

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SP 2008

Department:Journalism

Degree:MA

Title:Diffusion of Viral Marketing Into the World of Public Relations

With the ever-changing world of technology, consumers can be reached through more and more media. These opportunities are only possible if the advertising and public relations industries follow their audiences and understand how to reach them effectively. This research examined how the public relations industry was adopting the technique of viral marketing. This method of delivery allows messages to be subtly given to audiences and then gives consumers control to pass that message along to their friends. Since marketing and advertising are attached to this technique, it was predicted that public relations would avoid using viral marketing to reach their audiences.

To perform this research, textual and thematic analysis were completed. Four trade journals were analyzed, *Advertising Age*, *AD Week*, *PR Week*, and *PR News*, and they were analyzed in relation to the diffusion of innovations theory. The comparison of the two allowed for trends to be pulled out from the 200 articles that were sampled and read. What was found was that public relations professionals are laggards in terms of adopting viral marketing. It is important for public relations to understand that they must follow their audience on-line and build brand relationships with them through the social means of viral marketing. This research shows the future of public relations and advertising. There is no denying that consumers are moving to the Internet, and are getting more savvy about ignoring campaign messages. The way that professionals must communicate with their audiences is changing and becoming more of a partnership.