

## VIRAL MARKETING TECHNIQUES WITHIN ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK

**Nur Undey Kalpaklioglu<sup>1</sup>**

**Nihal Toros<sup>2</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In the globalized world, the change in the life styles, social, economical and political conversions, technological developments lead the marketers to use viral marketing effectively in the search of new medium. The way people used to communicate has completely been changed and it became easier for consumers to share their experiences about products, brands and services through internet. By viral marketing techniques marketers can reach their consumers by using their imaginations, creativity and interactivity. Viral marketing techniques are powerful channels for organizations to reach their target groups since they give an opportunity to spread the marketing messages very fast to a lot of people. In this study, viral marketing techniques, supported by different cases, are emphasized and the viral mediums on the web platform such as e-mailing, advergaming, consumer generated media, weblogging, videologging and mobilelogging are highlighted.*

*The main purpose of this study, is to contribute to the "Viral Marketing" concept in online social network, as an alternative marketing technique, both theoretical and practical aspects.*

**Key Words:** *viral marketing, e- word-of-mouth marketing, alternative marketing techniques.*

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<sup>1</sup> Asst. Prof. Dr., Beykent University, Faculty of Communications, Public Relations and Advertising Department, e-mail: nur@kalpak.net

<sup>2</sup> PhD., Public Relations Specialist, e-mail: ntoros@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

While making their purchasing decisions most of the consumers frequently rely on other peoples' decisions (like friends, family, acquaintances etc.). They listen to their recommendations, suggestions, and personal advice. This personal informal share and exchange of information is often called as word-of-mouth (WOM). Word-of-mouth refers to oral person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator which the receiver perceives as a noncommercial message, regarding a brand, product, or service. (Arndt, 1967:291) This includes consumers, subjective personal opinions and experiences with objective product information.

In twenty first centuries' highly competitive world, researches show that the consumers are exposed to over 5.000 advertising messages everyday (Data Smog, David Shenk Harper Collins Publishers, April 1997). More than 60% of consumers feel constantly bombarded by too much advertising and more than half of the participants prefer not to buy a product promoted too aggressively (The New Consumer, the Craving for Comfort and Connection, Yankelovich Partners, April 2004.) Only 35% of German consumers still trust traditional form of advertising. (Trust in Advertising- a Global Nielsen Consumer Report, October 2007) For example, one survey shows that consumer attitudes toward advertising plummeted between September 2002 and June 2004. Nail (2005) reports that 40% fewer people agree that advertisements are a good way to learn about new products, 59% fewer people report that they buy products because of their advertisements and 49% fewer people report that they buy products because of their advertisements, and 49% fewer people find that advertisements are entertaining. (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauvels, 2009:90) In addition o all these mentioned negative attitudes of the consumers towards advertising, TV advertising costs have increased by 256% during the past decade (Chaos Scenerio, R. Garfield, Ad Age, April 2005).

Marketers are particularly interested in better understanding of WOM because traditional forms of communication appear to be losing effectiveness. (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauvels, 2009: Nail 2005) As traditional advertising lost its power; the recommendations, suggestions, advices of friends, acquaintances, family etc, gained importance in buying decision process of consumers. Researches show that 78% of consumers trust recommendations from other consumers (Trust in Advertising- a Global Nielsen Consumer Report, October 2007). As markets are being conversations, the consumers are the boss. For the first time consumers being the boss everything the marketers, and advertisers used do to persuade them, will no longer work.

Today more than two-thirds of US economy is influenced by word -of- mouth (Mc Kinsey & Company, 2000) 17% of our conversations revolve around companies, brands, products or services (Carl, 2005). Word-of-mouth marketing takes the attention of many practitioners recently. One calls it the world's most effective, yet least understood marketing strategy (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauvels, 2009: Misner, 1999). Since viral marketing is a way of word of mouth marketing technique in which marketing message is carried out through internet, it's also called as e-word-of-mouth. This new marketing technique has been getting more and more popular since it's low cost and more trustful than traditional marketing techniques/advertising. Nowadays both scholars and practitioners in marketing field are deeply interested in viral marketing in online social network because of the extraordinary growth, influence and popularity of social communities.

## WORD OF MOUTH MARKETING

Many marketing experts accept positive word of mouth marketing as the oldest known marketing communication tool. Should the resource transmitting the message by word of mouth bear the characteristic of the one who is known and relied, it is usually considered the most trusted means of publicity. For this reason, word of mouth marketing is a subject to attract the interests of many researchers. The informal communication among the customers was first perceived in 1960s to be of much importance for the increase of sales.

In their daily lives, people speak to exchange ideas and comments about a product with each other. Being affected through each other is nine times stronger than it is through a magazine, newspaper or television advertisement (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955:9).

Tavukcuoglu (2007) has stated that companies should use this reality as a measurable marketing strategy and put those in consumers' chat environment by giving the instruments to make them talk about the company's products or services. Traditional communication theory considers WOM as having a powerful influence on behavior, especially on consumers' information search, evaluation, and subsequent decision making (Brown, Broderick & Lee, 2007:4; Silverman, 2001; Molly, Gilly & Graham, 1998; Brown & Reingen, 1987; Cox, 1963)

According to the definition of Word of Mouth Marketing Association / WOMMA, word of mouth is "the transmission of information about marketing created and transmitted by consumers to another". However, word of mouth marketing "includes all efforts realized by the organization to affect consumers related to creating and transmitting marketing oriented information to other consumers." ([http://www.womma.org/content/womma\\_term\\_framework.pdf](http://www.womma.org/content/womma_term_framework.pdf))

Consumers everyday encounter 5.000 commercial advertisements on the average. It has been determined that 76% of the consumers in USA close their eyes to those messages and do not trust advertising (Silverman, 2007). According to another research performed by Nielsen among 26.486 people in 47 different countries, 78% of consumers rely on recommendations of other consumers (Nielsen Company, 2007). This ratio has been increased in 2005 from 56% to 68% in 2006. Based on the latest research performed in 2008, the ratio of consumer rely on other consumers' opinion who are neuter is 83% for the participants between 25-35 and 78% for 35-64 age groups (Edelman, 2008:6). According to a research conducted by Lightspeed Research US in March 2011, 73% of the respondents said they trusted Consumer Reports, followed by the opinions and experiences of other consumers at 62%, and recommendations from family, friends and colleagues at 58%. Women are much more likely than men to say they would ask friends/family/colleagues for recommendations ([www.lightspeedresearch.com/press-releases/consumers-rely-on-online-reviews-and-price-com](http://www.lightspeedresearch.com/press-releases/consumers-rely-on-online-reviews-and-price-com)).

The efficiency of word of mouth marketing has been arisen due to that trust effect. WOM provides information concerning product performance and the social and psychological consequences of the purchase decision (Brown, Broderick & Lee, 2007:4; Cox, 1963). Environment of trust is created when people sharing their opinions about the product or the service do not have connection with products' producer or provider of service. .

According to the research carried out by White House Consumers Relations Department, 90% of displeased customers have stated that they would not purchase the same brand of product again. Each unsatisfied customer shares his/her negative experience with at least 9 people and 13% of those customers to more than 20 people. However, satisfied customers share their satisfaction with 5 people (Misner, 1994:27). 74% of people received the negative opinion of another prefer another brand (Millward Brown, 2005:4) and 76% of their decision criteria in purchasing is based on recommendations. Taken into consideration that a person communicates approximately 250 different people everyday, it is obvious how fast positive or negative opinions will be transmitted (Wilson, 1994:25).

Word of mouth marketing has also been a subject to attract the attention of marketers. In marketing literature word of mouth marketing has been dealt with marketing communications and it is in a close relationship with other marketing methods. It is believed that if the word of mouth marketing campaign carried out alone it would not end up with desired results. WOMM concept is to explain using daily word of mouth communication happening organically in terms with benefit of organization and re-forming to provide benefit to the enterprise by taking it beyond a bit of daily speaking. (Ahuja, Michels, Walker & Weissbuch, 2007:152) Traditionally WOM is defined as face to face communication about products, though the importance of same increases everyday in online world. Viral marketing, as one the leading marketing instruments through internet, can be explained as the marketing of ideas or products from one person to another by spreading like a virus in a planned way as a part of word of mouth marketing following technological developments.

## **VIRAL MARKETING CONCEPT**

Nowadays, conducting more efficient marketing activities by organizations is direct proportionate to their compliance with technology and marketing approaches. Especially, the emergence of internet and consumers' desire to have a word have directed marketing experts to digital environment as an alternative platform.

Digital word of mouth marketing namely viral marketing implies chat among consumers to be carried out in digital environment. The concept is defined as "creating informative and entertaining messages to be passed among the consumers in a virtual environment. (<http://www.womma.org/wom101>) Viral marketing is different from traditional word-of-mouth marketing. It has some advantages over traditional WOM (Yang, Yao, Ma & Chen, 2009:859; Yinan, 2006):

- The information can be easily stored in computers and the web; therefore digital word-of-mouth marketing information exists everywhere on the internet and for a long time.
- Most people can take part in the word-of-mouth marketing process in their leisure time, so by nature it is a non-synchronous spreading mode of advertisement.
- The anonymity feature enormously reduces the limitation induced by personal identities thereby making mutual communications on the web much easier than face-to-face in real life.

- Digital word-of-mouth marketing through the internet can spread more widely and much faster at a significantly lower cost as compared to most if not all traditional methods.

Viral marketing includes positive or negative evaluations on a brand or service to be transmitted on the internet to many people or organizations by potential, former or current costumers.

The term *viral marketing* was first time used by a Harvard Business School Faculty member Jeffrey Rayport. In 1996 he wrote an article called "The Virus Marketing". Viral marketing concept was defined as "network oriented word of mouth" by Juvertson and Draper in 1997 and introduced to explain free e-mail service of Hotmail (Juvertson, [www.dfj.com/cgi-bin/artman/publish/printer\\_steve\\_tim\\_may97.html](http://www.dfj.com/cgi-bin/artman/publish/printer_steve_tim_may97.html)). When "have your free e-mail address" was added under each e-mail sent by Hotmail, the number of users increased from 500.000 to 12 million just in one year (Godin, 2001:66). At present many international brands like Tupperware, Microsoft, PepsiCo etc. use viral marketing as their main marketing strategy. Recently Burger King has created an on-line promotional campaign that promotes an interactive website, [www.subservientchicken.com](http://www.subservientchicken.com), in which consumers can visit and type in commands for the man in the chicken suit to execute. The viewers are also able to notify friends of this humorous website by clicking the "tell a friend" link and supplying e-mail addresses. (Eaton, J., [www.docs.com/docs/42444246/e-word-of-mouth-marketing](http://www.docs.com/docs/42444246/e-word-of-mouth-marketing)) The more innovative and interesting, the higher the uptake. On April Fool's Day Workopolis offered all MSN.ca Web site visitors the opportunity to send a fake press release to their friends. There were number of templates provided to choose from-things like announcements of the sender's new job as CEO, TV news anchor, or supermodel. The viral campaign was a resounding success, far existing Workopolis's expectations.(Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey, 2006:67)

The efficiency of viral marketing is related to how fast the messages are transmitted and the number of people they are transmitted spontaneously. Therefore, viral marketing which is a form of word of mouth marketing to be carried out in a virtual environment will show its impact very shortly and reach to more people.

## **VIRAL MARKETING TECHNIQUES**

The basic viral marketing techniques such as advergaming, e-mailing, blogging, moblogging, vlogging, wikis, social networking sites, rate and review sites supported by examples has been studied below.

### **Advergaming**

Until the millennium, internet advertisements were digitalized printed ads transferred to the web sites. As game sector developed to 30 billion dollar budget and became so popular, a new medium was born for advertisers; Advergaming, which means the advertisement of a product, brand or organization by using "video games", is a term combining "game" and the abbreviation of "advertisement" and is regarded as a game

with an advertisement purpose. It's advertising within game. The term "advergames" was first used by Anthony Giallourakis in January of 2000. After published in American Magazine Wire in 2001 people started to use the term as a meaning of internet game.

Consumers can interact with brands for minutes and sometimes for hours and change their passive positions in conventional channels to active owing to the advergames which increase brand awareness and direct the interest of consumers to marketing messages.

According to a research performed in 2006, it was determined that 105 million people played advergames on Internet. 50% of those players spent more than 25 minutes for advergames, 42% of those spent more than 1 hour in a week. 90% of players accepted the game call which came via e-mails, played the game and shared his score. (Kurt, 2008:92)

Usually there are four steps of advergame design;

- First step; the costumers needs and goals are determined, the image and the main message of the product are should be decided.
- Second step; the borders and the size of the game should be determined. To download the game the size of the folder should be small.
- Third step; "investment process", the biggest part of the game develops in this step. In this process marketers, graphic designers, coding experts, animation experts and script writers should all be involved.
- Fourth step; ideas presented, design and developing processes should be done. The heros of the game, locations and the prizes given to different achievements are decided.

A successful game should be at least 4-5 mins. preferably 15-20 mins. Brand names should be integrated to the game expressively, the difficulty levels should increase step by step. On the other hand game can be improved by time and new experiences should easily be added to have positive impressions on consumers.

Advergames that will be categorized as below the line advertising, above the line advertising and alternate reality games have taken their places in today's marketing world as an alternative channel by showing the power of internet.

### ***Below the Line Advertising***

They are applications in which the advertisement of product is included within game or the product being included in the game. This technique basically uses less traditional techniques like e-mail, pr and sales promotions. If the budget is relatively limited and the target audience is specific, below the line advertising is an effective instrument because it indicates the products' characteristics other than the brand name. Some of the sales promotions used in below he line advertising techniques are; discounts, coupons, gifts, sponsorships etc.

Second Life ([www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)), which was developed by Linden Lab in 2003 as a real time game platform, is an example of in-game advertising. This platform, which has more than 5 million members, gives

them the possibility to live in a virtual environment and do the things that they cannot do in the real world without time limit.

Vestel, which purchased an island called Vestel Country in Second Life, became the first Turkish brand that provided different services such as product publicity or entertainment.

Rixos Hotels have also taken their places in Second Life. The 40 room hotel also has a health center, SPA, meeting rooms, marina, boats, entertainment centers and social areas. Employment in Rixos Hotels around the world is provided for those working in Rixos Hotel World, whose management is similar to a real hotel and discount in the real hotels is applied to the people staying in the virtual hotel.

### ***Above The Line Advertising***

It's a technique which uses mass media such as tv, radio, cinema and internet to advertise the brands. Games can be placed to the company's web site to take the attention of visitors. In general, they are professional interactive applications prepared to make the visitors stay longer on web sites. So the visitors are exposed to company's messages for a longer period. Even though they are similar to classical arcade games, innovative applications have also been encountered by time.

Fortis was one of the companies who used this application. The visitors play the game approximately for 12 minutes in Fortis Turkey Cup. The game, which had 200.000 registered users, were played 25 times by each player and 5 million times in total. The game, whose aim was to create a social network, was also the first multi- player advergence application and the brand application on Facebook. The interaction time of players with brands has reached up to 6 hours with Fortis Turkey Cup in which it is possible to chat with other players during game. Word of mouth was also supported by fan sites, portals, blogs and Google Adwords advertisements. (Öztaşkın, 2008)

Standard Chartered Bank embraced social media with a campaign in the United Arab Emirates. In order cut through the clutter of Ramadan advertising they turned to Facebook to create an engaging and interactive campaign. The Idea is based around the traditional 'Majlis' (Ramadan tent) where family and friends gather during this time. My Majlis is a Facebook game that replicates the experience and social aspects of the real life place in a virtual setting.

Fans are able to create their own 'Majlis' or tent, purchase furniture, decorate and invite guests to visit, all using Standard Chartered credit cards. Each of these steps have been designed to optimize Facebook's share features to increase the potential reach of the campaign.

In just 4 weeks, more than 15,277 fans played My Majlis, on average spending over 7 minutes per visit playing the game. This campaign has demonstrated that Standard Chartered Bank are willing to step away from traditional marketing and offer a more engaging experience for their audience. (<http://www.digitalbuzzblog.com/case-study-facebook-gam/>)

One of the most valuable Turkish brands, Turkcell, who were looking to promote their new smart phones bundled with mobile internet. Turkcell's agency, Rabarba from İstanbul, developed a campaign that

would be a great fit for their target market. In order to attract heavy internet users, who tend to avoid online advertising, they created a unique live competition through Twitter.

The campaign featured the smartphone, which was packed in gift boxes and covered with post-its. Players had to tweet what was written on the post-its to unwrap the boxes, using the hashtag #turkcell. Along the way contestants could take part in games, such as Pictionary, Trivia and word puzzles winning minutes and mobile data. The final challenge was to get a celebrity to retweet the message – winning the successful Twitter user a phone.

The campaign was live for 3 hours a day over 7 days and generated 56,734 tweets. (<http://www.digitalbuzzblog.com/turkcell-twitter-campaign/>)

### ***Through The Line Advertising***

Through the line advertising uses both “below the line” and “above the line” advertising techniques. This technique focuses on the target audience and also use mass media. The game used in through the line advertising gives the chance to discover the feelings of wonder, deepness, satisfaction and winning for the player. Lost series as the detail is given below could be good example for this type of advertising

The advertisements of an association named Hanso ([www.thehansofoundation.org](http://www.thehansofoundation.org)) has been broadcasted in the second season of the series called Lost and different telephone numbers have been given according to the countries where the advertisements were shown. For those who call the number and solve the questions on the association’s web site, information on Hanso Association and the examinations conducted on the Lost island have been given.

Charlie Pace being one of the characters in Lost series is the member of a group named DriveSHAFT. A web site has been made with regard to this group and the start date of the series is announced as Charlie’s death date ([www.driveshaftband.com](http://www.driveshaftband.com)). In the meantime, Mp3, clip of the song included in series and the songs and lyrics of the songs -which do not exist actually- of this group have been placed to the site.

Bad Twin being the book of Gary Troup is shown in some places of series. When the book is searched in Google, the web site ([http://www.amazon.com/Bad-Twin-Gary-Troup/dp/1401302769/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_sr\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1238410813&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Bad-Twin-Gary-Troup/dp/1401302769/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1238410813&sr=8-1)) of Amazon appears. However, it is written on the book and the biography of author that he has died in the crash of plane numbered 815. In addition, the last reportage before his death, not existing actually, has been published in Youtube. [http://www.amazon.com/Bad-Twin-Gary-Troup/dp/1401302769/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_sr\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1238410813&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Bad-Twin-Gary-Troup/dp/1401302769/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1238410813&sr=8-1)

A web site ([www.oceanic-air.com](http://www.oceanic-air.com)) has been created for the airway company Oceanic which was the airline company landed on the island. In addition, a site named Lostpedia (<http://lostpedia.wikia.com>) including blogs provided by consumers, alternate reality games, everything related to series has been created.



The curious searchers of the Lost series found the web site of Rachel Blake while looking for the Hanso Association because Hanso Association's web site was hacked and they found themselves in another story.

Sponsorship activities have been realized with Sprite, Jepp, Monster and Verizon successively in the same period. The advertisement of these brands including some clues about Lost have been published in Entertainment Weekly magazine. Furthermore, new clues have been hidden in podcasts of DJ Dan, and also clues more than 500.000 have been hidden in the web site named [www.syblymonal.com](http://www.syblymonal.com). Sprite brand has been shown only in one place in this site. Sprite has increased its web site traffic 400% and the average visiting time 275% between May-September 2006 by setting its brand in a spoken subject and by only spending 150.000 USD budget. (Sernovitz and Stairhime, <http://www.imediaconnection.com/content/13526.asp>)

A Lost panel has been organized in Comical Con 2006 and a person named Rachel Black among the audience declared that she would explain the truth and gave the name of a web site. Films including some clues have been broadcasted in the web site. The codes required watching these films have been spread virally.

The consumers purchasing Apollo Bar chocolate which is advertised on the back cover of Lost magazine, are directed to the web site named [www.wherisalvar.com](http://www.wherisalvar.com). When the consumers took their picture with the chocolate and loaded it on the website, they were given new clues about the Lost series.

At the end of the project, a video of Rachel Black broadcasted in Youtube is accessed and her relation with Hanso Association is explained.

Aero Hot Chocolates, wanted to develop an integrated through the line marketing campaign that champions their key differentiator and brand attribute; bubbles. They wanted to position Aero as an anytime, sociable alternative to other hot chocolates.

Get Together with Aero Hot Chocolate' campaign had 6 week roadshow exclusive to ASDA stores – 45 activity days. Aero bubble positioned front of store for maximum footfall and dwell time. Wet and dry samples, coupons and in-store point of sale collateral were given to drive purchase. Competition entry mechanic with purchase – trips to New York and spa days. At the end of the campaign, 179, 450 consumers sampled the product. 64% of consumers went on to purchase. 1972 % average sales uplift on campaign days. 98% average uplift maintained 5 weeks post campaign. The campaign won the ISP Gold Award for Experiential Marketing at Point of Purchase 2009. (<http://www.idexperiential.co.uk/clients/Aero-Hot-Chocolate>)

## **Blogging**

Nowadays the developments in the communication technologies turned consumers into considerably influencing factors in marketing. Consumers became information producers for other consumers. Blogs, being one of the consumer based media tools, which can be defined as Internet diaries have become a major tool of word of mouth marketing for the marketing communication and public relations experts. Even though blogosphere has a great importance in the transmission of a message, a small error made against the blog writers can turn into communication chaos.

Blogs, considered as consumer based sources, give the possibility to reach thousands of people and play an important role in shaping the purchasing decisions of the persons relying on the experiences and ideas of other consumers. Blogs are important both in personal and corporate image developing. They present unfiltered information like ideas, experiences to many other people in digital environment. Blogging provides experts and wannabes with an easy way to make their voices heard in the Web-based marketplace of ideas. Companies that ignore independent product reviews and blog discussions about service quality are living dangerously. (Scott, 2010:61) Shared experiences and solutions are very important for companies to shape their marketing efforts, so companies must take part in such a social network. Customers who are active in blogs can influence other customers toward positive or negative attitudes. Basic characteristics of blogs are such as ; (Sweeney, Mac Lellan & Dorey, 2006:58)

- informal (great for relationship building),
- easy to maintain (can be maintained by yourself or eb sites visitors can participate),
- informative.

Blogs can be used in the field of marketing for different purposes such as (Odabasi, 2009:93);

- research,
- determination, confirmation and analyzing of word of mouth marketing,
- advertising and evaluation of ads,
- early warning system,
- concept leading.

At the end of the year 2004, Mazda, Dr.Peppers and Seven Up companies tried to conduct a word of marketing campaign with the blog writers. However, this was not an achievement at all. In these campaigns they used professional advertisement films and showed them as shared among the blog writers. As the blogs are considered as non commercial information arena, those commercial advertisements are seen as an attack.

Blogs have been improved since they are written for the first time. The blogs are divided into two groups. The first category is, "diaries" of people based on personal experiences. Which is very important, because personal experiences of other customers are more effective than commercial messages on consumers. The other one is the "news" blogs which can be assumed as the most useful application for the word of mouth marketing. Slashdot.org being a technology blog can be an example corresponding to the second type. When some news or stories are sent to site, the comments from the members subscribed to site starts to come instantly. Each story in the blog is transformed to a dialog environment where the comments are shared mutually. (Kent, 2008)

### **Vlogging**

In the online world video is becoming more and more popular each passing day. Many people are posting links to videos from different social networks. Vlog word has been derived from "video" and "blog" words. Videoblogs are the fastest and easiest way to share videos with family, friends or totally strangers in

the digital world. Videoblog is a connection of video files posted to the internet using a method that makes it easy to update content quickly-combining the usability of a blog with video files (Bryant, 2006:9).

Videoblogs have started after a small group of video fun found that blog is a spreading tool that they were looking for. The thing enacting first video bloggers has been that people around the world have recorded their life and broadcasted these videos through their blogs and achieved in online environment to enable them for everyone. (Karan, 2008:19) Cameras have been applied in time in place of reading and writing and these internet diaries have started to be kept as picture not by writing. Videoblogging is changing the way people think about visual media, how they interact with it, and what they choose to say with it (Bryant, 2006:10).

As a result of becoming widespread, blogs and videoblogs have come into forefront as an area of advertisement and marketing. Videoblogs should have (Bryant, 2006:10);

- Video that can be downloaded and played outside of your Web browser.
- A regularly updated blog format.
- An RSS feed with enclosures, so people can subscribe to your feed and download your videos whenever its convenient for them.

People can create professional videoblogs or personal videoblogs for their own pleasure. Usually people create personal videoblogs to keep in touch with distant friends, to archive family history, to make people laugh, to make new friends on line, just to stroke their egos etc.

People usually create professional videoblogs to promote their businesses. In videoblogs people promote their products, services or themselves. They may give professional information, educational background about their products and service to their clients or potential clients. Pikniktube.com, İzlesene.com, Yemekevi.tv, Annemutfakta.tv are some of the videoblogs in Turkey.

Yemekevi.tv started to its broadcasting life on 7 February 2007 is video supported internet site including everything related to food & beverage. World kitchens, place recommendations, views and opinions as well as many recipes are found in the site.

Gary Vaynerchuk (VAY NER CHUK), the star of Wine Library TV, is Director of Operations at Wine Library in Springfield, NJ. with his unconventional, often irreverent commentary on wine, Gary has attracted a cult-like following of more than 80,000 viewers a day.LTV has blossomed into a full-fledged community. The viewers (self-named “Vayniacs”) convene on an extremely active [forum](#), and have organized numerous off-line gatherings. Gary and the viewers have teamed up with [Crushpad](#) in the past year to create the first ever community wine, [Vayniac Cabernet](#). On May 14<sup>th</sup> 2011, he made hi 1000<sup>th</sup> episode on Wine Library TV. (<http://tv.winelibrary.com/>)

### **Moblogging**

Moblogging has been formed through “mobil” and “blogging” words put together. Putting information to blogs by using cell phone with camera or mobile device is called moblogging.

Through mobile components of Web sites and programs (also called widgets) designed to minimize the interface of those sites to fit small screens and maximize their usability on tiny devices, these social

networking sites entered mobile space. (Varnali, Toker, Yilmaz, 2011) As mobile phones became a part of people's lives, they are the perfect channel for social sharing. The basic asset of social media is its "immediacy", if the information reaches the target audience fresh; its valuable, if the information is old; has little or no value. PC's can not reach the speed of mobile medium. Therefore mobile medium is ideal for social sharing.

Turkcell-imBenim.com being the first infrastructure of Moblogging in Turkey, has been accomplished by Turkcell but the site was closed as of 28 February 2009.

Moblog named www.moblogging.us gives information about mobile logging and additionally presents persons the possibility of uploading the photographs they have taken by cell phone to the site. Due to the photographs of the famous hotel chain in the center of Hilton Head Island and by uploaded to the site gave popularity to the hotel among the consumers following moblog.

Moblogging being an alternative place for marketing experts as of removing the limitations of time and place will increase its efficiency in time.

Since sharing social media content requires increased air time, it also encourages users to buy unlimited data plans. For content providers, mobile social networking applications and platforms provide an excellent environment to unleash viral campaigns. Viral campaigns require campaign and target specific multimedia content (e.g., branded videos, branded wallpapers, ring tones, music, stories and news) to be generated, which increases demand for the services of content providers. (Varnali, Toker, Yilmaz, 2011)

### **E-Mailing**

Nowadays e-mail is one of the most preferred communication medium. Everyone has at least one professional or private e-mail account. E-mail is one of the most effective methods for brands to reach customers directly. E-mail marketing is one of the digital word of mouth marketing methods, which aims to attract the attention of consumers using new methods and to increase sales. Using e-mails as direct marketing tools is also possible. As a result of user's entering to a web site and inputting information required, his/her contact details are taken to the web site's database. Nowadays e-mail sending within the scope of integrated marketing communications is used in the meaning of continuance of the relations with customers and sending advertisement via e-mail, even to support the efforts of word of mouth marketing. If it's used correctly it reduces marketing costs. Another advantage of e-mail marketing is the feedback of the campaign which can effectively be reported. In e-mail marketing practices what percentage of the e-mails successfully distributed, what percentage of the e-mails were displayed by the receivers, how many users withdrew from membership can be reported in detail.

E-mail sending within the framework of word of mouth marketing in digital environment has been arisen from the need of social interaction among people. For this reason while people are transmitting the e-mails they have received, they consider and apply this transaction as a means of help, social interaction or entertainment rather than a marketing tool. Hence, word of mouth marketing that will be applied by a company should start with sending e-mails to their consumers who gave their contact information and

accepted to receive e-mails. After adding their comments, sharing these messages with their close friends or relatives who can be interested, in fact helps the organization to achieve its marketing objective. (Coe, 2005)

E-mail marketing is authorized marketing. The basic difference between spam is the authorization of the user. At present spam is the main problem on internet. Spam senders try to show themselves as e-mail marketers although they are not.

In e-mail marketing campaigns there are some basic points which needs to be taken into consideration seriously. An e-mail send by a brand must include some opportunities for the receiver. E-mail must be addressed to the receiver personally. Researches show that unnecessary mails and e-mails which do not present any advantages or opportunities to the receiver, directs the receiver to withdraw from the mailing list.

To be successful in e-mail marketing campaigns as a viral marketing tool, the timing is very important. The opportunities and campaigns presented must be clear. For example if a customer does not come to a store as frequent as he used to be, it's a good time to send an e-mail including an attractive coupon to regain the customer. If a customer does not use the companys shopping card any more, an e-mail can be send to promote the use of the card. Other than these: e-mails, e-cards, coupons which present opportunities for the costumer, can be send on special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries etc.

E-mailing as a viral marketing tool is a very effective way to build brand awareness and loyalty. Brand owner can communicate with its costumers and potential costumers in the accordance with their interests. Messages can be shaped personally and timing is flexible.

One of the most important point in e-mailing is the "send it to a friend" button and "share it with social network groups" button. These buttons should always be placed under the text so messages can be announced to large groups.

### **Social Networking Sites**

Nowadays costumers are the pioneer factors in marketing; they demand for more and more and shout as loud as they can to make their voices to be heard. Due to their viral characteristics social networking sites are the best platforms for them. Social networking sites ensure the communication of individuals between each other and are crucial in terms of pervasion of recommendations, the comments related to products and ideas.

The first social networking site was founded with the name of SixDegrees in 1997. Today the most known social networking sites are Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, Flickr, LinkedIn, Bebo, Netlog, Yahoo 360, Yonja, Orkut (especially in Brasil). Social networking sites like Myspace, Twitter, Facebook developed with Web 2.0 and reached to incredible dimensions with Web 3.0. In such sites information spreads interactively. People rely on the advices, experiences and ideas of of their friends, family etc. as trustable advisers more than commercial messages. The basic difference between social networking sites and traditional channels is that the answers to questions can be seen by a wide population. As the information is open; benefiting, evaluating, developing and critising activities makes social networking sites more trustworthy. The users of such social

networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, Myspace etc. other than communicating with each other promptly, can reach brief information and tolerant to advertising and sales they are exposed to.

The researches about the social networking sites show that there is a sharp increase in their usage. While MySpace increased by 11.6% in USA in 2008, Facebook have started to rise with 78.6%. The visitor number of Flickr has also reached to 14 million. (The comScore, 2008) According to 2011 datas Twitter reached more than 200 million users. Facebook reached more than 800 million active users and the number of users increasing each passing day, 50% of these active users long on to facebook in any given day, and an average user has 130 friends and more than 900 million objects are interacted among these people ([www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics](http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics)). These statistics show the power of social networking sites in marketing communications for spreading out the ideas and telling the stories of the company.

Fortis has realized the first brand application of Turkey in Facebook being a social network. Users over 4.500 in the first three days and 20.000 users in the first month have attended to "Fortis Turkey Cup Prediction Game". The application put into practice on the eve of group matches has allowed users to make score predictions for matches in accordance with the fixture. Those making best score predictions have been ranked at the end of every match week accordingly (<http://www.pctime.com.tr/habergoster.asp?id=599>).

British Airways created a connection between New York and London by using Tweeter and designing Metrowin web page. The web page gives advises about where to go, where to eat, where to stay. Twitter is becoming more and more popular also in Turkey. Turkish Airlines and Pegasus Airlines send information about their new destinations and sales promotions through Twitter. (Odabasi, 2009)

## **Wikis**

Wikis are web pages, which can be viewed and modified by anyone with a web browser and internet access. So anybody can change the wiki content as he/she likes. Wikis can be described as; internet encyclopedias in which the internet users are free to contribute to the content. They are surprising, collaborative and robust group sites.

Provide their users both the author and the editor privileges. The consumers, whose place have been changed from the receiver to the sender of information can express their opinions, comments, reverse thoughts about every subject freely without reviling. Other than the content, sounds, movies, pictures can be loaded and multimedia presentations and simple digital stories can be created. Goldstein says "... Over on the Wiki side, you need to be an expert in something to get it populated to begin with, and then you need the resources to keep it up" (Scott, 2010: 55). Some current news, information regarding product promotions, comments about famous persons, experiences on product, brand or organization are shared in Ekşisözlük and spreaded by word of mouth in digital environment

The first Wikis appeared in mid 1990s. Scientists and engineers used them to create dynamic knowledge bases. Later on they became considerable viral marketing tools. Ekşisözlük being a Turkish wiki formed a part of "sourcetimes.org" site by Sedat Kapanoğlu in 1999 is participative vocabulary including

comments of registered writers on every type of words and concepts. ([http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ek%C5%9Fi\\_S%C3%B6zler%C3%B6k](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ek%C5%9Fi_S%C3%B6zler%C3%B6k) )

### **Rate and Review Sites**

These sites are the web sites which include comments and evaluations of the consumers about the products or services. These sites playing efficient role for decision making of consumers have been discerned by marketing experts and became a new area for the applications of word of mouth marketing.

TripAdvisor ( [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)) is a comment and evaluation site and its content is formed by consumers. TripAdvisor is clicked approximately 20 million times in a month. The site provides information about hotels, restaurants or world cities and has 5 million registered users . The site updates information of 23.000 cities continuously and contains photographs and comments about 180.000 hotels all around the world. (Öymen,[http://www.bthaber.com.tr/haber.phtml?yazi\\_id=545000185](http://www.bthaber.com.tr/haber.phtml?yazi_id=545000185)) Such rate and review sites are more important in service industry due to the lack of pre-experience possibility of services. Especially in tourism sector, many people surf on such rate and review sites to see the experiences of others before buying a tour, choosing a restaurant or a hotel.

### **CONCLUSION**

Marketing concept is based on human needs and today the concept has been developed as the needs vary. Due to the technological developments cause the changes in the human needs, product diversity is offered to meet these needs and tactics are formed to sell these products more and more. This approach brought a new dimension to the marketing concept: customer orientation that ends by customer satisfaction. The changes in life styles, education and family structure have affected awareness of consumers. Many differences and properties have started to appear together with the diversity in media field. Therefore, marketing communication, which consists of activities directing consumers to purchase the new products, gain importance.

Viral marketing is a marketing technique which enables information transfer, gives services and information to other people free of charge. It also motivates people/ groups and uses existing communication channels.

At the present day reaching the consumers in traditional methods is becoming harder and harder. As the modern consumers are more conscious about what they buy, what they consume, the harder the job of the marketers is. In the new millennium the characteristics, preferences, likes and dislikes of consumers change rapidly. In the globalized world the ways of reaching the information has also been changed Nowadays viral marketing which is based on “recommendations” is a new trend for companies, to make the target audience/consumers to read, to watch, to see the messages sent and to position the brand in their minds. The power of “recommendation” is known for many years but not used as a marketing method. Getting

information or an evaluation on a product or a service from other consumers is trustworthy as the users of the products are not members of the company.

Viral marketing targets creating a message rather than transmitting a message to consumer. It's based on to make consumers a part of the campaign and aims to turn them into brand/organization/company agent.

Persuasion, having significant place in the marketing communication, will be stronger with viral marketing as named as recommendation from a third person. The ones understanding the power and efficiency of viral marketing among the firms, carry out advertisement, public relations and personal sales activities, integrated this communication technique in their activities.

With the internet, sharing experiences related to brand, product and services of consumers have become easier. Benefiting from this situation, marketing professionals have used marketing in digital environment for spreading marketing messages by transmitting from a consumer to another consumer. Effective work can be organized in limited budget in this new marketing trend. The lack of efficiency of the conventional tools has caused the transition of consumers from a passive position to an active position. Transmission of the opinions voluntarily of experienced consumers- being independent from the organization- has become effective on the purchasing decision of the new ones. Consumers behave like marketers by using the "send it to a friend" button, to share, to inform, to send the messages to their friends. In a way they become volunteer marketers. It is predicted that the power of viral marketing applications will increase its efficiency by showing more development in the future. But it has to be mentioned that although the viral marketing messages are effective but does not guarantee the desired consequences so it is a process to be used attentively.



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