Viral Marketing in Increasing Brand Awareness and Predicting Purchase Intention: Exploring Mediating Role of Brand Loyalty in FMCG Sector

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Abstract	Original Research Article

The study aims to examine whether brand awareness contributes to consumers' purchase intention on FMCG products in the context of viral marketing. In this study, 452 FMCG customers in India voluntarily participated. Smart PLS 4.0 was used to analyze the data for the measurement model and structural model after the convenience sampling technique was used to gather the data. It was revealed that viral marketing has a sizable impact on brand awareness leading to purchase intention. Furthermore, this study explored that brand loyalty has a partial mediating effect between the aforementioned two constructs. In order to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals, FMCG companies can benefit from this study by formulating their brand management strategies in light of the findings. Additionally, this study opens up new opportunities for future researchers and management experts to find a distinctive viewpoint on this fascinating topic.
Keywords: Brand awareness, Purchase intention, Brand loyalty, FMCG Products, Viral Marketing, Smart PLS.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Emerging Trends of FMCG Sector

One of the most significant industries in the world is the FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) sector. According to a report published in The Times of India (October 6, 2022), the FMCG business is in a good position to grow by $310.5 billion between 2022 and 2026, largely due to consumers' increased use of ready-to-eat food products. It is projected that by 2025, consumers would spend a total of 8.85 trillion dollars on food products.

The demand gradient will also be propelled over the coming several years by rising consumer awareness and the spread of organized retailing. Due to the rising adoption of experience retailing, where customers associate shopping with social and leisurely events, the FMCG industry, as a whole, has been growing steadily over the past ten years. To put things in perspective, the expansion of the global FMCG market is largely driven by the rising population. In a similar vein, regular product launches, increased consumer knowledge of diverse FMCG products, rising middle-class disposable incomes, better access to consumer goods, a noticeable shift in customers' lifestyles in both developed and emerging nations, effective brand promotion and competitive pricing, strong logistics and distribution channels of such companies, expansion of internet commerce, and increased R&D spending by both established players and newcomers in the market bring mobility to the FMCG segment.

FMCG marketers must have a thorough awareness of consumers' wants and preferences in order to successfully market their products. It significantly affects brand loyalty and consumption of the consumer. Brand awareness is essential for building a brand since it causes potential buyers to think of the brand (Buil et al., 2013). Brand loyalty is emotionally enforced by brand commitment, which is a result of brand awareness (Hsu *et al.,* 2011; Ramaseshan *et al.,* 2013; Subhani & Osman, 2011). It is also one of the most important factors in choosing a particular brand (Aaker,

1991). Once more, brand awareness aids in maintaining the brand in the customer's mind. As a result, it influences the customer's internal attitudes and inspires brand loyalty in them (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). By encouraging one to lean toward the brand that already exists in their mind, it also stimulates purchase intention (Keller, 2019). Precisely, brand awareness determines a potential customer's ability to recall the brand out of the blue and develops purchase intention (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness improves customers' views toward brand loyalty (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). Since it is a person's deliberate action to consider all options before making a purchase (Hollis & Farr, 1997), brand awareness and brand loyalty play a crucial part in purchase intention (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007).

1.2 Emergence of Viral Marketing with the advancement of Information Technology

Marketing experts are now looking at a digital environment as an alternative platform due to the advancement of the internet and consumers' desire to share their opinions on products or brands accelerate the concept . The development of information technology in recent times has opened up new genres for business (Lu *et al.,* 2010). The widespread use of the internet has given people the chance to interact with one another through multi-blogging, without having to meet in person (Gruzd *et al.,* 2012).

With the evolution of internet, word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing has created a new buzz in marketing communication. Viral marketing techniques are the collective name for this technological opportunity or innovation. It's a form of online word-of-mouth communication, which is regarded as the most recent medium. In addition to this, social networking websites have a big impact on how people behave and make decisions. When the targeted audience actively uses digital channels, brands cannot ignore social networking sites. This is the case because social media offers various benefits to businesses, including facilitation of word-of-mouth (WOM) communication (Chen *et al.,* 2011b), increased brand popularity (de Vries *et al.,* 2012), information sharing in a business context (Lu & Hsiao, 2010), building trust and sales (Agnihotri *et al.,* 2012), and social support (Ballantine & Stephenson, 2011).

1.3 The Rationale of Viral Marketing

Marketers have been concerned in how to disseminate information about their products, locate their brands, and improve the perception of their brands since the early 1960s (Ahuja *et al.,* 2007; Dobele *et al.,* 2005). Rayport (1997) referred to a marketing strategy in his essay "The virus of marketing" in the Fast Company magazine (Viral Marketing). Prior to the development development of technology, marketers relied on oral word-of-mouth communication. With the passage of time and the advent of technology, electronic word-of-mouth communication has taken its place, and

this transformation is known as viral marketing (Kaur *et al.,* 2022). This form was created based on the concept that consumers who are happy with the company's goods or services always recommend it to their friends and family (De Pelsmacker *et al.,* 2010). The term "viral" refers to a style of marketing in which promotional messages are sent from one client to another similar to how the flu virus spreads, according to Palka *et al.,* (2009). Viral marketing is a powerful approach for building brand awareness because it allows customers to distribute product information to their social networks.

According to Kim and Lowrey (2010), viral marketing is a tactic or phenomena used in marketing to compel consumers to spread information. One of the contemporary strategies for promoting and publicizing businesses by utilizing online interactions is viral marketing. . Companies can communicate with consumers in a variety of ways using viral marketing techniques, such as SMS, blogs, forums, video websites, chat rooms, social networks, and email (Woerndl *et al.,* 2008). Messages are frequently and willingly forwarded to social networks, which could give the message more legitimacy in the eyes of the recipient. Viral marketing may effectively reach thousands of people and encourage them to purchase the brand's items (Chiu *et al.,* 2007; Bampo *et al.,* 2008). Due to their adaptability and ability to quickly reach consumers, marketers have recently focused a lot of their efforts on social media networks. These forms will offer a precise statistical measurement of the number of times a certain message has been viewed; as a result, they may give marketers a way to monitor their efforts and ascertain the effects of viral marketing on consumers. The sociological perspective demonstrates how strongly socioeconomic class affects people's purchasing behaviours. The quantity of brand-related conversations will rise as a result of fusing public curiosity with user experiences. It has been demonstrated that content that elicits strong feelings of attraction and excitement is more likely to spread like a virus (Berger and Milkman 2012; Dobele *et al.,* 2007).

According to Dawar & Dawar (2015), Shashikala & Mahapatro (2015), Zernigah & Sohail (2012), Pelau & Zegrea (2010), Haghirian *et al.,* (2005), and other researchers, viral marketing is a convenient and cost-effective way to reach a big audience, send individualized messages at a high rate of transmission, and with the least amount of effort. It can quickly spread among a huge population (De Pelsmacker & Van Den Bergh, 2007). Many recipients who are interested can be reached by the quick and widespread application. Additionally, viral marketing uses social contacts to build very trustworthy relationships. Additionally, the messages are disseminated to the target market, which aids in reaching new markets and customers when the message is broadly disseminated with brand reputation being boosted because these

messages are delivered by people they know and trust (Kirby & Marsden, 2006). In the past, consumers would frequently read business reviews and base their decisions on the messages they heard in radio and television advertisements. To acquire the most accurate information about businesses, consumers today like to hear the remarks and honest feelings of actual customers about the goods and services they value. Therefore, businesses must use viral marketing to improve brand recognition and consumer awareness. The main flaw with viral marketing is that it might have unfavorable outcomes when rivals or competitors alter the message's content. Enterprises are almost unable to stop and retrieve the message after it is made available on the Internet, which might result in loss of brand control (Krishnamurthy, 2000).

1.4 The impact of Viral Marketing on Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention

Dawar and Dawar (2015) studied the idea of a paradigm shift in marketing and revealed the characteristics that led viral marketing to be a potent tool for increasing brand awareness. Consumer attitudes toward the messages of viral marketing are assessed based on their responses using metrics like rewards, relevancy, message clarity, annoyance, familiarity with the brand, and fun. The use of social networks helps to create brand awareness; and brandable software, interactive flash games, e-books, and video clips can all be used in viral marketing campaigns.

The marketing approach used by WOM and on social networks increases brand awareness by generating publicity. The main objective of viral marketing is to increase sales revenue through carefully designed viral processes (Borade, 2013). Viral marketing is a technique used by marketers to promote their products and businesses (Kusumadjaja, 2014). Through blogs and viral formats, a personalised online community with opinion leaders is created, enabling the brand to establish strong connections with its target market. This presents a unique opportunity to increase brand awareness (Datta *et al.,* 2008). Viral marketing enables rapid expansion with minimal investment in brand positioning, brand awareness, purchasing behaviour, and attitudes toward products. Internet marketing creates the most rapid, comprehensive, and affordable brand exposure, as well as recommendations and exponential growth (Dobele *et al.,* 2005).

Viral marketing increases brand awareness by enhancing the brand's image. It takes the relationship between the consumer and the brand to an interactive level where technology aids in creating enduring, long-term relationships with consumers, which in turn aids in the development of brands. In the targeted group, viral marketing aims to persuade brand users, advocacy consumers, and game players to tell their friends and family about their favourite companies (Sankaran & Kannan, 2015).

According to Baird and Parasnis (2011), social media has a significant potential for assisting marketers in brand building through the use of WOM in an inexpensive way. Electronic Word-of-Mouth, or "Ewom," is any feedback provided by potential or actual customers about a business, a product, or a brand and made publicly available to numerous individuals and organisations online. Customers become more aware of a brand or business when they encounter such statements.

Qualman (2011) asserts that even if a company is not active on social media, if its brands are discussed on numerous forums and websites, the community will probably come to like the brand. The pervasive, dynamic nature of social media frequently changes the conditions for effective brand management (Gensler *et al.,* 2013).

Puriwat & Tripopsakul (2021) examined the impact of Viral Marketing on Brand Recognition and Preference in Social Media by developing a framework for viral marketing success (7I's) in social media contexts and analysing the relationships between the 7I's, brand recognition, and brand preference.

1.5 Components of Viral Marketing affecting Brand Awareness

The following are the important elements that are persuading and effective in creating brand awareness:

Social Media: This component of the research is included as a result of the importance of "Social Network" as a communication channel in social media (SM). More than just a straightforward tool for content creation, collaboration, and sharing, it is now an essential part of the media context (Singh *et al.,* 2012). Companies can target potential customers affordably thanks to the advertisements that appear on all social networking sites (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). According to Hutchings (2012), using media in a new commercial context can be a powerful and effective business tool because it enables businesses to spread information, advertise a brand or product, or boost sales more stealthily than with traditional marketing. In viral marketing, social media thus effectively raises brand awareness.

Message: A message (MES) is the information that needs to be communicated and has been encoded in a variety of languages, such as words, music, pictures, sculptures, poetry, light, and symbols. The target audience and the media types should decide on the appropriate language because the informative role of advertising is essential in determining its efficacy (Zernigah & Sohail, 2012). The expressiveness, diversity, and content of the message are all included in its definition. A persuasive message will spread quickly, but a bleak advertisement's message could ruin

the entire campaign. The use of messages in viral marketing helps to increase brand recognition.

Attractiveness: Positive and negative attractiveness are two different types of attractiveness (ATT). While legitimate content is quickly transmitted, offensive content will be treated with hostility. Thus, an effective viral marketing strategy must be framed after consulting experts and researching pertinent models, especially the AIDA Model in Marketing (Hassan *et al.,* 2015), as it first captures and maintains attention through interest before stimulating desire. Customers may accept the message and choose to use the company's goods or services when they are sufficiently interested. Attractiveness positively increases brand awareness in viral marketing.

Spread: Spread (SP) is the degree of user engagement on a platform that allows for effective communication between users regardless of time and place. It's also true that it connects people so they can learn, communicate, and shape their own behaviours. Because of this interaction, users now have different perceptions of advertisements. The crowd effect, which affects both individual human behaviour and collective behaviour, is the foundation for all social behavior (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). This effect is reciprocal, reverberating back from individuals or small social groups to other people or larger social groups.

1.6 Research Gap

While going through the existing works of literature, it is crucial to point out that the influence of numerous criteria (such as brand name, product benefit, value for money, and packaging) for choosing FMCG brands is discussed in detail and in a mighty way. The chance to assess a brand's worth in the context of viral marketing has not received enough attention. While reading it, it becomes clear that there is a void in the literature on this subject. Exploration in this field may offer new insight for future research. Even social scientists haven't shared much insight to these potential areas, particularly in terms of FMCG products. Therefore, a closer look at this aspect of brand awareness growth and how viral marketing affects FMCG product's purchase intentions may provide the researchers with new genre to consider.

The epitome of our study is to focus how components of Viral Marketing helps to develop brand awareness of FMCG customers leading to purchase intention. Our humble effort also illustrates how Brand loyalty is positively associated between Brand awareness and purchase intention. Our study, thus, takes into account the mediating role of brand loyalty between brand awareness and purchase intention to make our research more credible, pertinent, and logical.

2. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined by Blackwell et al. (2001) as "what we expect we will buy." Accordingly, purchase intention can be used to measure a consumer's propensity to acquire a product, and the stronger the purchase intention, the more a consumer wants to buy a product (Dodds *et al.,* 1991; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000). Purchase intention is frequently used to estimate consumer purchasing behaviour, according to Kimery and McCord's (2002), measuring actual consumer behaviour is challenging. Zeithaml (1988) used the alternatives "possible to buy," "planned to buy," and "thought to buy" to assess purchase intention. Mathur (1999) proposed four components for assessing purchase intention – I would buy from this brand, I would definitely think about buying from this brand, I would hope to buy from this brand, and I would definitely intend to buy from this brand. In addition to traditional in-store purchases, purchase behaviour has been studied in a variety of marketing fields, including green marketing (Nguyen *et al.,* 2016), luxury brands and products (Beuckels and Hudders, 2016), B2B transactions (Wei and Ho, 2019), and online purchases (Sundström *et al.,* 2019).

2.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness, as defined by Kotler and Keller (2016), is the process of assisting consumers in remembering or recognising a brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase. It is more important than ever for online brands to have strong brand recall when a customer makes a decision away from the place of purchase. Recall is more difficult to accomplish than recognition because, for example, people are more likely to remember a brand's colour than its name. When considering a particular product category, consumers often think of a particular brand first (top of mind awareness, or TOMA) (Armah & Attafuah, 2020). They have included four insights in their model to assess brand awareness: top of mind, brand recall, brand recognition, and unaware of brand (TOMA). Awareness is linked to a favourable price/quality ratio, accessibility, trustworthiness, high quality, close proximity to people, and classic styling (Kapferer, 2012). A brand with a high level of brand awareness suggests that it has a good reputation in the market and that consumers have come to accept it (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007).

Brand awareness was divided into two groups by Hoeffler and Keller (2002): depth and breadth. While brand awareness is broad when it comes to consumers' propensity to think about the various contexts in which consumption and purchasing scenarios may take place, brand awareness is intense when it comes to consumers' propensity to remember the brand when the need arises. When determining their purchase intentions, consumers chose a brand over

competing goods with a similar reputation based more on brand awareness than brand reputation (Brewer & Zhao, 2010). The impact of brand equity and brand awareness on consumers' purchase intentions was examined by Shahid *et al,.* (2017). The researchers discovered an association between brand awareness and consumer purchasing intention.

Marketing professionals have begun using neuroimaging technologies because brand awareness has such a big impact on sales. By utilising neuroimaging technologies, evaluation process of consumer may be faster, less expensive, and more accurate than conventional marketing methods at comprehending decision-making and related processes (Ariely & Berns, 2010; Plassmann *et al.,* 2015). Due to these advantages, consumer neuroscience has attracted the attention of academics ever since the "Coke and Pepsi" experiment (Hoegg *et al.,* 2010). People are becoming aware of the fact that we can observe and study consumer behaviour at the neuroscience level by looking at how the brain processes inputs and how consumers respond to external stimuli (Scheier, 2007). Based on the discussion above, initial hypothesis of our study is:

H1: Brand awareness encourages purchasing intention.

Brand awareness ultimately has a direct impact on brand loyalty, even though its effects on the process of consumer loyalty are not fully understood. It's intriguing to see that some studies discovered a significant connection (Tsang *et al.,* 2011; Valavi, 2014). Other researchers found a tenuous connection (Esch *et al.,* 2006; Ramaseshan *et al.,* 2013; Hyun & Kim, 2011; Liu *et al.,* 2013). While examining the coffee shop industry in Indonesia's major cities, Bernarto *et al.,* (2020) found that brand awareness has a positive impact on brand loyalty. These observations led this study to make the following hypothesis:

H2: Brand awareness instills Brand Loyalty among potential customers.
2.3 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is crucial for an organization's success in the face of intense competition (Li and Green, 2011). The two facets of loyalty, behavioural and attitudinal, are described by Saili et al. (2012). The attitudinal loyalty shows one's propensity to be loyal to a brand when they try to buy it first (Oliver, 1997). Conversely, Rundle-Thiele and Mackay (2001) assert that behavioural loyalty extends to procurement procedure and abides by this custom. Brand loyalty is a behavioural construct that relates to repeat purchase intentions; as a result, loyalty is one of the outcomes of brand equity rather than a component in it (Nam *et al.,* 2011).

The future growth of a brand's market share is another reason why customer loyalty is crucial. Loyalty, in the opinion of Eakuru and Mat (2008), is essential to a company's success. In competitive industries, loyalty is the result of a marketing strategy that adds value to brands (Ramaseshan *et al.,* 2013). In conventional marketing contexts, numerous studies on brand loyalty have been conducted (Sabet *et al.,* 2014; Boohene & Agyapong, 2010; Chang & Wang, 2011; Cheng & Rashid, 2013; Omar *et al.,* 2013; Pi & Huang, 2011; Saeed *et al.,* 2014; Choi *et al.,* 2011; Sharma *et al.,* 2013; Chinomona & Dubihlela, 2014; Hsu *et al.,* 2011; Lee & Hsieh, 2011).

According to Yoo *et al.,* (2000), brand loyalty can influence a consumer's choice to stick with a particular brand or product and cease switching to other brands. Additionally, brand-loyal customers will simply purchase the product based on prior experiences without giving it any thought (Yee & Sidek, 2009), suggesting that brand loyalty can subsequently increase customers' purchase intention (Malik *et al.,* 2013). This conclusion was supported by an empirical study done by Khan *et al.* (2022) by investigating the relationship between brand equity dimensions and the effects of each factor on Malaysian consumers' purchase intentions. According to the study's findings, brand loyalty is the primary variable influencing a consumer's propensity to buy. These serve as the third proposition of our study:

H3: Brand loyalty encourages prospective customers to make purchases.

To make the study more insightful, we made a modest effort to uncover even mediating role of brand loyalty over brand awareness and purchase intention.

H4: For FMCG products, brand loyalty acts as a mediator between brand awareness and purchase intention.

The literature that has been published in the past indicates a correlation between brand awareness and intention to buy. Thus, based on the aforementioned observations, the proposed research model is shown in Figure 1 below.
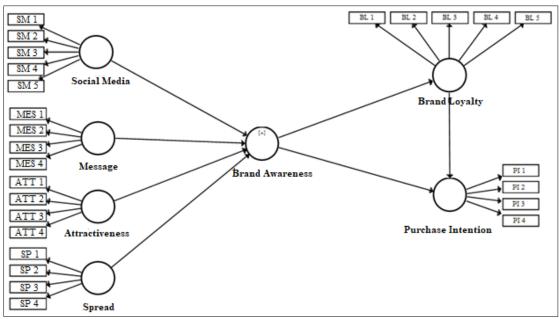
Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Context, sample, and data collection procedure

Empirical data were gathered for the current study using cross-sectional and exploratory research designs. To address our research questions, a semi-structured questionnaire was designed. The survey was meticulously conducted using 7-point Likert scales, which range from "1 = strongly dissatisfied" to 7 = strongly satisfied" and were taken directly from the literature. The survey was administered on 452 respondents, including those who voluntarily offered their opinions and views regarding the impact of brand awareness on purchase Intention. To select the sample, a non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed.

To select the questionnaire items, a pilot study was carried out initially. The G* Power (Faul et al., 2007, 2009) test was also administered at a 5% level of significance, and it was found that 115 samples were adequate to confirm the validity of the acquired data. This data was used to determine the bare minimum sample size needed for our investigation.
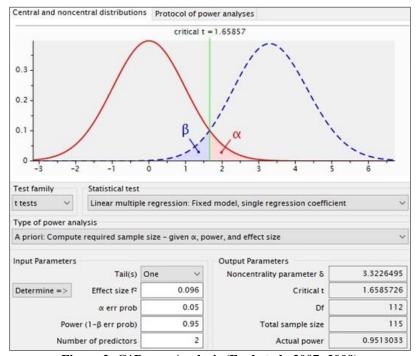

Figure 2: G*Power Analysis (Faul et al., 2007; 2009)

Table 1 below shows the respondents' demographic breakdown. The table shows that only 55.09% (249) of the survey respondents were male and 44.91% (203) were male. According to their profession, it shows that 26.99% of interviewees were unemployed, while only 10.62% were retired. The remaining respondents are either self-employed or service holder.

Additionally, 28.10% of interviewees (127 people) were between the ages of 41 and 50, and 33.41% (151 people) were between the ages of 31 and 40. The respondents who were under 30 and over 50 years old are 15.49% and 23.00% respectively.

In order to test the hypotheses of our study and to ascertain the extent to which social media, message, attractiveness and spread influence over brand awareness and, in turn, influence purchase intention. The primary data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using Smart PLS (version 4.0.8.4). We can increase the flexibility of the study by employing a multivariate analytical approach (Hair *et al.,* 2017, 2019, 2020; Nitzl *et al.,* 2016, Richter *et al.,* 2016, Rigdon *et al.,* 2016, Ringle *et al.,* 2014, 2016). Additionally, a systematic approach was used to estimate the causal relationships between the latent variables using partial least squares modeling, a variance-based and prediction-oriented technique (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). For this, the PLS-SEM method advises running two models: an inner/measurement model and an outer/structural model.

Following are the demographic profile of the interviewees as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Demographics (N=452)

Demographic Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
Age	Below 30 years	70	15.49
	31 – 40 years	151	33.41
	41 -50 years	127	28.10
	Above 50 years	104	23.00
Gender	Male	249	55.09
	Female	203	44.91
Family Income (per month)	Less than 50,000	176	38.94
	50,000 -1,00,000	149	32.96
	1,00,000 -2,00,000	90	19.91
	More than 2,00,000	37	8.19
Occupation	Unemployed	122	26.99
	Self-Employed	114	25.22
	Service Holder	168	37.17
	Retired	48	10.62

Source: Primary Data

3.2. Scales of Measurement

In order to gather enough information about the latent variables of our proposed study model, we prepared two types of questions for this study: general and specific. For general inquiries, we started by compiling demographic information on the main responder characteristics, such as gender, age, family income, and occupation. The choice of particular questions was based on the components of our research questions and was made in order to analyse the measures connected to our latent variables, which include (1) Social Media, (2) Message, (3) Attractiveness, (4) Spread, (5) Brand Awareness, (6) Brand Loyalty, and (7) Purchase Intention.

The measuring scales that earlier researchers had recommended were used to help choose specific questions in order to be more precise. Such scales were taken into consideration to gauge our matching constructs. Due to this, a few indicators underwent minor revisions to make them more accurate and understandable to our target respondents. Additionally, some changes were made to the research material to make it more compatible with the indicators.

4. RESULTS ANALYSIS

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

To advance the research, the study focused on internal reliability and convergent validity. In PLS-SEM, the confirmatory study had been used (Schuberth et al., 2018; Nitzl et al., 2016). In order to further study on brand awareness, Composite Analysis (CCA) was carried out using reflective formative assessment (Yildirim & Correia, 2015). In two-stage reflective formative evaluations, the score of the latent variable of all four dimensions of brand awareness was first calculated. Based on the results of the first-order construct, the second-order construct of the formative model was evaluated subsequently. The internal dependability was assessed using Composite Reliability, Dijkstra and Henseler's rho, and Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha and rho values were well over the cutoff point of 0.70, which was sufficient for

social research (Hair *et al.;* 2017, Hair *et al.;* 2020). The value of loading/weights for Social Media (SM2) and Spread (SP2) were below 0.70, which was the only point of concern. Since the AVE values exceeded 0.50 in every instance this was sufficient enough to establish convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.;* 2019). Again, the Composite reliability in our analysis was greater than 0.8 in each case but less than 0.9, which is considered to be quite excellent (Diamantopoulos *et al.,* 2008). The results of the internal reliability and convergent validity investigations are thus accurately reflected in Table 2. Table 3 made it clear that each construct is unique and we could proceed with our analysis amiably.

Table 2: Quality Criterion for Reflective Model Assessments and Composite Model

Construct	Items	Type	Loading/ Weights	Cronbach's Alpha	rho A	CR	AVE
Social Media	SM11	Reflective	0.787	0.792	0.797	0.859	0.551
	SM2		0.613				
	SM3		0.802				
	SM4		0.791				
	SM5		0.7				
Message	MES 1	Reflective	0.811	0.683	0.685	0.826	0.612
	MES 2		0.797				
	MES 3		0.738				
	MES 4		0.723				
Attractiveness	ATT1	Reflective	0.767	0.722	0.737	0.826	0.544
	ATT2		0.764				
	ATT3		0.767				
	ATT4		0.644				
Spread	SP1	Reflective	0.812	0.734	0.763	0.832	0.556
	SP2		0.6				
	SP3		0.754				
	SP4		0.796				
Brand Loyalty	BL1	Reflective	0.641	0.798	0.798	0.862	0.556
	BL2		0.757				
	BL3		0.789				
	BL4		0.805				
	BL5		0.725				
Purchase Intention	PI1	Reflective	0.802	0.781	0.83	0.86	0.611
	PI2		0.698				
	PI3		0.642				
	PI4		0.949				
Brand Awareness		Composite		NA	NA	NA	NA
	Social Media						
	Message						
	Attractiveness						
	Spread						

Source: Author's Calculations

Table 3: Discriminant Validity using Fornell & Larcker

Constructs	Purchase Intention	Brand Loyalty	Social Media	Message	Attractiveness	Spread
Purchase Intention	**0.742**					
Brand Loyalty	0.641	**0.783**				
Social Media	0.597	0.66	**0.746**			
Message	0.531	0.631	0.54	**0.737**		
Attractiveness	0.611	0.57	0.571	0.487	**0.782**	
Spread	0.543	0.631	0.582	0.685	0.552	**0.746**

Source: Author's Calculations

This study employed the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). All HTMT values should be smaller than 1 according to the HTMT inference approach (Henselar *et al.,* 2015; Gold *et al.,* 2001). The components of Message and Spread in this study were 0.935, which was over the allowable value (Henselar *et* *al.,* 2015). The HTMT inference method was used to be on the liberal side of discriminant validity, and it was well within the allowed limit. Thus, as shown in Table 4, it was sufficient to demonstrate the distinctiveness of each construct.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity using HTMT

HTMT Criterion	Purchase Intention	Brand Loyalty	Social Media	Message	Attractiveness	Spread
Purchase Intention						
Brand Loyalty	0.870 CI.900[0.753;0.973]					
Social Media	0.749 CI.900[0.616:0.852]	0.886 CI.900[0.799;0.964]				
Message	0.687 CI.900[0.551;0.807]	0.880 CI.900[0.725;1.011]	0.697 CI.900[0.56;0.818]			
Attractiveness	0.747 CI.900[0.635;0.85]	0.757 CI.900[0.634;0.868]	0.709 CI.900[0.592;0.812]	0.618 CI.900[0.463;0.739]		
Spread	0.699 CI.900[0.526;0.827]	0.871 CI.900[0.729;1.008]	0.732 CI.900[0.623;0.822]	0.935 CI.900[0.795;1.039]	0.709 CI.900[0.571;0.811]	

Source: Author's Calculations

4.2. Structural Model Assessment

We investigated the connection between the constructs and predictive significance in the structural model assessment (Hair *et al.,* 2017). The bootstrapping procedure was used to obtain the p values for the study's intended hypothesis (Hair *et al.;* 2020). In the beginning, formative measurement models must be studied for each set of the structural inner model's predictor constructs (Cassel *et al.,* 1999). The Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) was given the proper consideration in the assessment of collinearity issues. Therefore, there was no collinearity problem with it. The importance and significance of Path Coefficients were then looked at. By using the Bootstrapping procedure in the PLS algorithm, the coefficients should ideally fall between -1 and +1. Brand awareness was discovered to be a second-order composite. All constructs' outer weights were significantly different from zero and significant at the 1% level. The assessment of the structural model was accurately reflected in Figure 3. Additionally, the endogenous construct's coefficient of determination (R^2) was investigated. R^2 was typically used to calculate each endogenous construct's variance. In PLS-SEM analysis, the low value of R^2 is typically tolerated (Raithel et al., 2012). In our study, the R^2 values for brand loyalty and purchase intention were 0.512 and 0.472, respectively. These values of the endogenous constructs were recognized by social science (Hair *et al.,* 2017). Therefore, brand loyalty and purchase intention for FMCG items are positively impacted by brand awareness.

By using SRMR, the Goodness of Fit was evaluated (Hair *et al.,* 2020). The SRMR threshold value is 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Henseler *et al.,* 2016). The SRMR value that was determined to be 0.76 suggested that the structural model and hypothesis testing can be described rather well.
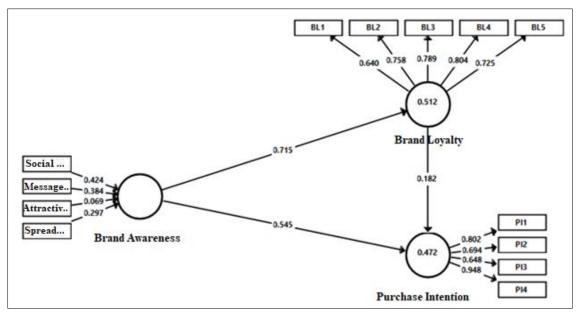
Figure 3: Structural Model Assessments with Control Variables

According to Table 5, brand awareness is crucial in fostering brand loyalty and growing purchase intention. Even brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intent. As a result, each hypothesis was adequately supported.

Table 5: Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Std. Beta	Sample Mean (M)	t-Values	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%	SUPPORTED/ NOT SUPPORTED
H1	Brand Awareness -> Brand Loyalty	0.715	0.717	20.911***	0.622	0.783	SUPPORTED
H2	Brand Awareness -> Purchase Intention	0.545	0.543	8.61***	0.424	0.659	SUPPORTED
H3	Brand Loyalty -> Purchase Intention	0.182	0.183	2.975***	0.087	0.307	SUPPORTED
H4	Brand Awareness -> Brand Loyalty -> Purchase Intention	0.130	0.131	2.888***	0.049	0.222	SUPPORTED

Source: Authors' Calculations; Bootstrap Values of Path Coefficient

4.3. Mediation Effect

With the aid of bootstrapping, the significance of the path coefficients had been assessed in order to look at the direct effects, taking into account the t-value and the bias-corrected confidence interval. The results of our study show that brand awareness has a significant influence on purchase intention.

Brand loyalty is considered in our study as a mediator between brand awareness and purchase intention. Therefore, it is imperative to evaluate the indirect effect. Hayes and Scharkow (2013) suggested a simulation study to compute the product of coefficients of indirect effects using the bootstrapping approach despite the fact that there are numerous ways to evaluate the mediation effect. This method yields results that significantly confirm each of the indirect effects that we had proposed. The results support the existence of a partial complementary mediating effect in our study. The following table supported this fact of mediation.

Table: 6: Direct, Indirect and Total effects

Relationship	Estimate	P Value
Brand Awareness -> Brand Loyalty -> Purchase Intention	0.130	0
Brand Awareness -> Purchase Intention	0.545	0

4.4. Importance Performance Map Analysis

We used Impact Performance Map or Importance Performance Matrix to make the findings of our study more logical and realistic. It helps to determine the extent to which brand awareness and brand loyalty have an impact on purchase intention (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). We calculated the combined effects of brand awareness and brand loyalty on purchase intention and presented them in Table 6. The result of the purchase intention performance calculation was 76.559.

Table 7: Importance-Performance Map (Construct Wise Unstandardized Effects)

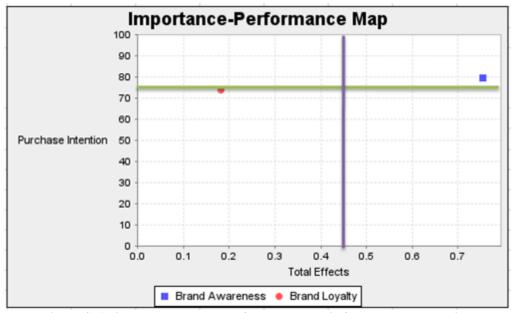| Constructs	Importance	Performances
Brand Awareness	0.754	79.413
Brand Loyalty	0.183	74.013
Mean Value	0.468	76.713

Source: Author's Calculations

Figure 4: Adjusted Importance Performance Matrix for Purchase Intention

By increasing brand awareness by one unit from 79.413 to 80.413 in Figure 4, the purchase intention would rise to 76.313, having an overall effect of 0.675. The purchase intention would climb to 75.742 with a total effect of 0.182 if brand loyalty increased by one unit from 74.013 to 75.013. Therefore, for FMCG items, purchase intention depends on both brand awareness and brand loyalty; therefore marketers must pay attention to both.

5. CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates unequivocally the critical role that brand awareness plays in fostering brand loyalty as well as in encouraging potential customers to make a purchase decision. With the impact of viral marketing, it is more imminent. This study envisages the degree to which social media, message, attractiveness, and spread influence FMCG's market-share in terms of raising brand awareness. If marketers want to succeed in the competitive market, they must use these viral marketing strategies carefully. By attempting to increase brand recognition and brand loyalty, the IMPA claims that there are specific ways to

persuade potential customers to become inclined toward purchasing FMCG products. We were given a clearer understanding of how brand awareness and brand loyalty would influence how likely consumers would be to purchase FMCG products. In our study, we thoroughly assess even the partial mediating role of brand loyalty over brand awareness and purchase intention. In a nutshell, this study becomes more relevant as it succinctly demonstrates that marketers must exert tremendous effort to successfully implement viral marketing to establish methods to foster brand awareness and brand loyalty among potential consumers of FMCG products in order to reap significant rewards for the company.

6. Implications, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

The purpose of the current study was to offer some illuminating and inspiring concepts to academics, decision-makers, and practitioners.

Marketing professionals should focus first on developing a system of support for both prospective customers and current clients, both of whom need to

have their expectations met in order to be happy with the product. The varying needs and demands of the prospects must also be monitored carefully. Marketing professionals could control the competitive market and increase their market share with a clear understanding.

Furthermore, since digital transformation is advancing economies around the world, marketers should incorporate digitalized infrastructure into their business processes to help them better understand and relate to their target audiences. It assists in identifying the demands of the competitive market as well as the combinations required for the FMCG products of the future.

The current study has some drawbacks that are similar to those of earlier studies, despite its relevance on potential contributions. Afterward, future research may address all by considering novel perspective of introducing the concept of viral marketing. The fact is that the scope this study was restricted to a narrow demographic range, thereby making it difficult to know with certainty whether the findings would hold true for an investigation conducted over a longer time or in a different setting. In subsequent studies using the same theoretical framework, the resulting model may then be tested in different circumstances and on different populations over longer time periods. Future research may concentrate on additional factors, such as, credibility, entertainment, and influencers, that may have an impact on both brand awareness and purchase intention. When all of those factors are considered together, it may be possible to gain a comprehensive understanding of how viral marketing plays a crucial role in influencing potential customers to become more inclined toward FMCG Brands.

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Appendix I: Measurement Scales Used

Construct I: Social Media (all the items have been adapted one by one from Chi (2011, 46), Taubenheim et al., (2008, 58), Pham & Gammoh (2015, 325), Choi et al., (2016, 772), Felix et al., (2017, 123).

Construct I: Social Media

SM1	Social Media Marketing provides meaning and connection between Brands and consumers and offers a personal channel and currency for user cantered networking and social interaction.	7 point Likert 1=Totally Disagree 7= Totally Agree
SM2	A way of using the internet is to instantly collaborate, share information and have a conversation about ideas or causes we care about.	

SM3	Company's process of creating and promoting online marketing related activities on social media platform that offers values to the stake holders.	
SM4	Social Media helps in creating words of mouth, positively affecting customer equity, enhancing customer loyalty to the company, and increasing purchase intention of the company's product or services.	
SM5	Social media marketing helps to achieve organisational goal by creating value to stake holders.	

Construct II: Message

MES 1	Persuasive message spread rapidly.	
MES 2	Message with higher visibility is accepted quickly.	7 point Likert 1=Totally Disagree 7= Totally Agree
MES 3	The target audience and the media types should decide on the basis of appropriate language.	
MES 4	A bleak message can destabilise the entire campaign	

Construct III: Attractiveness

ATT 1	Legitimate content of message is quickly transmitted	
ATT 2	Offensive content of message is treated with hostility	7 point Likert 1=Totally Disagree 7= Totally Agree
ATT 3	Funny and ingriguing message have better acceptance	
ATT 4	Attractiveness positively increases brand awareness	

Construct IV: Spread

SP1 1	Word gets around from person to person as more and more people share the content.	
SP2 2	It starts a chain of referrals where your company gains max exposure.	7 point Likert 1=Totally Disagree 7= Totally Agree
SP3	Spread is responsible for crowd effect.	
SP 4	The crowd effect affects both individual human behaviour and collective behavior.	

Construct V: Brand loyalty (first three items adapted from Taylor et al., 2004)

BL 1	I consider myself a consumer loyal to the FMCG Brand.	
BL 2	When it comes to buying, my first purchase option is my choice over a particular FMCG Brand.	7 point Likert 1=Totally Disagree 7= Totally Agree
BL 3	I will continue buying products of my preferred FMCG Brand.	
BL 4	It makes a sense to me to be loyal to a particular FMCG Brand.	
BL 5	I can associate myself to a product of FMCG Brand.	

Construct VI: Purchase Intention

PI 1	Social media plays a pivotal role in increasing purchase intention.	
PI 2	Message entices prospective customers towards preferred FMCG brands.	7 point Likert 1=Totally Disagree 7= Totally Agree
PI 3	Attractiveness increases the appeal for preferred FMCG brands.	
PI 4	Word of mouth communication helps to increase purchase intention.	