

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF VIRAL VIDEO ADVERTISEMENTS

Dr. Rishi Raj Sharma¹ and Balpreet Kaur²

In modern times, consumers are increasingly resistant to traditional interruption marketing and other techniques of advertising and media cluttering. While facing such problems, companies are compelled to think of new ways to communicate with their target audience. In such a situation, viral marketing can play a vital role. This paper provides knowledge and research significant for the organisations to design their viral videos in a creative manner that optimizes their chance of viral success. Since, the effectiveness of viral video advertisements designed on the basis of hierarchy of effects model i.e. AIDA has been significantly less explored so experimentation was conducted on these lines. The results of the present study reveals that creative viral video advertisements positively affect the recall, attention, interest and intentions of the viewers to purchase products and spread positive word-of-mouth for products & advertisements. Hence, viral video advertisements are establishing itself as the most effective tool for marketing and advertising the companies' products.

Introduction

In the past, advertising and marketing communications went to work only for the purpose to increase sales, but today advertising is being considered as one of the important elements of customer service. With the development of communication technology advertising is creating value for customers (Gharibi, Danesh and Shahrodi, 2012). Moreover, the emergence of internet has changed the total scenario of advertising and marketing. It has vastly altered the ways in which people view, use and interact with media and this has in some way changed the effectiveness of traditional marketing techniques while creating new marketing opportunities (Andrew, 2010). Traditional advertising is all about interruption and it disrupts the people and draws their attention to itself when they are concentrating on, like a TV program, newspaper or magazine article. People have become so inundated with advertising messages that they have started

¹Sr. Assistant Professor & Incharge, Department of Business Management, Guru Nanak Dev University RC, Gurdaspur

²Research Scholar, Department of Commerce & Business Management, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

ignoring these messages (Eley and Tilley, 2009). An advertiser communicates the advertising message to the people without knowing their willingness to receive the message that interrupts people's activities. Therefore, in modern times, consumers are increasingly resistant to traditional interruption marketing (Brottet and Curau, 2007).

While facing these problems, companies are also compelled to think of new ways to communicate with their target audience, which are more effective with regard to budget/brand recognition ratio (Brottet and Curau, 2007). In such situations, viral marketing can play a vital role. The idea of viral marketing is to use pre-existing social networks to produce increase in brand awareness or to achieve other marketing objectives such as product sales through self-replicating viral processes (Wikipedia, 2010). If a good product speaks for itself, viral marketing helps in building a virus and make it spread, from one consumer to another, making a cascading effect.

In other words, viral marketing describes a marketing strategy that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message voluntarily via e-mail, blog, website or other internet space, in the forms of video clips, interactive flash games, advergames, e-books, branded software images or even text messages. Like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message from thousands to millions of people (www.oppapers.com). Hence, viral marketing is a comprehensive marketing strategy that includes several (viral) components in it (Golan and Zaidner, 2008).

However, the information does spread like a virus but viral marketing campaign has no connection to spam or other destructive sorts of digital content. Rather, a viral marketing campaign seeks to use the cost-effective forces of spreading information and content exponentially, using social networks online (Rune and Vinberg, 2009). Further, viral marketing campaign has the power to reach thousands and millions of people at shortest possible time with an aim to increase brand awareness and sales at minimal cost. A well-drafted viral marketing campaign has five to ten times more impact than regular advertisement (www.voteorus.com/viralmarketingcampaign.html).

The term viral advertising, on other hand refers to a specific online advertising practice. It is an advertising technique in which video advertisements are distributed from one user to another via e-mail or through online social networking (Golan & Zaidner, 2008). In actual, viral advertising relies on provocative content to motivate rapid peer-to-peer communication of persuasive messages from identified sponsors (Porter and Golan, 2006).

Unlike the traditional marketing process, viral video advertisement has become more popular in today's scenario through the process of internet sharing. A viral video spreads through online sharing such as blogs, forums, emails and sharing websites (www.hyperdictionary.com). However, to spread like wildfire, the video needs to appeal the audience. For this viral video needs to be effective and this is possible only if it meets the four objectives of Hierarchy of Effects model i.e. AIDA (attracting attention, generating interest, stimulating desire and action). Gholamzadeh and Jakobsson (2011) are also of the view that AIDA a well-known advertising model plays a significant role in consumers' buying process. Hence, a viral message developed in accordance to AIDA has a good chance to take the consumer from the awareness level to his detriment i.e. purchase decision.

Working on the similar front, Cudmore (2010) opined that there is a need for advertising companies to use AIDA(S) parameters to convert hard won visitors into customers. The five parameters are:

- a) **Attention:** - A good message with the product in the centre grabs visitor's attention.
- b) **Interest:** - A strong headline with details of all benefits and advantages that customer would enjoy after purchasing the product or service and making them aware that they can afford it, create interest in the minds of viewers.
- c) **Desire:** - Telling the customers how the product will solve their problems and will make their life satisfied.
- d) **Action:** - Telling the customers how easily they can purchase that product.
- e) **Satisfaction:** - Make the customers satisfied and happy so that they will recommend and pass along the message to their family members or friends etc.

According to AIDA model, most of what advertising should do is to create awareness in the viewers. People should know who they are and what they produce, what distinguishes them from other companies and how they can have access (As quoted by Gharibi, Danesh and Shahrodi (2012) from the study of Velz and Muryani, 1382).

Some previous research studies indicate the use of viral marketing as important promotional strategy effecting consumer-buying process. White and Smith (2001) opined that effectiveness of advertisement depends upon the creativity involved in advertising content. So creativity is assumed as pre-requisite of advertising

effectiveness. On similar grounds Kover, Goldberg and James (1995) claimed that it is the creativity, which pushes the message into viewers' minds.

Advertisements using creative templates appear to have a positive impact on recall leading to potential increase in sales (Goldenberg, Mazursky and Solomon, 1999). On the other hand, Lethagen and Modig (2008) used five dimensions of ad creativity (novelty, meaningfulness, humour, positiveness and well craftiness) and found evidence that creative ads are more effective in promoting ad & brand attitude, brand interest, purchase intentions, ad & brand word-of-mouth intentions. The comparative analysis of creative advertisements with other advertisements conducted by Smith and Yang (2004) claimed that creative advertisements help to attract more attention of the customers because of divergence factor. This study was further elaborated by Smith, Chen and Yang (2008) by measuring the interaction effect of divergence and relevance on consumers' response process.

Studies conducted by (Ang and Low, 2000; Till and Baack, 2005; Ang, Lee and Leong, 2007; Lethagen and Modig, 2008) also linked advertising creativity to varying measures of advertising effectiveness such as recall, Ad & brand attitude, purchase & word-of-mouth intentions etc.

In addition to these researches, some other studies explaining AIDA model describe the positive and significant relationship of the AIDA model with advertising effectiveness (Gharibi, Danesh and Shahrodi, 2012). Similarly, the study conducted by Ansari and Joludar (2011) to measure the effect of TV advertisement on customers' purchasing decision and their satisfaction behaviour reveals that TV advertisement built on the basis of creative advertisement strategies, was effective in catching attention of customers, creating interest, stimulating desire and action for purchasing.

As far as the studies related to message attractiveness and advertising effectiveness are concerned, it has been revealed that message attractiveness is one of the most important factors that affect advertising effectiveness (Sanayei, Shahin and Amirosadt, 2013). An advertisement is also considered to be effective if it is based upon the AIDA model leading the consumer from first step to fourth one. Similarly, Bushnell Joseph (2009) opined that if marketers use AIDA in every video then it would lead the people taking action after watching the video that is full of attention grabbing, super interesting & massively persuasive. This would result in pulling the profits of the companies.

Based on the review of studies, it can be hypothesized that viral advertisements designed in accordance to Hierarchy of Effects model have an optimum chance of surviving by fulfilling the necessary parameters of advertising effectiveness. Although a number of studies have been cited out that explain the effectiveness of advertisements using AIDA model, but a very few comprehensive studies could be found which could explain the effectiveness of viral videos advertisements designed on the basis of AIDA model. And how these advertisements effect the recall, attention, interest, intentions to purchase the product and to spread the positive word-of-mouth for product & advertisement still remains significantly less explored.

So here, an attempt has been made to measure the effectiveness of creative viral video advertisements on the dimensions (such as recall, attention, spreading the positive word of mouth etc.) thus affecting the overall consumers' buying process.

Database & Research Methodology

A sample of 100 respondents was selected from the major districts of the state of Punjab i.e. Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ludhiana and Patiala. The respondents selected for the sample of the study were regular users of the internet and they comprised of professionals, service class people, housewives and students. Non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique was adopted for selecting the sample.

The videos of ten creative advertisements were short- listed. The selection was based upon our personal perception as well as on the comments received and number of 'likes' clicked on the video sharing sites such as YouTube etc. These advertisements were pretested by showing them to five independent experts in marketing including both from the industry and from academics. They were asked to rate these videos based on its creative content in such a way that they suffice all the parameters of Hierarchy of Effects model. The videos that scored top four positions were finally selected for the purpose of study. These videos were of McDonalds McAloo Tikki, AMWAY Quality Products (Home, Nutrition & Beauty), Levi's Jeans and Tata Tea advertisements.

Further, the questionnaire was designed in order to test the effectiveness of viral videos advertisements. The different constructs used in questionnaire were derived from the intense review of past studies. The questionnaire was pretested on the sample of 20 respondents and then suitably revised. The revised questionnaire comprised of three parts. First part pertained to the portfolio of advertisements to be shown to the

respondents. Second part contained a number of statements, which were used for measuring the effectiveness of viral video advertisements i.e. recall, attention, interest, product purchase intentions and product & advertisement word-of-mouth intentions. Third part of questionnaire included demographic profile of the respondents.

Hypotheses of the Study

In order to frame the hypotheses for study, the creative content of advertisement was taken as independent variable that may affect the different dimensions of advertising based upon the Hierarchy of Effects model. The hypotheses framed were:

H1: Creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on catching the **attention of the respondents.**

H2: Creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on respondents' **interest for purchasing the products.**

H3: Creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on respondents' **product purchase intentions.**

H4: Creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on respondents' **product and advertisement word-of-mouth intentions.**

To analyse the hypotheses formulated, linear regression technique was applied.

Data Analysis and Results:

Demographic Profile of the Sample:

The demographic data recording the gender, age and educational qualifications of the respondents comprised of 55% males and 45% females. Most of respondents were of the age category of 30 to 40 and majority of the respondents were graduates and above.

Ranking of Viral Video Advertisements:

On first day of experiment, the selected portfolio of viral video advertisements was shown to the respondents. The portfolio contained videos of four above mentioned advertisements which were advertising the products of both high and low involvement categories such as air & water purifiers, cosmetics(Amway), clothes(Levis), fast food items(McDonald), tea(Tata). After showing all the videos to them, the respondents were

asked to rank the advertisements from 1 to 4. The rank 1 was assigned to the advertisement that attracted their attention the most and so on till the rank 4 to the video that they found least attractive. For the purpose of analysis, overall perceived ranking of the viral video advertisements shown to the respondents were tabulated and weighted average score (WAS) was calculated for each of the respective advertisement video as shown in table 1.

Table1: WAS and Ranks of Viral Video Advertisements

Ranks→ Viral Video Advertisements ↓	1	2	3	4	Total	WAS	Overall Perceived Rank
A	55	30	15	-	100	3.4	1
B	15	35	30	20	100	2.45	2
C	20	25	10	45	100	2.2	3
D	10	10	45	35	100	1.95	4
Total	100	100	100	100			

(A: McDonalds McAloo Tikki, B: AMWAY Quality Products (Home, Nutrition &Beauty), C: Levi's Jeans, D: Tata Tea)

From Table 1, it is revealed that advertisement A (McDonalds) was ranked 1st may be because of its interesting content and showing clear price information of the product. The advertisement B (Amway) secured 2nd rank. It may be due to its brand image or even the advertisement guaranteeing 100% money back policy of the company. The advertisement C (Levi's) secured 3rd rank which may be attributed to its funny content. This advertisement scored less on attractive scale because it was showing the product Jeans only and that too without mentioning the brand name anywhere in the video. The advertisement D (Tata Tea) ranked 4th and perceived to be least attractive as it was quite straight and less creative.

Recall of Viral Video Advertisements:

On second day of experiment, the respondents were asked to recall the advertisements they had seen the previous day. They were asked to recall any one of the shown advertisements and to give brief description of the advertisement recalled in terms of its product, brand, or model. The main purpose of this was to check the 'Top of Mind

Awareness Level' of the respondents. As hypothesised the advertisement is considered to be effective if it meets four objectives of AIDA model (attention, interest, desire and action). The advertisement that is better recalled, is supposed to attract the attention of the viewer the most.

Table 2: Recall of Viral Video Advertisements

Recall → Viral Video Advertisements ↓	Number of Respondents (N)
A	55
B	15
C	20
D	10
Total	100

(A: McDonalds McAloo Tikki, B: AMWAY Quality Products (Home, Nutrition & Beauty), C: Levi's Jeans, D: Tata Tea)

Table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents, 55% in this case, were able to recall the advertisement A (McDonalds McAloo Tikki, featuring two children as model of the advertisement). This advertisement was considered as one of the most creative videos attracting the attention of most of the viewers. The advertisements B, C, and D were recalled by 15%, 20% and 10% of the respondents respectively. Hence, the dimension of creativity in the advertisement A outscored the brand image of Amway products in the ad B and even the brand image of levis Jeans in the ad C. The celebrity effect of Sharukh Khan in the advertisement D was also not able to have positive influence on recall of the viewers in comparison to the other advertisements probably due to the straightness of the ad lacking creativity.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that advertisements leading to higher rate of top of mind awareness are more creative and hence are better recalled and this affect could be accredited to their attention catching dimension.

Formulation of Constructs and Scale Reliability

The second stage of the questionnaire dealt with the set of five constructs corresponding to different perceptual statements extracted from the previous studies. These different statements pertaining to the five different constructs were to be rated by the respondent on five point likert scale ranging from Strongly agree (+2) to Strongly disagree(-2) keeping in mind the advertisement that was ranked first by them individually. These five constructs are

Table 3: Set of Constructs

	Constructs
C1	Creative Viral Video Advertisement
C2	Customers' attention to Viral Video Advertisement
C3	Interest for purchasing
C4	Product purchase intentions
C5	Product and ad WOM intentions

There was a set of 21 statements that had been classified corresponding to five constructs. Out of these, nine set of statements referred to the construct C1 of 'Creative Viral Video Advertisement', which was taken as independent variable in study. The remaining twelve statements were used to measure the dependent variables corresponding to the constructs i.e. C2, C3, C4, and C5 as shown in table 3.

Testing the Reliability of the Scale

To proceed further, the reliability of the constructs was first determined by using Cronbach's alpha and it determined the degree to which all of the items measured the same construct based on internal consistency. Here in table 4, the value of Cronbach's alpha for each construct was found to be greater than 0.7 which is the commonly accepted threshold (Nunnally and Berstein, 1994), hence laying the foundation for further analysis.

Table 4: Reliability Measures of Constructs and Number of items used for the Study

	Constructs	N (Sample Size)	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
C1	Creative Viral Video Advertisement	100	.871	9
C2	Customers' attention to Viral Video Advertisement	100	.701	2
C3	Interest for purchasing	100	.793	4
C4	Product purchase intentions	100	.703	2
C5	Product and ad WOM intentions	100	.907	4

Before testing the hypotheses of the study, the correlation among dependent variables was calculated using Pearson correlation method as given in table 5. It determined the strength of linear correlation between two constructs. In order to calculate the correlation among the constructs, the mean of statements was calculated corresponding to each construct.

The table 5 reveals correlation of all the constructs were statistically significant at 0.01 level of significance. The correlation coefficient of Interest for Purchasing and Customers' Attention to Viral Video Advertisement was 0.507, which was highest among all the constructs. On the other hand, product purchase intentions and interest for purchasing had the lowest correlation (0.272).

Table 5: Pearson Correlation of Constructs

	Customers' attention to Viral Video Ad	Interest for purchasing	Product purchase intentions	Product and ad WOM intentions
Customers' attention to Viral Video Ad	1			
Pearson Correlation				
Sig. (2-tailed)				
N	100			

Interest for Purchasing	Pearson Correlation	.507**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	100	100		
Product purchase intentions	Pearson Correlation	.367**	.272**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.006		
	N	100	100	100	
Product and ad WOM intentions	Pearson Correlation	.298**	.429**	.298**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.003	
	N	100	100	100	100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Testing of Hypothesis

Linear regression technique was applied to measures the effectiveness of creative viral video advertisement on various dimensions such as attention, interest, product purchase intentions and product & Ad word-of-mouth intentions.

Customers' attention to advertisement:

H1: Creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on catching the attention of the customers.

Table 6 shows the regression analysis of customers' attention to creative viral video advertisement. Here R^2 is 0.420, which reveals that 42 percent of variance of customers' attention to advertisement is explained by the independent variable (creativity). Adjusted R^2 is 0.414. T-value is 8.425, which depicted the relevant importance of Creative Viral Video Advertisement and Customer's attention to advertisement. F value is 70.984 and the overall model is significant at 95% level of significance. Here p value is less than 0.05 so null hypothesis is rejected and hence, it is revealed that creative viral video advertisement has positive effect on catching the attention of the customers.

Table 6: Linear Regression Analysis of Creative Viral Video Advertisement and Customer's attention to advertisement

Type of Variable	Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	t-value	F-value	P-value	Result of hypothesis
Independent Variable	Creative Viral Video Advertisement	.420	.414	8.425	70.984	.000	H1 Accepted
Dependent Variable	Customer's attention to advertisement						

Interest for Purchasing:

H2: Creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on customers' interest for purchasing the products.

Table 7 reveals the regression analysis of interest for purchasing and creative viral video advertisement. In this case, R^2 is 0.544, which shows that 54 percent of variance occurring in the variable i.e. interest for purchasing is explained by the independent variable i.e. Creative Viral Video Advertisement. The results reveal that creative viral video advertisement has significant effect on customers' interest for purchasing, as p value is less than 0.05. Hence, accepting the alternate hypothesis.

Table 7: Linear Regression Analysis of Creative Viral Video Advertisement and Interest for Purchasing

Type of Variable	Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	t-value	F-value	P-value	Result of hypothesis
Independent Variable	Creative Viral Video Advertisement	.544	.540	10.820	117.062	.000	H2 Accepted
Dependent Variable	Interest for purchasing						

Product Purchase Intentions:

H3: Creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on customers' product purchase intentions.

In table 8, the value of R^2 is 0.168, which indicates that approximately 17 percent of variance in customers' purchase intentions is explained by the independent variable. As p value in table is less than 0.05, so null hypothesis is rejected. So it can be stated that creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on customers' product purchase intentions.

Table 8: Linear Regression Analysis of Creative Viral Video Advertisement and Product Purchase Intentions

Type of Variable	Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	t-value	F-value	P-value	Result of hypothesis
Independent Variable	Creative Viral Video Advertisement	.168	.160	4.449	19.796	.000	H3 Accepted
Dependent Variable	Product purchase intentions						

Product and Advertisement word-of-mouth intentions:**H4: Creative viral video advertisement has positive effects on customers' product and ad WOM intentions.**

Table 9 depicts the regression analysis of creative viral video advertisement and product & ad WOM intentions. The value of R^2 is .261, which explains that 26 percent variance of product & ad WOM intentions can be determined with Creative Viral Video Advertisement. P value in table, which is 0.000, indicates that creative viral video advertisement has significant effect on customers' product & ad WOM intentions. So in this case, null hypothesis is rejected at 5 percent level of significance.

Table 9: Linear Regression Analysis of Creative Viral Video Advertisement and Product & ad WOM Intentions

Type of Variable	Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	t -value	F-value	P-value	Result of hypothesis
Independent Variable	Creative Viral Video Advertisement	.261	.253	5.876	34.524	.000	H4 Accepted
Dependent Variable	Product and ad WOM intentions						

Conclusion

In present business scenario, viral video advertising has become more popular through the process of internet sharing. It is also considered as important tool effecting customers' purchase intentions and hence his purchase decisions. The effectiveness of viral video advertisement can be adjudged if it meets four objectives of A-I-D-A (attention, interest, desire and action). It is the creativity that makes the advertisement effective and pushes the message into viewers' minds (Kover, Goldberg and James, 1995) hence the relationship between creativity and the dimensions of AIDA becomes significant. In addition to this, the past studies have revealed that advertising creativity has proven its effectiveness in shaping the attitudes and the purchase intentions of customers too.

In the present study, it was found that advertisements, which were recalled first by the respondents were mostly the creative ads as perceived by the them and these were the

ads which attracted their attention the most. These creative ads were considered to generate more top of mind awareness level with the respondents and hence were high in recall. The regression analysis technique applied to measure the effects of viral video advertisements on the dimensions/variables of A-I-D-A reveals that creative viral video advertisements have favourable effect on these variables. As it is observed from the analysis that the independent variable of creativity has significant relationship with all the dependent variables explaining the advertisement effectiveness such as attention, interest, product purchase intentions and product & advertisement word-of-mouth intentions. The analysis reveals that although the creativity in the advertisement has significant effect on all the dimensions of advertisement effectiveness i.e. A-I-D-A but it affects the interest to purchase the product the most having the maximum variance explained, followed by the variable 'attracting the attention' of the respondents. After this came the variable 'product and ad word of mouth intentions' with comparatively less explained variance and in case of 'product purchase intentions' the variance explained by the independent variable was the least.

This discussion reveals that creativity being the independent variable does have the real strength for the promotion of viral advertising in the market place especially in creating the interest for purchasing the product among the respondents.

The study significantly proves that the viral video advertisements are establishing itself as the most effective tool for marketing and advertising the companies' products. In order to achieve their objectives, the organisations need to design their viral video advertisements in a way, which enhances the creative content of the advertisements in compliance to the dimensions of AIDA. Further, in order to achieve the effectiveness of advertisement, the organisations need to redesign their viral videos in a manner, which can also spread positive word-of-mouth for them.

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