

## “THE STUDY OF VIRAL MARKETING USING E-COMMERCE SERVICES”

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper reports development of a longitudinal exploring study on the provision of highly accessible and integrative electronic service on viral marketing , usually delivered through word-of-mouth or even enhanced by the network effects of the Internet and it is seen as a marketing "strategy", encouraging people to pass along a marketing passage voluntarily. Viral marketing is about marketing techniques that are meant to increase brand awareness, on the basis of preexisting social networks. It works by means of self-replicating viral processes, which might prove (in a more metaphorical way) similar to the spread of pathological viruses. This paper discusses how viral marketing spreads rapidly with a zero cost technique of social network and the significance of employing e-commerce strategy to it. The basic characteristics includes effortless transfer to others , Scales easily from small to very large ,Exploits common motivations and behaviors , Utilizes existing communication networks ,Takes advantage of others' resources etc.*

**KEYWORDS:** *E-Commerce, E-Business, Viral Marketing, Networking.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Viral marketing is a term coined to define the productive ways a marketing message is made available. And corporates are using the medium to circulate brands and brand messages. The idea has caught on like a virus, as efficiently as Information Technology has entered households and businesses. This technique describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence. Off the Internet, viral marketing has been referred to as "word-of-mouth," "creating a buzz," "leveraging the media," "network marketing." But on the Internet, for better or worse, it's called "viral marketing" .

***The Definition of Viral Marketing: -***

- 1. Simple to understand-** if you can't describe the concept in one sentence, it's probably not going to work.
- 2. Simple to Use-** keeps it dead simple for the user to use - life is complicated enough.
- 3. Simple to Find-** seeds your viral marketing campaign (blogs, emails, ads, websites, etc) and make it easy to find.

#### 4. **Simple to share** - make it easy for people to tell others.

What is unique about the concept is that where brands or brand ideas are exchanged within communities, they are idea-led, not advertising-led. There are some high-profile viral success stories. Like Google mail. By simply sending an e-mail, consumers hawked the service because every message contained a Google mail ad. That helped it grow to 50 million accounts in its first year, way back in 1992.

Viral marketing is successful because there are so many customers who are willing to pass along just about any message, as long as it is valuable or beneficial. Most people, who receive valuable viral messages, pass them on to other interested people. Word-of-mouth communication increases sales, brand awareness, and market coverage.

Word-of-mouth marketing provides you with benefits that you cannot get from any other form of online advertising. Through viral email marketing you get the best way to

- Reach the most targeted audience
- Increase sales and improve online awareness by many folds
- Cost-effectively build brand recognition and interest in your offerings

"Forward to a Friend" viral marketing is effective because it creates a personalized information-based relationship between your subscriber and new receptionist they forwarded.

Some key points to help you utilize the word-of-mouth viral marketing as a successful medium through your existing relationship network:

- Give away products or services to encourage referral
- Apply effortlessly a "Forward to a friend" utility to ease transfer to others
- Give the referral person a choice to opt-out

A viral marketing strategy need not contain ALL these elements, but the more elements it embraces, the more powerful the results are likely to be. An effective viral marketing strategy:

1. *Gives away products or services*
2. *Provides for effortless transfer to others*
3. *Scales easily from small to very large*
4. *Exploits common motivations and behaviors*
5. *Utilizes existing communication networks*
6. *Takes advantage of others' resources*

Let's examine at each of these elements briefly.

#### **1. Gives away valuable products or services**

The web expands the types of communication channels available including customer to customer communication using viral marketing services. Using "Free concept" is a most powerful word in a marketer's vocabulary. Most viral marketing programs give away valuable products or services to attract attention. Free e-mail services, free information, free "cool" buttons, free software programs that perform powerful functions but not as much as you get in the "pro" version. Wilson's Second Law of Web Marketing is "The Law of Giving and Selling". "Cheap" or

"inexpensive" may generate a wave of interest, but "free" will usually do it much faster. Viral marketers practice delayed gratification. They may not profit today, or tomorrow, but if they can generate a groundswell of interest from something free, they know they will profit "soon and for the rest of their lives" (with apologies to "Casablanca"). Patience, my friends. Free attracts eyeballs. Eyeballs then see other desirable things that you are selling, and, presto! you earn money. Eyeballs bring valuable e-mail addresses, advertising revenue, and e-commerce sales opportunities. Give away something, sell something.

## **2. Provides for effortless transfer to others**

A viral campaign could end up affecting several million highly targeted consumers, which to achieve using traditional media would potentially cost as many dollars, Pounds, or Euros as the amount of consumers reached. The medium that carries your marketing message must be easy to transfer and replicate: e-mail, website, graphic, software download. Viral marketing works famously on the Internet because instant communication has become so easy and inexpensive. Digital format make copying simple. From a marketing standpoint, you must simplify your marketing message so it can be transmitted easily and without degradation. Short is better. The classic is: "Get your private, free email at <http://www.hotmail.com>." The message is compelling, compressed, and copied at the bottom of every free e-mail message.

## **3. Scales easily from small to very large**

To spread like wildfire the transmission method must be rapidly scalable from small to very large. The weakness of the Hotmail model is that a free e-mail service requires its own mail servers to transmit the message. If the strategy is wildly successful, mail servers must be added very quickly or the rapid growth will bog down and die. If the virus multiplies only to kill the host before spreading, nothing is accomplished. So long as you have planned ahead of time how you can add mail servers rapidly you're okay. You must build in scalability to your viral model.

## **4. Exploits common motivations and behaviors**

Clever viral marketing plans take advantage of common human motivations. What proliferated "Netscape Now" buttons in the early days of the Web? The desire to be cool. Greed drives people. So does the hunger to be popular, loved, and understood. The resulting urge to communicate produces millions of websites and billions of e-mail messages. Design a marketing strategy that builds on common motivations and behaviors for its transmission, and you have a winner.

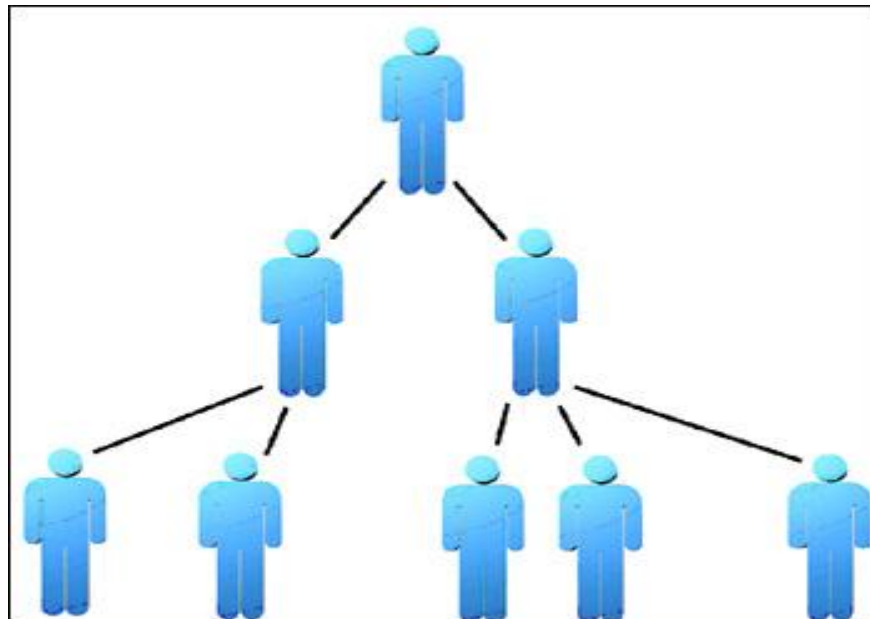
## **5. Utilizes existing communication networks**

It is possible for the first time such things as video on demand, live video, IPTV, and other formats of rich media interactivity. Those companies that are harnessing these trends in a creative and viral way are finding themselves to be moving ahead of competitors who perhaps previously held the greatest market share by spending large sums of money in the traditional media. Social scientists tell us that each person has a network of 8 to 12 people in their close network of friends, family, and associates. A person's broader network may consist of scores, hundreds, or thousands of people, depending upon her position in society. A waitress, for example, may communicate regularly with hundreds of customers in a given week. Network marketers have long understood the power of these human networks, both the strong, close networks as well as the weaker networked relationships. People on the Internet develop networks of relationships, too. They collect e-mail addresses and favorite website URLs. Affiliate

programs exploit such networks, as do permission e-mail lists. Learn to place your message into existing communications between people, and you rapidly multiply its dispersion.

### 6. Takes advantage of others' resources

The most creative viral marketing plans use others' resources to get the word out. Affiliate programs, for example, place text or graphic links on others' websites. Authors who give away free articles, seek to position their articles on others' webpages. A news release can be picked up by hundreds of periodicals and form the basis of articles seen by hundreds of thousands of readers. Now someone else's newsprint or webpage is relaying your marketing message. Someone else's resources are depleted rather than your own.



### Viral Marketing Techniques

**1. Word of Mouth** - We have all seen this phenomenon displayed with many products. People spread the word about some great movie or gadget and suddenly everyone knows about it. Human nature dictates we tell our friends about some great product we have bought or found. Nature of the beast, it's just the way we are - so why not take full advantage of it?

If you have a web site - put up a simple 'tell a friend' form so your visitors can easily tell others about your great site. Easy and very simple to do but many webmasters don't do it. Similarly, if you have a newsletter, service, product or with any aspect of your site - just include a few sentences at the end of your copy - asking very politely, "if you found this service, product or web site helpful - why not tell your friends, family and colleagues about it."

**2. Branding** - Make sure you have a logo on your site or product. Branding your site is very important if you want your site or product to be noticed and talked about. For that matter, a catchy brand name can be a 'viral technique' in itself - so try and come up with one that springs from the lips with a distinctive ring to it!

People recognize brands; it gives them a clear image of your site or product. Include your brand or logo on every page of your site and on every product, service, material coming from your site or business.

**3. EBooks** - Savvy marketers jumped on this new invention very quickly, they knew the 'viral' power of these little ebooks. Ebooks are electronic files that can be downloaded from any web site and distributed easily around the web. You can also have other webmasters or marketers, 're-brand' these ebooks with their own links. High quality ebooks get passed along very quickly and are great viral tools.

Anyone can write a simple ebook on the topic of their site. If you can't write, just get permission to use a collection of articles from the numerous 'article directories' on the web such as [www.ezinearticles.com](http://www.ezinearticles.com) or [www.goarticles.com](http://www.goarticles.com) . Ebook compiling software (in both .exe or pdf format) is relatively cheap or can be found for free on the net. Just Google to find it!

**4. Viral Software** - Some simple software products or applications can be very viral, often passed around or downloaded from the web by thousands each day. These have to be useful or handy products that the users will desire - ecalendars, organizers, personal planners, link checking software, and so on. Many are desktop products that sit on the computer user's desktop - prime location in the marketing arena.

And the best examples of this kind of viral software have the company logo, sales message and contact email - with LIVE LINKS to all of the above - conveniently displayed within the product. These simple software programs can be great viral promotional devices that spread like wildfire across the web. (get an example of this below in the author's resource box)

**5. RSS** - Newest player in the viral game! RSS which stands for 'Really Simple Syndication' and just by the nature of what it does; RSS is an awesome viral tool. Originally used by news organizations to syndicate their news stories, it is usually associated with Blogs because blogs use an RSS feed to distribute their content. Good quality RSS feeds are picked up and displayed by different web sites all across the web.

Internet Viral Marketing is an online marketing technique that is meant to increase your brand awareness or product sales through various online media such as video clips, ebooks, articles, or software. The goal is to create messages or content with a high probability of being passed along over and over to reach the most amount of people possible. So what are some specific examples of internet viral marketing and how can you use them? Read on for the top examples and tips that you can start using now!

#### **Examples of Internet Viral Marketing use in E-commerce :**

**1- Headlines and Tags:** Do keyword research to find catchy keywords for your headlines. They should provide a high search engine ranking but also make sense for your content.

**2- Blogs:** Don't just have a blog, be sure you are following other blogs and getting people to follow yours. The more people you have following your blog information, the more viral your content will be.

**3- Social Networks:** Be sure you have a presence on all the top social networks and provide regular updates as to what you are doing in your business. Provide valuable information, develop a following of friends and contacts and your content will become more widespread and viral and drive more and more traffic to your website!

**4- Forums:** Become a source of valuable info! Start a thread or participate with great, helpful content. This is a great way to drive traffic to your website and build of a viral following of viewers.

**5- Email Lists:** This is another one of the top ways to build an internet viral marketing campaign. The bigger your list, the more people will see your content. And the potential for growth here is massive when you consider the possibility of the people on your list passing on your emails to their lists! This is a classic example of the good kind of virus.

Following are two companies have used viral marketing to spread their brand to the masses?

**1. Hotmail-** Hotmail is one of the most classic examples of successful viral marketing. They offered free e-mail to the masses, and simply attached a signature at the bottom of each e-mail message that promoted their free service. Every single e-mail sent by a Hotmail user contained this message, thus spreading it like a virus. Recipients would see the ad, and as a result, they too signed up for Hotmail.

**2. Watchmen-** One of the most recent examples on this list, Watchmen's viral campaign has consisted of fake newscasts and mock PSAs. Judging from the buzz online, these videos are doing their job. Fans are pumped up, and anxiously awaiting the movie's release.

#### **Benefits of Viral Marketing: -**

**1. Increased brand awareness.** By interacting with others through a social media channel, you are able to build awareness for your business. Increase your visibility through active interaction on many different levels, Networking drives traffic back to your website.

**2. Improved reputation.** By participating in forums or networking sites, your business gets positive feedback. You want to keep the communication channels open on all social media fronts. Your business can benefit from this by being consistently involved in discussions on topics that are relevant to your business.

**3. Personal Development.** Networking with the right people will keep you in the loop on the latest industry happenings and greatly improve on your knowledge levels. A big part of social networking is observation. Seeing how others reflect or participate in conversations is a great way to improve your own experience in the field.

**4. Relationships with benefits.** With healthy social networking, your business can extract future benefits such as testimonials, links and recommendations from others. If you want an effective Online Marketing campaign, Social Networking is the practical answer to reaching effective online relations.



## **Effective Viral Marketing Strategies**

Effective viral marketing strategies can help you snatch the attention of web users towards your online business venture.

### **Powerful promotion technique**

Viral marketing is a simple but powerful tool for promoting your products and resources to a wide majority of the audience. For successfully promoting your resources through viral advertising it is possible to make use of the existing social networks and other available resources. Through the information provided on these social networks, you are able to sort out your advertising requirements. The other viral advertising campaign tools and procedures that can be used to construct an effective promotion strategy for your online business include the following:

- Building easily transferable and simple promotion messages
- Presenting affiliate programs
- Designing free e-books
- Offering free services and products
- Providing video clippings and images
- Offering suitable rewards for the referrals
- Developing effective and interesting blogs
- Submitting interesting articles
- Granting access to online contests and games
- Offering free software downloads
- Providing newsletters and forums

The viral advertising campaign must be designed to exploit the general human inspiration and behavior. Consequently it is always necessary to update the website content and strategies according to the changing online marketing requirements.

### **Conclusion**

*Choosing the company's strategy towards Viral Marketing using e-commerce techniques in general* speaks, of three major options: (1) *Lead*: Conduct large-scale innovative ecommerce activities. (2) *Watch and wait*: Do nothing, but carefully watch what is going on in the field in order to determine when EC is mature enough to enter it. (3) *Experiment*: Start some e-commerce experimental projects (learn by doing). Each of these options has its advantages and risks.

To reach an unlimited number of potential clients and customers, at a very low or no cost, a viral marketing campaign is just what the doctor prescribes. Putting the power of the Internet resources of others to work for you will pay huge dividends in the future. By using e-mail links and referrals, a viral message can be sent from person to person at almost the speed of light. The word can be spread around the world in literally the blink of an eye. Traffic can be brought into your website the same day. Those visitors may not be immediate customers or clients, however. Like anything else in business, developing a strong customer base will take much longer.

The people who assist your viral marketing efforts will benefit as well. They can be part of something fun and exciting, or they may simply want to get something for free. In any case, any good viral system should have a solid personal benefit for the sender.

If your viral marketing concept catches on, you will need it to handle the infected visitors.

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See all the Website white papers at

<http://digitallabz.com/blogs/11-examples-of-viral-marketing-campaigns.html>

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Internet-Viral-Marketing---Top-5-Viral-Marketing-Examples-and-How-to-Use-Them!&id=2413508>



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