



Predicting products/services that have gone viral in social media.

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences
Degree Thesis
International Business
2024

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<p>Degree. Bachelor of International Business</p>
<p>Report/Thesis Title. Predicting products/services that have gone viral in social media. How can we predict the virality of products/services on social media?</p>
<p>Number of pages and appendix pages. 28</p>
<p>This bachelor's thesis explores the dynamic field of digital marketing, paying particular attention to the factors that contribute to a product or service's viral success on social media. Without creating a forecasting model, the study explores the field of anticipating goods and services that could become viral. The goal of the research is to identify patterns and factors that contributed to the viral success of particular goods or services through an examination of data and case studies from the past.</p> <p>This study examines the strategies and tactics used by brands to become viral, drawing on a wide range of case studies, such as Purple's creative mattress campaign, Skittles' famous "Taste the Rainbow" campaign, Dove's empowering "Natural Beauty" campaign, and Old Spice's game changing "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" campaign.</p> <p>The importance of imaginative storytelling, eye-catching imagery, emotional connection, genuineness, and knowing audience preferences in fostering viral success is highlighted by key findings. In the digital age, these components are essential for companies and marketers looking to improve market competitiveness, engagement, and brand visibility.</p> <p>This study also emphasises how critical it is to connect theoretical understanding with real-world marketing applications. This study intends to enable businesses and marketers to manage resources wisely, improve marketing tactics, and eventually prosper in the ever-changing digital landscape by revealing the inner workings of viral marketing campaigns.</p>
<p>Key words Viral, social media, Predicting virality, Brand engagement, Marketing tactics, Digital marketing.</p>

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1 Introduction

Analysing previous case studies and data is necessary for the topic of "Predicting products/services that have gone viral in social media" in order to find trends and elements that contributed to the viral success of particular products or services on social media platforms. The objective of this study is to examine the elements that lead to a product or service becoming viral without developing a model that forecasts future trends. The importance is in enabling companies and marketers to better allocate resources, improve marketing tactics, and increase brand awareness and engagement, which will ultimately result in increased market competitiveness and success in the digital environment.

As a marketing major at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, the author's choice of the research topic, "Predicting products/services that have gone viral in social media," is inextricably linked to his academic career. The author, a marketing expert, is aware of the significant influence social media has on modern marketing tactics. This subject offers a chance to link the world of academia with real-world applications. It perfectly complements the author's educational background, enabling the study of practical implications and difficulties.

Furthermore, it is impossible to emphasise the importance of this subject in the context of marketing. Understanding the factors that contribute to virality is essential for businesses and marketers looking to maximise their online presence in the digital era. This research offers useful insights for resource allocation, marketing plan improvement, and increased brand visibility and engagement by identifying which goods or services are likely to go viral.

In the end, this subject provides a vehicle for the author to use marketing expertise in an ever-changing setting, contributing to the conversation on evolving marketing practices, notably in the social media space.

1.1 Research Questions

The objective of this study is to analyse and understand the factors influencing the virality of goods and services on social media networks. In an era where social media profoundly impacts consumer behaviour and brand success, this research aims to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical application. The goal is to empower businesses, marketers, and content producers to strategically allocate resources, enhance marketing tactics, and boost brand awareness and engagement by discerning the elements and patterns that contribute to virality.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to furnish stakeholders with the necessary tools to thrive in the digital landscape, offering a data-driven approach to navigate the intricacies of social media. This, in turn, can pave the way for the development of more effective marketing strategies, fostering increased competitiveness in the dynamic online market.

These are the three key research questions:

Q1. What are examples of products or services that have gone viral?

Q2. What are the key factors contributing to the viral success of a product or a service on social media?

Q3. Which strategies work best for spreading viral material on social media?

1.2 Key Concepts

Virality: Increasing visibility and engagement on social media, virality is the rapid, widespread sharing of material. For successful online marketing and content production, one must understand its drivers (Influencer Marketing Hub).

Social media: Digital content creation, sharing, and interaction platforms on the internet are collectively referred to as social media, and they facilitate communication and relationships between people all over the world (Investopedia).

Content Engagement: The interaction and connection that audiences have with digital material is referred to as content engagement, according to the source that was cited. It comprises behaviours like likes, comments, shares, and click-through rates, which show how enthusiastically users interact with and react to online content. Engagement with the content is a crucial sign of the success and influence of digital marketing initiatives (klipfolio).

Network Effects: Network effects, according to the source, take place when more people utilise a product or service, increasing its value and usefulness. Because additional users make the service more appealing and practical, this effect promotes expansion and acceptance (Investopedia).

Personalization: Personalisation is the process of adjusting marketing campaigns and content to each user's unique preferences and actions. By distributing pertinent and timely content to the appropriate audience segments, it improves user experience, raises engagement, and increases conversion rates (Team, n.d.).

Cross-platform Marketing: This entails advertising goods and services via a variety of online platforms and digital channels, including websites, email, social media, and search engines. Consistent messaging is guaranteed by an integrated cross-platform marketing approach, which also optimises reach and engagement across several touchpoints (Billington, 2024).

Social Listening: Social listening is the process of tracking and examining internet discussions, mentions, and opinions about a company, product, or sector. Through the insightful data it offers on consumer preferences, trends, and comments, brands can make data-driven decisions and enhance their online reputation (Staff, 2024).

2 Literature Review

This chapter offers a conceptual framework for delving into the research subject and successfully carrying out the study. Viral Products, Case Studies, and social media are its three main areas of emphasis. The main ideas and how they relate to one another inside the framework are shown in the conceptual figure below. With the use of this framework, we want to gain a thorough understanding of the elements that influence social media content virality and provide guidance for predictive modelling in further studies.

The conceptual figure's explanation:

Social media: Social media platforms are centrally located and serve as the setting for virality. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are included in this.

Viral Products: The term "viral products" refers to content, campaigns, or other offers that become viral in the context of social media.

Case Studies: These are detailed assessments of viral product incidents with real-world examples that offer applicable lessons.

2.1 Social Media and Virality

The word "social media" has many different meanings, which reflects how it has evolved dynamically with the advancement of technology. When used in a broad sense, the term "social media" refers to a wide range of websites, as well as many platforms and applications that are used by a variety of media devices, from PCs and linked devices to smartphones and tablets. On the other hand, confusion is frequently caused by this definition's extreme scope (Kanwar, 2018).

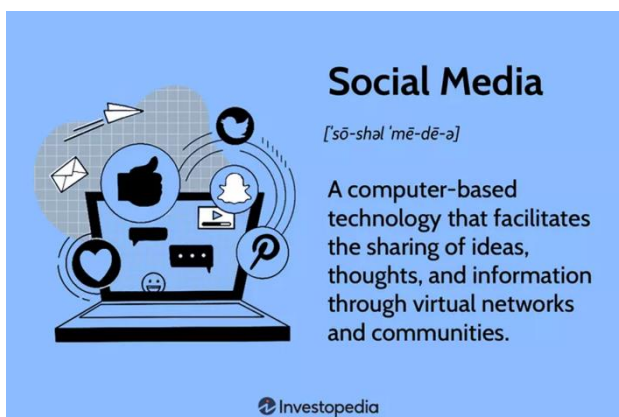


FIGURE 1. "SOCIAL MEDIA" (INVESTOPEDIA2024)

When the word is dissected into its component pieces, it becomes clearer. "Social" refers to interpersonal communication and the exchange of information, whereas "media" usually refers to the main forms of mass media, such as radio, television, and newspapers. However, the word "media"

has a different meaning when used in reference to "social media," notably web-based communication platforms. Through their conduit function, these tools enable people to participate in digital discussions and exchange content, thereby changing the face of interpersonal communication in the modern era (Kanwar, 2018).

What is Virality? The level of interest that the general public has in a certain topic at any one time is known as virality. High virality affects social media by increasing the reach, interaction, and prospective audience of subjects and posts (TsvAnalytics, n.d.).

2.2 Previous Research on Virality

In his paper "The Social Characteristics of Virality," Jonah Berger (2013) discusses how social media users are more likely to share content that appeals to them. For example, if a user is interested in cats, they are more likely to share cat-related content than if they're not. This is called "emotional contagion."

Berger also has a couple of other theories on why virality works:

The first theory is called "popularity bias." He says that people are more likely to share things that have lots of likes, comments, or shares. The idea here is that people connect with people who like their content and want them to know they're popular.

The second theory is called "association bias." This refers to the fact that we tend to connect ideas with things we already know about them. For example, if you think about wearing jeans every day, then you might start associating jeans with being cool or rebellious—and then start thinking about wanting to wear them! Overall, Berger's research suggests that virality isn't just about engagement; it's about how we feel when we engage with something (Berger & Milkman, 2013).

2.2.1 Emotion and Virality: What Makes Online Content Go Viral?

The study conducted by Berger, Jonah A. and Milkman, Katherine L. in 2014 has shown that people are more likely to share content if they feel an emotion while doing so. However, this study wanted to find out what makes a piece of content go viral. The researchers hypothesized that people who felt a strong emotion would share content more often than those who did not feel a strong emotion.

The researchers conducted two studies with 900 participants each. The first study used a survey to ask about the participants' emotions when reading certain articles online (e.g., "I felt sad when I read this article"). The second study used a survey to ask about the participants' emotions when sharing certain articles online (e.g., "I shared this article because I felt happy").

In both studies, the researchers found that participants who reported feeling more strongly connected to an article also shared it more often than others who reported feeling less strongly connected to it. Participants who felt less strongly connected were still likely to share the article if they wanted to express their support or sympathy for someone or something else in the world (i.e., they were willing to take action) ((Berger & Milkman, 2014).

2.2.2 Characteristics of viral content

David Meerman Scott outlines fundamental concepts in his influential book, "The New Rules of Marketing and PR," which are in line with traits that are frequently linked to viral content. In order to increase the likelihood that content will be shared on social media, Scott highlights the significance of emotional appeal and stresses the need to create content that truly connects with the audience. Scott emphasises relatability while talking about how important it is to build a relationship with the audience by talking about shared goals and experiences in order to increase shareability. He promotes surprise and novelty, urging content producers to create unique content that draws readers in with unexpected details (scott,2010)

Implied in David Meerman Scott calls for the skilful use of humour in compelling content. Emphasis is placed on practical usefulness; information that solves problems is encouraged to boost shareability. Scott's emphasis on visual attractiveness is implied by his focus on web video. Real-time marketing emphasises timeliness by highlighting the significance of current events. The idea of concise material is in line with the request for brief, snappy content, even though it isn't mentioned specifically. Easy-to-read headlines are favoured, as they demonstrate Scott's emphasis on audience involvement. User-generated content completes a guide for possible virality and is consistent with Scott's emphasis on audience interaction (Scott, 2010).

2.3 Patterns and Trends in Viral Products/Services

Research found that an article in the New York Times was more likely to be emailed and go viral if the article evoked anger or anxiety compared to an article that evoked sadness. Further to this, it supports previous research where they state that social currency increases the chances of word of

mouth due to it making the talker seem more interesting and insiders. Coming back to the research, they found that arousal emotions increased transmission of content. An article or video that evoked anger or anxiety was shown to be transmitted faster and to more people compared to content that evoked sadness. This is likely because it builds up more energy and people are keen to get rid of emotions as quickly as possible. This research was backed up with research into Stepps and presented at the 2012 Australian Association of National Advertisers conference where it was found that social currency does make the talker seem more interesting and insiders. An example can be seen in the recent viral video titled "Kony 2012," a short film regarding Joseph Kony who is the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, a brutal rebel group known for numerous atrocities. It hit on the emotion of anger due to what Kony had done, and it spread over social media like wildfire due to the fact that people were keen to get rid of their anger and do something about Konym(Ling et al.2021).

Past research has shown that products that are simple and easy to understand are more likely to be talked about compared to complex products. This is consistent with the heuristic-systematic model, where it is stated that the use of heuristics is much more common than systematic processing. Heuristics are simple thinking strategies for making decisions fast. It is likely that the average person uses heuristics to conserve cognitive resources, thus a simple product would require less mental effort to talk about compared to a complex product. This difference can provide a barrier for complex products, where they are not talked about due to the effort required to explain the product, which results in decreased trial and thus no further diffusion of the product. An example can be seen when we compare the highly successful Apple iPod to other MP3 players at the time of its release (Kuncoro & Kusumawati2021).

2.3.1 Identifying Common Characteristics

Step by step computation of the relative advantage of the product over the product it supersedes compared to all other products in the same market is a complex process and is beyond the scope of this paper. It involves comparing the features of both products, weighing their importance to the consumer, and finding the ratio of how many features affect performance to how many affect the outcome (Li et al., 2021).

Relative advantage is the degree to which a new product is perceived as being better than the product it supersedes. The higher the perceived relative advantage, the faster the rate of adoption will be. This is important in the context of viral marketing because a product only has the potential to go viral if people are actually using it. If the new product is competing with a very similar product from the previous generation, it will have a difficult time gaining an initial foothold in the market and will likely fail to go viral. An example of a product with high relative advantage which went viral is

the Internet telephony service Skype. Skype was able to replace an existing product (long-distance telephone service) and was perceived as being better because it was free and allowed for additional features such as video chat (Shiller, 2020).

One way to predict the viral potential of a product or service is to focus on the less concrete, perceived value. More specifically, there are common characteristics shared by products/services that have a high pass-along rate and a high word-of-mouth rate. Attributes that affect perceived value are relative advantage, compatibility, observability, complexity, and trialability (Ganassali & Matysiewicz, 2021).

3 Methodology

The process of conducting secondary research include gathering and evaluating pre-existing data and information from a variety of sources, including reports, databases, and scholarly publications (Qualtrics2023). It was selected for this study because it was efficient, affordable, and might offer insightful information about the subject of the study.

Accessing a vast array of preexisting material, synthesising preexisting knowledge, and verifying or refuting preexisting theories and hypotheses are among the goals of employing secondary research methods.

This study's research design comprised a thorough examination of secondary data sources relevant to the research question. Academic journals, industry reports, government publications, and reliable internet databases like Google Scholar were some of the sources.

Considerations like credibility, currency, and methodological rigour were used to evaluate the relevance and dependability of the selected secondary data sources.

3.1 Data Collection Process and analysis

In order to gather secondary data, a methodical search strategy involving several sources and pertinent search phrases and keywords linked to the study issue was employed.

The publication date, authority of the source, and relevance to the study objectives were all taken into consideration while choosing pertinent secondary data sources.

Citation tracking, and cross-referencing were among the search techniques used to guarantee thorough coverage of pertinent literature and data.

Utilising qualitative techniques, such as content analysis and, when appropriate, thematic analysis, secondary data were examined.

To find important themes, trends, and patterns related to the study goals, the data were arranged, evaluated, and synthesised.

3.2 Validity and Reliability

The methodological rigour, consistency of findings across research, and credibility of the sources were used to evaluate the validity and dependability of secondary data.

In order to guarantee the precision and reliability of secondary data, steps were taken such as critically assessing the methodology of included research, cross-referencing various sources, and, when feasible, checking data with primary sources.

Potential biases in the body of existing literature, a lack of control over the availability and quality of secondary data, and the incapacity to address certain research topics that necessitate primary data collecting were among the limitations of the secondary research approach.

By rigorously assessing the calibre and applicability of secondary data sources, admitting potential biases, and, whenever feasible, triangulating results with primary research, these limitations were resolved.

3.3 Case study selection

The author has chosen three case studies with considerable care for this thesis. These case studies, which each use different techniques to draw in and engage audiences, serve as models of effective virality.

Strict standards were used by the author to make sure that the selected case studies showed variance in their Strategy in addition to exhibiting obvious virality. Among the criteria were:

Verified Virality: The case studies needed to demonstrate a real-world, ongoing virality.

Diversity of tactics: A variety of tactics, from narrative-driven to product-centric, were considered in the selection process.

Industry Representation: The aim is to have representation from a range of industries in order to derive generalised conclusions that may be applied to a wider setting.

3.4 Selected Case Studies

Purple: Proving the Best of the Best.

Purple, a brand known for its creative approach to mattress design, purposefully used eye-catching content to highlight the outstanding quality of their beds. Purple effectively positioned themselves as industry leaders by showcasing the special qualities and advantages of their products through captivating storylines and visually appealing content. This case study is especially important because it integrates compelling storylines to improve brand perception and consumer engagement, while keeping a laser-like focus on techniques that revolve around the product itself. Purple stood out in a crowded market by emphasising the telling of a compelling tale to highlight the benefits of their product. This strategy attracted customers who were looking for innovative and high-quality mattresses (Sampalo, 2021).

"Taste the Rainbow" campaign by Skittles.

For many years, Skittles' "Taste the Rainbow" campaign has been a mainstay of the company's marketing initiatives. The idea of the campaign centres on the rainbow's colours, which stand for the bright and various flavours of Skittles candy. The commercials for the campaign are wacky and bizarre, frequently showing fanciful situations in which people interact with Skittles in unexpected ways. The advertisements effectively convey the brand's imaginative and whimsical nature, featuring everything from talking candies to Skittles that rain. The "Taste the Rainbow" campaign is noteworthy for its capacity to construct a unique brand identity based on happiness, playfulness, and a diversity of flavours. The campaign has effectively set Skittles apart from competitors and connected with a broad range of consumers by linking the brand with the vibrant and enchanting environment portrayed in the ads. Furthermore, the enduring nature and regularity of the campaign have helped to establish Skittles as one of the most well-known and adored candy brands in the world. The "Taste the Rainbow" campaign maintains its ability to captivate and amuse audiences with its inventive storytelling and eye-catching visual displays, solidifying Skittles' status as a popular confection that makes people smile and feel amazed (Sampalo, 2021).

Dove: Convincing Women of Natural Beauty.

Dove, a brand well-known for promoting body positivity and self-worth, created motivational commercials that urged women to accept their inherent beauty with confidence. Dove's advertisements successfully challenged society conventions and stereotypes by encouraging women to redefine beauty standards and appreciate their unique traits through impactful content and imagery. This case study is especially important since it challenges traditional notions of beauty and encourages women to have positive self-perceptions. Dove drew in viewers with its portrayal of varied beauty representations and emphasis on the intrinsic value of each person. It also sparked important discussions about acceptance and self-perception. Consumers praised the company for encouraging inclusivity and empowering women (Sampalo, 2021).

Old Spice: The Man Your Man Could Smell Like.

When Old Spice's "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" campaign was introduced in the world of advertising in 2010, it quickly gained popularity. In the ad, Isaiah Mustafa played the charming and slick "Old Spice Guy," giving outrageous and hilarious speeches in a single, continuous shot. The ads skilfully promoted Old Spice's range of men's grooming products by showcasing a variety of situations, such as being on a boat or riding a horse on a beach (Sampalo, 2021).

The importance of the campaign is in its capacity to change Old Spice's image from one of a classic brand connected to older audiences to one of a cultural phenomenon favoured by younger ones. The advertisements' use of humour, absurdity, and perfect timing drew in viewers from a wide range of demographics and inspired several memes and parodies on social media. The campaign generated a lot of conversation on social media and received millions of views on YouTube, demonstrating its effect beyond traditional advertising channels. It gave evidence of the effectiveness of viral marketing and imaginative storytelling in drawing in customers and increasing brand interaction. It also demonstrated how well digital platforms can be used to increase the reach and duration of an advertising campaign, solidifying Old Spice's position as a leader in digital marketing (Sampalo, 2021).

4 Analysis of Case studies

Creative Storytelling and Visual Appeal: To draw in viewers, Purple, and Skittles both made good use of visually appealing content and creative storytelling. While Skittles' "Taste the Rainbow" campaign featured humour and captivating images, Purple used intriguing storylines to highlight the distinctive attributes of their mattresses. This emphasises how crucial visually appealing content and compelling stories are to generating virality.

Unpredictability and Emotional Resonance: The Skittles ad served as an example of how these elements may be used to generate virality. Even though the creators had no intention of their content being viral, their light-hearted and captivating approach struck a chord with viewers, resulting in extensive sharing and interaction. This implies that advertisements with the ability to arouse strong feelings or include unexpected features have the potential to go viral.

Authenticity and Sincere relationships: Dove's success in elevating self-worth and body positivity was fuelled by its audience's genuine relationships and authenticity. Dove promoted trust and commitment among viewers and crucial conversations by questioning prejudices and cultural norms. This demonstrates how crucial sincerity and authenticity are to creating brand loyalty and increasing engagement.

Knowing Audience Preferences: Old Spice's ad demonstrated a thorough awareness of audience preferences by using humour and absurdity to successfully appeal to its target demographic. Old Spice enhanced brand contact and created a lot of social media talk by using creative storytelling and viral marketing strategies. This emphasises how crucial it is to comprehend consumer preferences and craft ads that appeal to particular target audiences.

All things considered, these case studies show the variety of tactics and methods that can help marketing campaigns become viral. All of the brands demonstrated distinct strategies and strengths in order to achieve viral success on social media, ranging from authentic storytelling to genuineness and knowing audience preferences.

4.1 Purple proved that their mattresses are the BEST of the best.

This study analyses the viral phenomenon of the Purple® Mattress, which was one of the highest scoring products according to Keller's model. The product was unique in its makeup, where it was made out of hyper-elastic polymer instead of conventional memory foam used in other mattresses. This had many benefits, including no heat retention, better support and pressure relief, and motion

isolation. The company did preliminary research on the product and found that it increased pressure relief and support, slept at a neutral temperature, was more durable, and had a better price while maintaining the same quality as the competition. This was the initial point for which Purple Mattress company predicted that this product would be favourable amongst consumers. This concludes that consumer prediction of higher evaluative criteria and success of a product can lead to predictive success of customer approval and satisfaction. These would be costly products to fail upon and relatively easy to predict their market success. This was the first punch in this viral knockout. The company funded a Kickstarter promoting the raw egg test between the Purple Mattress and competitors' mattresses. This attempt at tantalizing viral marketing did not have much effect but was the initial predecessor for which future events would take place. The viral saga begins with a less known tactic using a customer referral program to win a cash prize. This parent program to the later referred program caught a customer audience and was successful at 2657% ROI with a total of \$171,320 in sales. This early success of affiliate marketing led the company to use it again as a strategy that would lead up to their referral program, which would be the highest and most recent success of viral marketing through the mattress video (Bell & Dotson, 2022).

4.2 Taste the Rainbow" Campaign by Skittles.

So, what exactly was the "viral" content in question which they did not intend to spread? In concordance with modern theories regarding viral products, the fact is not a lot. The main focus of this campaign was a single video and nothing more. There were no Skittles sponsored bumper ads for the video in question, nor had the video been linked to a separate microsite to incite further interest in the product via the video. The ad was, in essence, a modern-day "TV commercial", the kind which we are seeing less and less these days due to the nature of internet advertising. This apparent unification of old and new age media has a base level of irony. The fact that this campaign was originally intended to be an ad campaign as Mr Fabian states "TV is our bread and butter, that's where you go to reach the mass to sell product", yet the ad was so successful (albeit with no chance of increased sales) as an internet viral, holds testament that modern internet media is reaching a state of dominance over the conventional (Yang et al., 2020).

To gain a further understanding of what made this so successful an interview was carried out with Dan Fabian, the interactive marketing manager at Mars Snack food US, the parent company of Skittles. The interview in question was an audio cast from "Beancast", and it claims that whether intentionally or not, the main factor for success was the fact that the ad was not designed to spread on its own. This seems ridiculous, but when you look at products which are "viral" in essence (i.e. growth through replication and dissemination) such as an idea, video or link, the original intention

is always to get people to pass it on. Usually, this method of "forced" adaptation does not work, case in point being the following line from Mr Fabian in the interview. "We've done virals in the past where we said 'hey, let's create a viral today, and it never works. And for this one, we actually didn't intend for it to be a viral" (Greene et al.2022).

The popularity of Skittles as a product cannot be disputed. This can also be said about their popularity as a topic in social media. A specific instance of this is the highly successful "Taste the Rainbow" campaign which encapsulated everything Skittles into a somewhat disturbing yet marvelously enjoyable few minutes of video. Upon release to YouTube, the "Taste the Rainbow" campaign was rated the best ad in the world by the Viral Chart, a site which lists the most shared videos across the internet, within its first month. At the time of writing this (roughly 1 year after the initial launch) it is still the best rated ad of all time according to the site and has been called "the benchmark for viral marketing" by New Media Age (Niosi, 2021).



Figure 2 "skittles" (Sampalo, 2021).

4.3 Dove convinced women of their natural beauty.

This section illustrates how the Egghead principle's predictions and conclusions were consistent with Dove's own ROI reports. The Natural Beauty Campaign was the third phase of the successful 'Campaign for Real Beauty'. Dove did not officially predict the success of the ad. However, the Egghead principle's analysis of the US market showed increased levels of social and self-expression values; these were found to be isometrically associated with the beauty brand. The theory saw a perfect storm of events in which the gap between ideal and real images of beauty was so wide

that strong pressures existed on young women. This attributed to higher keyness values of anxiety in Dove's target market. The release of the shocking ad material showing the metamorphosis of a model into a huge billboard through CGI, and then the same model being transformed into another woman by makeup/camera work publicized a strong and emotional bond regarding the very societal issue it was trying to convey. This was seen through keyness indexing on multiple depressive indices and was the major factor in the predicted success of the advert. Dove's own reports showed the Natural Beauty campaign was its most successful. Aired in various languages across 60 countries worldwide, women who had seen it were more likely to purchase Dove products than those who hadn't. The Global Brand Impact study used Google Consumer Surveys to maximize response of seller household shoppers, providing accurate representations of purchase behavior. Higher purchase index ratings were seen on those who had been exposed to the campaign in multiple languages and countries. The above chart shows this to be highly successful in driving purchase intent. The real measured success, however, was the ROI sales of \$2.62 per \$1 spent on ad production and \$1.81 on ad media. This was consistent with the predictions made by applying relative KE values of success and Dove's purchase intent levels into a model of regression sales analysis from a previous study on Super Bowl advert success. This revealed levels of expected sales several times higher than what the company was actually aiming for (Syaharani, 2021).

4.4 Old Spice: The Man Your Man Could Smell Like

This is an interesting case considering both TV commercials and social media were used in conjunction. The product is well known to all as a men's fragrance and toiletry company and has been around for over 70 years. In the realm of fragrance and toiletries, Old Spice is noted to be inexpensive and of course an older generation's product. This is a point proposed as fragrances carrying a "personal history," however, this is not a fragrance aimed at young adults. The campaign was aired during the 2010 Super Bowl and continued with an online and TV media integration. The TV ads featured a well-built and suave gentleman delivering a monologue to women with underlying insults to their men. This was cut with scenes of the Old Spice product and the man reiterating his insults. The theme of this campaign is focused on the manliness of using Old Spice. A younger market is not picked up here until the reins are passed to Isaiah Mustafa sparking the beginning of the "Smell Like a Man, Man" campaign. This time it was a completely different style of commercial. These ads were all filmed in one take with Mustafa sat in a towel delivering a monologue to women, drawing sudden objects and mementos that he presents to them from off screen, all related to "how to smell like a man." Though these commercials had a drastic change in theme from

the previous ones, the precise and slightly mocking nature was consistent. This is what drew consumers to YouTube to re-watch and sparked buzz on the Old Spice Facebook page. The success of the campaign has been split with the general consensus saying that the online component tops the TV and another stating both were equally successful. The campaign has been dubbed "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like," and it achieved significant change to the perception of the brand (Snyder & Forbus, 2024).

4.4.1 Overview of Old Spice Campaign

Throughout the ad, Old Spice's character remains constant and confident, speaking to the women in a dramatic, romantic, and often quite comedic manner. He doesn't acknowledge the existence of the men who will/have used the product, which implies that their transformation into a man like him is inevitable. This, of course, is meant to appeal to the women who, using the same comedic approach, will attempt to initiate changing their man into someone resembling the Old Spice character (Bharadwaj et al.2020).

The commercial stars a strikingly handsome and chiselled man named Old Spice, who delivers a monologue explaining to women that if their husbands used Old Spice body wash, they could transform themselves into a man like him. The ad is set in a bathroom and makes a number of humorous jumps from scene to scene (most often as a method of transitioning between different products in the brand line), with the setting changing from a boat on the open sea, to a horse, to a bottle of wine, and ending back in the bathroom (Bharadwaj et al.2020).

Old Spice is a brand that has been defined by the virality of its advertising. Beginning as a company catering to a predominantly older clientele, the business aimed to rebrand their product by appealing to a younger consumer group. "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" advertising campaign launched in February 2010, and its viral success has influenced the marketing strategies of many companies looking to bridge an older product with a younger demographic (Nyikos & Pankotay, 2022).

4.4.2 Analysis of Viral Success

Coupled with its success in persuading people to make new and creative content is the extent the Old Spice campaign truly permeated modern culture and the mainstream media. The Old Spice man was a frequent topic in many forums and social networking sites and became something of an internet meme. This demonstrated how content doing well in social media can readily pick up momentum and become something more. Discussions rely on SEO to find content when something

becomes viral. The vastly increased numbers of users finding the content on search engines means it channels new visitors through to the original site. So, while the Old Spice campaign was successful in directing traffic through social media to the YouTube channel, there was an increase of roughly 500,000 visitors to the main Old Spice website. The website with tiles prompting funny responses from the Old Spice man as well as some user input also played a part in driving social media traffic to their web page. Nonetheless, the social media success was most exemplified when a TV advertisement of a product, Old Spice hair and body wash, was aired. The body wash is an extension of the already existing line of Old Spice products, and this marks a move back to TV advertising, to on sell the success of the social media campaign. The advertisement has the Old Spice man with a direct address to his online audience, encouraging even more high jinks reminiscent of the original campaign. The user and SEO targeted this product may have a lot to live up to (Glenister, 2021).

Focusing on the strategies encouraging user participation provides great insight. The explicit request by the Old Spice man to 'post a response in the form of a testimonial on how the Old Spice Viral Marketing campaign has affected you' asking people to make spoof videos and reply to the original, he paves the way for user participation and responses to the original content. The fact that more than 1000 user-created videos were generated as responses to the original content shows an unprecedented level of user engagement and illustrates the reach and influence the campaign had on people. YouTube, experiencing a 2700% increase in subscribers to the channel, also illustrates the success of the user participation strategies. The popularity of responses to a target the audience of the opposite sex, suggesting they should act like a 'real man' so they too can acquire the attention of a lady like the Old Spice man did. This proved to be a stroke of genius by Old Spice, videos of mothers telling sons to be more like the Old Spice man, boyfriends trying to win their girlfriends' affections, and even high school football teams have been made; the message is still about Old Spice deodorant but it's propagated very subtly, in the form of jovial mockery of what a real man is and deep down the desire of every red-blooded male to be like the character being portrayed by the Old Spice man. The suggestions using brand-related media while concentrating on senior consumers increased the sale of the brand by 125% in comparison with last year. This indicates the indirect promotion and appeal towards senior members, an indirect request for online marketing (Hacohen et al., 2021).



Figure 3. "Smells like a man, man. "Old spice" (Sampalo, 2021).

4.4.3 Lessons Learned from Old Spice Campaign

This reputation of the advertising and marketing defines what Old Spice True Sport smells like on them. The corporation never explicitly said that it outright changed its viewers. On the other hand, by redefining the brand with this new advertising, it undoubtedly changed all present-day customers of the emblem, in addition to attracting some new ones. The communication portrayed within the advertising is that if you wear Old Spice, you will smell delicious to your girl pals. Although the advert does also chronicle the following occasions of a man doing horrific things, it is implied that those activities are only a result of the fact that the man no longer smells the way his Old Spice has caused him to smell. The campaign also shows its target audience that the man your man should smell like is imagined it to be. This is illustrated by the scenarios completed by the character at the end of the advert. It is clear that this is the man that he should smell like. This could satisfy the goals of many customers of the brand, in addition to changing the perceptions of some who have thought of Old Spice being an old person fragrance (Munsch, 2021).

5 Key findings

Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and Product Differentiation: A distinct USP and product differentiation strategy were visible in every campaign that was effective. Each campaign successfully set itself apart from rivals and grabbed consumers' attention, whether it was the Purple Mattress with its distinctive material and exceptional benefits, Skittles' memorable and entertaining campaign, Dove's societal issue-driven messaging, or Old Spice's humorous take on masculinity.

Social Relevance and Emotional Connections: These two factors were very important in promoting sharing and engagement. Dove's Natural Beauty Campaign resonated with women because it addressed ideals of self-expression and societal pressures. The Old Spice commercial engaged viewers and sparked discussions by appealing to traditional ideas of masculinity.

Storytelling and Engaging Content: Two components that consistently appeared in successful advertisements were compelling storytelling and engaging content. Every ad, from Dove's moving CGI makeover to Skittles' iconic video to Purple Mattress's raw egg test and customer testimonies, used creative storytelling to effectively communicate its message.

Integration of Traditional and Digital Media: Another element that successful campaigns had in common was the integration of traditional and digital media outlets. Purple Mattress made use of referral programmes and Kickstarter, but Skittles' marketing moved from television to the internet with ease. Dove's campaign made use of online and TV advertisements, while Old Spice successfully reached viewers on social media and TV.

User Engagement and Participation: Promoting user involvement and participation has been shown to be crucial for the success of viral content. Dove's CGI metamorphosis evoked strong feelings, Old Spice promoted user-generated material and comments, Purple Mattress utilised customer feedback and referral programmes, and Skittles spurred debates and sharing.

Memetic Potential and Cultural Relevance: For a number of initiatives, these two factors were crucial to their success. The "Taste the Rainbow" campaign by Skittles became a global phenomenon, and Old Spice's campaign created an internet meme with its spokesman to encourage more interaction and sharing.

5.1 Recommendation for further study

The author has emphasised the importance of using controlled trials, such as field studies, to examine how product attributes affect customer behaviour when making purchases. Through accurate specification of these features and the implementation of controlled experimental designs, researchers can obtain important insights into the ways in which differences in product attributes impact consumer decision-making processes. When combined with techniques such as conjoint analysis, field experiments offer a strong foundation for tracking customer behaviour over time, which makes it easier to create predictive models.

Moreover, the author pointed out the significance of acquiring genuine feedback from actual customers in order to precisely assess the effectiveness of online product sales. Working together with companies that make products can be quite important in this process since it allows academics to test out different approaches for getting input from actual customers.

The emergence of computer technology has provided businesses with previously unheard-of opportunities to obtain customer feedback via online survey forms integrated into their product websites. Taking advantage of these technological developments can produce rich datasets that shed light on consumer preferences, attitudes, and purchase patterns, which can then be used to inform future studies in the field of online selling.

To sum up, the author has argued in favour of investigating techniques like controlled trials and online questionnaires in order to improve predictive modelling and gain a deeper comprehension of customer behaviour in the context of online product sales. Through the adoption of novel methodologies and the establishment of cooperative alliances with industry participants, researchers can accelerate the progress of knowledge in this crucial field, providing significant perspectives for both theory and application.

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