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Viral Advertising: Popularity and Willingness to Share among the Czech Internet Population

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***Abstract*—**This paper presents results of primary quantitative research on viral advertising with focus on popularity and willingness to share viral video among Czech Internet population. It starts with brief theoretical debate on viral advertising, which is used for the comparison of the results. For purpose of collecting data, online questionnaire survey was given to 384 respondents. Statistics utilized in this research included frequency, percentage, correlation and Pearson's Chi-square test. Data was evaluated using SPSS software. The research analysis disclosed high popularity of viral advertising video among Czech Internet population but implies lower willingness to share it. Significant relationship between likability of viral video technique and age of the viewer was found.

***Keywords*—**Internet advertising, Internet population, promotion, marketing communication, viral advertising, viral video.

I. Introduction

SINCE the year 2008 the size of the *Internet population* has grown dramatically from only half of the population in the Czech Republic to 70% of the Czech population in 2013[1]. The latest data show, that in January 2014 there were 6.8 million people older than 10 years of age using Internet connection. Companies have to reflect these rapid changes in the society and particularly adapt their communication strategies to the new development. More and more customers can be reached by online advertising.

Nowadays effectiveness of traditional offline advertising is constantly decreasing [2]-[4]. Unfortunately the same tendencies can be found in online world such as banner blindness, low click-through rates and ad clutter. Cho and Cheon's [5] theoretical model of ad avoidance consists of three latent variables which are: *goal impediment*, perceived *ad clutter,* and *prior negative experience*. In online environment users have more control on which content they want to see. They have a possibility to jump to another website while obligatory pop-up or advertising appear before the actual beginning of wanted video. Therefore, pushing the message aggressively through the Internet is not effective.

While classic online advertising tools such as banner ads, buttons, pop-up ads, e-mail ads, and paid text links are struggling with avoidance, viral marketing (viral advertising or e-word of mouth) has a prospective value. Firstly, users are not in *search mode* while watching viral content. Secondly, most of the time the source of the message is trusted (webpage, blog, Facebook page or another person). And lastly, there is willingness to forward the message which is a key feature of viral advertising. Electronic media made this kind of spreading much faster than traditional word of mouth.

Of course this technique has also its own limitations. For example this approach would be appropriate only for certain products or in certain cases and mainly on business to customer markets. At some point the company is not able to control the direction where the message is spreading. On the one hand, predict the exact outcome of the campaign is almost impossible, but on the other hand, the impact of campaign can be measured exactly (number of viewers, clicks, actions, or sharing).

The main aim of this article is to present results of the pilot primary research conducted through an online questionnaire survey focused on the popularity of viral video ads and willingness to share them among the Czech Internet population.

II. Theoretical Foundations

A number of authors deal with *viral marketing*. One of the definitions is 'Viral marketing is an Internet-enabled promotional strategy that encourages individuals to forward market-initiated messages to others via e-mail, social networking, web sites and blogs [6].' The reasons for viral marketing are: influence the consumer's behavior, increase sales, and increase brand awareness [7]. Viral advertising is done by using text, picture, video, or presentation [8]. The main reason why companies use the viral marketing are primarily low cost, rapid dissemination of information and high efficiency of intervention, especially among young people [9].

Online viewing represents opportunities for deeper brand engagement. Viewers are watching the advertisement of their free will and have many opportunities to interact immediately [10]. They can comment, like or dislike, forward via e-mail, share on social network, subscribe or follow channel, visit website or e-shop.

Moreover, viral spreading has one great advantage. As recent research confirms, if a viral ad is sent by a trusted sender, the influence of advertiser trust becomes non-significant or reduced [11]. Therefore, viral ad from a trusted sender (friends or family members) can overcome the handicap a less trusted advertiser might have.

In their comparison study of Porter and Golan [12] *viral video is* defined as 'unpaid peer-to-peer communication of provocative content originating from an identified sponsor using the Internet to persuade or influence an audience to pass along the content to others. 'Unfortunately, little research exists on viral video as special subset of viral marketing [13],

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[14].

In the Czech academic marketing research the situation is quite similar and viral marketing or viral video advertising is the topic mainly for popular and trade press.

III. Methods and Sample

A. Method

For the research purposes were defined two objectives:

- The main objective was to assess the specific attitudes towards viral video among Czech Internet population as a marketing communication tool.
- The secondary objective was to disclose possibilities for author's future scope of academic research towards the doctoral thesis.

For the purpose of the research was chosen quantitative research method and online survey technique was used to collect the data [15].This technique is a low cost technique and it is suitable for given research.

Four closed questions (two Likert scale and two dichotomous) and one opened question was used. Six segmentation questions were asked to ensure proper sample selection. Brevity of the questionnaire caused a high rate of return in a short time period and sufficient amount of responses were collected.

Empirical part of the research confirmed or denied four hypotheses which were following:

- H_1: More than 75 % of the Internet population considers non-traditional online advertising more interesting than traditional.
- H_2: More than 50% of the Internet population would share entertaining advertising video on the social network.
- H_3: The likability of viral video is independent on the gender of the viewer.
- H_4: The likability of viral video is independent on the age of the viewer

For the evaluation of the data were used descriptive statistics. Individual questions were assessed using absolute and relative frequencies in IBM SPSS and collated into tables. Tables are not used for questions where text is sufficient for explanation. Correlation matrix was designed to determine statistical relationships between given answers.

To evaluate H_3 and H_4: the dependence of one categorical variable on the other, Pearson's Chi-square test was used, (1), which is based on the difference between the empirical (observed) and theoretical (expected) frequencies [16].

Four steps of calculation:

Calculation of two-dimensional probability (Pij = Pi Pj)
Calculation of theoretical rates (E=nPij)
Calculation of deflections (O-E)
Calculation of $(O-E)^2/E$

$$\text{Chi - square} = \Sigma\Sigma\ ((O-E)^2)/E \qquad (1)$$

B. Sample

Data for this study were collected in January 2014 through free online survey web portal. Target respondents were members of the Czech Internet population therefore online form was the only choice to obtain the data. A total of 421 respondents completed this survey. Sample was modified by removing random females from the sheet to bring the data closer to real Internet population. After this 384 responses remained which is minimum sample size for this type of study. Despite this, the sample is dominated by women (72.9%). Students are the most important group represented (50.0%), followed by employees (37.5%). Table I shows the complete distribution of the sample in the employment category.

TABLE I
SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION - EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY

Category	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Student	192	50,0
Employed	144	37.5
Maternity leave	15	3.9
Unemployed	14	3.6
Self-employed	13	3.4
Pensioner	6	1.6
Total	384	100

University graduates (52.9%) prevail in the sample, followed by secondary school graduates (41.9%) and elementary school educated (5.2%). Distribution according to age shows Table II.

TABLE II
SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION – AGE CATEGORIES

Age	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Up to 19	38	9.9
20 - 26	233	60.7
27 - 36	65	16.9
37 - 46	26	6.8
47 - 56	12	3.1
57 and more	10	2.6
Total	384	100

Respondents were mainly from cities bigger than 100 000 inhabitants (42.1%). Distribution by salary is highly affected by the high number of students in the sample. Therefore group *up to 10 000 CZK* prevails (45.1%) followed by *10 001 – 20 000 CZK* (32.3%) and *20 001 – 30 000 CZK* (15.1%). The rest of the sample is represented by people who earn *more than 30 000 CZK* (7.6%).

C. Evaluation of the Questions

Q1: 'Non-traditional online advertising caught my interest more than traditional.' Likert scale was used to answer this question. Respondents' answers show Table III.

TABLE III
Q1: NON-TRADITIONAL AND TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

Answer	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Strongly agree	154	40.1
Agree	163	42.4
Neutral	40	10.4
Disagree	18	4.7
Strongly disagree	9	2.3
Total	384	100

The question discloses strong positive attitudes (82.5%)

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towards non-traditional online advertising compared with traditional forms. This finding complies with other empirical evidence mentioned in the introduction of this paper.

Q2: 'Do you like viral advertising videos on the Internet?' Dichotomous question (yes or no) was used. Popularity of viral videos confirmed most of the participants (67.7 %) while the rest (32.3 %) answered *no*. Neutral answer option was not enabled. The goal was to force respondents to make a decision whether they like or does not like this form of communication.

Respondents who answered *yes* were allowed to give an example of their favourite viral video. Most of them answered 'Volvo Trucks - The Epic Split feat. Van Damme' which has more than 70 million views on YouTube.

Q3: 'When I view entertaining advertising video on the internet I share it on social network.' Again the Likert scale was used to answer this question. Results revealed less willingness (46.9 %) to share the content than in second question about popularity of viral videos (see Table IV). This means that likability of viral video communication does not automatically cause same extent of willingness to share it.

TABLE IV
Q3: WILLINGNESS TO SHARE VIRAL VIDEO

Answer	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Strongly agree	74	19.3
Agree	106	27.6
Neutral	45	11.7
Disagree	86	22.4
Strongly disagree	73	19.0
Total	384	100

Q4: 'Are you influenced by viral videos when purchasing product?' Yes or no were the possibilities to answer this dichotomous question. Most respondents answered *no* (77.1%). But since many other variables influence purchase intention the total of 22.9% positive answers shows very impressive effect of viral campaigns.

Intermediate positive correlation (0.309) was found in the data within question three ('When I view entertaining advertising video on the internet I share it on social network.') and question four ('Are you influenced by viral videos when purchasing product?'). This statistical relationship implies that willingness to share deepens brand engagement and therefore has a significant effect on purchasing intentions.

D. Verification of Statistical Hypotheses

H_1: More than 75% of the Internet population considers non-traditional online advertising more interesting than traditional.

The hypothesis is *accepted* since 82.5% of respondents consider non-traditional online advertising more interesting compared to traditional forms.

H_2: More than 50% of the Internet population would share entertaining advertising video on the social network.

The hypothesis is *denied* since only 46.9% of respondents showed willingness to share the entertaining advertising video on social network.

H_3: The likability of viral video is independent on the gender of the respondent.

The results of the Chi-square test are: Pearson Chi-square value is 0.151. The *p*-value is 0.697. At the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, i.e. 5 % the hypothesis is *accepted*. There is not enough evidence to suggest that any differences between groups are for any reason other than chance. Hypothesis is *accepted* since there is no statistically significant association between likability of viral video and gender.

H_4: The likability of viral video is independent on the age of the respondent.

The results of the Chi-square test are: Pearson Chi-square value is 21.904. The *p*-value is 0.001. At the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, i.e. 5% the hypothesis is *rejected* since there is statistically significant association between likability of viral video and age. Correlation of these two variables is positive (0.231) therefore older the respondent is lower the likability of the video.

IV. CONCLUSION

Viral marketing or so-called viral advertising is relatively new discipline in marketing communication mix. Theoretical debate has shown recent increasing interest in this topic among academics. For most businesses in nowadays highly competitiveness global environment it is important to step out from ad clutter and promote the values to customers effectively. Viral video advertising is one of the opportunities which can be useful for many enterprises.

Results of this pilot research revealed high popularity of viral video among Czech internet population. Respondents also preferred non-traditional online advertising over traditional forms which confirm recent trends in advertising business. Unfortunately, willingness to pass along the video on social network is relatively low. Moreover, this research disclosed that likability of viral video is independent on sex of the respondent and dependent on respondent's age.

The secondary objective was met since the topic of viral video advertising offers many opportunities for research. Based on this study, author will focus on deeper understanding of the factors which would increase willingness to share the viral videos.

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