

A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING VIRAL MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS
USING SOCIAL MEDIA

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This dissertation is dedicated to my husband and my family for their endless support and encouragement throughout my studies.

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ABSTRACT

The dramatic employment of digital trend technologies, Internet and social media has fundamental touch on business and opened up opportunities in marketing field. Word-of-mouth communication can be helpful in social media for marketing and it is called as viral marketing. However, there are many online retailers, though managed to retain product or product reputation but unsuccessful to grow their business because do not know or do not understand viral marketing techniques. Therefore, this study had been discovered the techniques used in viral marketing on social media. In order to use the viral marketing techniques efficiently, the discovered techniques were evaluated. To evaluate the techniques, a framework to evaluate the techniques was designed and named as VMT Evaluation Framework. Viral marketing techniques had been applied by online retailers (SME) on three different sites of Facebook which are FB Profile, FB Page and FB Group. The result of using the viral marketing techniques on Facebook was based on engagement rate. The engagement rate showed the most effective VMT is Be Fun/Interesting for FB Profile, Web-linked Viral for FB Page, and Draw Motivation is the only one that had been used by the retailers for FB Group. At the end, the result performance of each viral marketing techniques were ranked out in the proposed enhancement model of digital marketing. Hence, the online retailers that using Facebook (social media) to market their product or services, they will able to focus and use more viral marketing techniques according its effectiveness.

ABSTRAK

Penggunaan teknologi digital, *Internet* dan media sosial secara dramatik telah membuka peluang dalam bidang pemasaran. Perkataan-komunikasi-mulut atau *Word-of-mouth* membantu pemasaran dalam media sosial dan dipanggil sebagai pemasaran viral atau *viral marketing*. Walaubagaimanapun, masih ramai peniaga atas talian yang berjaya mengekalkan reputasi produk tetapi tidak berjaya untuk mengembangkan perniagaan mereka kerana tidak tahu teknik pemasaran viral. Oleh itu, kajian ini akan mencari teknik pemasaran viral yang berkesan untuk digunakan di dalam media sosial. Bagi mengenalpasti keberkesanan teknik-teknik pemasaran viral tersebut, ia perlu dinilai. Untuk menilai teknik tersebut, rangka kerja untuk menilai teknik direka dan dinamakan sebagai Rangka Kerja Penilaian VMT (*Viral Marketing Techniques*) atau *VMT evaluation framework*. Teknik pemasaran viral digunakan oleh peniaga dalam talian (*SME- small medium enterprise*) di tiga laman Facebook yang berbeza, iaitu *FB Profile*, *FB Page* dan *FB Group*. Keputusan penggunaan teknik pemasaran viral di *Facebook* adalah berdasarkan kadar penglibatan atau *engagement rate*. Keputusan penilaian menunjukkan teknik yang paling berkesan adalah Jadi Menarik/Menyoronokkan bagi *FB Profile*, Mengviralkan Pautan Laman Web bagi *FB Page*, dan Menimbulkan Motivasi adalah satu-satunya teknik yang digunakan untuk *FB Group*. Akhirnya, hasil prestasi bagi setiap teknik pemasaran viral akan disusun mengikut keberkesanannya di dalam model pemasaran yang dicadangkan untuk penambahbaikan. Oleh itu, peruncit dalam talian yang menggunakan (media sosial) *Facebook* untuk memasarkan produk atau perkhidmatan mereka, mereka akan dapat memberi tumpuan dan menggunakan teknik-teknik pemasaran viral dengan lebih kerap mengikut keberkesanannya.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRM	-	Customer Relationship Management
FB	-	Facebook
SME	-	Small Medium Enterprise
SEO	-	Search Engine Optimization
VM	-	Viral Marketing
VMC	-	Viral Marketing Criteria
VMT	-	Viral Marketing Techniques

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

An overview of this study will be covered in this chapter. In addition, a brief explanation on what will be done for the next stage also will be discussed here. More importantly in this chapter is the description of research such as background study and problem, problem statement, objectives, scope and significance of this research. In this study, there are three main key points which are digital marketing, viral marketing and social media. The entire process that will be done for this study has been summarized in Figure 1.1.

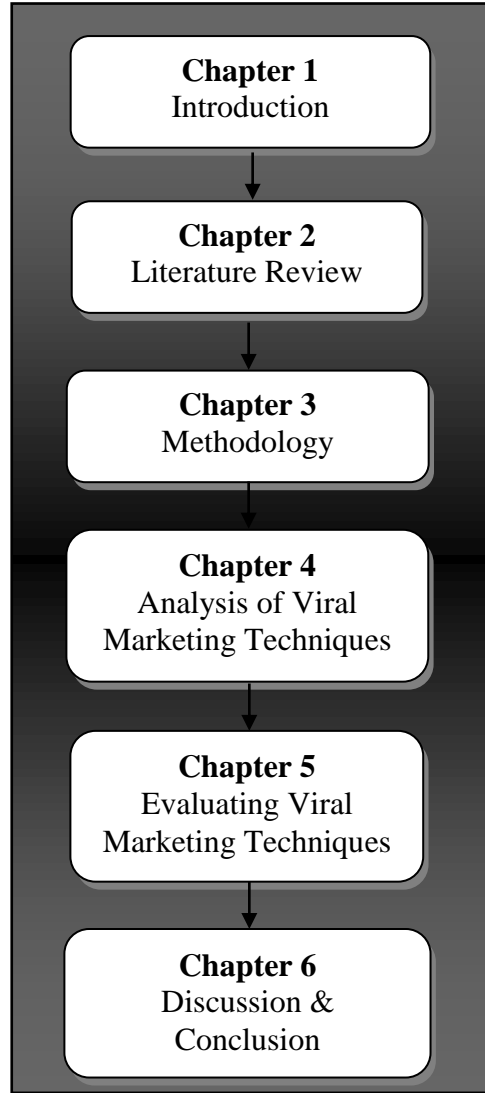


Figure 1.1 Structure of research

1.2 Background of Study

The Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) invented during 1990s is mainly for global sharing information. The digital era begin with the raising of digitals start-ups (Red Ant, 2009). At the same time, the number of Internet users growth rapidly. According to the Internet Live Stats (2014), by 1 July 2014, the global Internet user's

population reached 3 billion and the Facebook active users is about 1.33 billion. Due to the raising of Internet users, it has made the Internet an increasingly significance and actively acts as attractive platform for business practices. The dramatic employment of Internet and digital trend technologies has had fundamental touch on business and opened up opportunities in marketing field; build a new and interconnected part of business models. Besides, it is also enhance potential efficiency of commercial activities between companies (Liang et al., 2004). Then, a lot of researchers and practitioners have highlighted that the Internet is an important weapon for e-Marketing.

Today, the marketers is should not purely rely on traditional media for marketing. They have to make a step in social media utilization. In less than a decade, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn gained their phenomenal popularity among Internet users (Kleinberg, 2008). If the majority of users engage with social media, companies should engage with social media as well (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014). It is because social media is not just for communication platform with customers but also as an effective tool develop relationship with customers. Companies need to cultivate digital relationships through promotional strategies to highlight the co-creation of content. If applied effectively, the power of social media could help the company achieve best selling with specific strategy as well as operational benefits (Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009). This leads shifting to a web content contribution which influences users to generate their opinions. Their opinions is extremely important because it is become viral among their peers and influences others purchasing decision (Zhu, 2013). A company uses the customer opinions as testimony to promote a product or service to influence other target people. At the end, word-of mouth communication can be particularly helpful (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014). This seductive concept is called as viral marketing. Basically, word-of-mouth is the foundation of viral marketing. This phenomenon originally discovered by Rogers (1995) and he described viral marketing as Internet adaption of marketing employing word-of-mouth impacts.

According to Bryce (2005), there is one ordinary marketing strategy that has been used by a majority of all start-ups marketers with information goods which is viral

marketing. The consumer-to-consumer (or peer-to-peer) communications as opposed to company-to-consumer communications to spread marketing message is the main purpose of viral marketing (De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008). Peer-to-peer communication can overcome customer's resistance, influence customer behavior and effective acceptance (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). The declined usage (Hann et al., 2008) and benefits (Lam, 2010) of traditional marketing has been pursued the used of marketing via digital platform. The trend gain popularity among both researchers and practitioners due to require less effort but low cost (Lam, 2010) but also its ability to spread in large scales (Watts et al., 2007). The accessibility of a wide network of users along with low cost communication mechanisms has realized marketing managers of these benefits (Kalyanam, McIntyre and Masonis, 2007).

However, marketing managers are still struggling to get a clear understanding on how to efficiently incorporate social media and viral marketing into their online business models (McKinsey, 2011). Marketer's managers only know how to present their products on social media sites but they do not know how to attract people and make it worth in the way people pass information around social networks. For example, pursuing people or give a way to consumer to give good testimony about the products. Somehow, there are still many online retailers, though managed to retain product or service reputation but unsuccessful to grow up their business because they fail to understand viral marketing strategies (Tassi, 2012). In order for online retailers to successfully grow, there is a need to discover the techniques used in viral marketing by incorporating social media. After that, the techniques need to be applied and evaluated. Viral marketing is at an early phase of development and previous concerned on the motivations and behaviours of those passing-on email messages. To date with new trend Internet employment, the suitable criteria of viral marketing techniques should be measured and evaluated their effectiveness (Cruz and Fill, 2008). The important thing is to measure customer's willingness to share and recommend a product or services within their colleagues (Reichheld, 2003). Netherless, the previous research only establish general criteria for evaluating viral marketing (Cruz and Fill, 2008). Therefore, the aim for this research is going to identify the viral marketing techniques with its key criteria

in social media and evaluate it to make online retailers believe the power of viral marketing. It will promote viral marketing for good practice by online retailers.

1.3 Problem Statement

The main question addressed in this research is “How to evaluate viral marketing techniques performance by online retailers in social media marketing?”. Besides, there are also some another question arises, which are:

- i) What are the techniques in viral marketing?
- ii) What are the criteria that need to be focused for viral marketing techniques evaluation in social media platform?
- iii) What are the most effective viral marketing techniques in social media for online retailers?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- i) To investigate existing viral marketing techniques for online retailers.
- ii) To propose a framework to evaluate viral marketing techniques for social media marketing
- iii) To recommend the best viral marketing techniques in social media.

1.5 Scope of Study

The research scope is focused on the statement below:

- i) The research is focuses on viral marketing techniques used for marketing

- ii) The research focuses for small medium enterprise (SMEs) online retailers and they are the respondents for this study.
- iii) The research is focusing on viral marketing techniques performance on Facebook

1.6 Significance of Study

For this study, it is expected to be beneficial especially for online retailers. Hence, the motives which contribute to the significance for this study need to be done are:

- i. Viral marketing guidelines are used to encourage online retailers to implement viral marketing techniques in social media platform
- ii. Evaluation framework help online retailers to measure their viral marketing performance on social media.
- iii. The result from viral marketing evaluation can make online retailers realize that online marketing in social media need strategy.
- iv. The evaluation can help online retailers to choose and apply viral marketing techniques and criteria effectively.

On customers' side, they gain better information and marketing benefits on desired product or services

1.7 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter summarize the brief overview of the research problem background, and from the problem statement identified, the goal of this project is finalize, which is to propose evaluation framework of viral marketing performance on social media platform.

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