

Does Viral Marketing Impact upon Consumer Purchase Intention through Brand Awareness? – A Mediation Effect Framework Based Analysis

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Abstract

The study explores the mediation effect of brand awareness within the association of Viral marketing and purchase intention of consumer in the cosmetics product segment. The study has been performed among 300 respondents of Agartala city that emphasized Baron & Kenny model of mediation with multiple linear regression analysis with the help of SPSS 20 analytical software. The findings of this study depicts the presence of partial mediation which means that brand awareness acts as an intermediary between viral marketing and consumer purchase intention which is directly influenced by latter. The conclusion highlights the crucial role of viral marketing method to spread brand awareness which in turn drives the consumer's intention to purchase. This study signifies the need for combining viral marketing as well as brand building initiatives in the cosmetic product segment, that add to theoretical knowledge as well as practical impact for the marketers.

Keywords:-Viral Marketing; Brand Awareness; Purchase Intention; Cosmetic Products; Mediation Analysis; Baron and Kenny

1. Introduction

In today's date viral marketing has become an important aspect of advertisement and retailing. It has become a potential strategy for organizations to rapidly spread message by digital sharing and word-of-mouth. Viral marketing is a marketing strategy which stimulates the customers to share the message or content Kim and Lowrey(2010). Due to the online communications viral marketing has become a modern technique for advertising and publicizing companies. Firms could reach out to customers through email, social media networks, video websites, Short Messages services, forums, blogs, chat groups due to the viral marketing tactics (Woerndl et al., 2008). The ability of viral material to elicit strong emotions or reactions is essential because it encourages individuals to share it with their social networks, which increases its reach dramatically. Start-up firms often begin by using targeted seeding strategies, presenting the content to influential people or institutions in the hopes that it will be sufficiently disseminated. Social media platforms having larger audience act as a foundation for dispersing viral contents rapidly across the networks. Moreover, since the social media groups are online and are connected therefore, the content spread rapidly and reaches specific audiences. Of participants easing the virality within specific demographics or more. By improving the brand's image, viral marketing raises brand recognition. It raises the interaction level between the customer and the brand to one in which technology helps build strong, long-lasting relationships with customers, which benefits brand growth. Within the

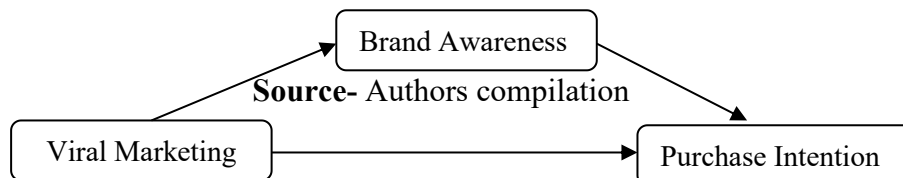
intended audience, viral marketing seeks to encourage brand ambassadors, brand users, and gamers to tell their friends and family about their favourite brands (Sankaran et al. , 2015). Brand awareness is the process of helping customers recall or recognise a brand in enough detail to make a purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Online companies now more than ever need to have a strong brand memory when a client decides to make a purchase somewhere else. Since individuals are more likely to remember a brand's colour than its name, recall is harder to achieve than recognition. Strong brand awareness indicates that a company is well-known in the industry and that customers have become used to it (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007). Neuroimaging technologies are being used by marketing experts because of the significant influence brand awareness has on sales numbers. Compared to traditional marketing techniques, the evaluation of consumers using neuroimaging technology may be quicker, less costly, and more accurate in understanding decision-making and associated processes (Ariely & Berns, 2010).

2. Review of literature

There has been subsequent number of studies related to Viral Marketing focussing on its different aspects. The evidence of partial mediation has been found when purchase intention has been regressed upon viral marketing and brand loyalty in a study that focused on the effect of brand loyalty in the context of cosmetics on the consumer's purchase intention as well as viral marketing within a limited sample size in Agartala (Bhowmik & Dev Chowdhury, 2024). Purchase intention has been predicted within the framework of viral marketing by incorporating awareness of brand by Mukherjee et al. (2023) where the analysis of the awareness of brand affects consumer purchase intentions for FMCG products was the investigation topic on the intervening component of brand awareness in the FMCG industry within the framework of viral marketing. The outcome of this study indicates that viral marketing significantly affects awareness of brand, which influences intention to purchase , however, brand loyalty has been found with minimal effect of intervention . With 280 respondents Abbas et al. (2024) studied the effect of viral marketing on awareness of brand as well as on intention to purchase in the Pakistani university and the study has concluded with a positive effect on awareness of brand among consumer's as because of the marketing communication . The research was only limited to only one aspect of viral marketing. Satrio et al. (2020) studied on the viral marketing in the context of cultural products where they executed emotion and awareness of culture to predict the intention to purchase. The study focused the products of Batik brand and 588 respondents has participated in the survey and has found that the emotion acts as an intervening variable between viral marketing & purchase intention. However, the research is limited to a wider population. Sawaftah et al. (2019) in their research titled "The relationship between viral marketing and consumer purchase intention, the moderator role of brand image and age: Evidence from Smartphone users in North Cyprus" with 177 respondents revealed that image of the brand acts as a moderator while intention of purchase gets predicted by viral marketing .The research was limited to a specific geographical area with limited sample size in a specific product category. Hughes et al. (2019) investigated on the topic titled "Driving Brand Engagement through Online Social Influencers: An Empirical Investigation of Sponsored Blogging Campaigns" where the focus was to identify the key drivers of successful engagement of brand in the internet where the findings depicts that source , incentives, factors , type of platforms drives engagement of a brand . However, the research was of limited matrix that did not discuss the return on investment. Liu and Wang (2019) Incorporated equity of brand to observe the

relation among the intention to purchase by consumer and the viral marketing where they mentioned that due to getting viral messages there might be negative influence on the equity of brand as well as intention to purchase. In limitation of the research highlights the limited sample size used in this research.

Figure1 - Conceptual Model



3. Methodology

The study has incorporated awareness of brand effect between intention to purchase as well as viral marketing to check the intervening effect among the 300 respondents of Agartala where Baron and Kenny approach Baron and Kenny(1986) has been emphasized . Using a structured questionnaire the data regarding these traits has been collected where, the participant's demographic profile were queried applying descriptive statistics for all the variables accounted. Moreover, to execute multiple linear regressions for the path analysis, SPSS 20 software has been used. Brand awareness has been accounted as the mediating variable, purchase intention of consumers has been accounted as the dependent variable and viral marketing has been considered as the independent variable in the study. Demographic variables such as, income, age ,gender , educational qualification has been incorporated as a control factors in this study. The responders had access to structured questionnaire and ethical standards were maintained in terms of the correctness and trustworthiness of data collection process. Initially in the data screening process the misfit data has been found and fix. Multiple linear regression has been performed after the pre-processing of data to check the connection between the variables .Using the Bootstrapping approach the robust insights among the variables in the mediation analysis has been checked with 5000 resample's which is a common practice in statistical analysis for performing mediation to obtain stable and accurate estimate of confidence intervals for indirect effects (Preacher and Hayes, 2004) . In the entire research strict measures were taken while maintaining the ethical standards keeping the confidentiality of the responses and the consent of the responders.

Research question

Does Brand awareness acts as a mediator between the viral marketing and consumer purchasing intentions?

In this study the average value of the independent variable i.e VM and the average value of the dependent variable i.e PI has been calculated to check the mediating effect of Brand awareness between them.

Research Hypothesis

H₁ - Viral marketing predicts purchase intention

H₂ - Viral marketing predicts the brand awareness

H₃ - Brand awareness influence the purchase intention

H₄- Purchase intention predicted by both brand awareness and viral marketing

4. Analysis and Discussion

As per Table 1, among 300 respondents, major respondents within the age group of 20 to 30. Subsequently, 27.67% of participants belonged to 30-40 age group , 17.67% respondents are

under-20 age group of the age group, and 11.67% respondents to the 40–50 age group. It's interesting to note that 10.66% of responders are beyond 50. The study accounted 59.67% of Male responders while 40.33% of responders are Female. The Highest level of education, bachelor degree which consists of 74% of respondents followed by secondary education that consists of 12% of the participants. 8% participants has a post graduate degree followed by PhD holders as well as elementary education holders forms noticeably less number of the participants.

Table-1: Descriptives

Descriptive	Attributes	Counts (% values)
Age group	> 20	53(17.67)
	20 to 30	97(32.33)
	30 to 40	83(27.67)
	40 to 50	35(11.67)
	above 50	32(10.66)
	Total	300(100)
Gender	Male	179(59.67)
	Female	121(40.33)
	Total	300(100)
Educational Level	Primary level	2(0.67)
	Secondary level	36(12)
	Bachelor degree	222(74)
	Post graduate	24(8)
	Ph.D.	8(2.67)
	Others	8(2.67)
	Total	300(100)
Employment Status	Unemployed	28(9.33)
	Govt. Employee	26(8.67)
	Private Employee	41(13.67)
	Business	28(9.33)
	Student	177(59)
	Total	300(100)
Monthly Family Income	10,000 to 20,000	76(25.33)
	20,000 to 30,000	135(45)
	30,000 to 40,000	22(7.33)
	40,000 to 50,000	20(6.67)
	above 50,000	47(15.67)
	Total	300(100)

Source: Author's compilation from primary data

Moreover, among the responders 59% of responders are student followed by private employees which is constitutes 13.67% .Business owners and unemployed responders constitutes 9.33% of the total participants on each side whereas 8.67% responders are government employees. This suggest that Viral marketing influences students of bachelor degree which is possibly due to the influence of digital networks among them followed by the other participants from different academic levels and occupational status. 45% of the total participants has monthly income between Rs (20000 to 30,000) which is followed by

responders having per month earnings between Rs(10,000-20,000) with 25.33% followed by responders with every month earning above Rs.50,000 that constitutes 15.67% whereas, only 7.33% participants are having per month earning Rs (30,000- 40,000) and 6.67% of responders are in the every month earning between Rs(40,000- 50,000).

Table 2 – Descriptive Statistics

Sl. No.	Attributes	Mean	Median	SD	Max	Min
1	I enjoy while consuming and sharing Viral marketing contents	2.5	2	1.18	1	5
2	Viral marketing messages are entertaining while consuming and sharing	3.23	3	0.82	1	5
3	Useful product information is shared in the viral marketing communication	3.16	3	1.34	1	5
4	Due to viral marketing I receive timely information.	3.32	3	0.93	1	5
5	I can rely on the viral marketing messages for product knowledge.	3.41	3	0.92	1	5
6	Viral marketing messages are trustworthy.	3.07	3	0.92	1	5
7	I shall try a product if it went viral on social media.	3.36	4	0.98	1	5
8	I shall attempt cosmetics when I learn about it through viral marketing contents.	3.27	3	0.93	1	5
9	After knowing a cosmetic product through viral marketing messages if I see it in a store I shall invest on it.	3.41	3	0.92	1	5
10	I will search for the cosmetic product after knowing about it through viral marketing campaigns.	3.24	3	0.99	1	5
11	I shall purchase a cosmetic product , if a viral marketing message provides me incentives.	3.29	3	1.01	1	5

Source: Author's compilation from primary data

To estimate the path analysis, hierarchical regression using SPSS 20 has been conducted. According to Baron and Kenny (1986) there are certain conditions which is to be fulfilled to identify the mediating effect. Initially, the predictor variable should be predicted by the observed variable. Secondly, the mediating variable should be predicted by the observed variable. Thirdly, the predictor variable should considerably predicted by the mediating variable and at last, the mediating variable and the observed variable should remarkably predict the predictor variable where predictability of the observed variable is reduced.

H₁: Purchase Intention significantly predicted by viral marketing

In table 3 there is a significant p-value for VM i.e. it is < 0.05 which is an evidence that illustrates the interaction between VM and PI and fulfils the first phase of Baron & Kenny model (Baron & Kenny,1986)

Table 3- Purchase intention and Viral marketing linear regression Coefficient table

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Beta				
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.104	0.163	-	12.904	0.00
Viral marketing(VM)	0.375	0.051	0.393	7.385	0.00

a. Dependent Element: Purchase Intention(PI)

Source- Calculated from Empirical data

H₂ : Brand awareness significantly predicted by viral marketing

The second criterion from Baron & Kenny model (Baron & Kenny, 1986) has been fulfilled in table 4 that demonstrates the significant interaction between BA and VM since the p-value stands <0.05.

Table 4- Regression coefficient table of Viral marketing and Brand awareness

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Beta	Coefficients			
	Beta	Std. Error	Coefficients		
(Constant)	2.231	0.220		10.144	0.00
Viral marketing(VM)	0.281	0.069	0.231	4.105	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Brand awareness(BA)

Source- Author’s compilation from primary data

H₃ : Purchase Intention significantly predicted by Brand awareness

In table 5 the p-value stands <0.05 which illustrates the significant evidence for the substantial relationship between Purchase intention and Brand awareness satisfying the third situation of Baon & Kenny model(Baron & Kenny,1986).

Table 5- Regression coefficient table of Purchase Intention and Brand Awareness

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients				
	Beta	Std. Error	Coefficients		
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.986	0.125		15.918	0.00
Brand	0.415	0.039	0.529	10.75	0.00

Awareness

1 0

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention(PI)

Source- Author's compilation from primary data

H4: Purchase Intention is significantly predicted by both Brand Awareness and Viral Marketing.

From table 6 the initial model illustrates the regression analysis between Viral marketing (VM) and purchase intention(PI) that highlights a significant p-value <0.05 where the R² value is 15.5% which is low and signifies a partial effect due to VM. Additionally, a 24% shift in R square can be shown in the second model when brand awareness is taken into consideration as the intervening variable for Purchase Intention and Viral Marketing.

Table 6- Hierarchical regressions model summary of Purchase intention, Viral Marketing and Brand Awareness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	R	F	df	df 2	Sig. F
						Square Change	Change	1	2	Change
1	.392	0.153	0.153	0.64623	0.152	54.537	1	298	0.000	
2	.596	0.356	0.353	0.56453	0.202	93.485	1	297	0.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Viral marketing(VM)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Viral marketing(VM), Brand awareness(BA)

Source- Calculated from Empirical data

Table 7 highlights the association between the dependent ,independent and intervening variable. In the first case when, PI has been regressed on VM the p-value remain significant i.e <0.05 while in the second case, when Brand awareness(BA) has been introduced along with VM the p-value remained <0.05. As per Baron and Kenny model if in both the models the values remain substantial then, it is a clear indication of partial mediation because of the intervening element i.e Brand awareness.

Table 7 - Regression coefficient table for PI , VM and BA

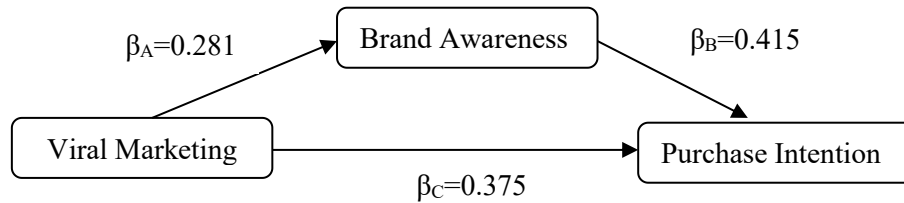
Model		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
					Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.104	0.163	12.906	0.000	
	Viral Marketing(VM)	0.375	0.051	0.393	7.385	0.000
2	(Constant)	1.295	0.165	7.839	0.000	
	Viral	0.27	0.04	0.286	5.987	0.000

Marketing(V M)	3	6					7
Brand Awareness(BA)	0.36 3	0.03 8	0.462	9.669	0.000	0.946	1.05 7

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention(PI)

Source- Author’s compilation from Empirical data

Figure 2 –Obtained values of Beta in the hierarchical regression



Source- Author’s compilation from primary data

Bootstrapping is a re-sampling technique which estimates the sample distribution of a statistic by iterative sampling using the data (Efron and Tibshirani, 1994). From table 8 the bootstrapped coefficients confirms the significance of both Viral marketing (VM) and Brand awareness (BA) in predicting Purchase intention (PI) among the 5000 bootstrap samples. The Unstandardized coefficients of VM, BA are 0.273(95% BCa Confidence interval:0.159) & 0.363(95% BCa Confidence interval:0.252) respectively where both the p-value stands <0.05 defines a minimal bias. This suggests that both VM and BA influence PI significantly.

Table 8– Bootstrap Coefficient table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Bias	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	BCa 95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
		-			1.730	2.488
1 (Constant)	2.104	0.001	0.193	0.000	.252	0.496
1 VM	0.375	0.000	0.061	0.000	.926	1.691
		-			.159	0.385
2 (Constant)	1.295	0.000	0.203	0.000	.252	0.478
2 VM	0.273	0.002	0.06	0.000		
2 Brand Awareness(BA)	0.363	0.002	0.055	0.000		

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 5000 bootstrap samples

Source- Author’s compilation from primary data

In the excluded variables table 9 it can be noted that the t-value of Brand awareness is 9.669 with a significance level 0.000 which depicts that despite of being excluded from the initial model, BA has a strong and statistically significant impact on PI .

Table 9– Excluded Variables

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance
1	Brand awareness	.462 ^b	9.669	0.000	0.489	0.946

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention(PI)

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Viral Marketing

Source- Author's compilation from primary data

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The interrelation within the purchasing intention of consumer, brand awareness, and viral marketing within the Agartala city area in the cosmetics has been clarified by this study. By utilizing SPSS 20 for analysis and the Baron and Kenny mediation model, it has been found that due to the incorporation of Brand awareness there is a presence of partial mediation between viral marketing and consumer purchase intention. This suggests that consumer purchase intention directly influenced by viral marketing but, the presence of brand awareness further amplifies its impact that underline the importance of building and maintaining brand awareness through effective viral marketing strategies in driving consumer purchase intention for the marketers to enhance the business generation in terms of the cosmetic segments. This study has been limited to a specific geographical area i.e. Agartala , India where a narrow population has been taken into consideration for the study as like as the previous researchers also studied focussing specifically the brand awareness mediation role on viral marketing and purchase intention. Therefore, it is recommended for the researchers to perform studies by incorporating more variables including brand emotions, brand engagement, viral marketing attributes with a broader population size in different location for more precise results about the impacts of Viral Marketing on consumers intention to purchase.

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