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Viral Marketing as a New Branding Strategy to Influence Consumer Behaviour: A Study of Technological Products in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital technologies and social media platforms has significantly changed marketing strategies. Viral marketing has emerged as a result of technological developments and societal changes, as it responds to market changes, adapts to customers' psychological needs and behavioral shifts, and enhances the effectiveness of word-of-mouth (WOM) and online marketing. This study aims to examine the impact of viral marketing on consumers' purchase intention and to explore the mediating role of brand awareness in the context of technological products in Turkey. In addition, this study examines the moderating role of traditional marketing in the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness. A quantitative study was conducted using data collected from 201 respondents. Reliability, correlation, and regression analyses were performed using SPSS. The findings show that viral marketing has a significant positive impact on purchase intention. In addition, brand awareness plays a critical role in enhancing purchase intention. The results highlight the growing importance of viral marketing as an effective branding strategy in the technology sector. The results also show that traditional marketing has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness. The results also indicate that brand awareness partially mediates the relationship between viral marketing and purchase intention.

Keywords: Viral Marketing, Brand Awareness, Traditional Marketing, Purchase Intention, Integrated Marketing Communications IMC.

JEL Classification Codes: M30, M31, M37

Tüketicileri Etkilemek İçin Yeni Bir Markalaşma Stratejisi Olarak Viral Pazarlama: Türkiye'deki Teknolojik Ürünler Üzerine Bir Çalışma

ÖZ

Dijital teknolojilerin ve sosyal medya platformlarının hızlı büyümesi, pazarlama stratejilerini önemli ölçüde değiştirmiştir. Viral pazarlama, teknolojik gelişmeler ve toplumsal değişimlerin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmış olup, pazar değişikliklerine yanıt vermekte, müşterinin psikolojik ihtiyaçlarına ve davranışsal değişimlerine uyum sağlamak ve ağızdan ağıza (WOM) ve çevrimiçi pazarlamanın etkinliğini artırmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki teknolojik ürünler bağlamında viral pazarlamanın tüketicilerin satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisini incelemeyi ve marka bilinirliğinin aracı rolünü araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, bu çalışma, viral pazarlama ile marka bilinirliği arasındaki ilişkide geleneksel pazarlamanın düzenleyici rolünü de incelemektedir. 201 katılımcıdan toplanan veriler kullanılarak nicel bir çalışma yürütülmüştür. SPSS kullanılarak güvenilirlik, korelasyon ve regresyon analizleri yapılmıştır. Bulgular, viral pazarlamanın satın alma niyeti üzerinde önemli bir pozitif etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, marka bilinirliği satın alma niyetini artırmada kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Sonuçlar, teknoloji sektöründe etkili bir marka stratejisi olarak viral pazarlamanın artan önemini vurgulamaktadır. Sonuçlar ayrıca, geleneksel pazarlamanın viral pazarlama ile marka bilinirliği arasındaki ilişkide önemli bir düzenleyici etkisinin olmadığını göstermektedir. Sonuçlar ayrıca marka bilinirliğinin, viral pazarlama ile satın alma niyeti arasındaki ilişkiyi kısmen aracılık ettiğini de göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: viral pazarlama, marka bilinirliği, geleneksel pazarlama, satın alma niyeti, bütünsel pazarlama iletişimi.

JEL Sınıflandırma Kodları: M30, M31, M37

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç ve Kapsam:

Bu çalışma, modern bir marka oluşturma stratejisi olarak viral pazarlamanın, Türkiye'deki teknoloji sektörüne odaklanarak, tüketici satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Dijital teknolojilerin hızlı gelişimi ve sosyal medyanın yaygınlaşmasıyla birlikte, geleneksel pazarlama stratejileri, etkileşim ve katılma dayanan dijital yöntemlere kıyasla daha az etkili hale gelmiştir. Viral pazarlama, bu yöntemlerin en öne çıkanlarından biridir ve bireysel paylaşım yoluyla sosyal ağlarda içeriğin hızlı bir şekilde yayılmasına dayanarak, nispeten düşük maliyetle pazarlama mesajlarının geniş kitlelere ulaşmasını sağlar. Bu çalışma, viral pazarlamanın marka bilinirliğini artırmadaki rolünü ve bu bilinirliğin tüketici satın alma niyetine nasıl yansıdığını anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, viral pazarlama ve satın alma niyeti arasındaki ilişkide marka bilinirliğinin aracı rolünü ve entegre pazarlama iletişimi çerçevesinde geleneksel pazarlamanın düzenleyici rolünü incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu çalışmanın önemi, literatürdeki bir araştırma boşluğundan kaynaklanmaktadır; çoğu çalışma, özellikle dijital pazarlamaya büyük ölçüde bağımlı olan Türk pazarı ve teknoloji sektörü bağlamında, değişkenler arasındaki doğrudan ilişkilere odaklanmış ancak bunları kapsamlı bir analitik modele entegre etmemiştir.

Yöntem:

Bu çalışma, viral pazarlama, marka bilinirliği, geleneksel pazarlama ve satın alma niyeti gibi temel değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri incelemek için nicel bir yaklaşım kullanmaktadır. Veriler, çevrimiçi erişimin kolaylığı nedeniyle kolay örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak Türkiye'de 201 katılımcıdan oluşan bir örnekleme dağıtılan çevrimiçi bir anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Anket, önceki çalışmalarda kullanılan ölçütlere dayanarak tasarlanmıştır. Viral pazarlama, bireylerin sosyal medyada pazarlama içeriğiyle etkileşim ve paylaşım derecesiyle ölçülürken, marka bilinirliği bireylerin markayı tanıma ve hatırlama yeteneğiyle ölçülmüştür. Satın alma niyeti, tüketicilerin gelecekte ürünü satın alma istekliliğiyle ölçülmüştür. Tüm maddeler beş puanlık Likert ölçeği kullanılarak ölçülmüştür. Veri toplama işleminden sonra veriler SPSS yazılımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Ölçeğin güvenilirliğini sağlamak için Cronbach alfa katsayısı kullanılarak güvenilirlik analizi yapılmıştır. Değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri incelemek için korelasyon analizi, hipotezleri test etmek ve değişkenler arasındaki etki gücünü belirlemek için regresyon analizi ve istatistiksel modellerin anlamlılığını değerlendirmek için varyans analizi (ANOVA) kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular:

Çalışma sonuçları, viral pazarlamanın tüketici satın alma niyeti üzerinde önemli bir olumlu etkiye sahip olduğunu, pazarlama içeriğiyle etkileşimi artırdığını ve satın alma olasılığını yükselttiğini göstermiştir. Sonuçlar ayrıca, viral pazarlama ile marka bilinirliği arasında güçlü bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymuştur; çünkü içeriğin dijital platformlarda yayılması, tüketicilerin marka hakkındaki bilinirliği dalğını artırır ve markanın zihinlerindeki varlığını güçlendirir. Dahası, marka bilinirliği satın alma niyetini etkilemede çok önemli bir rol oynar; tüketiciler bildikleri ve güvendikleri ürünleri satın alma eğilimindedir. Regresyon analizi, viral pazarlamanın satın alma niyetindeki varyansın önemli bir bölümünü açıkladığını ve modele marka bilinirliğinin eklenmesinin açıklayıcı gücünü daha da artırdığını, bu değişkenin kısmi aracı rolünü gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bunun aksine, sonuçlar geleneksel pazarlamanın düzenleyici rolüne ilişkin hipotezi desteklememiştir, çünkü viral pazarlama ile marka bilinirliği arasındaki ilişkide anlamlı bir etkisi görülmemiştir. Bu, modern ortamda geleneksel yöntemlerin dijital pazarlamaya kıyasla azalan bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir.

Sonuç ve Tartışma:

Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, viral pazarlamanın, özellikle inovasyona ve dijital etkileşime büyük ölçüde dayanan teknoloji sektöründe, tüketici davranışını etkilemede etkili bir araç olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu pazarlama türü, içeriğin hızlı yayılması ve kullanıcı etkileşiminden kaynaklanan sosyal etki yoluyla marka bilinirliğinin artmasına ve satın alma niyetinin güçlenmesine katkıda bulunur. Bulgular ayrıca, algılanan riski azalttığı ve tüketici güvenini artırdığı için marka bilinirliğinin satın alma karar verme sürecinde çok önemli bir unsur olduğunu doğrulamaktadır. Geleneksel pazarlama bazı durumlarda destekleyici bir rol oynamaya devam etse de, etkisi dijital pazarlamaya kıyasla sınırlı hale gelmiştir; bu da şirketlerin pazarlama stratejilerini dijital kanallara doğru yeniden yönlendirmelerini gerektirmektedir. Buna göre, çalışma, teknoloji şirketlerinin en iyi sonuçları elde etmek için ilgi çekici ve paylaşılabılır pazarlama içeriği geliştirmeye, sosyal medya varlıklarını güçlendirmeye ve entegre pazarlama iletişim stratejilerinden yararlanmaya odaklanmalarını önermektedir. Çalışma ayrıca, dijital ortamda tüketici davranışını daha iyi anlamak için daha büyük örneklem ve çeşitli sektörleri içeren ve güven, etkileşim ve algılanan değer gibi diğer değişkenleri inceleyen gelecekteki araştırmaları da önermektedir.

1. INTRODUCTION

The internet has recently witnessed an unprecedented marketing boom. A new type of smart advertising strategy will increasingly penetrate our daily lives in the future. Unlike traditional television advertising, this new type of advertising requires potential customers to participate in a virtual forum (the internet) to discuss a specific commercial product, interact with one another, and share their opinions about it. The goal is to create a spontaneous and viral chat (messages that spread rapidly across networks, spreading from mouth to mouth about a product, to gradually attract the largest possible number of internet visitors). Viral marketing is a very clever marketing design for attracting the public and potential buyers. Technological innovations and cultural changes have shed light on the creation of viral marketing, and viral marketing also meets the psychological and behavioral demands of consumers and responds to marketing trends (Montgomery, 2001).

During the recent period of viral marketing, customers began promoting products and services through this concept with a mouse click, which is considered word-of-mouth. The most important point in the success of this concept depends on trust between those spreading viral messages, relying on the extensive social network of colleagues, friends, and relatives to send promotional material. This reduces the cost of acquiring new customers in the medium and long term (Chu & Kim, 2011; Palka et al., 2009).

The emergence of the term viral marketing as a modern concept expresses modern marketing philosophy, as it is a strategy that expresses those personal communications that occur naturally between consumers by mail, short messages via mobile phone, internet networks, and means of communication-related to a good or service (Shirky, 2008; Steinman & Hawkins, 2010). Viral marketing plays a major role in directing consumer behavior towards buying. The rapid developments in the means of communication and technologies related to the market directly affected the spread of various forms of marketing practices such as online advertising, channels, and social networks, which allowed organizations and marketers to use all these means if they wanted to (Steenburgh & Avery, 2008).

Despite the growing academic interest in viral marketing as an effective digital strategy, several important gaps remain in existing literature. Most previous studies have examined the impact of viral marketing on consumer behavior in general contexts, while the technology products sector particularly in Turkey remains underexplored, despite its strong reliance on digital communication and viral content.

In addition, prior research has largely focused on analyzing relationships between variables independently, such as the effect of viral marketing on purchase intention or brand awareness on purchase intention. However, limited studies have integrated these variables into a unified causal model that explains the mechanism through which viral marketing enhances brand awareness and subsequently influences purchase intention (Pane et al., 2024; Chen, 2024).

Furthermore, many studies have relied on basic statistical techniques such as correlation and simple regression, which may not fully capture the complexity of relationships between viral marketing, brand awareness, and consumer behavior.

The practical application of this study was conducted on Samsung products as a representative global brand in the technology sector, with a primary focus on smartphones and related smart electronic devices widely used in Turkey.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Viral Marketing

Due to technological development, work in the field of e-marketing on the internet has developed a lot and has become an important part of the work of many organizations, due to the benefits achieved from it, and the potential or current creative products it offers in the market or on the organization's virtual website, because of developments in the field of business and because of the new and intense global competition, many international organizations are trying to search for everything new and work to implement it, and the latter is trying to benefit as much as possible in how to reach the goal at the lowest possible costs, whether in the long or short term (Cruz & Fill, 2008; Palka et al., 2009). Due to the large expenditures on promotional campaigns, a new type of marketing has emerged called viral marketing,

which is one of the modern concepts in marketing magazines as it is used to promote the products of organizations. Viral marketing acts as a form of spoken word or mouse word that encourages consumers to pass a company's message about its products or services via voice, video, speech, and written information to others over the internet in a user-generated site such as YouTube, Myspace, Facebook and google video. This allows advertisers to rapidly distribute advertisements and promotional videos that will quickly be shared by millions of people (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Sohn et al., (2013) consider it as a strategy that exploits the internet to exchange ideas, information, and clarifications about a specific product, and communicate it with the aim of encouraging customers to spread the message among network users. To sum up, it can be concluded that viral marketing is an innovative marketing strategy that relies on individuals to pass a message of interest to others based on the principle of the spoken word, and this type of internet marketing is used especially social networks with the aim of spreading messages quickly, through which the company aims to create awareness of its products and brands in addition to achieving other marketing goals (Johnson, 2008).

Viral marketing messages spread rapidly among individuals through networks, as illustrated in Figure 1.

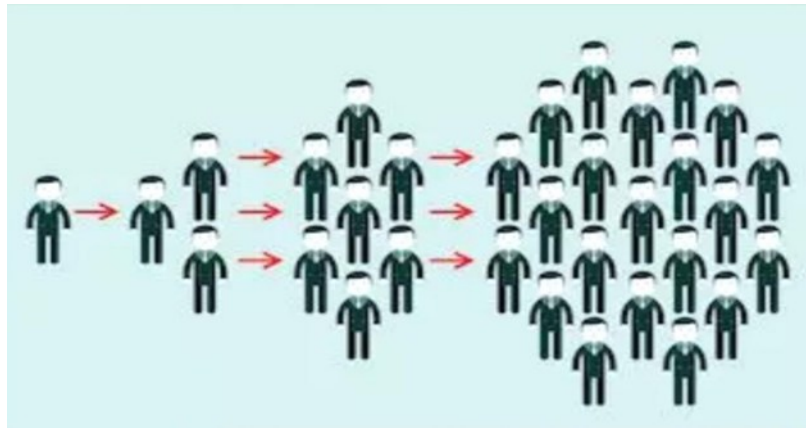


Figure 1. Propagation through viral marketing

Source: Quotemaster. (n.d.). Viral marketing. Retrieved June 15, 2017, from <https://www.quotemaster.org/viral+marketing>

2.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a fundamental element of brand knowledge. It refers to the ability to recognize a brand name and understand its association with a particular product within a product category. This concept reflects the extent to which current and potential customers are aware of and familiar with the brand. Brand awareness is a crucial step in brand building, as it plays a significant role in customers' purchasing decisions (Ateke ,2017).

Brand awareness is also defined as the customer's ability to remember or recognize that a brand belongs to a particular product category (Ansary et al., 2018). Brand awareness is also interpreted as a set of perceptions that form in the customer's mind, where these perceptions are linked to the brand's environmental commitments and concerns (Simona, 2019). In addition, it is defined as the ability of customers to recognize or recall a brand under different circumstances (Dib et al., 2014).

Keller states that brand awareness is related to the power of the brand in memory, so it is reflected in the individual's ability to perceive the elements of the brand, such as the brand name, logo, and its variations and transformations under different conditions. (Keller, 2003, p. 254), and often brand awareness is measured through two reputations: brand recognition or distinction and brand recall. While the original concept of brand recognition relies on the consumer's ability to enhance proactive brand detection, when they have a taste of the latter, that is, to recognize and understand the brand based on past experience. Because consumers can easily recognize a brand if they have seen it or heard about it before, in this case, when recognizing a brand, individuals are often required to choose from the many options available.

The brand awareness emerged and developed in the 18th century when producers began using names and images to enhance the brand's mental image. The brand awareness is one of the most intangible assets that organizations possess, as it distinguishes between products (Brunello, 2014).

A brand also represents an important part of legal property, as it can be bought and sold, and it provides sustainable future returns for the organization. The accumulated value of a brand, whether directly or indirectly through these advantages, is known as brand value (Keller, 2016). Strong brand value is built through a sound marketing plan based on the dimensions of the marketing mix, which in turn develops the dimensions of brand value that influence customer perceptions and behavior, thus creating positive brand value (Shariq, 2018).

2.3 Traditional Marketing

Traditional marketing is the oldest historical form of marketing, emerging with the expansion of industrial production and the need to promote goods through widespread mass media before the advent of the internet and digital technologies (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021).

This type of marketing relies on the use of mass communication channels such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and direct mail to reach the largest possible number of consumers within a broad market (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021).

Traditional marketing is based on one-way communication, where the organization sends the marketing message to the public without direct or immediate interaction from consumers, thus reducing opportunities for rapid feedback (Stanton, Etzel, & Walker, 1994). Traditional marketing also relies on a mass marketing strategy that aims to address the entire market with a unified message, rather than tailoring messages to specific customer segments (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The marketing mix (4Ps) concept, introduced by McCarthy, is the fundamental theoretical framework upon which traditional marketing activities are based. It consists of four key elements: product, price, place, and promotion (McCarthy, 1960).

Promotion is one of the most important components of this mix, encompassing traditional advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations—all tools that rely heavily on traditional media to deliver the message (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021).

Traditional marketing contributes to building brand awareness and enhancing its image among the public through repetition and widespread dissemination across various media platforms (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Despite its effectiveness in reaching a large segment of consumers, traditional marketing is characterized by high operating costs, especially for large-scale television advertising, and by the difficulty of accurately measuring return on investment compared to modern digital methods (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021).

Furthermore, the limited interaction with the audience is one of the most significant challenges facing traditional marketing, as this approach does not allow for precise personalization or immediate response to changing consumer behavior and needs (Stanton et al., 1994).

2.4 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention analysis is an effective process for predicting future purchases. When a consumer decides to buy something, it is driven by their intention. Purchase intention analysis has become widely used in many behavioral marketing studies. This leads to an understanding of what purchasing patterns might be in the future. Therefore, purchasing intention is considered one of the key indicators that the marketing manager relies on to predict future sales. Purchase intention is a key indicator for businesses that helps them predict the likelihood of a consumer making a purchase within a specific time period and acts as a proxy for actual behavior (Farris et al., 2010). The literature defines purchase intention from two angles: First, as a preference for repurchasing a particular product, indicating the post-purchase behavior of existing customers; and second, as the likelihood that a customer will choose a particular product, indicating the customer's general preferences regarding whether they believe the product or brand meets their expectations, needs, and desires. Purchase intention also represents the possibility that

consumers plan or prepare to purchase a particular product or service in the future. Therefore, it is a highly significant variable (Yeh & Hsiao, 2012).

It was shown (Al and Martins, 2019) that an increase in purchase intention means an increase in the opportunity to purchase, which means that if consumers have a positive purchase intention, positive engagement will enhance this purchase process.

The purchasing process is an evaluation of consumer attitudes towards a brand. Social media plays a significant and effective role in shaping purchasing processes in general, through providing interactive information to the consumer and forming positive attitudes towards the brand. This is achieved through marketing digital content directly related to positive purchasing processes. (Tuluk, 2021)

Therefore, what immediately precedes any behavior is the person's "intention" to make the decision, and the ability to exhibit a specific behavior is "behavioral intention." The stronger the customers intention, the more likely their behavior will be in accordance with it. To confirm the validity of this, we chose to apply the unified theory of technology acceptance and use, which has been used in many studies to identify customer behavior.

Purchase intentions can be used to test the implementation of a new distribution channel to help managers determine whether the concept is worth further development and to identify geographic markets and consumer segments targeted through the channel (Morwitz et al., 2007).

2.5 Integrated Marketing Communication

" Integrated marketing communication is a concept that includes planning and coordinating marketing activities like advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion and sales force. (Dumas, 2003)The origin of integrated marketing communications is not clearly defined,. It goes back to Schultz (1993). He said that Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is an approach to marketing that combines different tools into a unified program. This involves coordinating methods like advertising, direct marketing and public relations to deliver a clear message to the target audience. The goal is to make marketing efforts more effective.On the hand Duncan (2002) views IMC as a process of building relationships with customers and stakeholders. It's an activity that aims to mobilize all actors around the company with the same values. This helps the company stand out from competitors.

* IMC is customer-oriented and determined by customer data, perceptions and behavior.

Integrated Marketing Communication is a concept that manages a company's image. It focuses on the target audience, marketing mix and results (Kliatchko, 2020). It's also about integrating and coordinating many communication channels. This delivers a message about the organization and its products (Armstrong & Kotler 2012).IMC represents a communication process. It results from planning, integrating and implementing marketing elements like advertising and public relations. Over time this creates an impact, on the brand (Shimp, 2022).

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

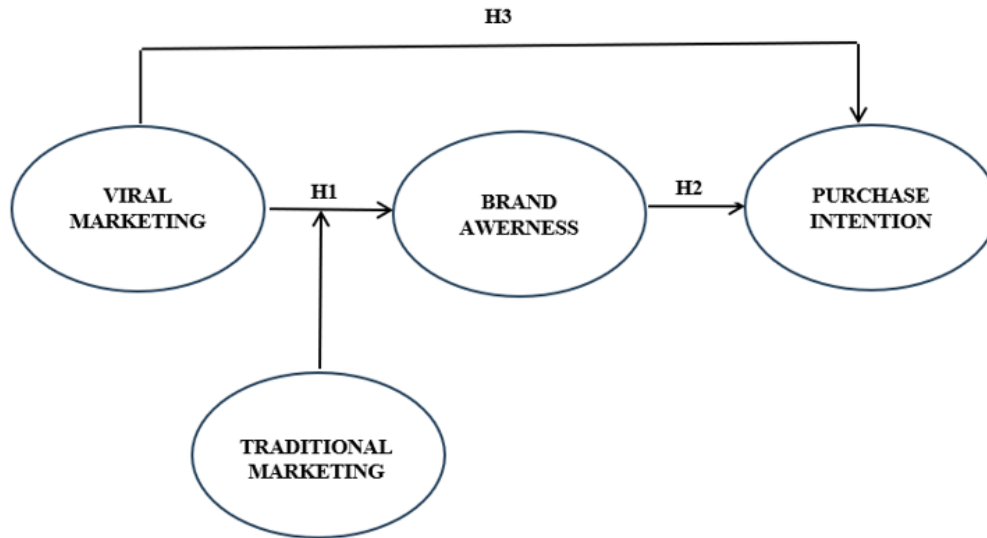


Figure 2. Initial Research model

H1: Viral marketing has a significant positive effect on brand awareness.

H2: Brand awareness has a significant positive effect on purchase intention.

H3: Viral marketing has a significant positive effect on purchase intention .

H4: Brand awareness mediates the relationship between viral marketing and purchase intention.

H5: Traditional marketing moderates the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness.

This study looks at how viral marketing, brand awareness and buying intentions are connected and also considers traditional marketing. Viral marketing spreads messages fast on platforms making more people aware of a brand. Brand awareness makes people more likely to buy from that brand. Traditional marketing can help or hurt how well viral marketing works for brand awareness. This model helps us understand how both online and offline marketing strategies influence what people buy.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of viral marketing on consumers' purchase intention toward technological products in Turkey. Quantitative research is commonly used in marketing studies to measure relationships between variables using statistical analysis. The study focuses on examining how viral marketing as a branding strategy influences consumers' behavioral intentions.

A survey method was used to collect data from respondents. The questionnaire consisted of several items designed to measure viral marketing, traditional marketing, brand awareness, and purchase intention.

4.2 Sample

The study used a convenience sampling method and was adopted due to time constraints and ease of access to respondents through online platforms. A total of 201 participants were included in the study. The study mainly focused on Samsung smartphones and smart electronic devices commonly used in Turkey. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. The study had females 140 females to be exact which is 69.7% of the people in the study and 61 males, which is 30.3% of the people in the study. Female respondents represented a larger proportion of the sample. The participants in the study belonged to different age groups. Some of them 55 people are between 20 and 25 years old, which

is 27.4% of the people in the study. Then there are 50 people who were between 26 and 30 years old which is 24.9% of the people in the study. The study also had 24 people who were between 31 and 40 years old which is 11.9% of the people in the study. 72 People in the study are over 40 years old which is 35.8% of the people in the study. The ages of the people in the study are evenly spread out but there are a little more people in the study who are over 40 years old. Participants in the study had different educational levels. Most of the people in the study 119 people have a bachelors degree, which is 59.2% of the people in the study. Then there are 41 people who have an education, which is 20.4% of the people in the study. The study also had 29 people who have a masters degree or higher which is 14.4% of the people in the study. 12 People in the study have a diploma, which is 6% of the people in the study. These results indicate that most participants had a relatively high educational background.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	140	69.7
Male	61	30.3
Age		
20–25	55	27.4
26–30	50	24.9
31–40	24	11.9
Above 40	72	35.8
Education		
High School	41	20.4
Diploma	12	6.0
Bachelor's degree	119	59.2
Master's Degree or Higher	29	14.4

The next step after the data were collected was to analyze them with the statistical software SPSS. The data were submitted to the following analyses: Reliability analysis, Correlations and Regression analysis, and the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

4.3 Measurement

This study addresses the following research questions:

- Does viral marketing significantly influence consumers' purchase intention toward technological products?
- Does viral marketing contribute to increasing brand awareness among consumers?
- Does brand awareness influence consumers' purchase intention?
- Does brand awareness mediate the relationship between viral marketing and purchase intention?
- Does traditional marketing moderate the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness?

4.4 Measurement Instrument

The constructs used in this study were measured using previously validated scales from the marketing literature. The measurement items were adopted from established studies, and all statements and their corresponding citations were taken directly from the sources listed in the survey instrument. Viral marketing was measured using items adapted from Chowdhury, Bhowmik, and Pandit (2025) and Chu and Kim (2011), which assess consumers' engagement with viral marketing content and their tendency to share promotional messages through electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on social networking sites. Brand awareness was measured using items adapted from Aaker (1991), which evaluate consumers ability to recognize and recall a specific brand. Purchase intention was measured using items adapted from Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991), reflecting consumers likelihood of purchasing the brand in the future. Additionally, traditional marketing was measured using items adapted from Kumar (2018) that assess the effectiveness of traditional media advertising. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Constructs measured:

- Viral Marketing (5 items)
- Traditional Marketing (3 items)
- Brand Awareness (5 items)
- Purchase Intention (4 items)

5. DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Descriptive statistics were first conducted to describe the characteristics of the respondents. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was performed to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Since this study employed regression analysis using SPSS rather than structural equation modeling (SEM), reliability was primarily assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between the variables. Finally, regression analysis was conducted to test the research hypotheses and determine the effect of viral marketing on purchase intention.

5.1 Reliability Analysis:

Reliability analysis was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement scales. The results showed that all constructs achieved acceptable reliability levels. The Cronbach's alpha value for viral marketing was 0.826, while traditional marketing recorded 0.872. In addition, brand awareness showed a reliability value of 0.748, and purchase intention had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.795.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Conclusion
Viral Marketing	0.826	5	Reliable
Traditional Marketing	0.872	3	Reliable
Brand Awareness	0.748	5	Reliable
Purchase Intention	0.795	4	Reliable

The results indicate that all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than **0.70**, which means that the measurement items are reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis. Therefore, the questionnaire used in this study demonstrates a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

5.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the study variables. The results revealed that viral marketing had a significant positive correlation with purchase intention ($r = 0.544$, $p < 0.01$). Traditional marketing also showed a positive relationship with purchase intention ($r = 0.592$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, brand awareness was positively correlated with purchase intention ($r = 0.512$, $p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that higher levels of marketing exposure and brand awareness are associated with stronger consumer purchase intention.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Variables	Viral Marketing	Traditional Marketing	Brand Awareness
Viral Marketing			
Traditional Marketing	0.316		
Brand Awareness	0.426	0.358	
Purchase Intention	0.544	0.592	0.512

(Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level)

The correlation results show that all independent variables have positive and significant relationships with purchase intention. Viral Marketing has a correlation coefficient of 0.544, Traditional Marketing has 0.592, and Brand Awareness has 0.512 with Purchase Intention. This indicates that increases in these variables are associated with higher consumer purchase intention.

5.3 Regression Analysis

Model 1:

A regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of viral marketing on purchase intention. The results indicated that viral marketing has a significant positive impact on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.675$, $p < 0.001$). The model explained 45.5% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.455$). The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 166.150$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results (Model 1: Effect of Viral Marketing on Purchase Intention)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
					R Square Change	F Change
1	.675 ^a	.455	.452	.58024	.455	166.150

The R^2 value of 0.455 indicates that Viral Marketing explains 45.5% of the variance in Purchase Intention, while the remaining 54.5% is explained by other variables not included in the model.

Table 5. ANOVA Results (Model 1)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	55.939	1	55.939	166.150	.000 ^b
	Residual	66.999	199	.337		
	Total	122.937	200			

Since the significance value is less than 0.05, the regression model is statistically significant.

Table 6. Regression Coefficients (Model 1)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.276	.103		22.032	.000
	VM_AD	.115	.009	.675	12.890	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase_Intention

The results show that viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.675$, $p < 0.001$). This means that higher levels of viral marketing activities significantly increase consumers' purchase intention.

Model 2 :Effect of Viral Marketing on Brand Awareness

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of viral marketing on brand awareness. The results indicated that viral marketing has a significant positive effect on brand awareness ($\beta = 0.426$, $p < 0.001$). The model explained 18.1% of the variance in brand awareness ($R^2 = 0.181$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 44.120$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1 was supported.

Table 7. Regression Analysis Results (Model 2: Effect of Viral Marketing on Brand Awareness)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.426 ^a	.181	.177	.59874

a. Predictors: (Constant), Viral_Marketing

Table 8. ANOVA Results (Model 2)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	15.816	1	15.816	44.120	.000 ^b
Residual	71.339	199	.358		
Total	87.155	200			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand_Awareness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Viral_Marketing

Table 9. Regression Coefficients (Model 2)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.607	.185		14.068	.000
Viral Marketing	.370	.056	.426	6.642	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Brand_Awareness

Model 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

A third regression model was conducted by including brand awareness along with viral marketing. The results showed that both variables significantly influence purchase intention. Viral marketing had a standardized coefficient of ($\beta = 0.557$, $p < 0.001$), while brand awareness had a coefficient of ($\beta = 0.254$, $p < 0.001$). The model explained 50.6% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.506$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 101.287$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 10. Regression Analysis Results (Model 3)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
					R Square Change	F Change
1	.711 ^a	.506	.501	.55399	.506	101.287

The results indicate that the independent variables explain 50.6% of the variance in purchase intention.

Table 11. ANOVA Results (Model 3)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	62.170	2	31.085	101.287	.000 ^b
Residual	60.767	198	.307		
Total	122.937	200			

The significance value is less than **0.05**, indicating that the model is statistically significant.

Table 12. Regression Coefficients (Model 3)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.341	.230		5.840	.000
VM_AD	.095	.010	.557	9.877	.000
Brand Awareness	.302	.067	.254	4.506	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase_Intention

The results show that both viral marketing and brand awareness have significant positive effects on purchase intention. Viral marketing has the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.557$), followed by brand awareness ($\beta = 0.254$).

Model 4: Moderation Analysis

A fourth regression model was conducted to examine the moderating effect of traditional marketing on the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness. An interaction term (Viral Marketing $\times$ Traditional Marketing) was created and included in the regression model. The results showed that the interaction term was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.578$, $p = 0.117 > 0.05$), indicating that traditional marketing does not moderate the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness.

Table 13. Regression Analysis Results (Model 4: Moderation Analysis)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.490 ^a	.240	.228	.57988

a. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction_VM_TM, Viral_Marketing, Traditional_Marketing

Table 14. ANOVA Results (Model 4)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	20.913	3	6.971	20.731	.000 ^b
Residual	66.242	197	.336		
Total	87.155	200			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand_Awareness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction_VM_TM, Viral_Marketing, Traditional_Marketing

Table 15. Regression Coefficients (Model 4)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.188	.526		6.056	.000
	Viral_Marketing	-.100	.184	-.115	-.541	.589
	Traditional_Marketing	.012	.171	.016	.072	.942
	Interaction_VM_TM	.079	.050	.578	1.573	.117

a. Dependent Variable: Brand_Awareness

6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The results of the statistical analysis indicate that viral marketing has a significant positive effect on purchase intention. The regression analysis showed that viral marketing explains a considerable proportion of the variance in purchase intention. In addition, brand awareness also has a significant positive influence on purchase intention. The findings suggest that both viral marketing and brand awareness play an important role in shaping consumer purchase intention. Based on the results of the regression analysis, the initial conceptual model was modified. The analysis indicated that some hypothesized relationships were statistically significant, while the moderating role of traditional marketing was not supported. The hypotheses of the study were tested using regression analysis. The results clearly indicate which hypotheses are supported and which are not, as follows:

- **H1 is supported:** Viral marketing has a significant positive effect on brand awareness ($\beta = 0.426$, $p < 0.01$).
- **H2 is supported:** Brand awareness has a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.254$, $p < 0.001$).
- **H3 is supported:** Viral marketing has a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.675$, $p < 0.001$).

- **H4 is partially supported:** Brand awareness partially mediates the relationship between viral marketing and purchase intention, as viral marketing retained a significant direct effect even after including brand awareness in the model. The mediation effect was assessed following Baron and Kenny's (1986) regression approach, indicating partial mediation.
- **H5 is not supported:** Traditional marketing does not significantly moderate the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, it was removed from the model.

Therefore, the modified model retains the direct and indirect (mediated) paths between viral marketing and purchase intention through brand awareness, while removing the moderating role of traditional marketing.

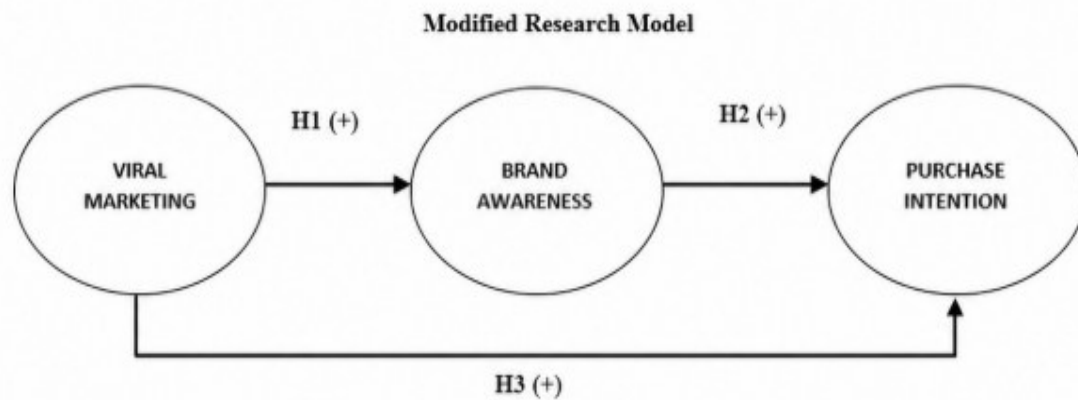


Figure 3. Modified Research Model

7. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of viral marketing on consumers' purchase intention and to examine the role of brand awareness as well as the influence of traditional marketing within this relationship. The findings of the statistical analysis provide several important insights into how different marketing strategies impact consumer behavior in the technological products sector. As a result of the correlation analysis, significant positive relationships were found among key variables. The results indicated that viral marketing is positively associated with brand awareness ($r = 0.426$, $p < 0.01$) and purchase intention ($r = 0.544$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that viral marketing plays an important part in shaping consumers' perceptions and increasing consumers' willingness to buy technological products. Viral marketing facilitates rapid information sharing through digital platforms, increasing brand awareness and strengthening consumers' purchase intentions.

Likewise, the results showed that traditional marketing is significantly related to purchase intention ($r = 0.592$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that traditional marketing tools, such as television advertisements, radio, and offline promotional activities, still contribute to influencing consumers' purchase decisions and supporting brand credibility. Although digital marketing strategies have become increasingly dominant, traditional marketing continues to support brand communication by enhancing brand credibility and reaching a broader audience. In addition, brand awareness demonstrated a significant positive relationship with purchase intention ($r = 0.512$, $p < 0.01$). This finding highlights the significance of brand recognition and familiarity in impacting consumer behavior. When consumers are more aware of a brand, they are more likely to trust it and consider it as a feasible option when making purchase decisions. Brand awareness reduces uncertainty and perceived risk associated with purchasing products, especially in the technology sector where consumers rely on brand reputation as an indicator of quality. These findings support the theoretical hypotheses proposed in the abstract frame of the study. This result is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the effectiveness of viral marketing strategies in spreading information quickly and influencing consumer attitudes through digital communication channels.

Also, the positive relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention confirms that brand awareness acts as an important factor in consumer decision making. Consumers tend to prefer brands that they recognize and recall because familiarity creates a sense of trust and reliability. Thus, companies that successfully build strong brand awareness are more likely to increase consumers' intention to purchase their products. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that both viral marketing and traditional marketing play significant roles in influencing consumer behavior. While viral marketing enhances brand awareness through rapid online communication and

social media engagement, traditional marketing strengthens brand credibility and supports the overall marketing message. The integration of these marketing approaches may still support the overall communication strategy for organizations seeking to increase brand awareness and stimulate purchase intentions among consumers. Based on these results, companies operating in the technological products sector should adopt integrated marketing strategies that combine both digital and traditional marketing channels. By doing so, organizations can maximize the effectiveness of their marketing efforts, enhance brand awareness, and ultimately increase consumers' willingness to purchase their products. The study results indicate that viral marketing had a greater impact on purchase intention than traditional marketing. This is due to the interactive and fast-paced nature of digital platforms, which allow consumers to share and interact with content directly. Furthermore, consumers in the technology sector rely heavily on social media and online recommendations when making purchasing decisions, further enhancing the effectiveness of viral marketing compared to traditional methods.

On the other hand, traditional marketing did not show a significant moderating effect in the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness. This may be attributed to the shift in consumer behavior and their increasing reliance on digital platforms as the primary source of information and brand interaction. This suggests that the impact of traditional advertising has diminished compared to the rapid and direct influence of digital content. These findings align with several previous studies, such as those by Chen (2024) and Pane et al. (2024), which confirmed that viral marketing enhances brand awareness and positively contributes to increased consumer purchase intention, particularly in modern digital environments.

8. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the impact of viral marketing on consumer purchase intentions in the technology sector in Turkey, focusing on the mediating role of brand awareness. The results showed that viral marketing is an effective marketing tool that directly influences consumer behavior and increases purchase intentions through its capability to spread rapidly across digital platforms and enhance interaction among individuals. The results also indicated that brand awareness plays a significant role in boosting purchase intentions, as it contributes to building trust and reducing the perceived risk level of consumers, making them more willing to make a purchase decision. The study further confirmed that viral marketing contributes to raising brand awareness, which positively impacts purchase intentions. In contrast, the results did not support the moderating role of traditional marketing in the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness, suggesting that the greatest influence in the current digital environment stems from modern, internet-based marketing strategies. Accordingly, the study recommends that companies, particularly in the technology sector, focus on adopting viral marketing strategies and strengthening their digital presence, while working to build strong brand awareness to gain competitive advantage and increase consumer purchase intention. The study also suggests future research addressing additional variables or applying the study to different sectors to enhance a comprehensive understanding of this field.

Also, the regression analysis results support these findings. The first model demonstrated that viral marketing explains a substantial proportion of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.455$), confirming its strong direct impact on consumer behavior. The second model demonstrated that viral marketing significantly affected brand awareness. The third model demonstrated an improvement in explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.506$) after including brand awareness, highlighting its important mediating role in strengthening purchase intention. However, the fourth model revealed that the interaction between viral marketing and traditional marketing was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), indicating that traditional marketing does not significantly influence the relationship between viral marketing and brand awareness. These findings reinforce the growing importance of digital marketing strategies over traditional approaches in influencing modern consumer behavior.

In conclusion, this study confirms that viral marketing is a modern and highly effective marketing strategy that significantly influences consumer purchasing intentions by boosting brand awareness. The findings highlight the need for organizations to prioritize digital marketing strategies to maintain their competitiveness in today's dynamic market environment.

8.1. Practical Implications

This study provides several practical implications for marketing professionals especially those in the technology sector. The study shows that viral marketing and brand awareness are becoming more and

more important when it comes to getting people to buy things. So companies should develop effective and interactive marketing strategies and interactive if they want to stay competitive in the digital world.

- Companies should put money into marketing campaigns that get people to share things like fun videos, social media challenges and content made by users.
- Marketers should work on making their brand well known because this helps people trust the company and feel safer when they buy things.
- Businesses should make marketing messages that're easy to understand look nice and are relevant to the people they are trying to reach.
- Organizations should have a presence, on social media and use digital channels to talk to people directly and get them more engaged.
- Even though traditional marketing does not seem to make a difference it can still be used to support digital campaigns and make the brand more credible.
- Companies should use a marketing strategy that combines traditional marketing tools to get the best results.
- Firms should always keep an eye on what consumer feedback and online behavior so they can make their marketing strategies better and understand what people need from viral marketing and brand awareness.

8.2. Limitations

Limitations to this research include:

- The study was limited to a sample of 201 respondents from Turkey. The findings cannot be generalized to all consumers or other countries, as consumers' actions are shaped by different cultural and demographic factors.
- Convenience sampling was employed as a means of collecting data. As a result, only limited extension to the groups using this sampling methodology can be made with these findings.
- The small, single- country sample used for this study might not directly represent consumers in numerous other countries.
- Only product- related information was examined. thus, our findings may not be applicable to industries.
- We only collected data at one point in time; thus, we do n't have any longitudinal information related to whether consumers' behaviours change over time.
- We did n't have sufficient time to gather further data and explore additional variables in greater detail.

8.3. Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it's clear that viral marketing plays a significant part in influencing consumers purchasing intentions, particularly by boosting brand awareness. The results also highlight the significance of digital communication strategies in shaping consumer behavior in Turkey's technology sector. These findings suggest that companies need to adapt their marketing strategies to align with the growing influence of digital platforms. contemporaneously, this study opens the door for further exploration to more understand the relationship between different marketing approaches and consumer behavior.

- Companies should concentrate on developing effective viral marketing strategies that encourage consumers to share content and engage with brands on social media platforms.
- Marketers should invest in building strong brand awareness, as it plays a crucial part in influencing purchasing intentions and enhancing client trust.
- adopting an integrated approach to marketing communication that combines digital and traditional marketing is encouraged to enhance overall effectiveness.
- future exploration should apply this model to larger sample sizes to improve the generalizability of the findings.

- Experimenters can study the same connections in different sectors or requests to compare results across different surrounds.
- future studies should include additional variables similar as trust, client engagement, perceived value, and trends to gain a deeper understanding of consumer behavior Longitudinal studies are also suggested to examine how marketing strategies impact consumer behavior over time.

DECLARATION OF THE AUTHORS

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