral marketing on the right target. He came up with six-member types in most social communities which are:

First, the frequent member who dishes out information on a regular basis within the social community. He spends more time than other members on the social platform. Second, the conversationists who visits about four times a week just to communicate and check recent discussions and information on the platform. Third, the hobbyists who are so entrenched with uploading music and writing guestbook messages. Finally, the opportunists that visit the social community rarely, most times once a week. These set of individuals only come to get updates on information.

It is important for marketing leads to have knowledge of the right target group for the viral marketing campaign. In the case of the social community, the frequent members and conversationists are to be considered as the right target. Marketing managers should also be aware of any new trends on the social media so as to be able to choose the right content as well as the most effective social network to be used for future viral marketing campaigns.

Another way in which viral content can be spread is through online games. Murphy (2001) stated that while emails and branded online games are not seen as the most useful components of the internet, they could be used for building awareness and drive site traffic. This is evident by the viral strategy used by Tiger. Tiger, a restaurant that launched an online game where players can win free meal tickets. However, the prerequisite to this is that the user needs to send the link to four other

players who upon visiting the site and registering will also stand a chance by following the same procedure.

According to Luis Halpern, the CEO of Toe-Design, the advantages of online games are that the customers unintentionally or unconsciously give out their personal information. The strategy of using online games to create brand awareness was also indulged in by Abel & Baker, an interactive agency where they created an online version of the famous game, Age of Empires game and subsequently asked players to mail the link to their friends. This brought the company more than 2 million subscribers (Murphy 2001) as well as increasing the sales. All in all, Wayne Arnold of Profero believes that potential viral games should be easy to play and should have the tendency of loading very fast because marketing managers have only a little time to grab people's attention.

1.4.4.   Advantages of Viral Marketing

Business entities have a lot to gain from viral marketing. Most business bloggers who write about businesses often create some sort of free advertising unintentionally for companies, and their respective products and services. Comparing viral marketing to traditional marketing and promotional tactics, it is clear that viral marketing will probably save companies a whole lot of money as the traditional marketing gulps large sums of money. Mohr (2007) believed that a major industry that mostly benefits from viral marketing is the film industry. This is absolutely true as it is evident that studio executives and producers are always looking for means to reduce their marketing budgets. According to Boswell (2002), viral marketing creates much more than enough buzz with regards to films.

A recent example of the use of viral marketing in the film industry can be observed from the famous television series "Game of Thrones" that was marketed on the internet. This television series has from its inception become a talking point of many online discussions boards and blogs alike from followers wanting to speculate about what will happen next in yet to be released episodes. As a result of this, many fans created series of blogs and websites where ardent fans of the television series could interact and share their respective opinions about the intrigues of the film while also discussing yet to be released episodes. The viral marketing of the Game of Throne series was definitely a success as it created the necessary hype around the television series as well as increasing

the awareness level of the series worldwide. As it is presently, it is harder to envisage a television series that has gained a worldwide appeal as much as the Game of Thrones. It has reached a stage whereby the followers of the television series have continually explored ways by which they could get to see the episodes even before being officially released as a lot of fans don't want to have second-hand information of the intrigues of the film.

Another major advantage of viral marketing is that it provides a good opportunity for companies with seemingly ordinary products with no special features to create a buzz around the promotion itself. A major example is the Burger Kings advertisement promotion for the TenderCrisp chicken sandwich. The company created a website where a person costumed like a chicken is seen performing a variety of commands as being given by the audience such as jump, dance, or run. Though everything was pre-recorded it looked more like an interactive webcam. This particular promotion, according to the company, brought an enormous popularity to the product while also increasing its sales. It was reported that Burger King recorded a sales hit of $500,000,000 in the first 12 months of introducing the TenderCrisp chicken sandwich followed by a 7% increase in the following year (Howard 2004). This instance proved that takes much lesser time for introducing and creating brand awareness for a particular product.

1.4.5. Disadvantages of Viral Marketing

The major disadvantage of viral marketing is the fact that it is uncontrollable. When a viral marketing campaign is unconsciously instituted, the marketer or the beneficiary of such campaign (the company whose product or service is being marketed) has very little or no capability to control the distribution of such viral marketing content. With regards to the manner of images and texts are used, these could be altered by the users and recipients in a negative way (Kirby 2006). An example of such incidence happened in 2007 to Turner Broadcasting Systems. In Boston that year, investigators found an unidentified electronic device. Further investigations revealed the content of the device to be a recorded marketing campaign by a marketing company known as Interference. The content was to be used to promote a late-night cartoon, Aqua Teen Hunger Force produced by Turner Broadcasting Systems.

This campaign was observed to have targeted the audience in Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, New York and Atlanta. The covert strategy of the marketing campaign did not only inconvenience thousands of people, but it was also against the law due to the fact that these electrical devices were attached to the private properties within the listed neighbourhoods without prior permission. It eventually led to a legal tussle that ended with Turner's and Interference's reputation being tarnished while they were also forced to pay the sum of two million dollars as damages to various individuals (Zuo & Veil, 2006).

Another disadvantage of viral marketing is connected with attention. Due to the diverse nature of the internet, it is often a difficult endeavour trying to attract the attention of the target population exclusively. As claimed by Justin Kirby, the Managing Director at Digital Media Communications, viral marketing campaigns should be interesting and innovative. Creating a better product is not a function of only time and money but having the capability to get the awareness of the target market to the product or service. It was further validated by the research made by Emerald Insight which showed that marketers sometimes find it rather difficult to target a specific set of audience when it comes to internet-based advertisement and promotions (Cruz & Fill, 2008). It is believed that the success of any advertisement depends largely on the side of the audience while some other school of thought is of the opinion that reaching the desired target is more important.

Bearing all these in mind, it can be seen that viral marketing is a cost effective tool being used by various organizations with the aim of convincing consumers to make actual purchase of the product being marketed in the viral message. And the bottom-line of it all is that by making consumers gain awareness of a particular product through viral marketing campaigns, the organization stands to achieve sales improvement from the success of the viral marketing campaign.

1.5.   Research hypotheses

Therefore, the following hypotheses to be tested were centred on identifying the relationship between viral marketing and consumers' response to it. The hypotheses involve whether or not viral

marketing affects brand perception, consumer's preference and ultimately if it actually drive sales. The null hypotheses to be tested in this research work are:

1. Viral marketing does not affect brand image and perception
2. Viral marketing has no impact on consumer preference
3. A successful viral marketing campaign does not lead to increase in sales.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to have a better insight into the topic, Old Spice body wash has been selected. The Old Spice viral marketing strategy was examined in order to ascertain how successful viral marketing is. As it can be noted, the Old Spice viral campaign had a target audience – men - in the beauty and self-care sector.

The major tactic of this viral marketing campaign was to start a conversation among beauty care consumers with regards to the virtues of the manly-smelling Old Spice over other body wash brands. Since many brands lacked masculine credibility, the brains behind Old Spice believed that the brand could be a champion of masculine-scented body wash. The theme was that if you want to "smell like a man" look no further than one product: Old Spice. It is important to note that beyond the advertising message, an insight was established which had to do with the target audience. An initial research by P&G had previously uncovered an interesting fact; more than 60% of men's body care products were actually being purchased by their female acquaintances. This wonderful insight prompted the marketing team of Old Spice to broaden their target. They believed that in order for sales, and ultimately production, of Old Spice to increase, they had to get deep into the minds of female shoppers. This strategic think would later encourage ladies to buy Old Spice for their guys. And the approach was on the premise that since body wash was a low involvement category, meeting sales targets was not going to be simply by creating awareness for Old Spice but by making sure both sexes get engaged in talking about the body wash. Therefore, sparking a conversation among men and women became a major strategy for the viral marketing campaign.

In order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion, a comparative analysis is made between the viral marketing campaigns of Old Spice in relation to its close substitute who did not use the same method. This invariably led to the inception of "the man your man could smell like".

2.1.   Research Design

Every good research work begins with a good design. A research design forms the framework, master plan or detailed blueprint of an entire research process. According to him, if it is a good well-thought-out design it will ensure that the information obtained in the course of the project is relevant to the research problem. The information must also be timely, accurate and reliable.

This research work made use of quantitative approach in the study. The quantitative approach of the research work involved administering questionnaires to the respondents through their respective emails which were sent back to the researcher via the same means. **Q**uantitative data refer to all such data and can be a product of all research strategies (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). Perhaps not surprisingly, the questionnaire is one of the most widely used data collection techniques for a quantitative research strategy.

In order to carry out the research assignment, the researcher made use of explanatory research design which aimed at testing associations of relations. The emphasis here is on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2005). The researcher visited major beauty care shops in order to administer questionnaires to the staff and also used observation to add to the study. The cosmetic and beauty care shops selected for the period under consideration were selected at random within Tallinn and its outskirts. The researcher used an explanatory research design to address the research question to explain the relationship in the variables under consideration.

2.2.   Data Collection

The subjects involved volunteered to take part in this study without any form of covert efforts while also stating that no incentives were negotiated with the respondents in the course of this study. The researcher made use of self-administered questionnaires which were delivered and subsequently collected later on. As Saunders et al (2005), asserted, self-administered questionnaires are usually completed by the respondents.

A questionnaire is a list of questions properly arranged and organized in a sequential manner in line with how the research questions have been formulated, in order to gather the needed facts by way of data from the respondents through which the research problems are solved. The questionnaire is a fact-finding technique. It is one of the major research instruments adapted by the researcher in obtaining information on the topic under investigation. Questionnaires make it possible for the researcher to attach numerical value to responses and analyze them accordingly. Efforts were made to design the questions in a simple, straight to the point and unambiguous manner.

The questionnaire is made up of two (2) sections (*appendix 1 and appendix 2*). The first section comprises of the respondents'' personal data while the second section contains all the research questions under investigation.

Validity and reliability of the instruments

Validity is the degree to which a tool measures it implies to measure. It is concerned with whether the findings are relayed about what its measures.

The researcher used primary data which was prepared by the researcher and given to the supervisor for review and other clarity through the use of expert peer reviews for consistency and other measurable requirements in order to measure respondent's perception, opinion and beliefs in the attempt to provide answers to the research question.

Reliability refers to the stability, accuracy and precision if measurement. The quality of research depends on the way the research is conducted and the reliability of the process. In order to test for the validity and the reliability of the data, the Spearman Rank Order was used.

3. CASE STUDY AND EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, an attempt was made to classify and analyse the responses from the members of the focus group according to the research questions and test of hypotheses in tabular form. Therefore, the chapter is treated under the following subsections:

2.3.   Presentation of data

The data presented in this subsection were collected from the study, based on the focus group's response to the questions contained in the questionnaires sent and hypotheses to be tested under the study. The characteristics of the members of the study group were presented using the following distribution tables as shown below:

Table 1**:** Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	82	80%
	Female	16	16%
	Total	110	100%
Age	21-30 years	88	88%
	31-40 years	8	8%
	41-50 years	2	2%
	51 years and above	1	1%
	Total	110	100%

Source: Field survey 2018

Table 4.1 shows that 80% of the respondents are males while 16% are females. It also revealed that 88% of them are within 21-30 years of age, 8% are within 31-40 years, 2% are within 41-50 years while 1% is above 51 years of age. The demographic data revealed that all the respondents are people who have the capability to make informed decisions with regards to beauty care products.

2.4.   Analysis of data

This subsection is concerned with the analysis of the relevant data collected during the study. It deals with the results obtained which were used to answer the research questions relating to the hypotheses of the research work. This method of reporting is based on hypothesis-by-hypothesis analysis, followed by relevant interpretation of the findings.

In all, three hypotheses were proposed in order to guide the study. Three questions from the questionnaire were used to make up the variables for testing each hypothesis.

Hypothesis one was tested using questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 of *appendix 2* of the questionnaire, hypothesis two was tested using questions 9, 10, 11 and 12 of *appendix* of the questionnaire while hypothesis three was tested using questions 13, 14, 15 and 16 of section II of the questionnaire. The options that served as answers to the questionnaire were allocated points with the highest being 5 for strongly agree the lowest being 1 for strongly disagree. The basis for rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho) and the subsequent acceptance of the alternate hypothesis (Hi) at 5% lies on the calculated z-score falling outside the values -1.96 to +1.96 i. e $-1.96 \geq z \geq +1.96$.

Hypothesis One

H0 -   Viral marketing does not affect brand image and perception.

H1 -   Viral marketing affects brand image and perception

Table 2: Hypothesis One

x	f	fx	(x-ẍ)	(x-ẍ)²	f(x-ẍ)²
20	17	340	1.481818	2.195785	37.32835
19	25	475	0.481818	0.232149	5.803719
18	37	666	-0.51818	0.268512	9.934959
17	23	391	-1.51818	2.304876	53.01215
16	3	48	-2.51818	6.34124	19.02372
15	1	15	-3.51818	12.3776	12.3776
14	2	28	-4.51818	20.41397	40.82793
13	2	26	-5.51818	30.45033	60.90066
12	0	0	-6.51818	42.48669	0
11	0	0	-7.51818	56.52306	0
10	0	0	-8.51818	72.55942	0
9	0	0	-9.51818	90.59579	0
TOTAL	110	2037	-48.2182	336.7494	239.2091
MEAN (ẍ)	18.51818				
STANDARD DEVIATION (ð)			1.474662		
STANDARD ERROR MEAN			0.140604		
VARIANCE			2.194579		

Source: Calculated based on questionnaire

Since the computed value of variance to be checked on the z-score chart is 1.962 which is within the acceptance region, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected while the alternate hypothesis (Hi) is accepted. This ultimately leads to the acceptance of the hypothesis that viral marketing affects brand image and perception.

Hypothesis Two

Null hypothesis -Viral marketing has no significant impact on consumer preference.

Alternate hypothesis - Viral marketing has a significant impact on consumer preference

Table 3: Hypothesis Two

x	f	fx	(x-ẍ)	(x-ẍ)²	f(x-ẍ)²
20	31	620	1.354545	1.834793	56.8786
19	25	475	0.354545	0.125702	3.142562
18	15	270	-0.64545	0.416612	6.249174
17	34	578	-1.64545	2.707521	92.0557
16	2	32	-2.64545	6.99843	13.99686
15	2	30	-3.64545	13.28934	26.57868
14	1	14	-4.64545	21.58025	21.58025
13	0	0	-5.64545	31.87116	0
12	0	0	-6.64545	44.16207	0
11	0	0	-7.64545	58.45298	0
10	0	0	-8.64545	74.74388	0
9	0	0	-9.64545	93.03479	0
TOTAL	110	2051	-49.7455	349.2175	220.4818
MEAN (ẍ)	18.64545				
STANDARD DEVIATION (ð)			1.415761		
STANDARD ERROR MEAN			0.134988		
VARIANCE			2.022769		

Source: Calculated based on questionnaire

Since the calculated variance is 2.37 which when cross-checked on the z-score chart is, falls within the acceptance range, it is imperative that the null hypothesis is rejected, followed up by a subsequent acceptance of the alternate hypothesis that viral marketing has a significant impact on consumer preference.

Hypothesis Three

Null Hypothesis - A successful viral marketing campaign does not lead to increase in sales.

Alternate Hypothesis - A successful viral marketing campaign leads to increase in sales.

Table 4: Hypothesis Three

x	f	fx	(x-ẍ)	(x-ẍ)²	f(x-ẍ)²
20	21	420	1.495413	2.23626	46.96145
19	33	627	0.495413	0.245434	8.099318
18	16	288	-0.50459	0.254608	4.073731
17	33	561	-1.50459	2.263783	74.70482
16	2	32	-2.50459	6.272957	12.54591
15	2	30	-3.50459	12.28213	24.56426
14	1	14	-4.50459	20.29131	20.29131
13	1	13	-5.50459	30.30048	30.30048
12	0	0	-6.50459	42.30965	0
11	0	0	-7.50459	56.31883	0
10	0	0	-8.50459	72.328	0
9	0	0	-9.50459	90.33718	0
TOTAL	109	2017	-48.055	335.4406	221.5413
MEAN (ẍ)	18.50459				
STANDARD DEVIATION (ð)			1.425654		
STANDARD ERROR MEAN			0.136553		
VARIANCE			2.051308		

Source: Calculated based on questionnaire

The calculated variance is 2.86 which, when checked on the z-score chart falls within the acceptance region. Hence, this would lead us to reject the null hypothesis while accepting the alternate hypothesis that states that a successful viral marketing campaign leads to increase in sales.

Reliability Test Analysis

The process involved picking 10 people at random from the focus group and then retaking the questionnaire again in order to identify the degree of variance between their initial responses and the subsequent one.

In order to test the reliability of the results obtained, the Spearman Rank order was used, with the formula being:

$$1 - (6\Sigma d^2)/n(n^2 - 1)$$

Where: d is the difference between variables x and y

      x denotes the total score obtained in the initial questionnaire

      y denotes the total score obtained after retaking the questionnaire again.

Table 5: Reliability Test

x	y	d	d²
50	48	2	4
49	48	1	1
48	47	1	1
50	49	1	1
51	49	2	4
44	43	1	1
48	47	1	1
50	49	1	1
44	43	1	1
46	47	1	1
		12	16

Source: Calculated based on questionnaire

The Spearman Rank coefficient is 0.903. This means that the results of the data gathered show a positive correlation between the variables x and y. this means that while there exist some minor discrepancies between the initial responses and subsequent responses, the responses show over 90% similarities leaving less than 10% as margin for error.

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The research was based on accessing the rate at which viral marketing as a tool can be used to drive sales. It is essential at this point to show a summary of the findings, or else, the whole exercise will be meaningless. In chapter one and two, it was noted that viral marketing campaign is a very important and cost-effective tool for advertising and marketing a product or service.

In the light of the above, it is clearly evident that viral marketing campaigns, if planned well have the potential to increase sales of a particular product which would, in turn, drive up production of such products. As it was revealed in the data analysis, a viral content has the capability of creating brand awareness for a particular product or service while at the same time create a perception for such brand. Not forgetting the fact that a properly planned viral marketing campaign can also induce consumers to stay glued to the product under consideration which will make such consumers feeling reluctant to change his preference easily.

Conclusively, it has also been revealed that viral marketing campaigns have the tendency to make people go as far as making extra purchases that can be given to their loved ones to give the product a try. This, as noted in the research always leads to the recipient of such gifts ending up making future purchases personally in as much as the product under consideration actually lives up the expectation contained in the viral message.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it could be rightly concluded that planning and implementing a successful viral marketing campaign is an important activity that organisations can use to drive up the sales of their products and services. By periodically setting up and undertaking viral marketing campaigns for products and services, organisations stand to gain a lot as this form of marketing is cost-effective and also gets to the consumer more than any other form of marketing campaigns that can be undertaken for a product or service. A simple link to a viral content sent in the right direction can go as far as outside the reach of the traditional means of marketing available to organisations.

However, it should also be noted that while the viral content has all the potentials to drive up sales, it can also be a nemesis for such products if there exists a simple misconception on the part of the creators of the viral content. There have been cases of viral marketing gone wrong as a result of one or two misconceptions on the part of the consumers who read undue meaning to the viral content, thereby making the viral marketing campaign experience the opposite of what it was intended for. A successful viral marketing campaign will surely increase the customer base of the brand and product while also establishing a cult-like following for such products and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve its corporate goals and objectives, a company needs to serve a larger market for its products. For this to be realised, there must be an avenue to consciously improve the number of people who are aware of the product as well as those who are willing to lay their hands on the product in order to form an opinion with regards to the product. Based on the findings of this study, it is further recommended that due organisations should engage in the use of viral marketing more often as it has been observed to be very cost-effective, thereby according to the organisation the opportunity to channel funds meant for other traditional marketing campaigns to other useful endeavours.

It is also recommended that organisations should take extra effort in analysing the underlying messages of a potential viral content before sending such out as a little honest mistake in the viral content can go a long way to damaging the reputation of both the brand and the organisation associated with the product. Extra care should be taken to scrutinize the message and search for hidden messages that might not go down well with the target audience as this might turn counterproductive in the long run.

Furthermore, marketing leads in organisations should continually be on the lookout for ways by which they can create quality viral contents that would solidify the gains that had been hitherto achieved through the use of traditional marketing means. This is sure to cover for any inherent deficiencies that may have been accrued to the product or service under the initial marketing scheme. Finally, it has been concluded that the majority of users will pass-on marketing material to one another. Therefore, organisations and businesses need to target these users effectively to enable their viral campaigns to be successful in generating sales.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Please tick (√) the following as applicable.

1. Name _____
2. Gender : (a) Male ( )   (b) Female ( )
3. Occupation: _____
4. Age: 21-30 ( )   31- 40 ( ) 41 – 50 ( ) 51 and above (   )

Link to survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LLBCR95

Link to Old Spice Commercial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtuWO8ppUhE

Appendix 2

Tick the appropriated option

5.   On receipt of a link to the Old Spice body spray, I felt the urge to open it and view.

Strongly Agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

6.   The marketing content succeeded in making me form an independent opinion about Old Spice

Strongly Agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

7.   The content of the link of Old Spice gave me the requisite awareness about the product

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

8.   The Old Spice body spray needs to more marketing for it to be known

Strongly Agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

9.   The marketing video link of Old Spice have induced me to stick with the product

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

10.   I have introduced the Old Spice to more than one person via sending the link.

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

11.   I have not had any cause to change my preference for Old Spice since I started using it.

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

12.   I don't think I would be changing to another body spray anytime soon.

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

13. I have had cause to purchase Old Spice for someone before.

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

14. The person I purchased it for made subsequent purchase of the product.

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

15. The marketing content really made some people that I know to give it a trial.

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

16. Old spice body spray is being given positive reviews by most people that I know.

Strongly agree ( ) Agree ( ) Indifferent ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )