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MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT ON

The Impact of Viral Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Marketing is all about understanding exactly what the people need and then creating a specific solution that will fit their life. It is necessary to price it fairly and make it accessible. It has shifted from basic posters or tv ad to social media, but the main goal is still about finding a way to connect a product with the right audience. Success in an industry depends on this process as even the most impressive innovations will fail if nobody knows they exist. It is the art of communicating in such a way that people choose your brand.

1.1.2 What is Digital Marketing

When we marketed in the past, we only had a few options such as advertising through newspapers and television or via billboards. Sometimes people even used word of mouth as a method of marketing. None of these were a bad option but due increased online presence, marketing strategies had to adapt and grow with the world as well.

Digital marketing involves advertising through the Internet but in comparison to traditional marketing, generally, with digital marketing, an ad can reach more people for a fraction of the price, and in real-time, the marketing director can evaluate impacts. They can now track how many people completed a desired action. In traditional ad methods, in order to find the amount of people who were exposed to the ad and who have completed the call to action was usually left as a guesswork.

In 2016, the marketing in India had a complete change. Almost everyone had access to the Internet. Jio provided low cost of Internet access, nearly everyone from all around India was online. It helped in creating a new target market segment that businesses were trying to reach to. Digital marketing was

no more an option because population of Internet users kept increasing in India. It became the primary method of marketing to the public.

1.1.3 Social Media and Marketing

Today, every brands is using social media platforms in order to engage with their audiences.

The most important part of social media marketing is efficient targeting the people around them. Brands are trying to pay so that their ads can reach the users of certain ages with certain interests. Beyond the basic paid ads by meta and google, brands can create their own content to reach users and build their own audiences. Brands can focus on storytelling about the brand & content. by using frequent posts. They can even build their own communities.

Influencer marketing can also help with this effort. With a traditional advertisement, the brand saying, “We know you’re going to love this product!” but might not seem believable to people. But with a celebrity saying, “I love and use this product!” this might be a bit more convincing to the consumer. Influencer marketing can be a bit more cost affordable due to their short reel type videos. Brands try to motivate their users and even instruct them on how to create content that can try build brand awareness.

With over 450 million social media users and a continuously growing number, there is still a rapidly growing audience for brands in India.

1.1.4 What is Viral Marketing

The phrase “viral” comes from the world of biology. Just as a virus can go from one person to the another, viral marketing describes content that goes from one person to the another by the internet without having to be promoted by the brand itself.

Viral marketing is a strategy of sending messages by electronic modes about some product to public around us. In a way, it is where a company makes something so captivating that the product or message is basically shared by the people who are consuming it to their friends and family.
The content itself can take many forms. It can be a funny video, a heart touching ad, a funny or relatable meme. What all the successful viral content have in common is that the content resonates and it makes people feel something strongly enough that they want to pass it on to their friends and family.

1.1.5 Viral Marketing Platforms

Viral marketing does not happen by itself as it requires the right platform in order to spread effectively and fast. Different platforms have their own different audiences and all of them can influence how quickly and how much a piece of content can spread.

Instagram is currently one of the most dominant platforms for the use of viral marketing, especially among the young generation. It has features like Reels, Stories, and Explore, the platform gives the brands and the creators multiple ways in order to reach the audiences which are far beyond their existing followers. The Instagram algorithm also helps in actively promoting engaging content to new users, which means a single viral reel or a post has the capability to reach thousand and millions of people without spending a single rupee on the advertising.

YouTube still remains an important platform for the longer type of viral content such as emotional brand films and product launches that need more than 30 seconds to tell their story. WhatsApp and Telegram play some sort of significant role in the spread of the viral content in India as it is used by people all over India to forwarded messages, videos, and audios through personal networks or Wifi at a remarkable speed.

Facebook continues to be relevant amongst the millennials and older generations for viral posts and community based sharing. Twitter, now known

as X, is the platform where brand conversations go viral via trending hashtags and witty exchanges between the brands and the consumers and it is the place where people and brands can also be cancelled over their content or ads if in case it hurts any sentiment of people.

The key for any brand is to understand that which platform is their target audience spending their most time on and they should create the type of content that can fit the natural behaviour of that platform as content that feels native to a platform almost always performs better than the content that feels forced or out of place.

1.1.6 Viral Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Understanding the viral marketing in its isolation is only half of the story. The more important question for marketers is that - what does the viral marketing actually do to the people who see it? How does it change the way they think, feel?
This is where the actual consumer behaviour comes in the picture.

Consumer behavior is the analysis of the behavioral and mental process of an individual that includes their buying and their consumption actions. It also includes the time frame of the consumption and it offers an explanation for the rationale behind the buying behavior of a person.

viral content is usually entertaining as it stimulates that particular consumer in a way that ensures that they give their maximum level of engagement to the content. As a result the consumer is exposed to various psychological elements of brand perception and attitude which helps change their perception of the brand to an extent.

1.1.7 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the possibility that consumers will buy a specific product. It is not considered as a surety of purchase but it can be most probably the strongest indicator that a marketing campaign has managed to influence some potential buyer.

Purchase intention is an essential indicator that can be used to predict the consumer behaviour. It can be used as a reference in order to measure the possibility of the consumers buying a product or service. It means that if a marketing campaign successfully raises purchase intention then it has done its job as the consumer is now seriously considering about making a purchase.

Purchase intention is the dependent variable in this study. The four independent variables like content appeal, informativeness, source credibility, and social influence are trying to explain and predict this outcome.

1.2 Problem Statement

Businesses spend tend to spend heavily on the viral marketing campaigns but still most do not know which part of it actually drives people to buy their product. There are various aspects like Content Appeal, Informativeness, Source Credibility, and Social Influence that play a role in influencing customers but still their individual effect on Purchase Intention remains unclear, especially amongst the young and educated consumers. For this reason the marketers end up guessing about what they feel drive the customers. The topic that I have opted for helps in identifying which dimensions of the viral marketing actually have the most effect on purchase decisions from the variables that I chose.

MBA students actually represent a consumer segment that is digitally active & socially connected. They share content with each other, they trust peer recommendations and they also respond to information-driven marketing more than traditional advertising. So by understanding what drives their buying

behavior through viral content actually helps in filling a real gap. It also gives brands a way to reach the consumers who will soon hold significant spending power.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aims of this study are as described below:

1. To examine how content appeal in viral marketing influences purchase intention.
2. To analyse the role of informativeness in driving purchase intention through viral marketing.
3. To evaluate the effect of source credibility on purchase intention.
4. To understand how social influence through viral marketing affects purchase intention.

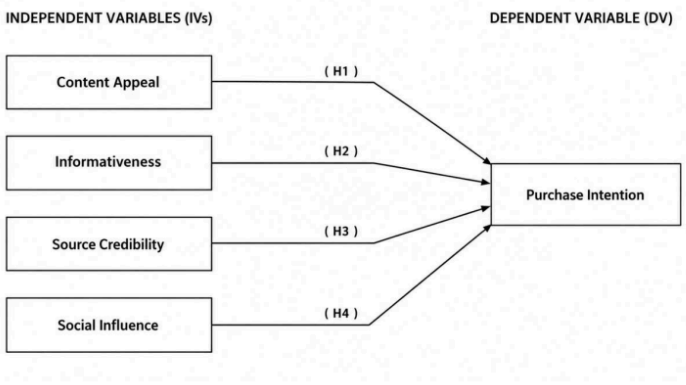
1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is aimed on understanding the impact of viral marketing on purchase intention among consumers. The data for this study has been collected by a questionnaire which was distributed to MBA & PHD students, using a 5 point Likert scale in order to evaluate responses across five variables.

The research is quantitative in nature and makes use of statistical tools including reliability analysis and multiple regression analysis to draw its conclusions.

1.5 Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework highlights the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. It shows that how each of the independent variables influence the buying intention of consumers.



Source : Own Image

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Every research study comes with its own set of limitations. Being aware of these limitations is important for interpreting the findings accurately and honestly.

1. **Sample limitations** : The study is based to students from a few institutions like DTU and DSE so the findings may not be fully representative of all young consumers in India.
2. **Self-reported data** : Since all the responses have been collected through a google form questionnaire, so they depend entirely on the honesty and self awareness of the respondents.
3. **Limited variables** : This study focuses on four different independent variables. There are likely a lot of other factors that can influence purchase intention such as brand loyalty, product category, or personal income that are outside the scope of this research.

4. **Rapidly changing landscape** : Viral marketing trends and consumer behaviour in the digital media is evolving quite quickly. Findings from this study reflect a specific point in time and this might not be fully applicable as the digital environment continues to change every year or so.

5. **No product category distinction** : The study treats viral marketing as a general concept without differing between the various product categories. The effect of viral marketing on customer buying behaviour may differ a lot between categories like fashion, electronics, or personal care.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Background

Long before the internet, people used to talk among themselves all the time. They used to recommend products to their friends, they even warned others away from their own bad experiences. People earlier actually managed to shape the brand perceptions in the ways that no advertisement was able to fully control. Now, the internet has taken that role and have managed to give it speed & scale.

Viral marketing may be best understood as a digital evolution of word-of-mouth. Datta, Chowdhury and Chakraborty (2005) defined it as a bundle of marketing techniques that can be used to manipulate existing social platforms in order to produce fast increases in brand awareness everywhere. Just as a virus manages to spread from person to person without the original carrier needing to be involved. In the same manner a well-designed viral message travels through networks on its own momentum. Larson (2009) built on this exact thing and he tried describing viral marketing as something qualitatively different from the traditional advertising that people are used to because the distribution is driven by the audience, not the brand.

The thing that managed to make this possible was the rise of social media. Platforms like YouTube, Facebook and discussion forums gave the consumers plenty of tools to create and respond to content at a scale that was previously impossible. Ferguson (2008) noted that word-of-mouth now travels at the speed of thought. The message doesn't stop at the person who received it now. It moves outward and tries to reach the audiences which the original sender never thought about.

2.2 The Shift in Consumer Power

The rise of viral marketing managed to reflect a quite deeper shift in the relationship between the consumers and brands. Bernoff and Li (2008) described this as a groundswell. It refers to a movement of people using technology to get what they need from each other. Brands were no longer able to land a message by simply broadcasting it. Consumers were now trying to compare their notes with each other. People were trying to share experiences and forming opinions collectively. They were realising that the experiences of other consumers also carried some weight as personal experience in shaping brand choice. Larson (2009) found that over 70% of consumers tried to engage in online research before they made a purchase.

This changed what effective marketing had to look like. Henry (2002) argued that companies needed to move from company-driven to customer-driven strategies . They needed to focus on the ones that offered personalised experiences rather than one way messaging. Viral marketing provided one way for it. The most effective campaigns were invitations. They gave consumers something worth sharing and then got out of the way.

2.3 What Makes Viral Content Spread

Larson (2009) identified emotional resonance as the core driver in his study. He believed that content spreads when it triggers a response strong enough to make someone want to pass it on. Clifford-Marsh (2009) drew a useful distinction between viral content and traditional advertising, that a viral piece can be something that people actively seek out and choose to send.

Larson (2009) analysed several well-known campaigns like from Burger King's Subservient Chicken to Xerox's Let's Say Thanks initiative. Each of the, managed to succeed due to different reasons but still all shared one feature, it was that they gave consumers a reason to engage personally. The

Careerbuilder.com campaign managed to generate over 44 million viral emails at a fraction of the cost of its Super Bowl television spots. This achievement illustrated something broader about the economics of viral marketing. Cost per impression was lower than the traditional media when the content was able to earn the share rather than simply buying it.

Barnes and Mattson (2008) documented the institutional adoption of this thinking across the Inc. 500, finding that the use of social media among the fast leading companies in the America nearly doubled between 2007 and 2008. The companies treating viral marketing as a long-term strategic tool were outperforming those that ignored it altogether.

2.4 Viral Marketing and Customer Delight

Most research into viral marketing regard purchases as the end of the interaction. Alramdhan (2022) was concerned whether there is potential for viral marketing beyond growing purchases and leading to customer satisfaction and even delight or not? In fast-paced environments where brand switching can happen in a heartbeat, simply meeting the customer needs is not beneficial to a business.

The study outlined the build of customer delight in three ways: expectation, experience, and surprise. Surprise was the most difficult to accomplish out of these and it was also the most effective in making customers come back. It was evident that addressing the surprise element was almost entirely absent in companies' marketing efforts. Customers were getting informed & entertained. But the elements that left customers with a genuine feeling of surprise which was such as remarkable brand interaction, this was absent in the reviewed viral marketing efforts.

In his study, Alramdhan (2022) examined viral marketing and customer delight in terms of Source Credibility, Informativeness, and Entertainment. Each of the

three dimensions was positively related to customer delight in quite different ways. Source Credibility was most important aspect by people in forming customers' expectations prior to the marketing interaction. Informativeness and Entertainment also managed to play a greater role in shaping the customer's experience after and during the marketing engagement.

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study follows a quantitative research design. This design is both descriptive and causal in nature. Quantitative research was opted by me as this study aims to measure the strength and the significance of relationships between the defined variables using some statistical tools. So it requires a structured approach rather than an open-ended approach. The descriptive component involves summarising the response patterns of MBA students through the descriptive statistics. It was done in order to understand how they generally feel about the viral marketing and its dimensions. The causal component involves testing the causal relationships between the four viral marketing aspects and the purchase intention of them with the use of multiple regression analysis. This can explain how and to what extent each of the variables influence the outcome.

3.2 Nature of Research

This study is applied research, it focuses on solving an actual problem rather than contributing to the theoretical knowledge. The problem that was being addressed is understanding which dimension of the viral marketing serves best to stimulate the intention to purchase among MBA students. This study is also cross-sectional which means that the data is collected from respondents at one particular moment, not over a long duration. Cross-sectional studies are useful for measuring a snapshot of a particular moment's attitudes and behavioral intentions. It is also the precise purpose of this study.

3.3 Sources of Data

This study draws on two sources of data.

- Primary data was collected directly from 102 MBA student through a structured questionnaire. It forms the basis of all the statistical analysis and findings in this study.
- Secondary data was gathered from published academic research papers, peer-reviewed journals, and books related to viral marketing, consumer behaviour, and purchase intention. This secondary data was used to build the theoretical framework and the literature review. It also informed the selection of the independent variables along with the design of the questionnaire.

3.4 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument that was used in the study was structured questionnaire. I opted for a questionnaire because it is the most practical and efficient way to collect standardised responses from a large number of respondents. It also produces data that can be directly converted into numerical values for statistical analysis.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections.

- The 1st section collected the demographic information of the respondents which included the gender, age group, and the primary social media platform used by them.
- The second section consisted of 25 statements organised across five subsections which were as follows **Content Appeal, Informativeness, Source Credibility, Social Influence, and Purchase Intention**. Each of the independent variable was dedicated with five statements.

All the 25 statements were measured using a five-point Likert scale which ranged from Strongly Disagree with a value of 1 to Strongly Agree which was assigned a value of 5. The Likert scale was chosen because it captured the

intensity of respondents' attitudes rather than just a yes or no response. It made it ideal for measuring perceptions and the behavioural intentions. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms which allowed quick sharing with respondents and it automatically recorded all responses in a structured format ready for analysis in an excel sheet.

3.5 Sampling Design

The focused population for the study are MBA students in India as they are the active users of social media platforms. They have regular exposure to viral marketing content. MBA students were selected because they represent a young and digitally active consumer segment with meaningful purchasing power. It makes them a highly relevant group for studying the influence of viral marketing on customer buying intention. A total of 102 complete and usable responses were collected.

The sampling technique that was used was purposive sampling method where people were deliberately selected based on some criteria. They had to be currently enrolled or been a recent graduate in an MBA programme. They had to be regular users of social media platforms where viral marketing content is commonly encountered. Purposive sampling was preferred over random sampling because the study required respondents directly relevant to the research topic.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was built on Google Forms and then the link was shared with MBA students through WhatsApp groups, Instagram, and direct messaging. Respondents were informed before filling the form that the survey was for academic research purposes only. The participation was entirely voluntary and all the responses were kept strictly confidential. Data collection was continued until 102 complete responses were received. The responses were exported from Google Forms to Microsoft Excel. After this the data was

reviewed for completeness, it was coded numerically, and then the composite scores were calculated for each variable by averaging the five question responses within that section.

3.7 Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Proposed Relationship
H1	Content Appeal has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention among MBA students.
H2	Informativeness has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention among MBA students.
H3	Source Credibility has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention among MBA students.
H4	Social Influence has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention among MBA students.

3.8 Data Analysis Plan/Techniques

The data was analysed using SPSS Statistics through three sequential stages:

- The first stage was Reliability Analysis using Cronbach's Alpha. It was used in order to verify the internal consistency of the survey form. A value of 0.7 or above was required for each variable to proceed with the further analysis.
- The second stage was Descriptive Statistics, the values were computed for all the 25 questions to produce the mean and standard deviation for each statement. It provided with an initial understanding of how the respondents generally felt about each aspect of the viral marketing and the purchase intention.

- The third stage was Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, it was used as the first technique to test all the four hypotheses simultaneously. The regression output provides the R Square value, it tells how much of the variation in the buying intention was explained using the four variables together. The F value confirms whether the overall model was statistically valid or not. The significance values for each variable determines whether each of the hypothesis was accepted or rejected.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This study was done with full regard for the rights and privacy of all respondents that filled the form. Their participation was entirely voluntary and no respondent was pressured or incentivised to fill the questionnaire.

All of the respondents were informed upfront that the survey was for academic purposes only and that their responses would be kept highly confidential.

The questionnaire did not collect any sensitive personal information beyond basic demographics.

Respondents were free to stop filling the questionnaire at any time.

These measures ensure that the study adheres to the standard ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

CHAPTER 4 — DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter shows the analysis for the data which was collected for this study. It discusses what the results mean in the context of viral marketing and purchase intention among MBA students. This chapter focuses entirely on what the data revealed using test like reliability and descriptive analysis. After this the test moves to regression analysis results. It closes with a discussion of findings, practical recommendations for marketers and an acknowledgement of the study's limitations.

A total of 102 MBA student respondents participated in this study by completing a structured questionnaire. The questions were focused on four dimensions of viral marketing which I opted for, they were Content Appeal, Informativeness, Source Credibility, and Social Influence with their effect on Purchase Intention. The analysis for this was done using SPSS Statistics through three stages which were Reliability Analysis, Descriptive Statistics, and then Multiple Linear Regression. Together these three stages give a complete and precise picture of how viral marketing influences the purchase decisions of this particular consumer segment.

4.2 Data Analysis

The data was analysed on SPSS platform. There were three tests done in order of one after another so that the datasets can be understood properly.

4.2.1 Reliability Analysis

Before I moved into the main analysis, I conducted a Reliability Test using Cronbach's Alpha to check whether the questionnaire items for each variable were internally consistent or not. To check whether the five questions were all measuring the same concept. A Cronbach's Alpha value of about 0.7 or more

is considered acceptable in research literature. All five variables in this study crossed that threshold and this confirmed that the data collected is trustworthy and it is suitable for further statistical analysis.

Table 4.1: Reliability Statistics — Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Result
Content Appeal	0.849	Acceptable
Informativeness	0.905	Acceptable
Source Credibility	0.772	Acceptable
Social Influence	0.874	Acceptable
Purchase Intention	0.839	Acceptable

Source: Own Analysis

Informativeness had recorded the highest Alpha value of 0.905 in this test. This suggests that it was the most consistently measured variable across all the respondents. Even the lowest value which was Source Credibility at 0.772, that also remained well within the acceptable range. These results confirmed that the questionnaire was reliable and all the five variables can be confidently used in the subsequent analysis.

4.2.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were checked for all the 25 questions to get an understanding of how the 102 MBA student respondents felt about viral marketing and its dimensions. All responses were on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 represents Strongly Disagree and 5 represents Strongly Agree. A mean closer to 5 indicates a higher level of agreement with that statement.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

Question	Mean	Std. Deviation
Viral content on social media grabs my attention	4.08	0.792
I find viral marketing content enjoyable to watch or read	3.95	0.937
Creative viral posts make me more interested in the brand	3.97	0.826
I often share funny or emotionally engaging viral content	3.92	1.041
Appealing viral content improves my impression of a brand	3.84	0.931
Viral marketing provides useful product info	3.68	0.846
I use viral marketing content to stay updated on new products	3.56	0.918
Viral posts help me compare different products	3.74	0.867
The info in viral marketing posts is easy to understand	3.74	0.900
Informative viral content increases my confidence in product	3.75	0.969
I trust viral marketing more from well known brands	3.68	0.946
Content shared by friends feels more trustworthy than ads	3.90	0.949
I check the authenticity of a viral post before believing the info	4.14	0.758
Credible sources improve my attitude toward a product	4.09	0.705
I ignore viral content if I doubt the source's credibility	3.97	0.814
Seeing a post shared by many people makes me curious	3.69	0.923
Viral marketing makes me feel a product is popular	3.73	0.869
I share viral content I think my peers will find useful	3.65	1.011
Viral campaigns suggest the product quality is good	3.47	0.992
Rapid spreading viral content influences my choices	3.50	1.012
Viral posts motivate me to learn more about a product	3.87	0.804
I would consider buying a product found via viral content	3.53	0.864
Viral content leads me to search for product online to buy	3.90	0.802
I am likely to buy a product if it is widely shown through viral ads	3.50	0.962
Overall, viral marketing increases my intention to purchase	3.76	0.835

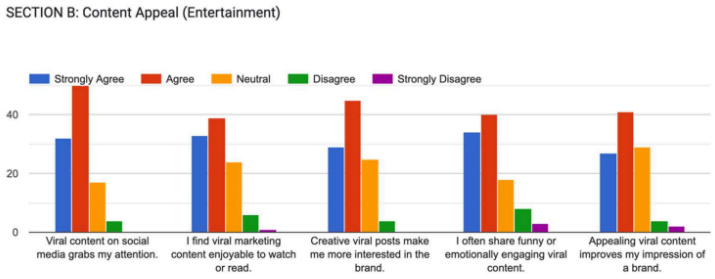
Source: Own Analysis

Content Appeal recorded the highest mean scores overall. The statement about viral content had the highest mean at 4.08. Source Credibility produced some of the most telling numbers. The question that was about “checking authenticity before believing a post” scored the highest mean in the entire study at 4.14. This reflects how critically MBA students evaluate the content that they consume. Social Influence recorded the lowest mean scores overall. Particularly the quality and influence statements ranged around 3.47 to 3.50, this suggests that while peer activity plays a role, MBA students are not simply swayed by popularity alone.

Response Distribution — Bar Graphs

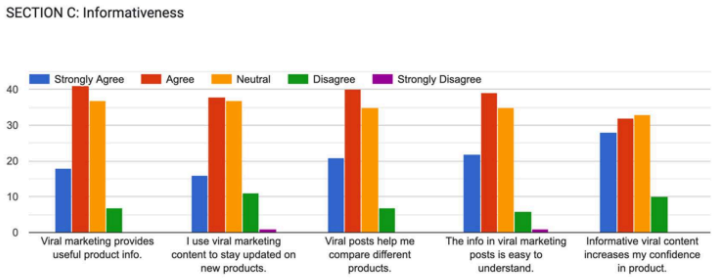
The following figures shows the response distribution for each of the 25 questionnaire items, grouped by independent variables. Each figure shows how many of the 102 respondents selected each option from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Section B — Content Appeal



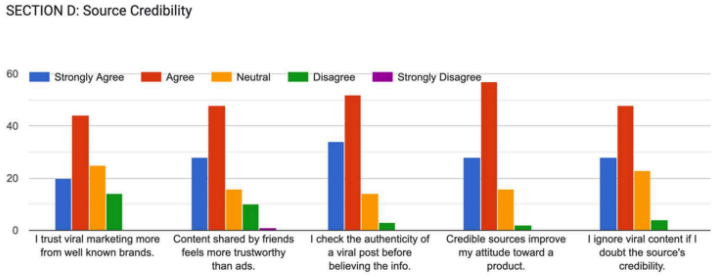
Source: Own Analysis

Section C — Informativeness



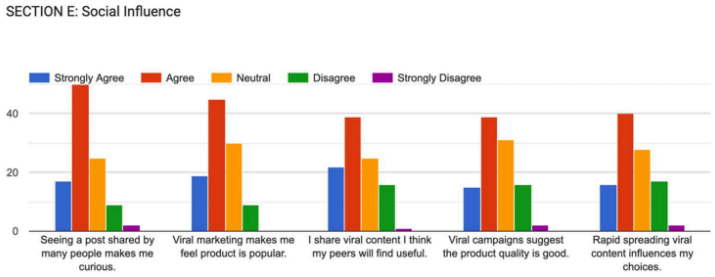
Source: Own Analysis

Section D — Source Credibility



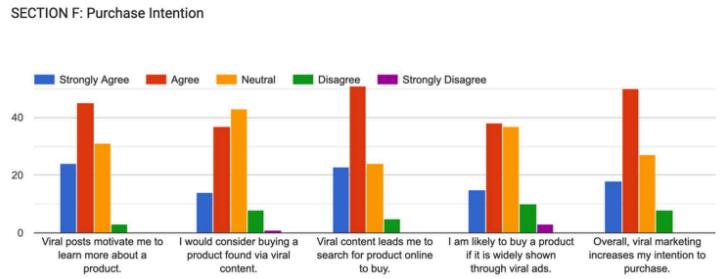
Source: Own Analysis

Section E — Social Influence



Source: Own Analysis

Section F — Purchase Intention



Source: Own Analysis

4.2.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple Linear Regression was used as the primary analytical technique to test all the four research hypotheses simultaneously. Purchase Intention was the dependent variable and Content Appeal, Informativeness, Source Credibility and Social Influence were the four independent variables. Regression was chosen to shows exactly how strong each variable's effect is. It also shows which one carries the most influence on purchase 'ntention.

Table 4.3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.828	0.686	0.673	0.3918

Source: Own Analysis

The R Square value of 0.686 means that all the four independent variables together explains 68.6% of the change in buying intention among the respondents. It confirms that the model captured the majority of what drives the purchase intention through viral marketing among the MBA students.

Table 4.4: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	32.569	4	8.142	53.043	<0.001
Residual	14.890	97	0.154		
Total	47.459	101			

Source: Own Analysis

The F value of 53.043 with a significance level of less than 0.001 confirms that the overall regression model is statistically valid and that the results were not occurring by chance.

Table 4.5: Coefficients Table

Variable	Beta	t	Sig.	Result
Content Appeal	0.078	1.082	0.282	Not Supported
Informativeness	0.191	2.549	0.012	Supported
Source Credibility	0.220	3.102	0.003	Supported
Social Influence	0.511	6.739	<0.001	Supported

Source: Own Analysis

4.3 Findings and Recommendations

Findings

1. The regression results produced clear and meaningful findings across the four hypotheses that were used. Social Influence emerged as the strongest and most significant predictor of buying intention with a Beta value of 0.511 and a significance level of less than 0.001. It means that when MBA students see viral content being widely shared and discussed within their peer network, it has by far the most powerful effect on their intention to purchase compared to any other dimension tested in this study.

2. Source Credibility was the second most significant predictor with a Beta of 0.220 and a significance of 0.003. The descriptive statistics strongly supported this result. The highest mean score in the entire study was for checking authenticity before believing a viral post at 4.14. the question about the credible sources improving attitude toward a product came in at 4.09. These numbers shows the MBA students as a critical audience that does not take viral content at face value.

3. Informativeness was the third significant predictor with a Beta of 0.191 and a significance of 0.012. it confirmed that content which delivers useful and relevant product information, that type of product contributes meaningfully to purchase intention among educated consumers.

4. Content Appeal was the only variable that did not show a statistically significant direct effect on buying intention. It recorded a Beta value of 0.078 and a significance of 0.282 which is above the required 0.05 threshold. It does not mean that content appeal is actually irrelevant because it recorded the highest mean scores in the descriptive statistics. The analysis shows that it is not enough on its own to drive purchase intention when we link it along with social influence, credibility and informativeness.

Table 4.6: Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Content Appeal has a significant effect on Purchase Intention	Not Supported
H2	Informativeness has a significant effect on Purchase Intention	Supported
H3	Source Credibility has a significant effect on Purchase Intention	Supported
H4	Social Influence has a significant effect on Purchase Intention	Supported

Source: Own Analysis

Recommendations

Based on the findings, these recommendations are made for brands and marketers targeting educated young consumers through viral marketing.

- Since social influence was found to be the strongest driver of purchase intention, hence the brands should prioritise creating the type of content that naturally encourages peer sharing and tagging.
- Investing in credible sources is really important for brands. The brands should start partnering with influencers or verified accounts that their target audience already trusts as students nowadays actively check the authenticity of content. So having a credible messenger is a basic requirement before any purchase intention is done.
- The informational quality of viral content should not be taken for granted for entertainment. Any content that is able to provide the buyers with something useful like product comparisons ,they for sure performs better with analytical audiences.
- Content appeal alone does not directly drive purchase intention but it still plays an important role as the entry point that can help in getting the

content noticed The brands should think of entertainment and visual appeal as the catchy part while other factors like social influence, credibility and informativeness are able to convert that attention into a purchase decision.

CHAPTER 5 — CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

The research that I did was to understand how viral marketing makes an impact on the buying decision of the consumers. The findings I got to know from the research is clear and important.

The dominant role of social influence

Firstly, MBA students are most likely to make a purchase after they are exposed to social peer influences through viral marketing. When a lot of people in a social group are talking about or engaging with some particular content, it creates a social validation that is much more likely to drive purchasing behaviour than any of the other factors that I examined. For most of the audiences, social groups behaviour is highly indicative of value purchasing behaviour. Marketers that are trying to reach young customer market, they should consider the value of viral marketing to their peer audience.

What the rejection of content appeal actually means

Second, Content Appeal does not properly predict purchase intention on its own. This is probably the most interesting conclusion of this study. It does not mean that visually appealing or entertaining content is irrelevant, we did see that the descriptive statistics showed that content appeal showed the highest agreement levels across the sample. I believe it means that for MBA students, finding something enjoyable to watch is just not enough to change it into a buying decision. Content appeal can act as an entry point, it may get the content noticed. But it needs the other aspects side by side of it to actually move someone towards a purchase.

Trust as a non-negotiable factor

Third, Source Credibility was the second strongest predictor. It can indicate that this demographic is virally active instead of passively responding to viral marketing. The question about “checking authenticity before believing a post” recorded the highest mean in the entire study at 4.14, because of this thing it

very clear that MBA students approach the viral marketing with a degree of healthy suspicion. They evaluate plenty of things like who is behind the content or whether that source can be trusted before they try to make it to influence their behaviour. If the messenger is a credible source, the impact of viral content may be significantly positive.

Informativeness as a driver for analytical consumers

Informativeness is a significant predictor at a Beta of 0.191, it makes sense because the sample is of MBA students. Most of the students know before making decisions they should analyse and evaluate. Viral content that tried to give them something substantial like useful product information and sometimes relevant updates, this speaks directly to how they process decisions. Brands that use their viral content as a place for real information will always get stronger purchase intention outcomes with this audience.

5.2 Implications

For marketers and brands

The main issue with this study is that it is not actually possible to develop effective viral marketing for educated young consumers only on this basis of entertainment. When brands are marketing to MBA students and similar kind of demographics, viral should be thought of as a multi-layered approach. Social proof, source credibility and informational value all add up to push a potential buyer from passive viewer to active purchaser. Viral content should be seen as an opportunity to deliver real value to the consumer.

For academic research

This study helps in adding to the literature on viral marketing from an academic view. I have tried to present it in the context of an Indian MBA student as I thought that it which remains unexamined in the existing body of literature. The finding that Content Appeal doesn't seem to influence purchase intention but

Social Influence does to some extent also provides an important view to how viral marketing works for different people.

5.3 Closing Remarks

Viral marketing is one of the primary ways in which brands can communicate with consumers in the digital time. It's influence on the behaviour of purchase is quite real. This viral marketing topic helped me in understanding that the most influential way to drive purchase thought among the college student is by socially influencing their choices. Whenever any brand tries to teach people about a product properly instead of just trying to sell it, it can increase the chances of purchase intent in the consumer because of the influence they are making. Trust in the source manages to shape how the content is being received by the students. Informative content earns more than entertaining content alone. And I understand that while visual appeal might matter to people, but still it is a starting point rather than the destination. Brands will be in a much better position to convert viral reach into actual purchasing behaviour among the customers if they recognise and take advantage of these differences.

ANNEXURE I - SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The Impact of Viral Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention

(Google Form)

Objective: This survey is part of an MBA research project. The viral marketing questions are related to any videos, memes, posts that you might have seen been being showcased a lot. Your responses are totally private and for research use only. There is no right or wrong here, so please fill it honestly.

SECTION A: Demographic Information

Please select the most appropriate option.

1. Name: _____

2. Gender

[ ] Male

[ ] Female

[ ] Prefer not to say

3. Age

[ ] 20–22

[ ] 23–26

[ ] 27–30

[ ] 30+

4. Which social media platform do you use most daily?

[ ] Instagram

[ ] Facebook

[ ] YouTube

SECTION B: Viral Content Appeal (Entertainment)

Please rate your agreement with the following:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Viral marketing content (videos, memes, posts) is visually attractive and grabs my attention.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I find viral marketing content enjoyable to watch or read.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Creative viral posts make me more interested in the brand.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I am more likely to share viral marketing content that is funny, creative, or emotionally engaging.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Appealing viral content positively influences my overall impression of a product or brand.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

SECTION C: Viral Message Informatics

Please rate your agreement with the following:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Viral marketing content gives me useful and relevant information about products.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I rely on viral marketing content to stay updated about new products and offers.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Viral posts help me compare different products before a purchase..	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
The information provided in viral marketing posts is clear and easy to understand.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Informative viral content makes me feel more confident about buying the product.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

SECTION D: Brand Trustworthiness (Source Credibility)

Please rate your agreement with the following:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I trust viral marketing more from well-known brands.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Content shared by friends feels more trustworthy than ads.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I check the authenticity of a viral post before believing the info.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Credible sources improve my attitude toward a product.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I am less likely to act on content if I doubt the credibility of the source.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

SECTION E: Social Influence

Please rate your agreement with the following:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Seeing a post shared by many people makes me curious.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Viral marketing makes me feel product is popular and worth trying..	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I share viral content I think my peers will find useful.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Widespread viral campaigns lead me to believe the product is of good quality.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Viral marketing that spreads quickly influences my buying decisions.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

SECTION F: Purchase Intention

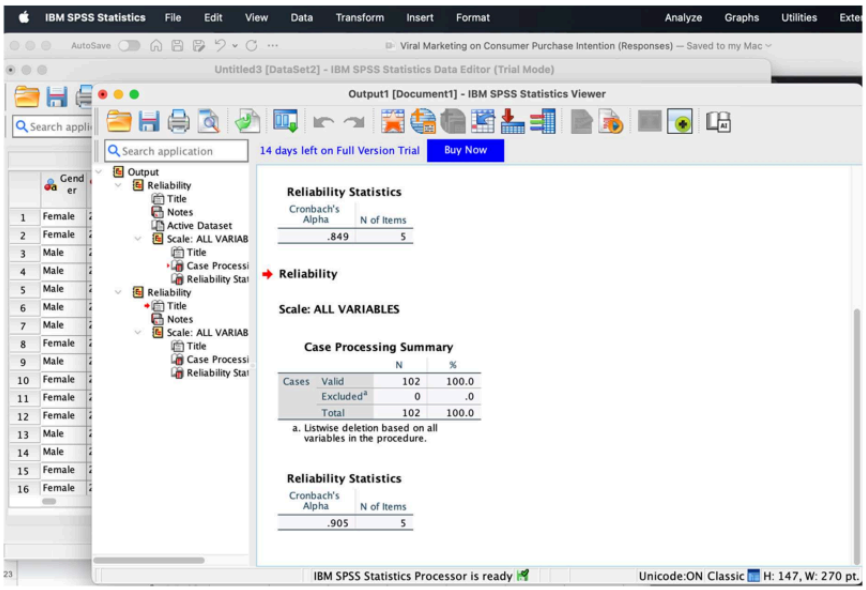
Please rate your agreement with the following:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
After seeing a viral post, I feel motivated to find out more about the product.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I would consider buying a product found via viral content.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Viral content makes me actively search for a product online to purchase it.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am likely to buy a product if it is widely promoted through viral marketing.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Overall, viral marketing positively influences my intention to purchase.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

ANNEXURE II – SPSS ANALYSIS

1. Reliability Analysis



Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

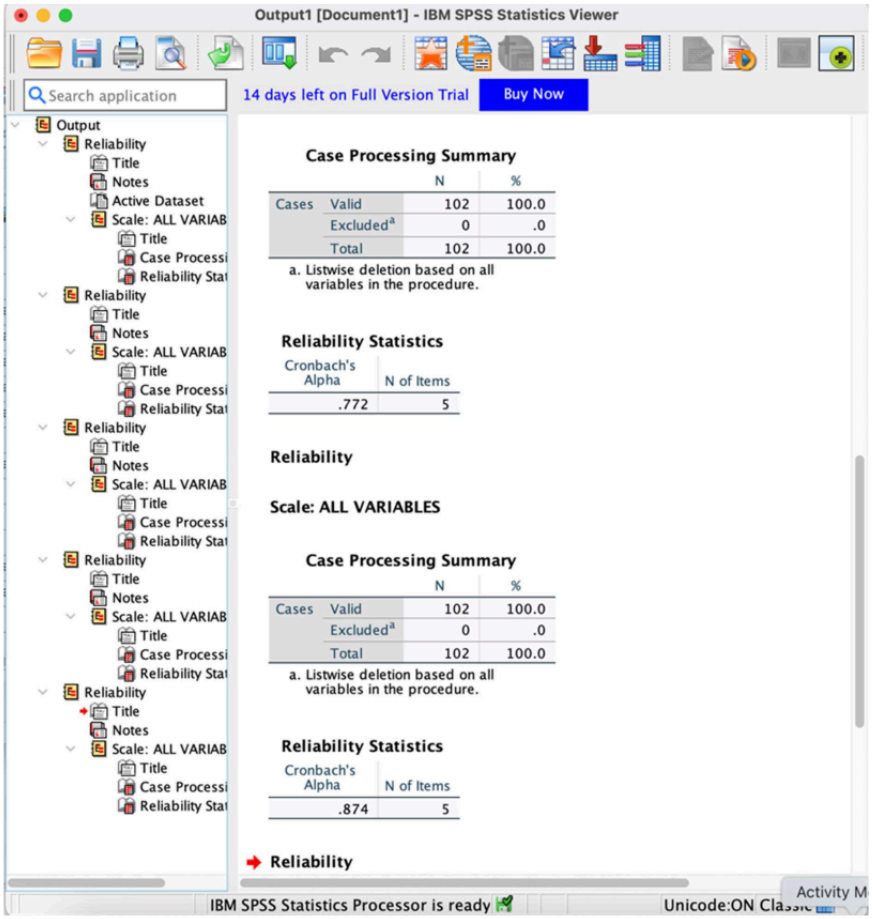
Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	102	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	102	100.0

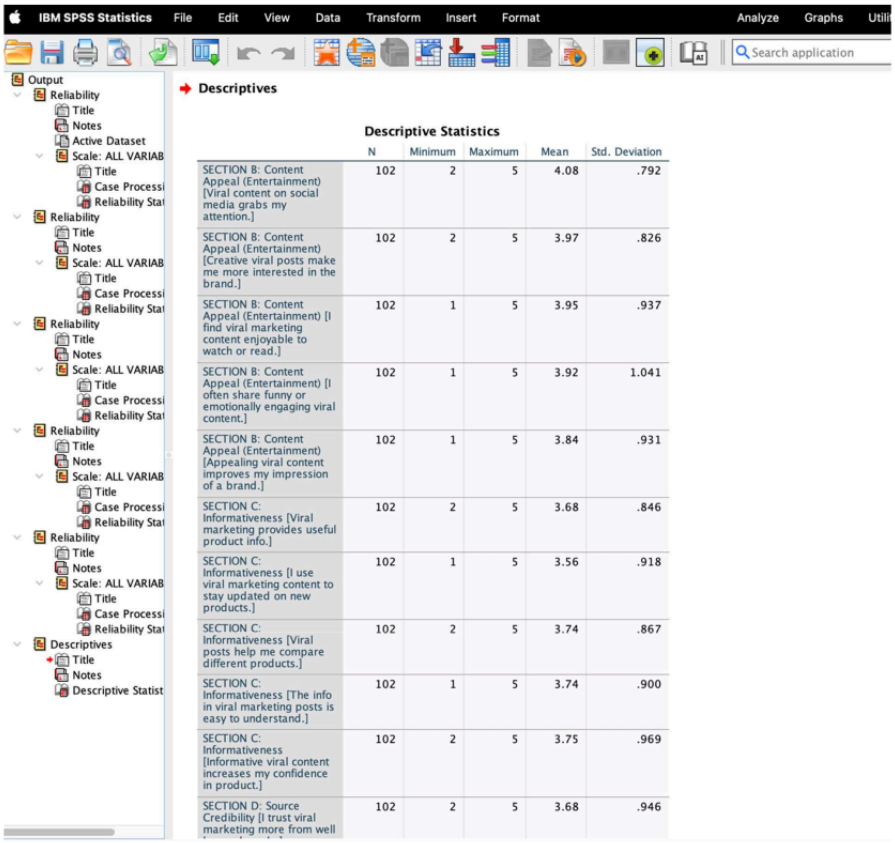
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.839	5


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Output
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N
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a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.
Reliability Statistics
Cronbach's Alpha
N of Items
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Reliability
Scale: ALL VARIABLES
Case Processing Summary
Reliability Statistics
Cronbach's Alpha
N of Items
.874
5
Reliability
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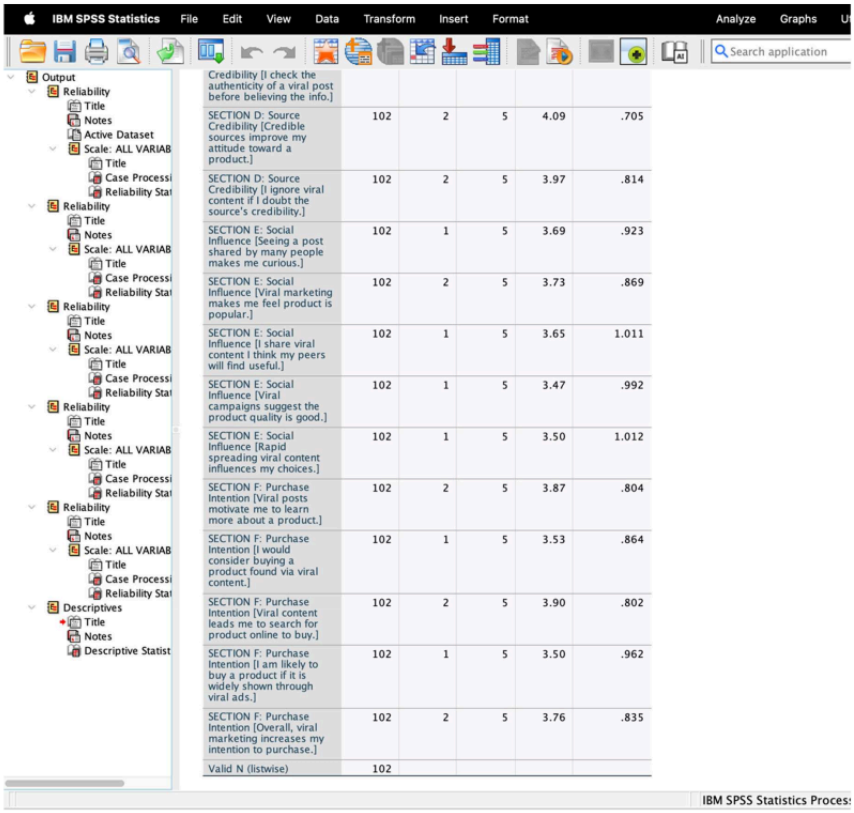
2. Descriptive Analysis



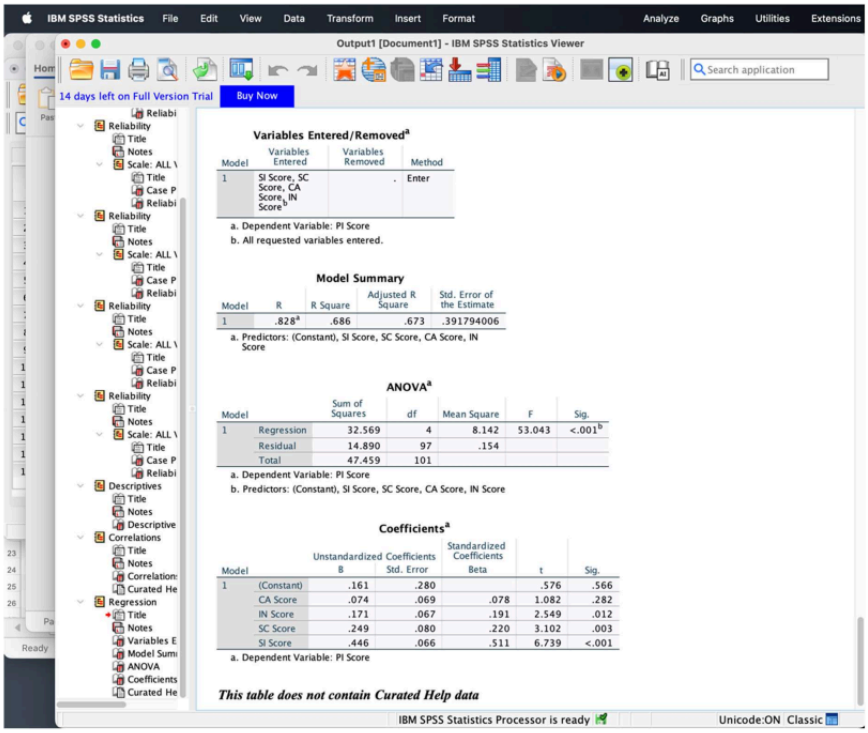
Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SECTION B: Content Appeal (Entertainment) [Viral content on social media grabs my attention.]	102	2	5	4.08	.792
SECTION B: Content Appeal (Entertainment) [Creative viral posts make me more interested in the brand.]	102	2	5	3.97	.826
SECTION B: Content Appeal (Entertainment) [I find viral marketing content enjoyable to watch or read.]	102	1	5	3.95	.937
SECTION B: Content Appeal (Entertainment) [I often share funny or emotionally engaging viral content.]	102	1	5	3.92	1.041
SECTION B: Content Appeal (Entertainment) [Appealing viral content improves my impression of a brand.]	102	1	5	3.84	.931
SECTION C: Informativeness [Viral marketing provides useful product info.]	102	2	5	3.68	.846
SECTION C: Informativeness [I use viral marketing content to stay updated on new products.]	102	1	5	3.56	.918
SECTION C: Informativeness [Viral posts help me compare different products.]	102	2	5	3.74	.867
SECTION C: Informativeness [The info in viral marketing posts is easy to understand.]	102	1	5	3.74	.900
SECTION C: Informativeness [Informative viral content increases my confidence in product.]	102	2	5	3.75	.969
SECTION D: Source Credibility [I trust viral marketing more from well	102	2	5	3.68	.946


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Transform
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Graphs
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Credibility [I check the authenticity of a viral post before believing the info.]
SECTION D: Source Credibility [Credible sources improve my attitude toward a product.] 102 2 5 4.09 .705
SECTION D: Source Credibility [I ignore viral content if I doubt the source's credibility.] 102 2 5 3.97 .814
SECTION E: Social Influence [Seeing a post shared by many people makes me curious.] 102 1 5 3.69 .923
SECTION E: Social Influence [Viral marketing makes me feel product is popular.] 102 2 5 3.73 .869
SECTION E: Social Influence [I share viral content I think my peers will find useful.] 102 1 5 3.65 1.011
SECTION E: Social Influence [Viral campaigns suggest the product quality is good.] 102 1 5 3.47 .992
SECTION E: Social Influence [Rapid spreading viral content influences my choices.] 102 1 5 3.50 1.012
SECTION F: Purchase Intention [Viral posts motivate me to learn more about a product.] 102 2 5 3.87 .804
SECTION F: Purchase Intention [I would consider buying a product found via viral content.] 102 1 5 3.53 .864
SECTION F: Purchase Intention [Viral content leads me to search for product online to buy.] 102 2 5 3.90 .802
SECTION F: Purchase Intention [I am likely to buy a product if it is widely shown through viral ads.] 102 1 5 3.50 .962
SECTION F: Purchase Intention [Overall, viral marketing increases my intention to purchase.] 102 2 5 3.76 .835
Valid N (listwise) 102
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3. Multiple Linear Regression



mrp 7

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