



## **VIRAL MARKETING AWARENESS AND PURCHASE DECISION AMONG SHOPPING MALL CUSTOMERS**

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**Article History: Received:** 02.10.2022

**Revised:** 23.12.2022

**Accepted:** 15.03.2023

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### **Abstract**

Viral marketing is advertising that spreads quickly through word of mouth or other natural means. Since social media and the internet became more popular, there have been a lot more memes, shares, likes, and forwards that spread quickly. The study aims mainly to identify the awareness level of consumers regarding viral marketing and the influence of viral marketing on their purchase decisions. The researchers collected data from 200 shopping mall customers in Kozhikode District, Kerala, and applied T test, ANOVA, correlation, and regression analysis for the purpose of analysis.

**Keywords:** Viral Marketing; Buzz Marketing, Social Media, and Word of Mouth Marketing.

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**DOI: 10.31838/ecb/2023.12.s2.139**

## **1. Introduction**

Viral marketing is one of the most important way to promote products. It is a popular form of mass marketing these days because it works well and doesn't cost much. According to (Laudon & Traver, 2001) viral marketing is "the practice of getting customers to spread a company's marketing message to friends, family, and coworkers." Viral marketing is only a useful marketing tactic in today's fiercely competitive business environment if it motivates customers to act on the message (i.e., use the brand, product, or service advertised) and spread it to other potential customers. Therefore, the twin objectives of viral marketing are consumption and forwarding activity (Dobele et al., 2007). Since the advent of electronic media, viral marketing has been incredibly popular because these platforms significantly improve connections between businesses and potential customers (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2004; Gruen et al., 2006). Although viral marketing has the potential to be an effective method of commercial communication, its mechanisms are still not fully understood (Boroff, 2000; Helm, 2000). Different terminologies such as "Word-of-Mouse," (Vilpponen et al., 2006), "Internet Word-of-Mouth," (Goldenburg et al., 2001), "Buzz Marketing" (Thomas, 2004), "Referral Marketing" (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2004), and "Stealth Marketing" (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004) are used to characterise viral marketing. The transmission style utilised in viral marketing is typically informal. Different channels, such as email, chat rooms, mobile phones, discussion forums, and other social networking sites, are used to distribute messages. They might contain content in a variety of forms, including as text and photos, Microsoft PowerPoint files, Adobe Flash animations, YouTube video clips, and so forth (Woerndl et al., 2008). The purpose of this paper is to identify the awareness level, attitude and the influence of demographic characteristics and social media usage of shopping mall customers on the purchase decision in viral marketing.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **a. Consumer Awareness and Viral Marketing**

Viral phenomenon is a specific instance of maximal market penetration at a rapid growth rate, within a condensed amount of time, and with a minimal expense of promotion (Boppolige & Gurtoo, 2020). (Fox & Lind, 2020) explained viral message mutations, develops a model for the viral replication process, and identifies mutation susceptibility at different stages of that process. The impact of brand loyalty on WOM and VMA is found to be negatively moderated by risk perception, and the information diagnosticity of online reviews can

assist in lessening the un-favourable perceptions brought on by risk concerns (Nedumkallel, Babu, & Francis, 2020). (Mudrik, Rigelsky, Gavurova, Bačik, & Fedorko, 2020) compared viral advertising of ABSOLUT and the guerrilla campaign of the company 4KA to assess the effects of particular viral campaign elements on Millennials' purchasing decisions. One of the most crucial conclusions is that characteristics like novelty, relevance, humour, and surprise have a big impact on consumer behaviour.

### **b. Viral Marketing Strategies and Purchase Decision**

Consumers purchase intension is not only based on informativeness, but also based on credibility of the source and entertainment (Hosseinihah & Mirabolghasemi, 2022). (Souki, Chinelato, & Gonçalves, 2022) said that commercial videos with entertainment, social, and functional value can help build brand equity and brand attachment. (Muhajir, et al., 2022) found that viral marketing positively influences purchase intension. According to (Aditi, Djakasaputra, Dewianawati, Wahyoed, & Titin, 2022) viral marketing has significant impact on visit interest and supply chain performance. (Hendijani & Marvi, 2020) studied the impact of viral marketing on purchase intension and found that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and attitude influences purchase intension of Iranian social media users.

### **c. Social Media and Viral Marketing**

According to findings of (Tobon & García-Madariaga, 2021), online consumer decisions to buy experiences-type goods are influenced by online electronic Word Of Mouth, and this electronic Word Of Mouth has a positive valence. The studies of (Sung, 2021) point out that a combination of Augmented Reality marketing tools and traditional marketing approaches can promote shared social experience and purchase intensions. (Al Abri & Valaee, 2020) found that unfavourable media coverage causes people to doubt the advantages of using social health insurance. The best viral marketing material would involve assisting the underprivileged through social health insurance, according to Indonesian local wisdom.

## **3. Objectives of the Study**

### **3.1 Objectives**

- 1) To identify the awareness level of consumers on viral marketing
- 2) To analyse the influence of viral marketing messages on purchase decision
- 3) To measure the influence of demographic aspects and the social media usage of consumers on their attitude towards viral marketing

4) To measure the relationship between consumer awareness on viral marketing and purchase decision.

#### 4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

##### 4.1 Data Collection

Data is collected from sample respondents by circulating a structured questionnaire.

##### 4.2 Sampling Method

The population of the study consists of consumers of Kozhikode District, Kerala, India. As the population is infinite and spread throughout the district, it is quite difficult to conduct a population survey. Hence, the researchers adopted a multi-stage sampling technique to select the required number of respondents from different parts of the district. In the first stage, the researchers selected the major shopping malls of Kozhikode District. Which consists of 7 malls namely, Address Mall, City Mall, Emerald Mall, Focus Mall, Hilite Mall, RP Mall and Surabhi Mall. In the second stage, pick out 3 of these Malls by applying Lottery method. The selected shopping malls were Focus Mall, RP Mall and Hilite Mall. In the third stage, respondents were selected from these 3 shopping malls by using convenience sampling. A total of 200 consumers are selected for the study.

##### 4.3 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was done to evaluate the consistency and validity of each multiple-item scale variable utilised in the survey. For all variables in the questionnaire, the reliability analysis of the pilot research conducted among 50 consumers in shopping malls found a Cronbach's Alpha value of

higher than 0.70, indicating that it is reliable and consistent.

##### 4.5 Normality Test

The value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S test) is less than 0.05, indicating that the test is significant and the data are non-normal. As a result, it's critical to check the skewness and kurtosis to determine if the deviation is serious. Non-normality will be serious only when the value of skewness is more than three and the value of kurtosis is more than ten (Kline, 2011). Since none of the values exceed this threshold, univariate normality can be assumed. As a result, researchers can perform parametric tests under the assumption of a normal distribution, and it is assumed that the sample data was normally distributed.

#### 5. Empirical Results

##### 5.1 Awareness Level of Consumers on Viral Marketing

###### 5.1.1 Gender-wise Comparison of Awareness Level of Consumers on Viral Marketing

In this section, the researchers try to find out the awareness level of viral marketing among male and female consumers. To know the difference, the researcher has done the descriptive analysis. To find out the statistical significance of the difference in mean score t-test also applied. In this case Levene's test of homogeneity shows p-value as 0.051, i.e., equal variance assumed. So, the study considered the value of equal variance assumed. The result is shown in table 5.1

Table 5.1  
Gender-wise Comparison of Awareness Level

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Max Score	t value	P value	Remarks
Male	100	24.13	6.14	40	-1.195	0.233	Equal variances assumed
Female	100	25.07	4.92				
Total	200	24.60	5.57				

Source: Survey data

From the table 5.1, it can be observed that aggregate awareness score of male consumer is 24.13 as against the maximum score of 40. This shows that in percentage terms, the awareness is only 60%. In the case of female consumers, the aggregate score is 25.07 out of 40. In percentage terms, the awareness level is 63%. The difference is not significant as the 'p' value for the 't' test conducted is greater than 0.05. From this, it can be concluded that the awareness level of male and female consumers are not different.

###### 5.1.2 Age Category-wise Comparison of Awareness Level of Consumers on Viral Marketing

The data relating to awareness level has been classified age wise and presented in Table 5.2 to understand the whether the awareness level is different among the consumers in different age category. The mean difference is also tested with ANOVA and F value is also given in the table.

Table 5.2  
Age Category-wise Comparison of Awareness Level

Age Category	N	Mean	SD	Max Score	F value	P value	Remarks
Below 20 years	70	25.91	4.05	40	3.439**	.034	ANOVA
20 – 40 years	95	23.64	6.39				
Above 40 years	35	24.57	5.39				
<b>Total</b>	200	24.60	5.57				

Source: Survey data

\*\*Statistically significant at the 5% significant level.

From the above table it can be seen that the highest mean score of awareness level is 25.91 (4.05) which is in the age category of ‘below 20 years’ and the lowest mean is 23.64 (6.39) in the age category ‘20-40 years’. The p value is 0.034 which means that mean score of different age categories are significantly different. It can be inferred from the result that younger consumers have better awareness on viral marketing than older ones. The

age category and awareness level is having the inverse relationship. Consumers in the lower age category have greater awareness and higher age category have lower awareness on viral marketing. It may be due to interest of young towards technology and social media.

To know the exact significant difference between different age groups one has to use multiple comparisons. In this case, Tamhane’s T2 test has been applied to identify the pair wise differences since the equal variances are not assumed. The result is shown in the Table. 5.3

Table 5.3  
Age Category wise Post Hoc Test – Awareness Level

Age Category (I)	Age Category (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	P value
Below 20 Years	20 – 40 Years	2.27218*	.81504	.018
	Above 40 Years	1.34286	1.03097	.485
20 – 40 Years	Below 20 Years	-2.27218*	.81504	.018
	Above 40 Years	-.92932	1.12227	.795
Above 40 Years	Below 20 Years	-1.34286	1.03097	.485
	Above 40 Years	.92932	1.12227	.795

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The table 5.3 shows that ‘Below 20 years’ age category is significantly different from all other age category in case of awareness level and from the mean difference it can be found that ‘Below 20 years’ is having the highest awareness level on viral marketing.

In order to understand the variability of awareness level on viral marketing among consumers in different education categories, the data relating to awareness level has been rearranged educational category-wise and presented in Table 5.4. F test is applied to find out the statistical significance of the mean difference. The result is exhibited in the following table.

### 5.1.3 Educational Qualification-wise Comparison of Awareness Level of Consumers on Viral Marketing

Table 5.4  
Educational Qualification-wise Comparison of Awareness Level

Education	N	Mean	SD	Max Score	F value	P value	Remarks
Schooling	62	25.42	5.49	40	4.649**	.004	ANOVA
Graduate	82	25.00	4.56				
Post Graduate	47	23.57	6.71				
Professional	7	18.00	3.83				
<b>Total</b>	198	24.55	5.56				

Source: Survey data

\*\*Statistically significant at the 5% significant level.

The above table reveals that consumers with 'Schooling' educational level is having the highest mean score of 25.42(5.49) and the 'professionals' having the lowest score of 18.00(3.83). Since the p value (0.004) is less than 0.05, the mean score of the awareness level of consumers on viral marketing is significantly different from others. It can be

concluded that professionals having the lowest level of awareness.

To find out exact difference among the groups multiple comparisons have been done through Post Hoc analysis. Tamhane's T2 test has been applied to identify the pairwise differences since the equal variances are not assumed. The result is shown in table 5.5

Table 5.5  
Educational Qualification wise Post Hoc Test – Awareness Level

Educational Qualification (I)	Educational Qualification (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	P value
Schooling	Graduate	.41935	.85982	.997
	Post Graduate	1.84489	1.20200	.562
	Professional	7.41935*	1.60654	.007
Graduate	Schooling	-.41935	.85982	.997
	Post Graduate	1.42553	1.10118	.737
	Professional	7.00000*	1.53257	.013
Post Graduate	Schooling	-1.84489	1.20200	.562
	Graduate	-1.42553	1.10118	.737
	Professional	5.57447*	1.74766	.044
Professional	Schooling	-7.41935*	1.60654	.007
	Graduate	-7.00000*	1.53257	.013
	Post Graduate	-5.57447*	1.74766	.044

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The table 5.5 shows that those consumers having 'professional' qualification is significantly different from all other educational level in case of awareness on viral marketing and from the mean difference it can be found that 'professional' is having lower awareness than the other educational categories.

#### 5.1.4 Annual Income Category-wise Comparison of Awareness Level of Consumers on Viral Marketing

Table 5.6  
Annual Income-wise Comparison of Awareness Level

Education	N	Mean	SD	Max Score	F value	P value	Remarks
Less than 5 Lakhs	168	24.61	5.42	40	1.221	.297	ANOVA
5 to 10 lakhs	28	25.14	6.52				
More than 10 lakhs	4	20.50	3.42				
Total	200	24.60	5.57				

Source: Survey data

From the above table it can be observed that annual income category '5 to 10 lakhs' having the highest mean score of 25.14(6.52) and the annual income of 'more than 10 lakhs' is having the lowest score 20.50(3.42). since the p value is 0.297, the mean score of annual income categories is not

In order to understand the variability of awareness level on viral marketing among consumers in different income category, the data relating to awareness level has been rearranged annual income category wise and presented in table 5.6.

Analysis of Variance is carried out to find out the statistical difference of the mean difference and F value is calculated and presented in the table.

significantly different from others. So, it can be concluded that the awareness level on viral marketing is not significantly different among consumers with different annual income.

### 5.2 Influence of Social Media Usage on Purchase Decision in Viral Marketing

To examine the influence of social media usage on decision making in viral marketing, the data relating to purchase decision in viral marketing has been

rearranged social media usage wise and presented in the table 5.7.

ANOVA is carried out to find out the statistical significance of the mean difference and F value is calculated and presented in the table.

Table 5.7  
Social Media Usage-wise Comparison of Purchase Decision

Social Media Usage	N	Mean	SD	Max Score	F value	P value	Remarks
Active	114	19.58	3.90	30	2.227	.111	ANOVA
Not Very Frequent	77	19.18	3.61				
Non-user	9	16.89	2.37				
Total	200	19.31	3.76				

Source: Survey data

The above table shows that the highest mean score of purchase decision is 19.58 (3.90) which is category of 'active social media user' and lowest mean is 16.89 (2.37) in the category of 'non-user'. The p value is 0.111 which means that mean score of different categories of social media users are not

significantly different. It can be inferred from the result that social media usage does not influence the purchase decision in viral marketing.

### 5.3 Social Media Channels used by Customers

Table 5.8  
Usage of Social Media Channels

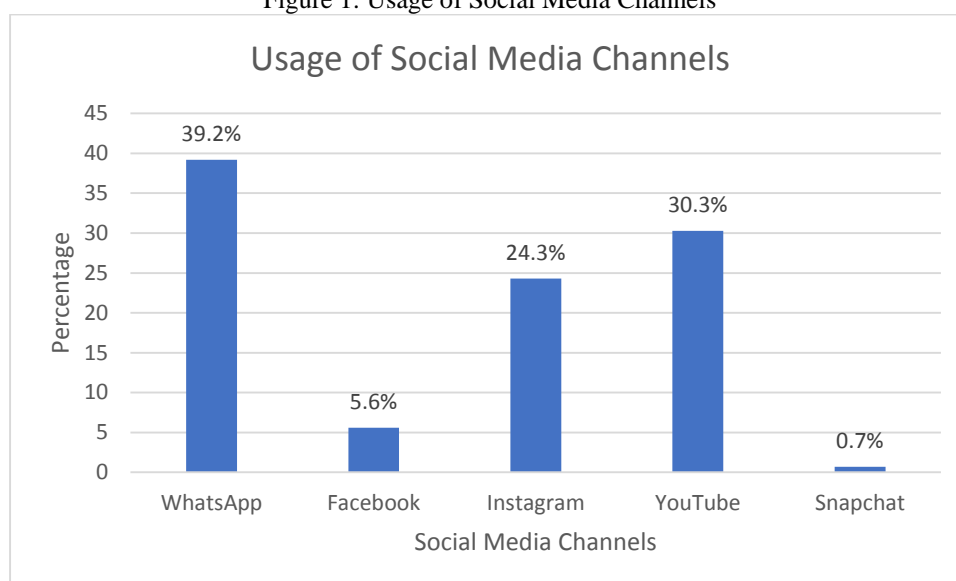
Social Media Channels	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
WhatsApp	176	39.2%	88.0%
Facebook	25	5.6%	12.5%
Instagram	109	24.3%	54.5%
YouTube	136	30.3%	68.0%
Snapchat	3	0.7%	1.5%
Total	449	100.0%	224.5%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Table 5.8 indicates that the majority of the respondents (39.2%) use WhatsApp and YouTube (30.3%) for communication, while Snapchat (0.7%) is the least used social media platform among the sample respondents. Among the 200 sample

respondents, 24.3% use Instagram and 5.6% use Facebook as platforms for social communication(Figure 1). So, it can be concluded that viral messages might be circulated through WhatsApp rather than other social media channels.

Figure 1: Usage of Social Media Channels



Source: Primary Data

#### 5.4 Relationship Awareness on Viral Marketing and Purchase Decision

Table 5.9  
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Awareness on Viral Marketing	24.60	5.57	200
Purchase Decision	19.31	3.76	200

Source: Primary Data

Table 5.9 shows that the mean and standard deviation of consumer awareness on viral marketing and Purchase Decision. Awareness has a mean score of 24.60 with a standard deviation of 5.57 and Purchase Decision has with mean 19.31 and

standard deviation 3.76. the correlation between these variables is shown in table 5.10.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relation between Awareness on Viral Marketing and Purchase Decision

Table 5.10  
Correlation between Awareness on Viral Marketing and Purchase Decision

		Awareness on Viral Marketing	Purchase Decision
Awareness on Viral Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	0.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	200	200

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

From the table 5.10, it is clear that the Karl Pearson Correlation Co-efficient(r) is 0.567, which shows a moderate positive correlation. The p value is statistically significant as it is 0.000 (p < 0.05). Hence the null hypothesis, there is no relationship between Awareness on Viral Marketing and Purchase Decision is rejected. Thus, it can be interpreted that awareness of consumers on viral

marketing influence the purchase decision of consumers.

##### 5.4.1 Regression Analysis

In order to analyze the effect of consumer awareness on purchase decision in viral marketing regression analysis is to be administered. The correlation between awareness on viral marketing and purchase decision showed that there is significant relationship

between these two variables. The research hypothesis is as follows:  
Decision

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no effect of Awareness on Purchase

The relevant data is given the table 5.11

Table 5.11  
Model Summary of Regression Equation of Awareness on Viral Marketing and Purchase Decision

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.567 <sup>a</sup>	.321	.318	3.11

a. Predictors: (Constant), Awareness  
Source: Primary Data

Correlation between dependent and independent variable is (0.567) reveals that these variables are positively correlated, indicating that they are moving in the same direction. It can be stated that

the R square of the regression model is 0.321 which indicates that 32.1% of the variation of purchase decision is determined by awareness of consumers on viral marketing.

Table 5.12  
ANOVA of Regression Model for Awareness on Viral Marketing and Purchase Decision

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	904.055	1	904.055	93.604	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	1912.340	198	9.658		
Total	2816.395	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Awareness  
Source: Primary Data

The ANOVA table 5.12 reveals that the significance and the validity of the regression model. The F value

of 93.604 and p value of 0.000 (p < 0.05) in the ANOVA table shows that the model is statistically significant. The result indicates that the regression model can be used to study the relationship between awareness on viral marketing and purchase decision.

Table 5.13  
Co-efficient of Regression Model for Awareness on Viral Marketing and Purchase Decision

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	9.887	.998		9.907	.000
Awareness	.383	.040	.567	9.675	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision  
Source: Primary Data  
The following equation represents the regression of effect of viral marketing awareness on purchase decision.

$$PD = 9.887 + 0.383 \text{ AVM}$$

$$\text{Purchase Decision (PD)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1$$

Where

$\beta_0 = \text{Constant}$

$\beta_1 = \text{Coefficient of Independent Variable}$

AVM = Awareness on Viral Marketing

From the above equation, it can be concluded that when viral marketing awareness increases by one unit, purchase decision increases by 38.3 percent. It can be seen from the result that the significance level of viral marketing awareness has significant

effect on purchase decision of shopping mall customers as the significance level of t test is less than 0.05.

Regression analysis led us to reject the hypothesis that viral marketing awareness has no effect on purchase decision of shopping mall customers. The result reveals that purchase decision is affected by consumer awareness on viral marketing.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this paper is to identify the awareness level, attitude and the influence of demographic characteristics and social media usage of shopping mall customers on the purchase decision in viral marketing. The researchers selected 200 shopping mall customers from



Kozhikode district of Kerala for this purpose. The statistical tools such as t test, ANOVA, Correlation and Regression analysis were used in this study. In the light of this study the researchers arrived at the conclusion that awareness level of male and female consumers were not different. Youngsters have greater awareness than adults. It may be due to the youngsters' interest towards technology and social media. The analysis of occupation reveals that professionals have the lowest level of awareness than other educational categories while there is no difference in consumer awareness in income-wise analysis. Based on the responses of sample customers, the highly used social media platform is WhatsApp while the study identified that the usage of social media does not influence the purchase decision in viral marketing. The correlation analysis shows that moderate positive correlation between consumer awareness on viral marketing and purchase decision. And the regression output tells us purchase decision is affected by consumer awareness on viral marketing. In the light of this study the researchers concludes that Viral Marketing has proved as effective and reliable marketing tool as it uses the consumers as the marketing media with no or minimum cost. The current study also contribute to the scope of further research in the topic the attitude of consumers towards word of mouth and viral marketing in respect of particular product and services. Research can be conducted to identify the category of product and services that influence consumers to share the messages to their network. Researchers can also study perception of consumers towards viral marketing and there is scope for comparative studies also.

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