VIRAL CAMPAIGN AS AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING PROMOTION INSTRUMENT

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Abstract
The article deals with the use of modern forms of marketing that have been gaining popularity in recent years with significant groups of cyberspace users. The power of viral marketing and viral campaigns is currently gaining momentum, despite the fact that a considerable mass of virtual environment clients often do not realize that they are part of this form of marketing. The success of viral campaigns can be attributed to well-developed strategy for such a campaign. To outline the functioning of various viral campaigns, we selected four specific campaigns that had already entered the virtual environment. A segmented sample of respondents was to evaluate given campaigns, which resulted in the fact that the viewer is often unaware of what is included. Chapter 3 describes the selected campaigns as follows: Dove Real Beauty Sketches, WestJet Christmas Miracle, Coca-Cola Unlock the 007 in You and Save the Children – Most Shocking and Second Day Video. 67.3% of carefully segmented respondents admit that they were willing to continue sharing a successful viral campaign. This proves that the potential of viral marketing is enormous. The theme of viral marketing itself is new and constantly evolving.

Key words:

1 Introduction
Marketing is among the areas that are constantly evolving, and actively use modern tools including the viral marketing. The power of viral campaigns has great potential, which affects a mass of clients in a relatively short time frame. Its scope is in the cyber environment and the financial demands of this marketing tool make up only a fraction of the budget for traditional advertising and promotions. Customers themselves have adopted this kind of advertising, and with a willingness to share it with friends who, often unaware that they support further dissemination, share the materials both for entertainment or for fear of the contents. We are daily overwhelmed by enormous amounts of information provided by the current virtual environment, so it is not easy to devise a successful viral campaign. The basis of success lies in a sufficiently coherent strategy through which we determine to whom our viral communications are targeted, and according to the specialization, we choose the appropriate channels, stories, topics and form processing. At the same time, we must realize that once we get into the world of viral communication, then our message can no longer be controlled and the potential impacts of a wrongly interpreted statement could fatally damage the reputation of such communication´s owner.
2 Viral marketing

The term viral marketing is attributed to Jeffrey Rayport who probably first used it in the article „The Virus of Marketing“ for Fast Company magazine in 1996. The author equates the desire of marketers to viruses conduct – having the greatest possible impact. Among the pioneers in the use of viral marketing in practice belongs the case of hotmail.com. In 1996 Sabeer Bhatia and Jack Smith launched an e-mail service which was available via the Web from any computer with an Internet connection. At the time when email was accessible mainly from corporate computers, it was a brilliant idea. To attract the users attention, it was enough to just add a short sentence at the end of each e-mail sent this way: „Get your free email at hotmail.com“ (Livingston 2008, p. 17, 22). This notice has spread worldwide. In 1997, Microsoft bought Hotmail for $ 400,000,000. This example shows the enormous potential of viral marketing. The concept of viral marketing can be translated into Czech as „viral“ marketing. Although the term virus evokes negative emotions in most subjects, this area of marketing has earned the name because of the way it spreads, the way very similar to the course of an epidemic. Most Internet users do not spread communication because of branding, but because it is fun, shocking, interesting, informative, etc., So they want to share it with others. For this reason, it ranks among the methods of word-of-mouth.

The viral campaign is not time or space limited, it can come back in waves. A viral campaigns submitter has minimum power over the course of spreading. Therefore, they must consider all the impacts that a campaign can bring. In the case of inappropriately selected contents of the message, the whole campaign may turn against the original focus. People may be inappropriately parodying the campaign and thereby destroying the company’s reputation. We must remember that there is a sophisticated strategy behind most successful viral campaigns. The actual publishing videos on the Web is not always enough. The actual publishing of videos on the Web is usually not enough. We even do not learn about the unsuccessfully attempted viral campaigns. The term viral marketing is very recent, and perhaps this is why there are many different definitions. For the purposes of this work, the two that best describe the viral communication problems were chosen. According to Kotler: „The Internet version of word-of-mouth marketing. E-mail messages or other marketing events that are so contagious that a customer wants to share them with their friends.“ „Viral marketing is a weapon that directly calls for sophisticated applications, for it can create tremendous response of consumers who become more and more immune against traditional forms of marketing communication.“

Viral marketing belongs to the methods of word-of-mouth. Each word-of-mouth campaign consists of five „Ts“, which we must identify before the campaign is started and then plan a unique strategy. All five Ts are shown in Table 1.

### Table 1: Summary of five Ts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Basic form</th>
<th>Advanced form</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talkers</strong></td>
<td>Volunteers, customers, bloggers</td>
<td>Influencers, agents</td>
<td>Spokespersons relate to the target audience. We try to deliver the topic which will be discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topics</strong></td>
<td>Special offers, great service, new product</td>
<td>Viral campaigns, special interest events, new ideas</td>
<td>The theme corresponds to the message. It must be simple, easy to remember; people will want to talk about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tools</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-face, mail forwarding, coupons</td>
<td>Community Forums, blogs, social media</td>
<td>Selecting the right tool for communication. For social networks, e.g., inventing hashtags (keywords joining the campaign together).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Take Part</strong></td>
<td>Join the conversations on blogs and forums</td>
<td>Active customer service, creating PR strategy</td>
<td>One of the most challenging activities. In case people start talking about an advertised brand, you need to start communicating with them. If you stop, the popularity wanes fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Track</strong></td>
<td>Blog Search, getting feedback</td>
<td>Trends analyzing, measuring the success of campaigns</td>
<td>The most valuable is the direct link of an ordinary customer. Learning to handle feedback and use it in an effort to improve.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.1 The spread of viral communication

Viral marketing spreads through the activity of users, who mostly do not even realize that they are disseminators themselves. According to Blake Rohrbacher⁶, users with good experience confide in approximately twelve other people. If we consider the functioning of the opposite trend, then also a dozen people learn about negative experience. It turns out that viral marketing may be an incredibly effective two-edged sword. See spreading scheme in Figure 1.

![Picture 1: Diagram of the spread of viral marketing](source)


2.2 Types of viral communication

There are more classifications of viral marketing, e.g. Sweeney⁷ divides them into:
- Word of mouth (we inform friends about interesting products and forward promotional coupons, etc.),
- Pass it on (we forward videos, interesting articles, and useful tools to people we know),
- Product or service based (we use the tools that are free and include their own marketing message – in the past, for example, Hotmail.com).

In contrast, Blake Rohrbacher⁸ distinguishes four positive categories:
- valuable virus (positive reviews),
- sneaky virus (at recommendation to other customers, you receive a bonus for yourselves),
- living virus (popular messaging programs),
- worm virus (sharing entertaining, or controversial statements that can entertain),

and one negative category:
- heinous virus (attempt to warn friends before a negative experience, this form of the virus spreads very easily and is extremely damaging to the brand product itself).

Of Czech authors, Jurášková divides viral marketing⁹, into active (companies produce viral messages and try to motivate sharing products) and passive virals (companies only rely on the quality of the product offered). According to JH Beneke, 2010, published in an article by Dudovskiy¹⁰, the division is as follows:
- passing to others viral messages – „viral communications forwarded to other users, primary kind, interesting messages conveyed online or offline, depending on what they are designed for,
- gossip-based viral messages – „viral communications based on gossip“, interesting innovations that may not be true. That may spread throughout the world, according to the topic of interest, or interest Gross,
- incentive-based viral messages – „motivational viral message“, individuals are motivated to spread viral messages,

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⁷ SWEENEY, S.: 101 ways to promote your web site: filled with proven Internet marketing tips, tools, techniques, and resources to increase your web site traffic. Gulf Breeze, FL : Maximum Press, 2006, p. 48.
• disguised viral messages – „hidden viral messages„ at first glance it is not clear what the statement represents. Aroused curiosity among customers who are themselves trying to learn more about the message.

3 Selected viral campaigns

To describe the functioning of various viral campaigns, we selected four specific campaigns that had already taken place in the virtual environment. The viral campaigns were intentionally chosen from different areas in which marketing operates. We used the snowball method, where the questionnaire is further distributed by means of the respondents who had already participated in the research (viral campaigns work on a similar principle). 124 women and 87 men were interviewed. The very issue of viral marketing is aimed at internet users and therefore the sample of respondents is, on average, better educated than the average of the Czech Republic. Specifically, the campaigns are as follows:

• Dove Real Beauty Sketches\textsuperscript{11},
• WestJet Christmas Miracle\textsuperscript{12},
• Coca-Cola Unlock the 007 in You\textsuperscript{13},
• Save the Children – Most Shocking Second a Day Video\textsuperscript{14}.

The aforementioned viral campaigns were evaluated by a carefully selected group of respondents, which was to serve as a representative sample that would carry out the initial partial research on the issue. There will be then a second wave of the survey, which will involve several times wider sample of respondents. We deliberately selected campaigns which are targeted at different groups of citizens. For more reliable results, the individual viral campaigns were shown to different groups of respondents in different order so that the respondents were not affected by the most recent experience.

3.1 The success of presented viral campaigns among respondents

Most respondents were impressed by the campaign by Dove – Real Beauty Sketches. It was marked the most successful by 32.2% of all respondents and scored heavily among women of all ages. Education, or work position did not


\textsuperscript{12} WestJet Christmas Miracle case study 2013 (Full Video) HD. [online]. [2015-04-21]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Oqlwnq2xiU>.


\textsuperscript{14} JENNINGS, N.: Save the Children ‘Second a Day’ ad is shocking, until you see a real Syrian child refugee. [online]. [2015-04-21]. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/03/06/save-the-children-second-a-day-ad-is-shocking-until-you-see-a-real-syrian-child-refugee/>. 44
matter. The campaign Unlock the 007 in You by Coca-Cola received less than two percent less i.e. 30.3%. The campaign mainly succeeded in men of older generations, men younger than 25 were impressed less. The campaign Save the Children – Most Shocking Video Second Day was the most impressive for 21.3% of respondents, namely working people with a far greater percentage than students (senior citizens did not find it impressive because of violence). It can be assumed that employees have, or will start families and are therefore far more affected by the theme of the child at risk. The same also applies to educated respondents. The campaign by the WestJet airline – Christmas Miracle made impression mostly on the age group of 16-25, and 16.1% of respondents found it to be the most interesting. The finding that the WestJet viral campaign was positively received by the least number of respondents was surprising, because the results of this campaign had shown a huge increase in profits. It might be due to the fact that the very air transport is, considering the area the Czech Republic covers, not very useful for normal travel. The popularity of Dove and Coca-Cola viral campaigns was expected. The Dove campaign itself made a very pleasant impression. The emotions seen in the video naturally make you think about the problem itself. What worked best for Coca-Cola, was the random choice of participants. There is no doubt that most men have at least once imagined what it might be like to be the successful 007 agent, and therefore the success of this viral campaign for men had been expected. The activity Save the Children worked on people’s solidarity. We had assumed that the campaign would most appeal to the current generation with children, because it describes child endangerment by war. In fact, this campaign had an impact on more age groups, especially on employed individuals, who are assumed to have or are expected to start a family.

3.2 Reasons why respondents labelled the particular campaigns

Dove Real Beauty Sketeches – most respondents appreciated a beautiful idea, and the fact that this communication makes people think while watching. They felt strong emotions, the message promotes self-esteem, is true to life, and its main idea and execution story is genuine. Coca-Cola Unlock the 007 in You – respondents appreciated the story, editing, music, and the processing itself. They found it brisk, and the opportunity to become James Bond amusing. Some respondents appreciated that it did not aim at emotions much, but focused on entertaining and engagement of passers-by. Save the Children Most Shocking and Second Day Video – child endangerment in the war aroused most sympathy among respondents, showing the worldwide problem that must be addressed. It contains a story that had the strongest effect. The respondents were shocked to see how the life of a happy child can change within minutes. WestJet Christmas Miracle – many respondents found it hard to imagine that such a thing might happen in the Czech Republic. The Christmas theme itself pleased many questionnaire respondents as well as the fact that it was strangers who received the gifts, although only in terms of promotion.
3.3 The campaigns spread and awareness among respondents

Most respondents (i.e., 43%) had become acquainted with a Dove viral campaign in the past. As the second most famous one was marked Save the Children (27% of respondents were familiar with it). The viral campaign by WestJet had been seen by 25% of respondents, and the Coca-Cola campaign by only 18% of respondents, although it has been reported as the second most successful among the participants in the survey. It might be due to the fact that the actual spread was not carried out by such important people who would pass the concrete message on to a larger group of Czech population. 37% of respondents had not encountered any of the above viral campaigns.

3.4 The willingness to share selected viral campaigns

Another objective was to determine whether respondents would be willing to share their experience further. This finding may help future creators of viral communication promote their work. Of all respondents, 32.7% of people would not participate in sharing any of the presented videos. The others would be willing to share one or more videos. The Dove viral campaign would be shared by 34% of respondents, Save the Children by 30%, the Coca-Cola viral communication by 28%, and the WestJet one by less than 18% survey participants. It is interesting that many respondents who had indicated previously that they would not forward a viral communication, would not mind sharing some of the selected campaigns with their friends. Some people do not realize the effect of viral marketing itself. The above mentioned facts indicate that campaigns containing a story, conveying emotions, or those which at first glance do not seem to advertise anything and give a feeling that anyone can take part in them, had the strongest impact on the respondents.

4 Evaluation

Chapter 3 describes four selected viral campaigns including the description of spreading process itself and its influence. The selected campaigns are as follows: Dove Real Beauty Sketches, WestJet Christmas Miracle, Coca-Cola Unlock the 007 in You and Save the Children – Most Shocking and Second Day Video. These campaigns were deliberately chosen, since they cover different areas of marketing application and functioning. Dove Real Beauty Sketches uses sociological experiment to promote self-confidence and natural beauty of women, and ranks among the most successful campaigns among respondents. WestJet Christmas Miracle is an airlines campaign, which addressed many consumers around the world, but appeared among the less successful campaigns with the questionnaire respondents (the idea that such a thing might happen in the Czech Republic, seemed unrealistic to them). Coca-Cola Unlock the 007 in You used an entertaining way to engage passers-by, who could imagine themselves in the shoes
of James Bond, experience a unique adventure and, if successful, get tickets to the film. Although the campaign was least known to the respondents, they labelled it as the second most successful (The reason why the respondents did not know it so well, is probably that the campaign is primarily targeted on men, who are less active on social networks, and therefore it did not spread through the internet like the others). Most Shocking and Second Day Video by Save the Children was aimed to support children threatened by war, and most addressed the employed respondents who are assumed to be at the age when they have, or are planning to start a family. The most important pieces of information reveal that almost 80% of respondents encounter a viral campaign at least once a week (many of them almost every day). A successful viral campaign must come up with something new that will address potential disseminators. Most users appreciate originality. Viral campaigns that include a story are entertaining and/or informative. Women across generations are very well addressed by a message which increases self-esteem, or a communication which arouses emotions. On the contrary, most men appreciate agility, while longer notices cause a very quick loss of attention. Men do not appreciate strong emotions either. A campaign focused on men should primarily entertain them. Men do not mind a variety of skits and controversy, some actually expect such kind of thing. In the beginning, 49% of respondents said they did not forward viral communication. After becoming acquainted with several successful viral campaigns, 67.3% of them admitted willingness to share some with others. This shows the huge potential of viral marketing. People often do not realize that sharing communication actually means sharing the promotion of a particular brand.

Conclusion

The paper reflects the issue of viral communication and viral campaigns. Its readers are introduced to the area of concern and then learn about a partial investigation into the issue. Chapter 3 describes the selected campaigns, Dove Real Beauty Sketches, WestJet Christmas Miracle, Coca-Cola Unlock the 007 in You and Save the Children – Most Shocking and Second Day Video. Most respondents were affected by the campaign by Dove – Real Beauty Sketches with 32.2%. The campaign by the WestJet airline- Christmas Miracle, which addressed 16.1% of respondents, had the least impact. The Dove viral campaign would be shared on by 34% of respondents, Save the Children by 30%, the Coca-Cola viral communication by 28%, and the WestJet one by less than 18%. 67.3% of respondents admit that they were willing to share a successful viral campaign further on. This proves that the potential of viral marketing is enormous. The theme of viral marketing is new and constantly evolving. The potential of viral marketing is currently not fully discovered and exploited. The partial research will be described in the thesis which served as a primary tool for monitoring this issue on a selected topic. In view of the issue’s great popularity among
respondents and favour with readers, a further investigation, involving a much wider range of segmented respondents, is currently being prepared.

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