Chapter LII
Creating Successful Mobile Viral Marketing Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the concept of mobile viral marketing as an innovative marketing tool. The outcome of the chapter is a description model including relevant characteristics as well as a typology that includes four standard types of mobile viral marketing. Moreover, a set of eight success factors is presented. With clear reflections of success factors' significance in different standard types, we structure the relationship between both and develop a success factor framework. As the description model is depicted as a morphological box, practitioners can use it as a creative technique for developing new mobile viral marketing strategies. Additionally, the framework supports marketers in evaluating their strategies. For scholars, our goal is to provide a useful starting point and impetus for further research.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional advertising has to cope with challenges such as getting time and attention from consumers, growing advertising reactance, lack of credibility, and increasing fragmentation of consumer needs as well as target groups. Due to resulting declining advertising efficiency, marketers continually search for innovative ways to communicate their particular messages. Mobile marketing—and especially mobile viral marketing—provides the opportunity to revolutionize advertising, as a prior explorative study (Marini & Wiedemann, 2006) showed. The 44 mobile marketing experts have confirmed that recipients getting mobile viral content from familiar communicators participate more frequently in a campaign than do initial contacts because per-

sonal messages gain more credibility than those coming directly from marketers. Furthermore, consumers typically share mobile content within their circles of friends taking stock in the same matters; therefore, mobile viral marketing enables the diffusion of commercial information and content within desired special target groups that could be extremely difficult to reach otherwise. Hence, marketers can significantly expand a campaign reach at low company expense by relying on consumers to disseminate content.

Like its counterpart on the stationary Internet (termed in this chapter electronic viral marketing), mobile viral marketing is based on word of mouth (WOM) and can be understood as a distribution and communication concept. The term "viral marketing" uses the exponential diffusion of an epidemic as a metaphor for the exponential diffusion of information about products or of the products themselves by "infected" individuals (Helm, 2000) in this type of mobile marketing. Since an epidemic may be local and can be global, the metaphor may be used regardless of the scale of diffusion that is achieved with a mobile viral marketing strategy.

Following these considerations, we define mobile viral marketing as a concept for distribution or communication that relies on customers to transmit content via mobile communication techniques and mobile devices to other potential customers in their social spheres and to animate these contacts to also transmit the content. We define such content as mobile viral content, which comprises mobile products, services, and ads. Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) Push and Uniform Resource Locator (URL) also fall into this category. Individuals transmitting mobile viral content are termed communicators; individuals receiving mobile viral content are termed recipients.

Although mobile viral marketing is tremendously attractive for marketers, the field is neglected largely by academic research (Okazaki, 2005). In this early stage, a mobile viral marketing

strategy still has to be developed by an "artist" who relies solely on intuition and personal experience. In order for a professional worker to perform this task, he or she must be provided with a well-defined tool that distinguishes the available elements of a mobile viral marketing strategy as well as a checklist to examine future success or failure. Only then can marketers provide customers with content that enables viral diffusion on the mobile channel. With this background in mind, the principal objective of the chapter is to develop a detailed understanding of the nature of mobile viral marketing and its success factors.

The outcome of the chapter is a description model in the form of a morphological box, including relevant characteristics as well as a typology that includes four standard types of mobile viral marketing. Moreover, a set of eight success factors is presented. With clear reflections of the success factors' significance in different standard types, we structure the relationship between both and develop a success factor framework. As the description model is depicted as a morphological box, practitioners can use it as a creative technique for developing new mobile viral marketing strategies. Additionally, the framework supports marketers in evaluating their strategies. For scholars, our goal is to provide a useful starting point and impetus for further research.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a literature review regarding WOM, electronic viral marketing, and mobile viral marketing. Section 3 offers the details of the method used in the chapter. In Section 4, we present and discuss our results. Section 5 outlines future trends. Finally, we conclude in Section 6.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of mobile commerce solutions such as mobile viral marketing differs from that of off-line and electronic commerce solutions due to the characteristics and limitations of mobile

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