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Influence of Viral Marketing on Consumer Behaviour and Brand Awareness

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Abstract

Digital technology is transforming marketing. There are numerous new developments in the field, and one of these prominent developments is viral marketing. This paper investigates the factors influencing consumers' positive attitude towards the brand within a digital marketing context. Primary data on these variables were collected from respondents using an online survey administered through Google Forms. The respondents include students and working professionals. Exploratory Factor Analysis, followed by Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) analysis, was performed to examine the relationship between variables. The results indicated that all the independent variables significantly predict 'Positive attitude towards the Brand'. While the model is statistically significant, the use of 5-point Likert scale variables introduces certain limitations regarding the interpretation of the variables.

Keywords: Viral Marketing; Consumer Behaviour; Brand Awareness; Multiple Linear Regression.

Introduction

The evolution of digital technology has transformed the way businesses engage and communicate with consumers. One of these significant developments is viral marketing, which utilises social media and digital platforms to spread the brand communication quickly and organically, resulting in earned media. Unlike traditional marketing techniques, which rely on one-way communication, viral marketing utilises organic peer-to-peer sharing to spread exponentially. Therefore, this ensures that messages are spread through consumer communications organically, generating widespread reach and credibility. Viral Marketing improves the credibility of the message because the message comes from an acquaintance.

Viral marketing primarily utilises social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), and digital channels (blogs, video sharing sites etc). to spread the message exponentially. The core mechanism involves creating engaging, informative and entertaining content that encourages consumers to share it with their acquaintances. This transforms consumers from mere receivers of the communication to active participants in the marketing efforts. Sometimes, consumers even transform

into brand advocates as they promote the brand voluntarily. Such voluntary actions by consumers can result in an exponential increase in the reach of the message, at significantly lower costs than traditional marketing methods.

The influence of viral marketing goes beyond just exponential reach as it shapes and influences consumer behaviour by influencing brand perceptions, consumer attitudes and their purchase intent. The effectiveness of these viral marketing campaigns is determined by factors like entertainment value and interactivity. When consumers come across a viral marketing content that aligns with their attitudes, interests or values, there are higher chances that the consumer develops positive and favourable attitudes towards the brand, thereby increasing their purchase intent. This also encourages them to engage with the brand's ecosystem. Also, viral marketing improves brand awareness by making brands more memorable. Brand awareness is critical to consumer decision-making. By increasing the reach of the brand's campaign exponentially, viral marketing increases brand visibility and brand recall. As consumers repeatedly encounter a brand's communication from trusted acquaintances, their trust and familiarity with the brand grow. This, in turn, leads to stronger brand loyalty among the consumers. However, viral marketing and viral content are not without their own challenges and problems. Through viral content, both positive and negative messages can spread quickly, impacting the brand in unexpected ways. Despite growing research on viral marketing, its specific applications and effectiveness in varying cultures and markets require further understanding.

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is essentially about understanding why people choose or decide to buy certain products or services over others, that encompasses everything from understanding when and where consumers buy to how they use and dispose these products and services. It encompasses everything from pre-purchase, the moment of purchase and post-purchase, i.e., the entire consumer journey (from need recognition to post-purchase evaluation) across all touch points. This entire journey is influenced by both external factors (cultural, social factors) and internal factors (customer's individual value system). Understanding this behaviour is very crucial for every business as it provides them with valuable insights about consumers' mindset. In essence, consumer behaviour is the study of how and why individual consumers, groups, or organisations make decisions regarding researching, evaluating, using and disposing of various products or services to fulfil their needs.

Viral Marketing

Viral Marketing is a strategic approach where a company uses consumers themselves as a medium to spread their brand communication. The company aims to spread its communication organically by creating content that is entertaining, informative or thought-provoking, thereby encouraging consumers to share the content with their acquaintances using social media or online platforms. The aim is to spread the message widely very quickly, similar to how biological viruses spread from person to person. This technique uses the power of word-of-mouth and social media to generate incredible brand awareness, often with a relatively low budget compared to traditional marketing techniques.

Literature Review

According to Akpinar and Berger (2016) virality of ads is of no use if it does not induce brand evaluation and purchase among the consumers. The paper determines the virality of ads by examining what makes an ad viral, valuable to the company. The authors used four different research methodologies namely: Field of Observation of viral ads and 3 individual studies. 240 ads were selected at random using two independent raters. The distribution of ads based on appeal and brand integralness was

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measured with and without control variables. Study 1 examined sharing and brand related outcomes by manipulating ads on 131 Undergraduate students at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Study 2 examined actual sharing by using three fictitious ads on 2 product categories across 3 ad types – emotional integral, emotional nonintegral and informational on 140 students of MEF University. Study 3 examined mediating role of inferences and persuasive attempts and brand knowledge on 149 Undergraduate students at Eranus University. The study identified that while informational appeal ads increase brand evaluation and purchase intention, emotional appeal increase shares. However, the benefits of both the appeals can be achieved by emotional brand-integral ads. Brand integralness can be actually beneficial. Further research can focus on identifying impact of brand presence on sharing based on appeal type (brand presence is different from brand integralness) (Akpinar & Berger, 2016).

Berger and Milkman (2011) identified that some online content (articles or videos) is shared much more than others. The authors collected 7000 New York Times articles to understand why some online content was shared more widely compared to others. The objective was to determine whether emotional tone (positive or negative) and specific type of emotion (e.g. anger, sadness, awe) affect the virality of these ads. These articles were collected over a three-month period (August 30 to November 30, 2008) using a web crawler, along with data such as article title, author, topic area, etc. Automated sentiment analysis was used to measure the valence (positivity or negativity) and emotionality of these articles using control variables. The study found that positive content is more likely to be shared, and the intensity of emotion an article evokes is also very significant. High arousal emotions, positive (awe) or negative (anxiety or anger), are more likely to be shared. Other aspects such as practical utility, interest, surprise and placement of the article on the website also influence virality. The study is limited to articles from the New York Times, and therefore, the findings cannot be generalised. Subjectivity in coding the articles and a relatively smaller sample size limit these research findings. (Berger & Milkman, 2011).

Han, Feit, and Srinivasan (2019) said that the traditional view is that negative buzz always leads to decreased sales and negative consumer responses. The paper tries to identify the impact of negative buzz on brand awareness, positive feelings toward the brand and purchase intent. It tries to determine if negative buzz can increase brand awareness and purchase intent across – automobiles and computers. Weekly time-series data from the YouGov BrandIndex tracking survey and Kantar AdSpender database on 5 computer brands and 26 automobile brands were collected, and a VARX model was used to analyse this data. For automobile brands, negative buzz has a negative effect on positive feelings and purchase intent and little effect on brand awareness. For computer brands, negative buzz can increase purchase intent by increasing brand awareness and signalling brand popularity. The study is limited to two product categories and, therefore, the findings cannot be generalised. Also, the VARX model may not fully capture the nuances of the consumer behaviour. (Han, Feit, & Srinivasan, 2019)

Batra and Keller (2016) said the way consumers make purchases has fundamentally changed. Their paper emphasises the growing importance of IMC in the face of new media and changing consumer behaviour. It aims to offer insights into how traditional media and new media interact to affect consumer decision-making. The authors reviewed existing relevant research on IMC and combined these findings and insights to develop two conceptual frameworks and models based on them. Optimal integration of marketing communication is crucial due to shifting media patterns and divided consumer attention, and marketers need to adapt their strategies accordingly. IMC effectiveness can be enhanced by using the two proposed models- Bottom-up communications matching model and

Top-down communication optimisation model. The limitation is that the paper does not have any empirical data or case studies and is completely conceptual. (Batra & Keller, 2016)

According to Çakirkaya and Afşar (2024), in contemporary marketing, viral marketing has the capacity to reach large audiences at low cost and enhance brand awareness. The paper tries to identify leading journals, authors in the field of viral marketing and analyse the main research themes within viral marketing literature to identify missing areas. Bibliometric, thematic content, and co-citation analysis of 222 studies from the Web of Science database was performed using VOSviewer software. Bibliometric analysis identified the most influential journals, authors and publications in viral marketing. Content analysis identified three main categories of viral marketing research: theoretical perspectives, antecedents, and outcomes & applications. It also identified 10 key trends in viral marketing: social media and viral marketing, Influencer marketing, Consumer behaviour in viral marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth, Viral advertising, Brand awareness and viral marketing, Viral marketing campaigns, Ethical considerations in viral marketing, Mobile viral marketing, and cross-cultural viral marketing. The study was limited to the database in Web of Science. (Çakirkaya & Afşar, 2024)

Kim and Kim (2024) said that in the current digital environment, the influence of meme marketing is growing due to its ability to shape both brand engagement and consumer perception. Their paper explores the power of meme marketing in shaping brand engagement and customer engagement in the digital environment. 3770 reviews and reactions of user-generated content related to meme marketing were collected using a web-crawling technique during January 2024. Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF), Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA), Word Cloud Analysis, and Thematic Analysis on the collected data found that meme marketing is a strategic tool in the digital marketing landscape. The key themes identified behind using meme marketing are Marketing and Brand Development, Engagement and Trends, Digital Presence, Consumer and Audience interaction, Generational Appeal, Time and Change. The paper focuses on data collected in January 2024, as social media trends shift rapidly, these findings may not be relevant or significant in other time periods. (Kim & Kim, 2024)

According to Robles, Chica, and Cordon (2016), their paper significantly advances the understanding of digital marketing dynamics by integrating computational modelling with behavioural economics. They extend the Consumer Agent-Based Model (ABM) to include a crucial "awareness" mechanism, thereby simulating a more realistic consumer purchase process where product knowledge is acquired gradually through word-of-mouth within social networks. These methodological traditional assumptions of complete information explore the nuances of consumer decision-making in complex, interconnected environments. The application of Genetic Algorithms (GAs) to optimise viral marketing campaigns by identifying influential nodes in different network topologies (scale-free and small-world) provides a framework for designing targeted marketing strategies. The findings, such as the observation that awareness slows diffusion, the effectiveness of GAs in identifying influentials, and the critical role of network structure - offer empirical insights that can inform advanced theoretical discussions on digital consumer behaviour, network effects, and optimisation in marketing science. (Robles, Chica, & Cordon, 2016).

Sawaftah, Çalıcıoğlu, and Awadallah (2019) utilised a quantitative survey methodology with a sample of 177 graduate students in North Cyprus to empirically validate the influence of viral marketing (which includes viral advertising and electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM)) on consumer purchase intention for smartphones. Brand image is a significant moderator, which increased the positive effect of viral

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marketing on purchase intention, while age was found to be an insignificant moderator in this context. This finding suggests that for certain product categories like smartphones, a strong brand image can amplify viral marketing efforts across different age groups. Next, viral advertising has a stronger impact than E-WOM. (Sawaftah, Çalıcıoğlu, & Awadallah, 2019)

Kumar and Reinartz (2016) aimed to understand the dual nature of customer value – first, company-generated customer perceived value, and second, customer-generated 'customer lifetime value'. By synthesising existing theoretical and practical advancements in measuring customer value, the authors highlighted the best practices in the use of CLV models. The authors advocated for the alignment of perceived and extracted value through strategic, data-driven marketing initiatives. They identified that modern CLV models, especially those that focus on forward-looking, individual-level data, outperform the traditional backwards-looking metrics in predicting customer worth and optimising resource allocation. They also identified the enduring customer value mandates aligning value delivery (perceived by customers) and value extraction. (V. Kumar & Reinartz, 2016)

V. Kumar (2015) aimed to develop a comprehensive history and conceptual roadmap on the changing landscape of the marketing discipline. By synthesising literature from key periods in marketing's history, the authors organised themes chronologically and built an established framework. The authors identified that marketing evolved from basic principles and accountability during the 1930s – 1950s to theory development, buyer behaviour assessment, 1960s – 1970s, and analytical decision science and quantitative methods, 1980s – 1990s. Driven by the advances in storage and customer analytics at segment and individual levels, the resource-conscious phase 1996 – 2004 focused on maximising customer profitability. Marketing investment-oriented phase (2005 onward) elevated marketing's role to a strategic business function requiring accountability, measurement and integration with board-level decision making. This phase saw increased interdisciplinary research and standard-setting. The authors identified that the most recent phase is the 'integrative phase', which responds to the digital transformation, increased social media prominence, cross-functional organisational changes – making marketing pivotal in decision-making alongside technology, finance and operations. (V. Kumar, 2015)

A. Kumar et al. (2016) aimed to assess the impact of firm-generated content (FGC) posted on social media platforms on the three major customer metrics: spending, cross-buying, and customer profitability. By collecting data from a large speciality retailer, merging customers' social media, participation records, in-store transaction data and attitudinal surveys. Propensity score matching and differences-in-differences models evaluated behaviour changes before and after exposure to FGC, isolating causal effects. Valence (sentiment), receptivity (likes, shares, comments) and susceptibility (positive brand perception) are the three dimensions operationalising FGC. The authors identified that the effect of FGC is both positive and significant and increases customer spending and cross-buying, even after accounting for TV and e-mail marketing influences. FGC works synergistically with traditional media (TV ads) and digital channels (e-mail), but its interaction with e-mail marketing shows a larger combined effect. (A. Kumar et al., 2016)

Colicev et al. (2017) aimed to assess and investigate the impact of different types of social media, namely owned social media (OSM, which is controlled by brands) and earned social media (ESM, which is generated by the users), on key consumer mindset metrics, which include brand awareness, purchase intent, and customer satisfaction. The authors used high-frequency daily data of 273 trading days for 45 publicly traded U.S. Brands across 21 industries. By utilising factor analysis, vector autoregression models, and regression analysis, the authors identified that Brand Fan Following (BFF) improves all consumer mindset metrics – awareness, purchase intent and satisfaction. Also, earned

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social media (ESM) volume boosts/ improves brand awareness and purchase intent, while ESM valence (positive/ negative sentiment) has the strongest effect on consumer satisfaction. Owned social media (OSM) increases awareness and satisfaction but has a non-linear and sometimes negative average effect on purchase intent. The authors also identified that purchase intent and customer satisfaction are shown to have substantial positive impacts on shareholder value (abnormal returns), while brand awareness has a weaker or non-significant effect.(Colicev et al., 2017)

Hinz et al. (2011) aimed to empirically compare the effectiveness of different seeding strategies for viral marketing campaigns using social network data. The authors tried to resolve conflicting recommendations of seeding strategies from previous studies, such as targeting well-connected individuals('hubs'), poorly connected individuals ('fringes'), network bridges (those connecting network clusters) or random seeding. The authors conducted two small-scale field experiments using a university-based social network, where viral messages are seeded according to four distinct strategies – hubs, fringes, bridges and random. Then, a large-scale real-world viral referral campaign is analysed using data from more than 200,000 customers of a mobile phone provider. The authors then used regression models (logit, Poisson) and Odds ratios to analyse the response likelihood, participation, reach and conversion rates. These studies concluded that seeding viral messages to well-connected individuals (high-degree) or to bridges (high-betweenness) significantly outperform random and low-degree seeding. These strategies generate up to eight times more successful referrals than low-degree seeding. In the real-world mobile phone campaign, high degree seeding increases both initial participation and the total reach/activity. However, hubs do not necessarily yield longer or deeper referral chains than less connected nodes. The main driver of superior performance is the greater activity and initial reach of hubs and bridges. (Hinz et al., 2011)

Schmitt (2011) aimed to articulate a model that addresses the underlying psychological mechanisms driving how consumers perceive, engage with and connect to brands and also distinguish levels of customer engagement. The author synthesised a detailed empirical literature and developed a model by categorising and reviewing constructs and processes underlying consumer-brand interactions. By synthesizing existing literature, the author proposed a consumer-psychology model, which distinguishes three layers of engagement: object-centred, self-centred, and social. The author also identified that five psychological processes - identifying, experiencing, integrating, signifying and connecting, capture how consumers engage with brands from initial awareness and sensory experience to signifying brand meaning and developing attachments. The model highlights that brand attachment is a stronger driver of loyal behaviours compared to simple liking or preference. (Schmitt, 2011)

Bampo et al. (2008) examined how different underlying social network structures - random, scale-free, and small-world, affect the performance of viral marketing campaigns in digital environments. The authors' objectives were to (1)identify how the social structure of digital networks mediates viral marketing campaign outcomes, (2) develop and empirically validate a process for modelling viral marketing campaigns, and (3) conduct simulation experiments to predict viral message spread within various types of social networks under differing managerial conditions. By using real-life viral campaign data of General Motors Holden, and epidemic theory (SIR model), comparative simulations are run for random, scale-free and small-world networks. Sensitivity analysis vary initial seeds, the probability of forwarding and connectivity to assess impacts on reach and spread. Through this analysis, the authors identified that the social structure of the network is a critical determinant of campaign performance (network topology affects both the reach and speed of message diffusion) and also that scale-free networks (with 'hubs') are generally more efficient for viral campaigns due to their concentrated

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connectivity. Another key finding is that increasing the number of seeds results in proportionally greater reach, and the number of activated contacts per participant is especially influential. The structure and design of the campaign interface (ease of forwarding, incentives) can strongly affect transmission behaviour and outcomes. (Bampo et al., 2008)

Barbosa et al. (2021) aimed to explore how young adults perceive digital storytelling campaigns on social networking sites (SNS). The authors specifically investigated why and how young adults engage with storytelling content, the behavioural and emotional impact of such campaigns and their outcomes for brands in terms of awareness, trust and loyalty. The authors conducted 8 focus groups with a total of 40 Portuguese SNS users aged 19 to 37. These sessions included viewing and discussing three exemplar digital storytelling campaigns. The group discussions were transcribed, and theory-driven content analysis was applied to the transcripts. The authors identified that storytelling campaigns are more likely to capture attention than traditional ads, sometimes overcoming users' habitual disinterest in brand content. Posts shared by friends are more compelling than those shared by brands. Content popularity further increases engagement. Many users prefer private sharing (via chats or groups) for branded storytelling over public sharing. Storytelling campaigns enhance brand awareness and can impact purchasing if the narrative creates emotional resonance or aligns with consumer values, especially when competing offers are similar. (Barbosa et al., 2021)

Methodology

This research uses a quantitative method to evaluate the relationship between viral marketing and consumer behaviour. It aims to assess the influence of viral marketing on consumer behaviour with respect to factors such as brand reliability and differentiation. The study uses a structured questionnaire to collect data from a diverse sample that includes students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and working professionals. A structured approach was used to ensure objectivity in the data collected.

Non-probability Convenience sampling is used to collect responses. The survey is distributed digitally in the form of "Google Forms" to undergraduate and postgraduate students from various academic institutions, and working professionals across different sectors. This enabled the collection of a broad range of perspectives on the topic.

The primary data collection tool is a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire includes demographic questions and 11 Likert scale questions measuring the influence of viral marketing on consumer behaviour.

Participation in this survey is voluntary, with respondents informed about the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses and anonymity of their identity. IBM SPSS Statistics 27 was utilised to perform Exploratory factor analysis and Multiple Linear Regression on the responses received. The Google Form administered is presented in the appendix section of the paper at the end.

Data Collection and Source

Primary data is collected through an online survey distributed via Google Forms. The survey link is shared with undergraduate and postgraduate students from various academic institutions, and working professionals through professional networks. The Google Form was shared with more than 400 individuals, out of which 213 responded voluntarily to the survey.

Data Analysis

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Initially, an Exploratory Factor analysis was performed on the responses of the Google Form collected using IBM SPSS Statistics 27 with the objective of identifying latent factors within the 11 Likert scale questions administered. The aim of exploratory factor analysis was to reduce the dimensions of the collected variables. Then, a separate Multiple Linear Regression was run on the entire responses. For regression analysis, the following variables were used.

Dependent variable: Positive Brand Perception (Q7)

Independent variables:

Perceived brand reliability (Q9)

Brand differentiation (Q11)

Interest in the Brand (Q13)

Results

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Table 1

Case Processing Summary

CASES	N	%
Valid	213.00	100.0
Excluded[a]	0	0
Total	213	100.0

Note. N=213

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a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure

Out of all the 213 responses collected, all the variables remain valid as indicated in Table 1 i.e., 100 % of the variables remain valid and none of the responses are excluded during analysis.

Cronbach's Alpha

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Table 2

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.894	11

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A reliability analysis was conducted on the 11 survey items, giving s Cronbach's Alpha of .894. This value indicates a high level of internal consistency, meaning the scale is reliable and its items consistently measure the same underlying construct.

Descriptive statistics

Table 3

Age group of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	*18-25*	*150*	*70.4*	*70.4*	*70.4*
	26-35	*33*	*15.5*	*15.5*	*85.9*
	36-45	*11*	*5.2*	*5.2*	*91.1*
	46+	*12*	*5.6*	*5.6*	*96.7*
	Under 18	*7*	*3.3*	*3.3*	*100.0*
	Total	*213*	*100.0*	*100.0*	

The analysis included a total of 213 respondents. As shown in Table 3, the sample is predominantly composed of young adults, with a significant majority of 70.4% falling into the 18-25 age group. The next largest category was the 26-35 age bracket, consisting of 15.5% of the participants, while all other age groups each constituted less than 6% of the total sample.

Table 4

Gender of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	*Female*	*95*	*44.6*	*44.6*	*44.6*
	Male	*117*	*54.9*	*54.9*	*99.5*
	Prefer not to say	*1*	*.5*	*.5*	*100.0*
	Total	*213*	*100.0*	*100.0*	

In terms of Gender distribution, the sample consisted of 54.9% male respondents (N=117) and 44.6% female respondents (N=95). One participant (0.5%) selected "Prefer not to say". Overall, the gender composition of the sample is relatively balanced.

Table 5

Current role or status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	*Other*	25	11.7	11.7	11.7
	Postgraduate student	85	39.9	39.9	51.6
	Undergraduate student	39	18.3	18.3	70.0
	Working Professional (entry-level)	33	15.5	15.5	85.4
	Working Professional (mid/senior-level)	31	14.6	14.6	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

The sample was diverse. Postgraduate students represented the largest single group at 39.9% (N=85), followed by undergraduate students at 18.3% (N=39). Working professional also constituted a significant portion of the sample, with 15.5% at the entry-level and 14.6% at the mid/senior -level. The remaining 11.7% of participants identified their role as 'Other'.

Table 6

Social Media engagement per day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	*1-3 hours*	120	56.3	56.3	56.3
	3-5 hours	45	21.1	21.1	77.5
	Less than 1 hour	27	12.7	12.7	90.1
	More than 5 hours	21	9.9	9.9	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

When asked about daily social media usage, a clear majority of respondents (56.3%, N= 120) reported engaging with social media platforms for 1-3 hours. A further 21.1%, used social media for 3-5 hours per day. Smaller portions of the sample reported usage of less than 1 hour (12.7%) and more than 5 hours (9.9%), indicating that the most common behaviour is moderate daily engagement.

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Correlation Analysis

Prior to conducting a Multiple Linear Regression, a correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. As shown in Table, all independent variables demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations with the dependent variable 'Q7: Positive Brand perception'. The strongest relationship observed was between 'Q9: Perceived Brand Reliability' and 'Q7: Positive brand perception', revealing a moderate positive score correlation ($r=.570, p<.001$). The correlations were as follows:

'Q9: Perceived Brand Reliability' ($r = .570$).

'Q11: Brand Differentiation' ($r = .516$).

'Q13: Interest in the brand' ($r = .442$).

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Initially, an Exploratory factor analysis was performed on the received responses with the objective of identifying latent factors within the variables being administered. The responses received a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of sampling adequacy of .896 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significance value of <.001. The factor results, however, indicated the presence of only a single factor. All the variables loaded on to one single factor with an eigen value of 5.433, explaining 49.388% of variance. This indicates the presence of one latent factor – 'influence of viral marketing' which was the objective of the paper. Therefore, no latent factors were extracted.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which 'Q9: Perceived Brand Reliability,' 'Q11: Brand Differentiation,' and 'Q13: Interest in the brand' predict 'Q7: Positive brand perception.' Among the 11 variables administered, only these 3 variables were selected to run Multiple Linear Regression due to their statistical significance.

Table 7

Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	R^2_{Adj}	Std. Error Est	F	P	Durbin-Watson
1	.645	.416	.407	.864	49.558	<.001	2.009

Note. N=213.

Table 8
ANOVA

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	111.052	3	37.017	49.558	<.001
Residual	156.113	209	.747		
Total	267.164	212			

Note. N=213

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Table 7 and 8 contain the regression model summary and ANOVA results. The overall model was statistically significant, F Statistic = 49.558, p < .001. The adjusted R-squared value was .407, indicating that approximately 40.7% of the variance in 'Positive brand perception' is explained by these three independent variables**.**

Table 9

Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*	*t*	*Sig.*
(Constant)	*.638*	*.235*		*2.715*	*.007*
Q9: Perceived Brand Reliability	*.389*	*.065*	*.378*	*5.949*	*<.001*
Q11: Brand Differentiation	*.235*	*.070*	*.224*	*3.355*	*<.001*
Q13: Interest in the brand	*.188*	*.060*	*.192*	*3.151*	*.002*

Note. N=213.

The individual regression coefficients and their significance are presented in Table 9. All three independent variables were found to be statistically significant predictors of 'Q7:Positive brand perception':

'Q9: Perceived Brand Reliability' had a statistically significant positive effect (B = .389, SE = .065, β = .378, t = 5.949, p < .001). This suggests that for every one-point increase in perceived brand reliability, positive brand perception is predicted to increase by approximately 0.389 points, assuming other factors are held constant.

'Q11: Brand Differentiation' had a statistically significant positive effect (B = .235, SE = .070, β = .224, t = 3.355, p = <.001). A one-point increase in perceived brand differentiation is associated with an approximate 0.235-point increase in positive brand perception.

'Q13: Interest in the brand' also had a statistically significant positive effect (B = .188, SE = .060, β = .192, t = 3.151, p = .002). A one-point increase in interest in the brand is associated with an approximate 0.198-point increase in positive attitude towards the brand.

An examination of the standardized beta coefficients reveals that 'Q9: Perceived Brand reliability' has the strongest unique positive impact on 'Positive Brand perception', followed by 'Q11: Brand Differentiation' (β = .224), and then 'Q13: Interest in the brand' (β = .192),

Assessments of Multiple Linear Regression Assumptions

The assumptions of Multiple Linear Regression were assessed before interpreting the output results. An examination of collinearity statistics indicate that multicollinearity is not a significant concern among the independent variables in this regression model as all the VIF values are between 1.329 and

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1.588. These values are well within the accepted range of VIF values. Hence, there is no multicollinearity.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.009 which is within the acceptable range of 1.5 – 2.5. Hence, the assumption of independence of errors is also met as there is no autocorrelation of error terms in the regression model. Also, histogram of standardized residuals (Figure 1) showed a generally bell-shaped distribution, and the Normal P-P plot of standardized residuals (Figure 2) indicated that mostly points followed the diagonal line. These plots suggest that assumption of normally distributed errors was largely met, however some deviations were present.
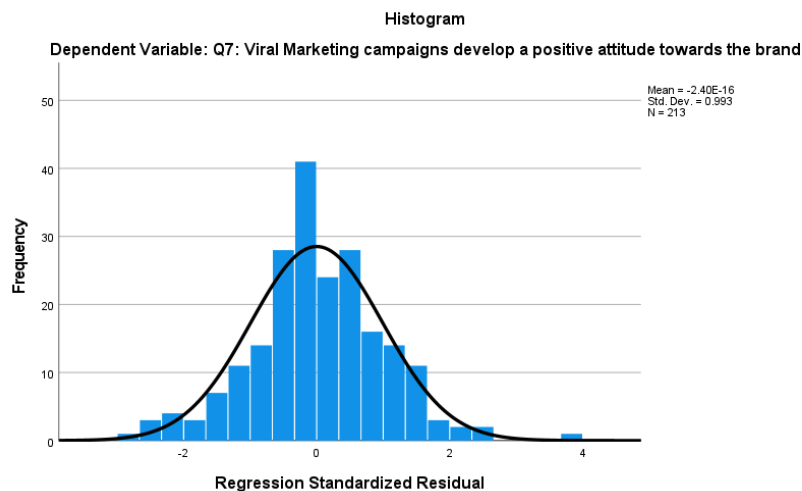

Histogram
Dependent Variable: Q7: Viral Marketing campaigns develop a positive attitude towards the brand

Mean = -2.40E-16
Std. Dev. = 0.993
N = 213

Figure 1.

Histogram of Standardized Residuals

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: Q7: Viral Marketing campaigns develop a positive attitude towards the brand
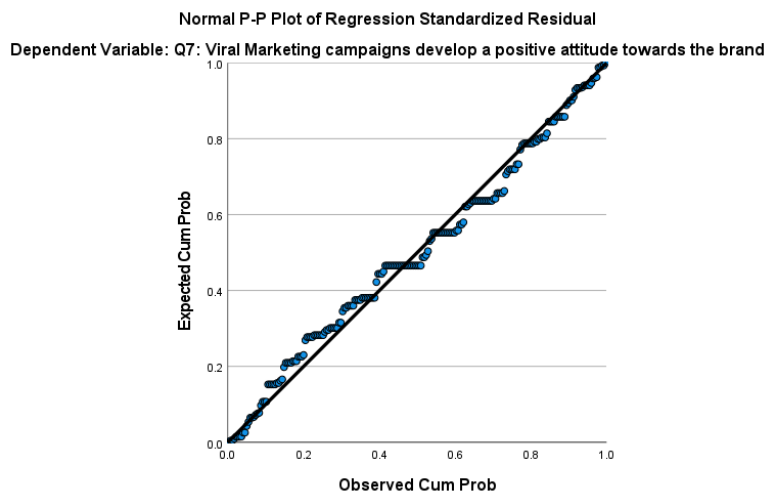
Figure 2.

Normal P-P Plot of Standardized Residuals

Discussion

The multiple linear regression analysis revealed that 'Perceived Brand Reliability,' 'Brand Differentiation,' and 'Interest in the brand' are all statistically significant positive predictors of 'Positive brand perception.' The model explained approximately 40.7% of the variance in the positive brand perception, indicating that these factors collectively contribute meaningfully to consumers' positive perceptions. Specifically, 'Brand Reliability' emerged as the strongest predictor among the three, suggesting that consumers' trust in a brand's consistent performance is a primary driver of their positive attitude. 'Interest in the brand' and 'Brand Differentiation' also play significant roles, though to a slightly lesser extent, highlighting the importance of engaging consumers and offering unique value propositions.

While the results of the model provide valuable insights into the predictors, there are certain limitation associated with this model. One primary limitation is application of Multiple Linear Regression model on dependent variable that includes responses on a 5-point Likert scale question (an ordinal level of measurement variable). Standard Multiple Linear Regression model assumes that the dependent variable is continuous and measured either on interval or ratio scale, implying that consecutive scale points have equal distance between them. This assumption is not satisfied by Likert scale questions where the distance or difference between 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' may not be equal to distance between 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree'. Therefore, although the variables were statistically significant, regression coefficients (unstandardized) that are used in the regression equation must be thought of as approximate values and not accurate values for prediction. Using ordinal scaled variable in dependent variable also makes it difficult to interpret the linearity assumption as the model cannot fully capture the small, minute details of the variables. The scatter plot also results in an image where it is difficult to interpret the linearity assumption.

Conclusion

This research aimed to examine the roles of perceived brand reliability, brand differentiation and interest in the brand on positive attitude towards the brand. The findings from Multiple Linear Regression analysis indicate that these three independent variables are statistically significant and contribute to shaping consumer's positive attitude towards the brand. This highlights that when consumers perceive a brand as consistently dependable, their overall positive attitude towards the brand is increased. Brand differentiation and Interest in the brand also were significant positive predictors.

Despite the statistical significance and findings, it is necessary to acknowledge that this research has certain limitations due to the methodology utilized as the dependent variable used is also a 5-point Likert scale. Due to the MLR model assumption that the dependent variable is continuous and has equal intervals between its measurement points, few assumptions cannot be accurately validated. Therefore, the model may not fully capture the real relationship between the variables.

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Appendix

Google Form

A survey on "Influence of Viral Marketing on Consumer Behaviour."

B   *I*   U   ⊖   X̶

Dear participant,

I am Y. Rakesh Chetan currently pursuing my MBA in PES University, Bangalore. This survey is conducted as part of my Postgraduate research project. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous, used solely for academic research.

Your participation is highly valued and will contribute significantly to this study.

Thank you for your time.

This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents.   Change settings

Q1: Age group: *

◯ Under 18

◯ 18-25

◯ 26-35

◯ 36-45

◯ 46+

Q2: Gender *

◯ Male

◯ Female

◯ Prefer not to say

Q3: What best describes your current role or status? *

◯ Undergraduate Student

◯ Postgraduate Student

◯ Working Professional (entry-level)

◯ Working Professional (mid/senior-level)

◯ Other

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Q4: How often do you engage with social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, X, WhatsApp, Snapchat etc.) daily? *

○ Less than 1 hour

○ 1-3 hours

○ 3-5 hours

○ More than 5 hours

Q5. I am more likely to share promotional content on social media if I find it entertaining. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q6: I trust promotional content more when it is shared by friends or influencers I follow. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q7: Viral Marketing campaigns develop a positive attitude towards the brand *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q8: I can easily recognize a brand's logo or tagline after encountering its viral content. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

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Q9: Viral content improves my perception of a brand's reliability. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q10: I am more likely to purchase a product if I encounter it repeatedly through viral campaigns. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q11: Viral marketing helps differentiate brands from competitors in my memory. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q12: I am likely to recommend a brand to others if I see its viral content frequently. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q13: Viral marketing content increases my interest in learning more about a brand. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q14: I remember brands that use humor or emotional appeal in their viral marketing. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Q15: Viral marketing campaigns make me perceive a brand as modern and innovative. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

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