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Product videos “gone viral”: Exploring the role of content, positive affect and social motivations

ABSTRACT

Viral video advertising is an avenue for marketers to spread information rapidly to a large, widespread audience. Video advertisements intended to “go viral” still get drowned out by media clutter. Content characteristics, positive affect and social motivations of the viewer have been highlighted as factors that influence the forwarding intention of viral product videos.

This study investigated these factors and their impact on forwarding intention. The results from a realised sample of 250 respondents confirmed the relationship between content characteristics and forwarding intention, the mediating effect of social motivations, and the multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations but not the mediating effect of positive affect alone.

As a result, marketing managers should focus on both positive affect (evoked emotions of enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and attentiveness) and social motivations (appealing to consumers’ need for distinctiveness, affiliation, and altruism) of the viewer when creating video advertisements intended for virality.

Keywords: viral marketing, viral video advertising, forwarding intention, social media

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INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements have not only resulted in media fragmentation but have also contributed to the shift in power from marketer to consumer (Porter & Golan, 2006; Labrecque et al., 2013). Consumers have “metamorphosed” from passive receivers of one-way marketing communication messages to active creators, exchangers, and critics of content. Advances in social media have therefore enabled consumers to play an active role in content creation as well as in the liking, commenting, and sharing of content (Kietzmann et al., 2011). These advances have contributed to the shift in power as consumers are now in control of what content, messages and information get passed on.

This poses challenges to those that rely on diffusion of content as part of their marketing communication strategy. The unparalleled opportunity for the dissemination of marketing messages to hundreds and thousands of potential consumers at a very low cost is either impeded or expedited depending on consumers’ forwarding intention. The rise of video sharing sites like YouTube with increased “ease of sharing” functionality across the majority of social networking sites has left most marketers with the aspirations of a “viral” video campaign, where a large number of views is achieved in a short time period due to sharing (forwarding) of the digital content (Tellis et al., 2019).

Regardless of how appealing this may sound, it might be a dismal miss for some. Others might, however, have a big hit with extensive sharing of the video in a few short hours (Nelson-Field, Riebe, & Newstead, 2013), thus earning the status of “going viral”. The question of why some videos achieve virality status and others disappear into the oblivion of an over-crowded media space has thus increasingly been a topic of interest for marketers and researchers alike.

The purpose behind content posted online is that it gets shared, hence forwarded to social networks. The question of what contributes to the forwarding intention of marketer-generated content is therefore one asked by several studies (Eckler & Bolls, 2011; Nelson-Field et al., 2013; Quesenberry & Coolson, 2019; Tellis, et al., 2019; Yang & Wang, 2015). In an attempt to answer this question, international research has focused on, inter alia, the role of information, emotion and brand in sharing online content (Tellis et al., 2019), the emotions that drive viral videos (Nelson-Field et al., 2013), emotional tone and its effect on forwarding intention and attitude (Eckler & Bolls, 2011), story development and shares and views of online advertising videos (Quesenberry & Coolson, 2019) and video sharing attitudes, intent and behaviour of American consumers (Yang & Wang, 2015), to name but a few of the substantial number of studies on the topic. Some South African researchers have also ventured into the topic of virality and have investigated the motivation behind generation Y’s sharing of online advertisements on social networks (Madinga & Maziriri, 2017), the role of content and emotion in viral marketing (Botha & Reyneke, 2013), and key drivers of viral success in emerging markets (Botha et al., 2018).

It is clear that even though what contributes to consumers' intention to forward videos has been the focus of numerous international studies the same cannot be said for South Africa. Very few South African studies have investigated viral videos and only one (Botha et al., 2018) followed a similar approach to this study of investigating mediators in the relationship between content and sharing of content. Their focus, however, was on consumer-generated videos whereas this research focused on viral product videos. The aim of this study was therefore to investigate the mediating role of positive affect and social motivations in the relationship between content characteristics and the intention to forward viral product videos. Since so few studies in South Africa have addressed the topic of viral product videos, the research's contribution will hence be beneficial to future researchers, practitioners, and managers. The next section discusses the broader concepts of the study to elucidate the proposed conceptual model followed by a subsequent discussion of each construct in support of the stated hypotheses.

1. VIRAL MARKETING AND FORWARDING INTENTION

The difference between viral marketing and traditional advertising lies in the fact that viral marketing depends on social media to “pull” consumers to the marketing content instead of “pushing” an advertising message onto the consumer via traditional channels. Viral marketing thus relies on the organic process of attracting consumers to the marketing content through sharing on social media (Quesenberry & Coolson, 2019). Viral marketing is regarded as the broader framework consisting of a wider assortment of electronic word-of-mouth strategies aimed at inciting online peer-to-peer conversations (Golan & Zaider, 2008). Viral advertising is considered by some to be a subset of viral marketing (Porter & Golan, 2006; Eckler & Rodgers, 2010) and by others as interchangeable (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004; Shirky, 2000) with viral marketing.

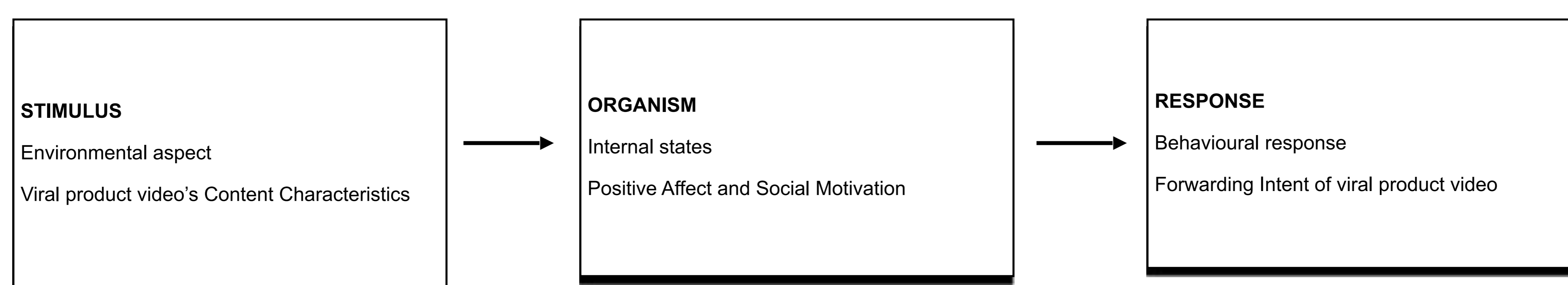
Viral video, as an advertisement format, has gained popularity in recent years due to the increase in the popularity of video sharing sites such as YouTube. Eckler and Bolls (2011) highlighted the fact that consumers are heavily engaged in all types of videos online, with most adult internet users (61%) having watched a video on video-sharing websites such as YouTube or Google Video, which host much of the viral activity. These video-sharing websites have displayed exploding popularity that has resulted in one-third of all brands worldwide to try the viral video approach (Eckler & Bolls, 2011). Quesenberry & Coolson (2019) confirmed that what was purported in 2011 is indeed still applicable now, by highlighting the fact that advertisers spent more than \$10 million on brand digital and mobile video in 2018 and that two-thirds of funds have shifted from traditional television budgets into digital video advertising. These findings support the notion that using video as the medium for viral marketing can enhance the virality of the content.

Marketers who wish to achieve this viral success need to increase their video advertisement's true reach by getting audience- and brand-driven views. These types of views are obtained by getting consumers to forward video advertisements to their social networks. Huang, Lin and Lin

(2009) also claimed that the key to spreading online electronic content successfully lies in an individual recipient's intention to forward messages to others. Once viewers start to pass along video advertisements to their social networks, this act of forwarding represents a potentially powerful marketing force. On the other hand, any video advertisement that fails to induce the forwarding intention of the viewer results in a discontinuation of the electronic word-of-mouth chain. In the words of Huang et al. (2009), "once the mouth is shut, the buzz can no longer be sustained, and the effect of viral marketing can be greatly discounted". Therefore, inducing the forwarding intention of every individual who views the content is critical in sustaining the buzz and achieving viral video advertisement success.

In an attempt to identify key drivers of viral success in emerging markets, Botha et al. (2018) proposed a viral marketing process based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response approach. The viral content and popularity of the content are regarded as the stimulus, content relevance, emotional response and social motivations are the organism, and the sharing of content the response. Previous studies analysing viral online content have also identified content characteristics (Akpinar & Berger, 2017; Botha & Reyneke, 2013), emotion (Eckler & Bolls, 2011; Tellis et al., 2019), and social motivations (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Taylor, Strutton & Thompson, 2012) as factors that contribute to rapid sharing of online content on social media platforms. The study by Huang et al. (2009) also indicated that the passing-along success of electronic word-of-mouth is dictated by two influences: the message factor and the sender factor. Content characteristics in the context of this study are thus regarded as the message factor and positive affect and social motivations as factors related to the sender. Previous studies thus support the approach adopted by this research that a stimulus (video content as the message) impacts the response (intention to forward), through the mediating effect of the organism (affect and social motivations, linked to the sender). This approach is depicted in the following conceptual model:

Model 1: The stimulus-organism-response model of viral product videos



In the conceptual model it is thus proposed that there is a direct relationship between the content characteristics of a viral product video, (stimulus in the environment) and forwarding intention (behavioural response) that is mediated by the organism, comprised of positive affect and social motivation representative of an individual's internal state. These constructs, in support of the

stated hypotheses, are therefore discussed next.

2. HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention

Previous literature reveals that a good story, as a video advertisement content characteristic, will evoke an emotional response in the viewer (Tellis et al., 2019; Quesenberry & Coolson, 2019; Knossenburg, Nogueira & Chimenti, 2016) that in turn will increase the forwarding intention of the viewer and result in increased sharing of the video advertisement. A good story has further been described as having drama (Tellis et al., 2019), the element of surprise (Knossenburg et al., 2016; Tellis et al., 2019), and having a plot with a “full story” of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement, thus a narrative (Quesenberry & Coolson, 2019).

Another content characteristic that has an impact on eliciting an emotional reaction that results in a higher likelihood of sharing is relatable content (Botha & Reyneke, 2013; Knossenburg et al., 2016). Relatable content allows the viewer to identify and think about the video content, resulting in an emotional connection and an increase in intent to forward as opposed to being alienated and not wanting to share.

The final content characteristic included in this study is brand integration. Previous literature emphasise that viewers’ awareness of the commercial nature of a message can create resistance towards persuasion and result in lower intention to share (Choi et al., 2018; Tellis et al., 2019). The brand should thus form part of the story for the video to be credible and convincing.

The three main elements of content characteristics highlighted by previous research linked to a higher intent to share and thus considered in this research, is a good story with relatable content in which the brand being advertised is integral to the narrative.

Hypothesis 2: Positive affect mediates the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention

Affect is used as an encompassing term for anything emotional such as feelings preferences, emotions, moods, and affective traits. It is therefore a psychological construct representing mental states of evaluative feelings of, for example, feeling good or bad and liking or disliking of a situation (Díaz-García et al., 2020). Positive affect (PA), according to the developers of the widely used PANSAS scale (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988), reflects the level of enthusiasm and alertness of a person. High positive affect then represents a state of being highly energised, full of concentration and pleasurable engagement. If feelings of being interested, enthusiastic, attentive, and inspired (PA items of the PANSAS scale) are experienced after watching the video it might increase intention

to forward, as Watson et al. (1988) opined that positive affect as opposed to negative affect relates to social activity and satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Social motivations mediates the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention

Self-enhancement and expression of uniqueness signals a need for distinctiveness and has been identified in the literature as social motivations impacting the sharing intent of individuals (Tellis et al., 2019; Nikolinakou & Whitehill King, 2018). Individuals share content to benefit themselves, thus satisfying the basic needs of feeling good about oneself in the eyes of others (self-enhancement) and expressing or signaling uniqueness (Tellis et al., 2019). Individuals also share to feel part of or belong to a community or group. Expression of affiliation can include connecting through discussion of common interest as well as through sharing positive emotions (Nikolinakou & Whitehill King, 2018).

The insights from the research by Nikolinakou & Whitehill King (2018) reveal that viewers fulfil the need to connect with others through the sharing of positive emotions evoked by the content, rather than the content itself. Affiliation can therefore be regarded as a social motivation that impacts the forwarding intention of the viewers of online videos. Altruism, according to the literature (Tellis et al., 2019), is another category of social motivations impacting sharing behaviour. Individuals share content to show concern or empathy for others. The findings of a study conducted by Nikolinakou & Whitehill King (2018) also revealed that functional altruism, thus informational support, is not a significant driver of virality whereas emotional altruism, thus emotional support, had a significant influence on the forwarding intention of the viewers of online video advertisements.

It is thus assumed that the social motivations of distinctiveness, affiliation and altruism might play a role in the forwarding intention of the viewer. Social motivations, however, do not influence forwarding intention independently. Nikolinakou & Whitehill King (2018) highlighted affiliation through positive emotions as opposed to affiliation through common interest to be a significant influence on forwarding intention. It therefore appears that positive emotions evoked by the content of the video might trigger social motivations of uniqueness, affiliation and altruism that will in return impact the forwarding intention of the video.

Hypothesis 4: There is a multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations on the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention.

Berger and Milkman (2012) attributed the reason for the increased likelihood of transmission of positive content to social motivations. The reasoning is that by forwarding positive content it reflects positively on the sender in that it boosts the mood of others. They also emphasised that emotional arousal as a state of mobilisation increases action-related behaviours such as sharing

of online content. A study by Wagner et al. (2015) also highlighted the fact that emotional situations trigger humans' tendency to affiliate with others due to their motivation to form social bonds and share experiences with members of the same species. They highlighted that the reason lies in the notion that the social sharing of emotional experiences is hedonically positive in itself and as such “contributes to the regulation of individual emotions”. Humans, because of their social nature, thus have a predisposition for affiliation and sharing of emotions with peers. The social motivations of affiliation, altruism and distinctiveness will thus also play a role in the decision to forward a video when positive affect is experienced after watching the content of the video. It is therefore hypothesised that the relationship between video content characteristics and intention to forward will be mediated by positive affect and social motivations.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used a conclusive research design following a positivism research approach. The data was collected using a survey as it enabled the researchers to collect descriptive data. The measuring instrument for the self-administered survey was designed using the web survey software, Qualtrics, and was distributed electronically.

The five viral video advertisements that formed part of the study were selected by considering their true reach metric. These videos also consistently appeared across the top contemporary lists of viral video advertisements (AdAge, 2020, Ecommerce Magazine, 2020 and Inc., 2018). The viral video advertisements that were selected are: Dollar Shave Club – Our Blades Are F***ing Great; PooPourri – Girls Don't Poop; Squatty Potty – This Unicorn Changed the Way I Poop; Purple Mattress – How to Use a Raw Egg to Determine if Your Mattress is Awful; Old Spice – The Man Your Man Could Smell Like. Pre-designed, pre-tested items were used to measure the respective variables. The scales were slightly adapted to fit the purpose of this study. Seven-point Likert scales were used to measure the independent as well as dependent variables. These scales allowed respondents to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements presented.

After finalising the measuring instrument, a pilot test was conducted among 20 respondents to identify potential errors and to assist in refining the questions for the final questionnaire. After the respondents completed the survey, they were interviewed and asked for feedback pertaining to the structure and sequencing of the questionnaire, as well as the clarity of the questions that were asked. The results were tabulated and the standard deviation of each item was scrutinised to ensure that respondents understood what was asked of them. After analysing the collected data, the standard deviations of all the items in the measuring instrument were identified as being below 1.7 except for two items forming part of the PANAS scale. However, these items were just above 1.7 and due to the limited sample size of the pilot test, it was decided to retain these items for the final analyses. Lastly, the pilot test was also used to confirm the emotional affect evoked by each video. The 10 negative items of the PANAS scale were included in the pilot test but were

removed for the final questionnaire since all the videos evoked a significantly higher positive than negative affect.

After the necessary changes were made using the feedback from the pilot test, the sampling for the final study could commence. No known sampling frame existed for the target population and non-probability convenience sampling was used. Five variations of the questionnaire were created, with a hyperlink to each of the five viral videos. Social networks were used to distribute the questionnaire leading to a realised final sample of 250 respondents.

Descriptive analysis for profiling the sample and inferential statistics in the form of multiple regression analysis were conducted using SPSS. Multiple serial mediation analysis was performed using Hayes PROCESS macro (model 6) in SPSS.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Demographics

Only two questions for demographics were included. The research did not aim to do comparisons between demographic groups and the questions were only included to provide an age and gender overview of the sample. The mean age of the sample was 20.68. The respondents were all in the age range of 18–23 years (18–19 = 53 respondents, 20–21 = 116 respondents, 22–23 = 81 respondents). The gender distribution of the respondents was 152 males and 97 females, with one respondent that preferred not to answer the question.

4.2 Measurement and reliability of measurement instrument

Intention to forward viral video

The scale used to measure intention to forward was adapted from Huang, Chen & Wang (2012), who reported Cronbach's alpha of above 0.7 and an AVE higher than 0.5 for the original scale. Respondents were asked to answer three different questions regarding their intent to forward the viral video advertisement that they watched. Responses were solicited on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instrument was reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.822 (M = 4.66, SD = 1.36).

Content characteristics (CC)

To measure the construct of content characteristics, scales items for a good story was adapted from Tellis et al. (2019), relatable content from Knossenburg et al. (2016), and brand integration from Choi et al. (2018). An overall interrater agreement percentage of 0.76 for the original scale of a good story was thus ensured. The relatable content original scale reported a Cronbach's alpha

of 0.93, AVE of 0.77, and the brand integration original scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. All the items used in this study were thus items adapted from reliable original scales.

Responses for all the content characteristics were solicited on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instrument was reliable with a Cronbach's alpha's ranging from 0.51 for a good story, 0.83 for relatable content and 0.84 for brand integration (M = 5.30, SD = .93 for overall construct of content characteristic).

The Cronbach's alpha for a good story was the lowest at 0.51, and thus less than satisfactory. A factor analysis was also performed and three of the four items for relatable content loaded onto the first factor, all three items for brand integration loaded onto the second factor, but only two of the four items for a good story loaded onto the third factor. The reliability and validity of the scale used for a good story is therefore questionable; however, for the purpose of this research, none of the items were removed.

Positive affect (PA)

To measure the construct of positive affect, the pre-designed and pre-tested Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) items were used and measured with a 7-point Likert scale (Guadagno et al., 2013). The instrument was reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 (M = 4.02, SD = 1.17 for the positive affect items).

Social motivations (SM)

To measure the construct of social motivations, pre-designed and pre-tested scales from Nikolinakou & Whitehill King (2018) were adapted. The first scale measured distinctiveness as a social motivation and reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. The scale to measure affiliation as the second social motivation had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76 in the original study, and the third scale to measure altruism as a social motivation had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

The respondents were asked to answer nine different questions pertaining to three variables that constituted the construct of the social motivations of the viewer. The respondents indicated their opinion using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The measurement was reliable, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 for distinctiveness, affiliation had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76, and altruism scored 0.83. (M = 4.09, SD = 1.19 for overall construct of social motivations).

4.3 Results of the multiple regression analysis

Before testing the mediation hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was run in SPSS to

predict forwarding intention of viral videos based on social motivations, content characteristics and positive affect. The assumptions for multiple regression were addressed first. There was linearity as assessed by scatterplots, there was homoscedasticity as assessed by the visual examination of residuals versus predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.01. The assumption of normality was met as assessed by the histograms.

The multiple regression analysis could thus commence, and results are shown in Tables 1–3.

Table 1: Model summary^b

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std Error of the estimate
1	0.715 ^a	0.511	0.505	0.961

a. Predictors (constant), SM, CC, PA

b. Dependent variable: FI

Table 2: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F
1	Regression	237.342	3	79.114	85.624
	Residual	227.296	246	0.924	
	Total	464.638	249		

a. Dependent Variable: FI

b. Predictors: (Constant), SM, CC, PA

Table 3: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardised B	Coefficients Std Error	Unstandardised coefficients B	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.036	0.351		0.104	0.918
	CC	0.414	0.090	0.283	4.577	0.000
	PA	0.100	0.078	0.086	1.286	0.200
	SM	0.495	0.073	0.434	6.752	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: FI

The results, depicted in Table 1, indicate that the model explained 51.1% of the variance, the R2 for the overall model was 51.1% with an adjusted R2 of 50.5%, a large size effect, according to Cohen (1988).

The multiple regression model statistically significantly predicted forwarding intention of viral product videos, $F(3,246) = 0.85624$, $p > 0.00005$, adjusted R2 = 0.505. Content characteristics (CC) and social motivations (SM) as depicted in Table 3 contributed significantly to the model, whereas positive affect (PA) did not.

4.4 Results of the multiple mediation analysis

Table 4: Regression coefficients, Standard Errors (SE), and model summary for serial multiple mediation

	<i>M</i> ₁ (Positive Affect)			<i>M</i> ₂ (Social Motivations)			<i>Y</i> (Intent to Forward)					
	Coeff	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff	SE	<i>p</i>			
<i>X</i> (CC)	<i>a</i> ₁	0.817	0.060	0.000	<i>a</i> ₂	0.382	0.075	0.000	<i>c</i> ¹	0.414	0.904	0.000
<i>M</i> ₁ (PA)	-	-	-	<i>d</i> ₂₁	0.502	0.060	0.000	<i>b</i> ¹	0.100	0.078	0.200	
<i>M</i> ₂ (SM)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>b</i> ²	.495	.073	0.00	
Constant	<i>iM</i> ₁	0.312	0.325	0.3377	<i>iM</i> ₂	0.0530	0.305	0.862	<i>i</i> _{<i>y</i>}	0.036	0.351	0.918
	<i>R</i> ² = 0.425 <i>F</i> (1,248) = 183.109, <i>p</i> = 0.000			<i>R</i> ² = 0.520 <i>F</i> (2,247) = 133.6224, <i>p</i> = 0.000			<i>R</i> ² = 0.511, <i>F</i> (3,246) = 85624, <i>p</i> = 0.000					

Table 5: Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	UCLI
0.414	0.904	4.578	0.00	0.236	0.592

The direct effect for content characteristics is positive (0.236 to 0.592) and significant ($p = 0.00$). The content characteristics of the viral product video advertisement are related to forwarding intention independent of the effect of positive affect and social motivations.

Table 6: Indirect effects of content characteristics (X) on forwarding intention (Y)

	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Total	0.474	0.071	0.337	0.610
Ind1	0.082	0.066	-0.053	0.205
Ind2	0.189	0.043	0.109	0.279
Ind3	0.203	0.048	0.120	0.308

Ind1: CC → PA→FI Ind:2 CC→PA→SM→FI Ind3: CC→SM→FI

Indirect effect 1, where positive affect mediates the relationship between content characteristics and forwarding intention, is not significantly positive since the bootstrap confidence interval is not entirely above zero (-0.053 to 0.205).

Indirect effect 2 represents the indirect effect of content characteristics on forwarding intention through positive affect and social motivations in serial, where positive affect will impact social motivations positively, which in turn will lead to a higher forwarding intent of the viral video. The indirect effect of 0.189 is significantly positive because the bootstrap confidence interval is above zero (0.109 to 0.308). Content characteristics elicited positive affect (a1 is positive) which in turn positively impacts social motivations (d21 is positive), which translated into a greater intention to forward the viral video (b2 is positive). The indirect effect of content characteristics on social motivations (a2) and then on intent to forward the viral product video is 0.203 and is significantly positive because the bootstrap confidence interval is entirely above zero (0.120 to 0.308). Total indirect effect is 0.474 and different from zero as determined by the bootstrap confidence interval of 0.337 to 0.610.

5. DISCUSSION

The content characteristics and forwarding Intention

H₁: There is a positive relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention

The results of the multiple regression and multiple mediation analyses indicated a significant relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention, with a p-value (p = 0.00) below the threshold of 0.05. The findings confirm that there is a positive

relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention. This finding implies that if a product video has a good story, relatable content, and brand integration it will impact the intent to forward positively.

This finding is in agreement with what is suggested by Tellis et al. (2019), namely, that various content characteristics (such as the element of surprise and a plot) arouse emotions, and subsequently, positively affect sharing. In addition, the findings from the present study reinforce the work of Knossenburg et al. (2016), where engagement and surprise were two main content characteristics that significantly increased the chances of online video advertisements going viral. Lastly, the work of Akpınar and Berger (2017), where emotional brand-integral advertisements were found to boost sharing whilst also bolstering brand-related outcomes, is also supported.

The mediating effect of positive affect

H2: Positive affect mediates the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention

The results of the multiple regression and multiple mediation analyses indicated that content characteristics had a significant relationship with positive affect, with a p-value ($p = 0.00$) below the threshold of 0.05. This finding implies that if the video has a good story with a full plot, drama and elements of surprise, combined with content the viewer can relate to and a brand that integrates in the plot, it will have a positive effect on the positive affect towards the video. Viewers will thus be interested, excited, enthusiastic, and inspired (items from the PA scale). However, the results also indicated that positive affect did not have a significant relationship with forwarding intention, with a p-value ($p = 0.20$) above the threshold of 0.05, as indicated by the results. This finding implies that higher positive affect will not necessarily lead to a higher forwarding intention.

The results of the multiple mediation analysis indicated that there was no significant mediating effect of positive affect on the relationship between content characteristics and forwarding intention, with a positive effect size (0.082) and BootLLCI being less than zero (- to 0.205). Therefore, no mediating effect of positive affect on the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention implies that the specified video advertisement content characteristics should not lead to an even greater increase in the forwarding intention of the viewer due to positive affect alone.

The findings of the present study therefore do not confirm the mediating effect of positive affect on the relationship between the content characteristics of video advertisements and forwarding intention.

This finding is contradictory to what is suggested by Berger and Milkman (2012), namely, that content that evokes high-arousal, positive emotions should be more viral. In addition, the findings of the present study do not correspond with Eckler and Bolls (2012) either, where a pleasant emotional tone elicited the strongest intention to forward. Lastly, the findings are also in contrast to Guadagno et al. (2013), where strong affective responses to a video reported greater intent to spread the video. This unexpected finding is attributable to the context in which the present study took place. The present study adapted the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) used by Guadagno et al. (2013) to measure the degree to which the video advertisements evoked a positive affect. Whilst the research by Guadagno et al. (2013) pertaining to emotional arousal asked American undergraduate students to watch specific popular videos, the present study focused on South African individuals between the ages of 18 and 23. It is thus likely that South African individuals did not have as much of an emotional connection with the video advertisements as their American counterparts.

The mediating effect of social motivations

H₃: Social motivations mediates the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention

The results of the multiple regression and multiple mediation analyses indicated that the content characteristics had a significant relationship with social motivations, with a p-value ($p = 0.00$) below the threshold of 0.05 as indicated by the findings above. This finding implies that the specified video advertisement content characteristics should lead to an increase in the social motivations of the viewer. Moreover, the results also indicated that the social motivations had a significant relationship with forwarding intention, with a p-value ($p = 0.00$) below the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, a relationship was indeed found between social motivations and forwarding intention. This finding implies that social motivations of the viewer should lead to an increase in the forwarding intention of the viewer.

The results of the multiple mediation analysis indicated that there was a significant mediating effect of social motivations on the relationship between content characteristics and forwarding intention, with a positive effect size (0.189) and both BootLLCI (0.109) and BootULCI (0.279) being greater than zero. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported as a mediating effect of social motivations on the relationship between video advertisement, content characteristics and forwarding intention was identified. This finding implies that if a product video has the elements of a good story, relatable content and the brand is integrated in the storyline, it should lead to a higher forwarding intent due to the social motivations of the viewer.

This finding is in accordance with Taylor et al. (2012), where online consumers were shown to use electronic word-of-mouth, and specifically the sharing of online advertising, to construct and express their self-concepts. In addition, the findings of the present study correspond with

those of Ho and Dempsey (2010), where internet users who were more individualistic and/or more altruistic forwarded more online content than others. Lastly, the findings reinforce the work of Nikolinakou and Whitehill King (2018), where significant triggers for eliciting virality for video advertisements were: appearing ahead of trends, stimulating discussion, eliciting strong reactions, making a statement of uniqueness, and sharing positive emotions.

The multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations

H₄: There is a multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations on the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention.

The results of the multiple regression and multiple mediation analyses indicated that positive affect had a significant relationship with social motivations, with a p-value ($p = 0.00$) below the threshold of 0.05. This finding implies that an increase in the positive affect (interested, excited, enthusiastic, inspired etc.) of the viewer should lead to an increase the social motivations of affiliation, altruism and distinctiveness. Furthermore, relationships have already been identified between content characteristics and positive affect and social motivations and forwarding intention.

The results of the multiple mediation analysis indicated that there was a significant multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations on the relationship between content characteristics and forwarding intention, with a positive effect size (0.203) and both BootLLCI (0.120) and BootULCI (0.308) being greater than zero. Therefore, the hypothesis (H₄) was supported. This finding implies that the specified video advertisement content characteristics should lead to an even greater increase in the forwarding intention of the viewer due to the presence of positive affect and social motivations.

This finding agrees with the work of Tellis et al. (2019), where the presence of emotion was empirically shown to positively affect sharing, and social motivations were highlighted as a notable contributor as well. Furthermore, the work of Nikolinakou and Whitehill King (2018) is also reinforced, where the presence of social motivations was empirically shown to impact forwarding intention, and emotion also appeared to play a critical role. Therefore, in accordance with what is suggested by the literature pertaining to viral video advertising, the findings of the present study confirm the multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations on the relationship between the content characteristics of video advertisements and forwarding intention.

Table 7: Summary of the empirical results

Hypotheses	Result
H₁: There is a relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention	Confirmed
H₂: There is a mediating effect of positive affect on the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention	Not confirmed
H₃: There is a mediating effect of social motivations on the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention	Confirmed
H₄: There is a multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations on the relationship between video advertisement content characteristics and forwarding intention	Confirmed

6. CONCLUSIONS

The empirical research was conducted in a South African context, with individuals between the ages of 18 and 23. In order to assess the relationship between the factors that influence the forwarding intention of viewers of video advertisements, an electronic survey was conducted amongst this target population. The survey focused on collecting the opinions of the respondents regarding specific content characteristics of the viral video they watched, the positive affect and social motivations evoked by the content, and lastly, the respondent's intention to forward the video advertisement.

The empirical results of the primary research were able to confirm the relationship between the content characteristics of video advertisements and forwarding intention. The content characteristics that were the focus of this study were: a good story, a relatable content, and brand integration. Marketing managers creating video advertisements with the intention of them going viral, are advised to first ensure that the content exhibits a good story by creating suspense, incorporating the element of surprise, creating drama as well as including a narrative. Thereafter, it is necessary to ensure that the context of the content is relatable by making the content relevant, interesting to watch, enjoyable and likeable. Lastly, the brand needs to be well integrated into the story, with emphasis on ensuring that the content is perceived as trustworthy, convincing, and credible. The presence of these content characteristics alone will substantially increase the likelihood that the forwarding intention of the viewer is increased, and the video advertisement is shared to a large, widespread audience.

The empirical results of the primary research were not able to confirm the mediating effect of positive affect on the relationship between the content characteristics of video advertisements

and forwarding intention. Marketing managers creating video advertisements with the intention of them going viral, are advised to not only focus on getting the content characteristics of the video advertisement to evoke emotions such as enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and attentiveness. The presence of these positive emotions alone will not increase the likelihood that content characteristics are able to induce an even greater forwarding intention from the viewer.

The empirical results of the primary research were able to confirm the mediating effect of social motivations on the relationship between the content characteristics of video advertisements and forwarding intention. The three social motivations that were the focus of this study were distinctiveness, affiliation, and altruism. Marketing managers creating video advertisements with the intention of them going viral are advised to appeal to distinctiveness by letting the viewer feel cool for sharing them, to let them want to be the first to tell their friends about them, and to let them feel unique or different for sharing them. In addition, marketing managers will need to appeal to affiliation by letting the video spark an interesting conversation with others, create a fun interaction with friends, or give the viewer the opportunity to talk to others about a common interest. Lastly, marketing managers will need to appeal to altruism by allowing the viewer to share useful information with others, to recommend the brand to others, and share new information with others. The presence of these social motivations alone will increase the likelihood that content characteristics are able to induce an even greater forwarding intention from the viewer, with the result being that the video advertisement reaches a large, widespread audience.

The empirical results of the primary research were able to confirm the multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations on the relationship between the content characteristics of video advertisements and forwarding intention. While the mediating effect of positive affect alone on the relationship between the content characteristics of video advertisements and forwarding intention was not confirmed, the multiple mediating effect of positive affect and social motivations increased the likelihood that content characteristics were able to induce an even greater forwarding intention from the viewer to the greatest extent. Therefore, marketing managers are advised to focus on both the positive affect and social motivations rather than just one of the two. By evoking emotions such as enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and attentiveness, and appealing to consumers' need for distinctiveness, affiliation and altruism, the likelihood that content characteristics will induce an even greater forwarding intention from the viewer will be maximised, with the result being that the video advertisement reaches a large, widespread audience.

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