

## Analysis of the Effects of Viral Advertising Studies on Sociological and Mass Education in Social Media and Internet Environments: An Example of Ice Bucket Challenge Advertising

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### Abstract

With the development of communication and information technologies, communication tools in the field of promotion and marketing have shifted from the traditional environment to the digital environment. In this context, the increase in Internet usage and the developing social media channels have started reaching much wider audiences. This situation has also led to transferring advertising and marketing activities to social media environments. Today, a new dimension has been added to the field of advertising, especially the environment prepared for viral ads to become influential on the masses. Viral ads, which are the subject of research, are spread by Internet users by filtering messages by people, transmitting them to another interested person and potentially transmitting and sharing the content of the message to those interested. The influence of social values on advertising, the harmony of the prepared advertisement with society and, in particular, the topics and content of the viral ads have also been affected. In this study, the analysis of the campaign of the “Ice Bucket Challenge” advertisement is included. This ad, an example of a viral ad, has been analyzed in the context of technological, corporate/brand, supporting factors, statistical success, using celebrities and opinion leaders, and its impact on education. In particular, information, awareness and awareness formation appear as essential features that attract attention within the scope of the study.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Advertising, Viral Advertising, Sociological and Educational Impact.

### Introduction

Communication, which has become one of the indispensable elements of human life, uses various ways for individuals to communicate their feelings, thoughts and opinions. A person who can exist in society by constantly communicating uses technology very well to communicate mutual ideas and feelings. According to Mutlu (1995), communication is an area where mental fiction about the course of the world has reached even more advanced points with radical technological innovations. According to Burton (1955), all communication actions are a process. The media accelerates this process and includes large audiences in it. The main power of the media lies in shaping our worldview.

In addition to newspapers, magazines, radio and television, Internet technologies and social media elements have caused the restructuring of communication today. Interaction has also been included in human life in parallel with communication. Mass media, which have essential functions such as informing, entertaining, educating, informing and creating public opinion, also carry out advertising and promotional activities to reach and mobilize society (Kimik, 2021).

With the contribution of globalization, which affects the whole world, a substantial change has been formed in sociological, psychological and economic fields, and the environment for new changes has been prepared within the scope of communication. This environment has paved the way for people to move in interaction other than communicating. The word “public opinion” comes to the fore when people interact with each other and take action. One of the most significant effects of all mass media and social media elements on individuals and society is to create public opinion. *Public opinion* is the typical attitude or behaviour that individuals who are members of similar social groups adopt in the face of certain events. Although public opinion, also expressed as the “sum of Opinions”, is defined differently by certain opinions, it is also used as the emergence of an interaction in a social sense (Zafer, 2021).

Today, developments and changes in both technological, social and economic fields have also caused the traditional dimension of communication to change. In particular, the impact of social media tools and their intensity

and speed have made it easier to reach the public while also changing the speed of public opinion formation. This situation also reveals the importance of creating a common point of view between people (Yamaç, 2009). Social media are structures designed as an environment suitable for access, can be restructured, has a broadcasting technique compatible with change, and spread through social interaction. Social media are the environments where individuals express their wishes and expectations from any product or service offered, the structures that offer them, and positive or negative thoughts about brands and products and services belonging to these brands (Köksal and Özdemir, 2013). Social media is also highly effective as an advertising medium and is indispensable for the advertising sector.

Changing and developing technology has also brought today's advertising activities to different dimensions. Advertisements on social media and the Internet have created great convenience in reaching the target audience directly. The introduction of advertising on the Internet has reduced advertising costs and made it accessible to a broader audience at a lower cost. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube, the advertising industry, which has expanded its coverage area by integrating with social media over time, has also led to the emergence of virtual advertising through social networking networks such as facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Thanks to this, the purchase action has also started quickly.

Viral ads that are spread using technology and the Internet are becoming widespread as a different dimension of marketing in our country and worldwide. Nowadays, because viral ads spread rapidly from social media, they reach the masses faster with the logic of creating a "virus effect." In this study, based on social media environments, viral ads, their characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, and especially the sociological effect of viral ads through a sample viral ad analysis will be examined.

### **Method**

The most important purpose of the content produced for promotional and marketing purposes is to increase the visibility and awareness of the brand offering the promoted service or product. For this purpose, it is important how much and to what extent the content reaches the people who want to receive services related to the area in which the service or product in question is located. The data obtained by content analysis serves to ensure that the content produced has access to a wider network of users. Content analysis, which is used to analyze a large number of content, is mostly related to the themes in that content. The importance of content analysis, which is a qualitative research method, in digital marketing has also been taken into account. The original content produced in the digital marketing process is analyzed in order to increase their success in reaching a certain audience. In the sample study, in addition to the content analysis performed via viral advertising, the compilation method was also used.

### **Communication Environments with Social Media: Perception and Perception**

Changing and developing technology in the field of communication has caused significant changes not only in daily life but also in social, cultural and economic life. Digital technologies, new media, the Internet and social media constitute the basis of changes. The Internet, which was first created for military use, has increased its usage rate considerably after it became public. Especially while the internet, which started to become widespread in the late 1990s, offers an environment called wWeb1.0, it has reached the next level as wWeb2.0 as of 2004, and it has become possible for users to create content on the Internet. The first steps of social media have also been taken in this way.

As it is known, social media is the dialogues and exchanges that individuals make over the Internet. Facebook, Twitter, Blog pages, forums, etc., are communication environments with an increasingly growing audience today. The fact that the tools that create these environments have an extensive user base and are gradually spreading is also crucial in influencing society's behaviour. The fact that social media sharing networks can be constantly updated and are open to multiple uses has become an ideal communication tool for people.

*Social media* is a media system that allows two-way and simultaneous sharing of information and content. In this system, where the extent of people's communication with each other has changed, individuals can easily access all the content they are interested in with the help of social networks. The effect of perception and perception has also changed through this communication with the help of technology.

In many sources, especially the dictionary of the Turkish Language Institution, "perception" is expressed as reaching the consciousness of that thing by directing attention to something and realizing it. The Perception Process is a meaningful, systematic and direct reaction of the organism to objects and events. Perceptions arise as a result of the senses. They take shape according to their old or new information. Therefore, perception is a personality reaction (Gültekin, 2021).

People also use their sensory organs and emotions to survive. They experience a series of interactions in their brain to see, hear, feel, smell, taste, touch and briefly perceive what is happening around them. Because in order for a person to act or be directed in one direction, a person must be aware of information in a specific direction. This means that a person understands the world and perceives it (Gönenç, 2018).

Creating, reproducing and managing the message intended to be given to the target audience or society per certain goals is expressed as perception management. For the target audience to reach the intended level, the audience is first analyzed in detail. In this way, the weaknesses and strengths of the audience are revealed, and then action is taken using the media, especially social media, to reach the desired perception.

In this method, which is used especially intensively in political life, media and social media are included in the process and virtual realities are created, making the distinction between the "real" and the "fictionalized" environment challenging to understand by mixing them. Thus, the intended attitude and change can be easily reached (Göksu, 2021).

### **Social Media as an Advertising Tool**

Social media has become the most critical influence of the visual world and an indispensable communication tool today. As it is known, communication is an essential tool for individuals to listen, judge, question and understand each other. Social media, consisting of the Internet and fast communication networks, has become a preferred area and a tool for individuals to communicate today. Social media, which offers its users a wide range of opportunities, also contains many positive and negative situations. According to Dijk (2016), social networking networks, considered social media, have emerged based on a need. Social media, seen as an alternative solution to social problems regarding content and quality, has also become an advertising medium.

According to Kırık (2017), "One of the most critical factors in the emergence of social media can be fulfilling the wishes of capital in today's world. Increasing demands also bring competition with them. Advertising is transmitting a message about a product or idea to the target audience through communication tools. It is essential to convince individuals and ensure that they take action.

As in many areas today, social media has become necessary in advertising. Because advertising is effective in the continuity of both businesses and individuals and societies, there are indispensable elements for a business or firm to continue in the same environment or sector and to maintain its hold. In today's conditions, its use in advertising and social media is among these elements. Dec. Social media confronts its consumers with new differences almost daily, increasing recognition and permanence. The importance of Twitter, Instagram, youtube and other social networking networks, especially Facebook, is very high in this recognition and is quickly becoming known to the consumer. The use of video broadcasts increases the effect even more.

The possibility of getting faster and broader information about a product or service that has just entered the market through social media causes businesses to use these networks more effectively and actively. Internet systems that develop in parallel with the rapid development of technology also affect easier access to the consumer due to the expansion of the speed of use and the area of use (Bulunmaz, 2021).

### **Advertising and Advertising Studies That Have Gone Viral**

The Turkish French word "reclaim" from the word entered into Turkish advertising is expressed as "the publication of messages that appeal to the eye or ear through the media for a price in order to warn consumers about the existence of a product or service and to create a positive attitude towards that product, service, brand or institution" (Küçükerdoğan, 2011). The primary purpose of advertising is to introduce the service or products to the buyer to make them show interest in this product and service and to generate income at specific rates through this event.

Advertisements are not made for commercial purposes only. There are also advertisements prepared for image or prestige purposes or by targeting the public interest in the form of a public spotlight. Because the best way to reach the audience and the target age groups is through advertising. Advertising is not only done by taking into account the needs of consumers. Since people's needs change over time, it is also essential to create different services and products according to the changing needs. It also describes the activities that are talked about in ads and the ideas that are generated. What is essential is that the consumer's reliability of the advertised product or service is also on the agenda. Enterprises are also forced to behave in a way that meets the requirements (Odabaşı and Oyman, 2003). Persuasion is critical in advertising. For persuasion, the advertising sector needs to have a good perception of the importance of advertising. Advertising provides product and brand information, adds value to the product and service, activates the target audience to direct sales, and supports businesses by reminding the consumer. For this reason, advertising is also essential as a sector. The history of this sector, which goes back to the ancient Roman

period, has become a significant activity and business line of today by adapting to the developing and changing times.

It is necessary to consider advertising as a whole. After the stage where topics such as the preparation editing of texts, the advertising campaign stage, economics and psychology are included, the media, i.e. the announcement stage, comes into play. As a result, there is a need for the advertising and advertising sector to increase sales, provide vehicle operation, reduce price-demand flexibility and brand dependence, provide convenience in sales to vehicle enterprises, guarantee quality, ensure the reduction of unit costs and contribute to the survival of enterprises. As it is known, advertising is an area that transmits actions or messages related to a service or product verbally or visually to the targeted audience for a certain fee. Advertising, which is the promotion of a product or service to consumers using all media elements, influences attitude and behaviour change in consumers. Persuasion is an essential feature in advertising.

Social media, which has become an area where individuals share almost every moment, has brought a different dimension to advertising. The Internet and social media networks, which have become more effective on people with the development and change of technology, have also changed the understanding of advertising due to the ability of multiple users to access images, videos and messages simultaneously. Viral ads have started to be expressed more with this method. Enterprises have also adopted viral marketing by understanding these developments more accurately. Based on how word-of-mouth communication occurs on the Internet, this area is being used very effectively today.

Along with the development indicators of the Internet, websites have come to the fore. In particular, corporate websites have become an essential source of prestige for companies. One of the most important benefits of online advertising is that a product or service can be delivered anywhere in the world without physical boundaries. Viral ads, one of today's most effective techniques in social media and internet environments, quickly deliver the products and services of companies and brands to the whole world. Viral ads have come to the forefront, especially with the development of the Internet and social media and their entry into human life. Because users are unaware of the ad, the ad can very quickly circulate from hand to hand and spread like a virus.

The emergence of viral ads in the historical process has yet to be discovered. However, some sources state that this kind of advertising feature was made by "Hotmail" for the first time. Which is the user address of Hotmail "www.hotmail.com." it is stated that Un has provided a free electronic mail service to its users for the first time. Users have received a complimentary "Hotmail" account and sent emails with other users, "get your private, free email at the bottom of the sent emails www.hotmail.com "your private, free email account www.hotmail.com take it from the address" he placed the message. Many users who received the messages also logged in to the site after these emails and got an account. Naturally, Hotmail has become more and more widespread all over the world (Porter and Golan, 2006 akt. Kınık, 2017, 127). Although this viral idea that has been realized seems to be a simple method in today's conditions, when the functioning of viral ads is examined, it is seen that it is the same method. Because it becomes effective by spreading from user to user in ads that have gone viral. Just as an advertisement can stay on the agenda for a day, it can also make its impact felt for a month or even a year.

The concept of viral advertising or viral advertising appears as an extension of social media elements. It aims to create and develop brand awareness among the designated target audiences. It appears in front of the viewer or consumer in many different ways. In ads that have gone viral, it is tried to attract the target audience of the advertised product, service or idea into its story. The most effective way they benefit from doing this is to identify with a character. If the buyer identifies himself with one or more of the characters in the ads, it dramatically increases the feeling that he is taking part in that ad. The target audience that puts itself in the place of another character starts to feel that it is part of that character's experience. Studies that have gone viral also become very important regarding people's preferences or follow-ups since this emotional connection has largely been realized. Nowadays, these ads, which are watched with interest in our country and worldwide, are breaking viewing records, especially on YouTube. These videos are made through users or brands. Videos prepared by users are watched more than others. Related videos are uploaded to YouTube in particular and shared with a broad audience with the help of social networking networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

In viral advertising, users can also shoot their videos and share them with other users on social networking sites or internet sites. Sharing such a thing is a significant advantage for millions of people. In addition, there is a distinct advantage in this type of advertising because the user ID can also send messages and watch videos without explicitly sharing them. At the same time, the inability to determine what is original and what is derivative reveals a bearish superiority. However, some situations have disadvantages. The most significant risk in viral advertising and viral marketing is the lack of control that occurs on the Internet. This deficiency can lead to negative results

of viral advertising campaigns. Especially in some derivative viral advertising videos, problems such as humiliation and humiliation of brands arise. This creates a negative brand perception in the consumer's mind, and it is almost impossible to correct this difficult situation.

### **The Effect of Viral Ads on Mass Education**

Technological developments and the media content shared on the Internet that have emerged in the context of these developments contribute not only economically, culturally, socially or politically but also to the education of individuals and the masses. With the integration of new communication technologies into everyday life, "interaction" has accelerated within the scope of various factors in people's lives, and people's insensitivity or sensitivity to many issues has increased. This situation has caused people to show different behaviours to certain studies or developments in their daily lives. Especially insensitive people direct their current needs to different searches, search for new communication environments, or get involved in different communication environments (Zafer, 2021). The most important of these communication mediums is social media; the advertising sector uses these mediums successfully. The most effective element of today's relevant sector is viral advertising. Viral messages are randomly circulated on internet-based social networking networks and sites, so videos, messages and a wide variety of content can easily reach the target audience.

Viral ads quickly promote educational materials, institutions or projects. This helps people to discover new opportunities or resources related to education. Viral ads contribute significantly to the education of individuals or audiences both with the detailed information they provide with the size of the product and detailed information provided in terms of the institution, organization, service characteristics or qualities of the advertised brands. Viral ads are not limited to influencing consumers' behaviour and enabling them to take action towards purchasing. They also have significant contributions to community education. Addressing social problems in the name of creating awareness also causes people to become more aware of these problems, to be informed, and to be educated. Animal rights, women's or children's rights affect the mobilization of the masses by creating an atmosphere of discussion in society in the face of numerous problems.

Viral ads have the potential to reach a broad audience. This situation can make it possible for more people to hear important messages about education because technological developments contribute to the rapid reach of all kinds of media content shared on the Internet to a vast audience. With the Internet, the great masses have taken control of the production and distribution of information under their control. All kinds of information is reached by communicating with the masses. Considering the Internet is a fast communication network, the proportion of individuals reached by spreading quickly in viral ads is too large to calculate. A big reason why it is addressed to a broad audience is that it also has the feature of being constantly up-to-date. Rather than individuals exchanging information directly with each other, the fact that people can have information in many different areas on social media or interact in these areas and accessible communication also affects the breadth of the audience.

Creative and exciting ads related to education attract people's attention and can create incentives for them to focus more on educational issues. In viral ads, it is more important not what the message says but how it is said. For the viewer to be affected by the viral ads, nonverbal communication and convincing, engaging conversations are included. In addition, eye contact, speech speed and body language are important, especially in videos. In addition, entertainment and information are also essential for viral ads. October 20, 2019. The music to be used or the venue to be chosen is effective in terms of attracting interest.

Viral ads can be an effective tool for educational campaigns or awareness-raising efforts. For example, it can draw attention to significant educational problems or create awareness. However, the content must be correctly informative and educational for viral ads to contribute to education.

Viral ads, which have the power to affect the masses intensely, have the potential to affect the target audience and the consumer more when they are prepared in a style that speaks to emotions. A large number of elements are included, including the element of violence. In order to understand and make sense of the target audience by analyzing viral ads correctly, the most searched words and words are identified and often used by users. There is no explicit advertising in a viral ad. However, the subject, not the brand, is more in the foreground and directly addresses people's subconscious. Therefore, awareness raising is significant.

### **Ice Bucket Challenge Advertising Example**

This campaign, which became famous with its full name in English under the name "Ice Bucket Challenge", that is, "Ice Water Challenge", and quickly spread with the support of celebrities and opinion leaders, is not a direct advertising campaign. However, it has grown like an avalanche with the social media influence created by celebrities and opinion leaders and managed to go viral in 2014 and pioneered such movements. The purpose of



this campaign is to draw attention to the ALS disease, to make people aware of this disease, and even to raise public awareness by making people who participate in the campaign feel what people with the disease feel. The main goal was to raise some awareness and collect donations to associations established to combat the disease.

Charles Kennedy, a golf player, first started the campaign. This startup took action without being connected to an institution and experienced a leap with the interaction of Charles Kennedy with this formation in order to attract attention. Charles Kennedy started by making videos and tagging his wife and one of his friends, Pete Frates. Pete Frates is an American baseball player diagnosed with ALS disease in 2012 at 27 and had to end his sports life due to this disease at the age of 31. Starting this campaign was an irrevocable idea that got in the way and became current when Charles Kennedy, an old friend of Pete Frates, invited him. Because he is also well-known, he wanted to make this kind of campaign current in 2014 by spreading it to celebrities and people around them. In this campaign, which is based on the ice water technique used by athletes specifically to relax or stimulate their muscles, Pete Frates poured a bucket full of ice water from the head down to show people how ALS patients feel about this disease and at the same time wanted everyone to experience it in November in a fun way.

The first person Pete Frates invited to this campaign was his close friend Corey Griffin. With this method, Corey Griffin convinced his entourage to participate in this campaign and ensured its rapid spread. It should be especially noted that this campaign is not an agency campaign. Individuals themselves have made such videos to make it current. The biggest reason the campaign has gone viral is that individuals feel the same feelings more sincerely by observing that other people they know are doing it. They want to be involved themselves by not being indifferent to it. In this context, the campaign has grown like an avalanche and has managed to reach all the celebrity followers on social media, especially with all the “challenges” and invitations made among celebrities. Dec.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Unlike traditional media, new media, which has become a part of human life, is an environment based on sharing various topics with a broad audience, commenting, discussing and interacting with similar content through Internet technologies. The visual aspect shared in this environment, the powerful content aspect, and the rich advertisements have become indispensable communication areas for institutions, individuals, and, therefore, the masses. Especially in the advertising sector, the birth of viral ads, which have become influential in sales and strategies, has been achieved.

Nowadays, since the promotion or sale of products or services is carried out over the Internet, the flow and distribution of information have passed chiefly to the control of the consumer since direct communication with consumers serves the purpose of spreading the product or service. Ads that spread and go viral on the Internet through social networking networks have essential contributions from an economic, cultural, psychological and sociological point of view. It has become highly successful in reaching a broad audience, raising awareness and especially forming awareness. Viral ads, which have a wide variety of content and visuals, also have a very influential position on society in terms of mass education.

As can be seen from the example of viral advertising analyzed, it has been highly successful in community education and mobilizing the masses by using celebrities and opinion leaders in the context of social responsibility. Nowadays, when the Internet and social media platforms are used intensively, the interest and skill of individuals and the audience in distributing information and information will continue to rise to an even higher level with the contribution of technology.

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