

# Value of Sharing: Viral Advertisement

Duygu Aydın, Aşina Gülerarslan, Süleyman Karaçor, and Tarık Doğan

**Abstract**—Sharing motivations of viral advertisements by consumers and the impacts of these advertisements on the perceptions for brand will be questioned in this study. Three fundamental questions are answered in the study. These are advertisement watching and sharing motivations of individuals, criteria of liking viral advertisement and the impact of individual attitudes for viral advertisement on brand perception respectively. This study will be carried out via a viral advertisement which was practiced in Turkey. The data will be collected by survey method and the sample of the study consists of individuals who experienced the practice of sample advertisement. Data will be collected by online survey method and will be analyzed by using SPSS statistical package program.

Recently traditional advertisement mind have been changing. New advertising approaches which have significant impacts on consumers have been argued. Viral advertising is a modernist advertisement mind which offers significant advantages to brands apart from traditional advertising channels such as television, radio and magazines. Viral advertising also known as Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) consists of free spread of convincing messages sent by brands among interpersonal communication. When compared to the traditional advertising, a more provocative thematic approach is argued.

The foundation of this approach is to create advertisements that are worth sharing with others by consumers. When that fact is taken into consideration, in a manner of speaking it can also be stated that viral advertising is media engineering.

The content worth sharing makes people being a volunteer spokesman of a brand and strengthens the emotional bonds among brand and consumer. Especially for some sectors in countries which are having traditional advertising channel limitations, viral advertising creates vital advantages.

**Keywords**—Viral advertising, marketing, consumers, brands.

## I. LITERATURE REVIEW

**I**N recent years consumers have been intensely surrounded by information and communication technologies broadcasted through the internet. As a result of this, e-Wom in other words viral marketing has gained importance [1]. Viral advertising is a dimension of viral marketing which gains more importance increasingly for many brands [2]. Viral marketing can be defined as electronic way of word of mouth

communication [3]. Viral marketing is seen as an effective method in order to transfer information about products and to raise brand awareness by making use of social networks of individuals. In that social network consumers not only gather information about products but also resort to that information in purchase decisions. Thanks to that social network lots of consumers are reached in a quick way [4]. Viral marketing is seen as a very important marketing tool while considering access efficiency to consumers [5].

Upon the interpersonal advices' becoming an important phenomenon in electronic environment, viral advertising has become a significant communication tool for advertisers [6]. Viral advertising is defined as an unpaid interpersonal communication based on designing the internet with provocative content by an acknowledged advertiser to persuade or influence the target audience with the aim of providing content with interpersonal transition [7]. Palka, Poustchi, and Wiedemann define viral advertising as: "The term viral describes a type of marketing that infects customers with an advertising message which passes from one customer to the next like a rampant flu virus" [8]. Just like a virus, viral messages spreading via social network can be interpreted as persuading, interesting, and recollective for consumers [2].

The difference between viral advertising and traditional advertising is primarily stated as unpaid media content. Basically, viral marketing is practiced within the scope of existing mail list of loyal consumers or official website of the brand. Traditional advertising is defined as impersonal advertising and viral advertising is defined as personal advertising. The basic objective of viral advertising is to change message content into viral and make it distributed by reliable sources like family or friends [7].

In a study conducted to evaluate consumer attitudes towards viral marketing, it was stated that in general terms consumers had positive attitudes towards viral marketing. According to the study, it was remarked that one of the most important elements of viral marketing affecting consumer attitudes is that it is informative. Source reliability and amusingness follow this element. Relevant and useful viral informings affect consumer attitude in a positive way. In addition to this, source reliability and amusing contents increase consumer acceptability of viral marketing messages [9].

As consumers regard an e-mail sent by their friends as the most reliable source, spread of viral campaigns on social networking sites gets easier [10]. Natural spread of a product or a service of a brand without any intervention of the brand itself is in one sense named as organic word-of-mouth marketing. The exact opposite reinforced word of mouth marketing is defined as brands' launching a campaign and making consumers referring to brands [11].

D. Aydın is with the Selçuk University, Faculty of Communications, Department of Advertising, Konya, 42151, Turkey (phone: +90-332-223-694; fax: +90-332-241-0187; e-mail: duyguaydin@selcuk.edu.tr).

A. Gülerarslan is with the Selçuk University, Faculty of Communications, Department of Advertising, Konya, 42151, Turkey (phone: +90-332-223-694; fax: +90-332-241-0187; e-mail: asina.asina@gmail.com).

S. Karaçor is with the Selçuk University, Faculty of Communications, Department of Advertising, Konya, 42151, Turkey (phone: +90-332-223-659; fax: +90-332-241-0187; e-mail: skaracor@selcuk.edu.tr).

T. Doğan is with the Selçuk University, Faculty of Communications, Konya, 42151, Turkey (phone: +90-332-223-691; fax: +90-332-241-0187; e-mail: tdogan@selcuk.edu.tr).

Word-of-mouth communication can be stated as stronger than traditional advertising. It is viewed as significant in terms of creating brand pusher effect. Viral marketing makes progress by means of strong personal advices of consumers. Viral advertising, sometimes not public as traditional marketing, is again practiced by identifying the advertiser like traditional marketing. While routine advertising concept is defined as traditional advertising, viral advertising is identified with advertising of forming provocative contents. In order to form provocative effect, it is stated that viral advertising content needs to be unusual. In this context application of emotional and amusing content are the prominent elements in viral advertising [7].

Ryan and Jones indicate that there are four rules for brands to consider while setting the campaign which will insure word-of-mouth marketing. These are; content forming rules which are interesting, simple, making people happy and ensuring trust/respect [11].

In this study, watching and sharing motivations of viral advertising by consumers are presented through a viral advertisement campaign which is quite influential in Turkey. In accordance with these data, it is aimed to make contributions to interpretation of viral advertising value in advertising field. The viral advertising sample lying in the center of the study is not included in social networks through the Facebook page of the advertiser brand. The popularity of social Networks like Facebook, Msn or Twitter is getting increasingly common in the world and in Turkey. Facebook has the highest number of followers and it is the most popular one among these social networks. Facebook has 689.332.700 members all around the world in March, 2013. Turkey ranks in top places among that big phenomenon. Turkey holds the fourth place after the United Nations, Indonesia, and the United Kingdom in terms of Facebook members. Both in Turkey and all over the world, the popularity of social networks and usage of them are very important for viral marketing and advertising practices. According to a study on the internet use conducted by Turkish Statistical Institute [12], it was established that the number of internet users, internet use level and rate of online shopping are becoming increasingly popular. With reference to these data, it is understood that viral advertising is a gradually rising value and opportunity for brands.

## II. THE METHOD

This study which is an exploratory one aims to associate advertisement sharing motivations of internet users in accordance with advertisement appreciation and demographic variables and to try to answer “why” and “how” questions. The study was conducted online on Facebook users sharing Anadolu Efes ads on the internet on probabilistic sampling. Simple random sampling, enabling each individual to participate equally in the study, was used in the study. The questionnaire form was directly texted to the people who liked and shared the ads from the date 20.02.2013 when the ads was broadcasted on Anadolu Efes Facebook page with the help of survey data base administrator that helps gather data on the

internet and sends results to SPSS program.

The questionnaire form which was directly sent to participants through the internet consists of 4 parts. The first part includes behavioral questions such as how often individuals watch and share ads on the internet and which interactive acts regarding Anadolu Efes Advertisement (like, share, comment) they perform. The second part specifically deals with finding out the participants’ watching and sharing motivations of Anadolu Efes Advertisement. Considering the literature review, a 32-statement attitude was prepared, participation levels of the participants to written statements were evaluated by five point likert scale (5= Definitely Agree 1= Definitely Disagree). The third part of the study gives information about the appreciation level of mentioned viral advertisement. Considering the literature again, influence level of image, words and music elements was questioned by addressing the appreciation level in Creativity, Meaningfulness, Amusingness, Trueness, Coziness, and Clarity context.

## III. FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

The research questions were answered by 287 internet users. 126 (45 %) of these participants were female and 154 (55 %) of them were male. 7 (2.59 %) of the participants did not specify their gender. 42.2 % of the users remark that they rarely share advertisements on the internet. The rate of people who always share advertisements is 9.4%. Almost 20 % of the participants state that they very rarely share advertisements on virtual media.

TABLE I  
THE FREQUENCY OF ADVERTISEMENT WATCHING AND SHARING THROUGH THE INTERNET

		Freq.	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	27	9,4	9,4	9,4
	Often	83	28,9	28,9	38,3
	Rarely	121	42,2	42,2	80,5
	Very Rarely	56	19,5	19,5	100
	Total	287	100	100	

TABLE II  
INTERACTIVE BEHAVIOR REGARDING ADVERTISEMENT

		Freq.	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Only like (Like )	122	42,5	42,5	42,5
	Shared on my own page	76	26,5	26,5	69,0
	Shared (Share) and Commented	64	22,3	22,3	91,3
	Recommended to other friend(s) (Shared on their wall/ sent them)	25	8,7	8,7	100,0
	Total	287	100,0	100,0	

Table II shows the interactive practices of the participants regarding Anadolu Efes advertisement. According to the table, 42.5 % of the participants only liked the advertisement. The other 57.5 % performed interactive practices and they shared it on their own pages, on their friends’ pages and they commented on it.

Table III shows data about advertisement information. The

answers to the question of what the advertisement is about and whom it speaks for are quite surprising. 42.9 % of the participants think that the advertisement is about Anadolu Efes Basketball Team. When legal marketing communication limitations of alcoholic drinks in Turkey are taken into consideration, this case can be considered as a procedural marketing success in remaining on the agenda and in making an impression on consumer perception both by basketball team sponsorship and by viral advertisement. On the other side 32.1 % of the participants think that the advertisement is about Anadolu Group, Efes Pilsen alcoholic drink, and basketball team.

TABLE III  
ADVERTISEMENT INFORMATION

		Frequency	Percent %
Valid	Advertisement of Anadolu Group	24	8,4
	Efes Pilsen drink advertisement	48	16,7
	Efes Pilsen Basketball Team advertisement	123	42,9
	All	92	32,1
	Total	287	100,0

In this study, expressions regarding viewer motivations about advertisement sharing were grouped and they were evaluated as motivations about entertainment, socialization, ego enhancement, information and brand value. Values of this question are presented on Table IV. As it is presented Socialization and Ego Enhancement are the used statements that indicate the most association and high means. Socialization factor which is "By sharing this advertisement I shared my feelings and thoughts with others, got in touch with others, felt that I existed in social life, developed familiarity with the sympathizers of the brand" got the highest value (M=2.67). "Ego Enhancement" value follows the socialization factor with a value of (M=2.61). This motivation includes the following expressions: "it is an advertisement sharing that helped me express myself, it adds distinction, it provides admiration of more prestigious people other than sharing something, it makes people experience the feeling of teaching others something, it makes people feel themselves different, it satisfies ego".

The third motivation that the participants associate is Information. Information motivation which includes the following statements: "I felt myself informed of the agenda; I had knowledge about the brand by watching and sharing; I informed others of the brand and the advertisement by sharing" has a value of (M=2.37).

In the questionnaire form which includes brand value perceptions of the consumers through advertising, while the following statements: "This advertisement provided me with positive attitudes to Anadolu Group; It made me think that Efes Pilsen is a strong brand" indicate feelings towards the brand, the following statement: "This advertisement is like an assurance that Efes Pilsen is a quality brand" reveals whether the advertisement is perceived as a quality assurance or not by the viewer. Participation level of this advertisement is (M=2.35). With the statements regarding the brand value "Sharing the Efes advertisement is proud, sharing the

advertisement strengthened my sense of belonging to the brand; I experienced the feeling of being a team follower by sharing the advertisement; Sharing the advertisement aroused the feeling of becoming a partner with the brand success; strengthened my sense of belonging to the brand, I felt like a representative of Efes Pilsen by sharing the advertisement, watching and sharing the advertisement enhanced my brand appreciation, Efes is a brand that satisfies its consumers" participant satisfaction concerning brand loyalty and belonging through advertisement was evaluated.

The factor with the following statements : "Sharing the advertisement entertained me, distracted my attention, cheered me up, relaxed me, helped me take a pleasant break, I nothing better to do, so I watched the advertisement and shared it, I watched and shared it to spend time" was defined as Entertainment & Leisure Time and had the least participation association ( M= 2.02).

TABLE IV  
DESCRIPTIVES OF ADVERTISING SHARING MOTIVES

Sharing Motives	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. D.
Socialization	287	1	5	2,679	1,180
Ego Enhancement	287	1	5	2,611	1,093
Information	287	1	5	2,376	1,063
Brand Value	287	1	5	2,351	1,028
Entertainment & Leisure Time	287	1	5	2,022	0,782
Valid N (listwise)	287				

A positive significant correlation is found between The Advertisement Likeability and Sharing Motivation. As the likeability level is increased, participation level of sharing motivation increases (Table V).

TABLE V  
CORRELATION ANALYSES

		Entertainment	Socialization	Ego Enh.	Information	Brand Value
Likeability	Pearson Correlation	,677 (**)	,530 (**)	,504 (**)	,507 (**)	,617 (**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	287	287	287	287	287

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

TABLE VI  
ADVERTISING SHARING MOTIVES; LIKEABILITY X GENDER

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. D.	Std. Error Mean
Entertainment & Leisure Time	Female	126	1,8320	,67938	,06052
	Male	154	2,1970	,82302	,06632
Socialization	Female	126	2,4821	1,08958	,09707
	Male	154	2,8458	1,22147	,09843
Ego	Female	126	2,4490	1,03879	,09254
	Male	154	2,7597	1,11170	,08958
Information	Female	126	2,2063	,99676	,08880
	Male	154	2,5281	1,08913	,08776
Brand Value	Female	126	2,1176	,91663	,08166
	Male	154	2,5502	1,07247	,08642
Likeability	Female	126	1,3862	,51038	,04547
	Male	154	1,6898	,75131	,06054

Table VI shows advertisement sharing motivations, likeability and gender difference. According to the table, men have a higher likeability level and motivational tendency when compared to women.

TABLE VII  
ADVERTISING SHARING MOTIVES; LIKEABILITY X PRODUCT USING

	Do you consume Efes Pilsen drink products?	N	Mean	Sig.
Entertainment & Leisure Time	Yes	206	1,8948	,72377
	No	77	2,3485	,83473
Socialization	Yes	206	2,5109	1,12600
	No	77	3,1136	1,19933
Ego	Yes	206	2,4667	1,04113
	No	77	2,9926	1,15406
Information	Yes	206	2,2686	1,00304
	No	77	2,6667	1,14962
Brand Value	Yes	206	2,1165	,91848
	No	77	2,9587	1,06013
Likeability	Yes	206	1,4903	,63625
	No	77	1,7186	,73627

Table VII presents the correlation between consuming Efes Pilsen drinks with likeability and advertisement motives. In addition to this, whether advertisement sharing motivations and likeability levels differ depending on the participants' consuming Efes Pilsen products or not consuming them was revealed via independent sample t test. According to the relevant analysis results, it was stated that participation level of subjects who did not consume the products to entertainment ( $t=-4.49$ ,  $p<.001$ ), socialization ( $t=-3.93$ ,  $p<.001$ ), ego enhancement ( $t=-3.67$ ,  $p<.001$ ), information ( $t=-2.85$ ,  $p<.001$ ), brand value ( $t=-6.57$ ,  $p<.001$ ) motivations were significantly higher than the participants consuming the products. According to the same analysis results, male participants had higher participation association on likeability level for all motivations than female participants.

When one-way variance (ANOVA) analysis was applied in the study, no significant correlation was found between education level, motives and likeability. As education level increased, the importance attached to ego and socialization motives increased, too. On the other hand, significant differences were found regarding sharing motives between the participants of 26- 35 and of 36- 45 age range and of 19- 25 age range ( $p<.01$ ). According to that, participants of 19-25 age range had a higher participation level regarding advertisement sharing motives than the other group.

TABLE VIII  
ADVERTISING SHARING MOTIVES; LIKEABILITY X AGE

Sharing Motives	Age	Upper Bound
Entertainment & Leisure Time	19-25	<b>2,4113</b>
	26-35	<b>1,7827</b>
	36-45	<b>1,4868</b>
Socialization	19-25	<b>3,259</b>
	26-35	<b>2,3987</b>
	36-45	<b>1,8214</b>
Ego Enhancement	19-25	<b>3,0247</b>
	26-35	<b>2,425</b>
	36-45	<b>1,9501</b>
Information	19-25	<b>2,6954</b>
	26-35	<b>2,2827</b>
	36-45	<b>1,8095</b>
Brand Value	19-25	<b>2,7672</b>
	26-35	<b>2,1484</b>
	36-45	<b>1,733</b>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Efes Pilsen is the most popular alcoholic drink brand of the Anadolu Group. Due to the legal limitations on marketing alcoholic drinks in Turkey, Efes Pilsen has tried to protect its brand value through basketball team sponsorship and has been successful in that for long years. Research findings reveal that even a non-drinker group can be a volunteer representative for an alcoholic drink brand through viral advertisement. Thus, almost 60% of the participants interacted directly and shared the advertisement on their own pages and on their friends' pages and commented on it. This case can be assumed as an indicator that the advertisement matched to the viral and viral marketing objectives were realized mostly.

On the other hand, the majority of the population who is the volunteer representatives of the advertisement does not relate the advertisement to alcoholic drinks and think that the advertisement belongs to the basketball team. Moreover, being a consumer of the product or not is not a good reason to promote advertisement. On the contrary, sharing the advertisement should be realized with stronger motivational trends for non-consumers of the product when compared to consumers. Creation of this illusion is certainly a result of sponsorship attempts that the brand did for long years. This situation confirms that viral environment is an opportunity channel for promotion of existing sponsorship attempts of brands. Brands' working sponsorship attempts that they practice in various areas up into "marketing tools" on viral environment will serve to attempts of brand value with lesser costs.

Socialization and ego enhancement lie on the foreground in advertisement sharing. At this point strategies that will serve to socialization of individuals and achieving ego enhancement in creative applications on the internet environment which is a personal channel will gain importance. The obtained data show that majority of the participants rarely share advertisement on the internet environment and as the likeability of advertisements increase sharing levels also increase. In this context, creative applications aimed at increasing likeability in viral advertisements play a key role. Success of viral advertisements is closely related to advertisers' taking likeability criteria and advertisement sharing motivations of target audience into consideration during viral marketing implementations.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] S. Helm, "Viral Marketing – Establishing consumer relationships by 'word-of-mouth'", *Electronic Markets* 10 (3), 2000, pp.158–161.
- [2] P. Eckler and P. Bolls, "Spreading the Virus: Emotional Tone of Viral Advertising and Its Effect on Forwarding Intentions and Attitudes", *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 11 (2), 2011, pp. 1-11.
- [3] J.E. Phelps, L. Regina, M. Lynne, P. David and R. Niranjana, "Viral Marketing or Electronic Word of Mouth Advertising: Examining Consumer Responses and Motivations to Pass Along E-mail", *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44 (4), 2004, pp.333–348.
- [4] D. Cruz and C. Fill, "Evaluating Viral Marketing: Isolating the Key Criteria", *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 26 (7), 2008, pp. 743-758.
- [5] M. Woerndl, "Internet-induced Marketing Techniques: Critical Factors in Viral Marketing Campaigns", *International Journal of Business Science and Applied Management* 3(1), 2008, pp.33–45.

- [6] A. De Bruyn, and L. Gary “A Multi-Stage Model of Word-of-Mouth Influence Through Viral Marketing”, International Journal of Research in Marketing, 25 (3), 2008, pp.151–163.
- [7] L. Porter and G. J. Golan, “From Subservient Chickens to Brawny Men: A Comparison of Viral Advertising to Television Advertising”, Journal of Interactive Advertising, 6 (2), 2006, pp.30-38.
- [8] W. Palka, K. Pousttchi, and D.G. Wiedemann, “Mobile Word-of-Mouth – A Grounded Theory of Mobile Viral Marketing”, Journal of Information Technology, 24 (2), 2009, pp. 172-185.
- [9] K.I. Zernigah and K. Sohail, “Consumers’ Attitude Towards Viral Marketing In Pakistan”, Management & Marketing Challenges for the Knowledge Society, 7 (4), 2012, pp. 645-662.
- [10] S. Ünal, “Viral Pazarlamanın Sosyal Paylaşım Sitelerine Üye Olan Kullanıcılar Üzerindeki Etkisini İnceleyen Pilot Bir Çalışma”, Öneri C:9, Sayı:36, 2011, pp.73-86.
- [11] D. Ryan, and C. Jones, *Understanding Digital Marketing*, London and Philadelphia, 2009, Kogan Page.
- [12] [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr), 07.04.2013.