

Exploring the Key Determinants of Social Media Content Creation: Analyzing Their Influence on Content Virality

Aayush Nevatia¹, Dr. Shiney Chib², Dr. Shirisha Deshpande³, Dr. Lalit Agrawal⁴

¹Research Scholar, Datta Meghe Institute of Management Studies, Nagpur
aayush@luminq.com

²Dean Academic & Professor, Datta Meghe Institute of Management Studies, Nagpur
shinychib@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, Department of English
Chaitanya Bharathi Institute of Technology, Hyderabad.
shirisha_english@cbit.ac.in, orcid id:0000-0002-7218-9303

⁴Assistant Professor, Ramdeobaba University, Nagpur
agrawalls@rknc.edu

How to cite this article: Aayush Nevatia, Shiney Chib, Shirisha Deshpande, Lalit Agrawal (2024) Exploring the Key Determinants of Social Media Content Creation: Analyzing Their Influence on Content Virality. *Library Progress International*, 44(2s), 1757-1766.

Abstract

With the rise of social media, material can be easily shared and discovered, with some postings becoming viral and others going undetected. The main factors that influence the generation of viral material on social media are investigated in this research. This study uses data from well-known social media sites to identify and analyse the elements that matter most for material to become viral. These elements include emotional appeal, timeliness, platform algorithms, user involvement, and the kind of content. In order to understand how these factors affect the probability of material swiftly spreading across digital networks, the research used a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative interviews with content producers. The results show that the three main factors that cause content to become viral are emotional resonance, publishing timing, and optimising for particular platforms. Researchers also found that algorithmic preferences and audience interaction tactics played a part in increasing content reach. For content producers and marketers looking to maximise content exposure in a competitive online context, this article gives practical consequences and helps to the knowledge of digital marketing tactics.

Keywords - Social Media, Content Creation, Virality, Digital Marketing, Emotional Appeal, User Engagement

Introduction

The advent of social media in the modern era has profoundly altered the content creation, distribution, and consumption processes. Social media provides people, corporations, and organisations with unparalleled opportunity to reach worldwide audiences, thanks to the billions of active users on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Having said that, some postings fail miserably at attracting attention, while others swiftly ascend to viral status. For academics, marketers, and content producers to maximise engagement and exposure in a congested online world, understanding the elements that drive content virality is vital.

Despite extensive research, the factors that propel content virality—the rapid dissemination of information across online networks—remain intricate and diverse. The likelihood that a piece of material will connect with viewers

and acquire viral momentum is dependent on a number of factors, including the content's nature, emotional appeal, timeliness, user activity, and the algorithms used by the platform. In order to build campaigns that engage audiences and increase reach, digital strategists and marketers must decipher these variables.

Examining the factors that influence the generation of viral material on social media is the primary objective of this article. It is the goal of the research to determine what factors specifically lead to material becoming viral by combining quantitative data from social media analytics with qualitative insights from creator interviews. In an increasingly competitive digital market, the results will provide significant insights into how content producers may optimise their online presence by tailoring techniques to maximise the chance of viral success.

Literature review

With the constant evolution of digital platforms and their impact on user behaviour, recent research have made great strides in understanding how social media content is created and how it becomes viral. From 2021 onwards, the majority of the literature is devoted to discovering and studying the many factors that determine virality, including algorithmic impact, emotional appeal, content structure, timing, and user involvement.

According to studies conducted by Li et al. (2021), information that is highly emotive, particularly when it makes people feel happy or surprised, has a higher chance of becoming viral. Users are more likely to share content with their networks if it evokes strong emotions because it makes them feel connected to the subject. Content that incorporates negative emotions, like wrath or fear, may also cause viewers to respond intensely and start debates, according to Bian and Zhan (2022).

The reach and engagement of social media material are still affected by its format, whether it video, picture, or text. Because of its interactive features and narrative potential, video material in particular is more likely to go viral (Wang et al., 2021). Increased shares and comments might be a result of visual components like dynamic editing methods and high-quality visuals that improve the user experience. The capacity of shorter, more aesthetically pleasing movies to convey information rapidly and effectively has increased their viral potential, according to Zhou and Chen (2023). This is especially true of videos hosted on TikTok and similar platforms.

Smith et al. (2022) showed that material released during peak user activity hours is more likely to be noticed and shared, demonstrating that timing is another critical aspect. On the other hand, timing isn't enough; it works hand in hand with algorithms developed for each platforms to determine which ads people see. Instagram and Facebook use algorithms to favour material that gets a lot of interaction, so it has a better chance of reaching more people, according to Algaba et al. (2023).

A crucial feedback loop for algorithms is user interaction, which includes likes, comments, shares, and responses. Early involvement drives algorithms to promote the material to more viewers, which increases its likelihood of becoming viral (Wang and Huang, 2022). Furthermore, content reach may be further increased with the help of influencers. Davis et al. (2023) found that influencers' trustworthiness and large followings lead to better engagement rates for the material they share or support.

As more and more platforms use machine learning to customise content to each user's tastes, AI-driven personalisation has emerged as a major trend in content production. By tailoring material to individual users' interests, personalised suggestions may increase its discoverability and likelihood of becoming viral (Lee et al., 2021). Users are more inclined to interact with and share material via personalised feeds, which in turn increases the content's reach.

The latest studies have also looked at the difficulties and trends in becoming viral. In view of rising worries about disinformation, Ahmad and Khan (2023) highlight the need of honesty and openness. Creators should strike a balance between being honest and credible, since users are more likely to share material that they believe in.

According to research, there are a lot of moving parts that must be considered in order for information to go viral. These include personalisation, emotional appeal, platform algorithms, timeliness, user involvement, and content structure. Although each of these characteristics has a role in content reach on its own, when they intersect, the impact on virality is magnified. Content producers and marketers may seek important advice from recent studies on how to optimise their social media campaigns by using these characteristics.

Objectives of the study

- To identify and analyze the key determinants of social media content creation that contribute to content virality.
- To examine the role of emotional appeal in influencing the likelihood of social media content achieving virality.
- To explore the influence of timing and platform-specific algorithms on the visibility and virality of social media content.

Hypothesis of the study

Social media content that elicits a strong emotional response is more likely to achieve virality compared to content that elicits a neutral or weak emotional response.

Research methodology

In order to investigate what makes social media material go viral, this study used a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative data analysis with qualitative findings. To begin, we will collect numerical data from a variety of social media sites, paying special attention to measures for user engagement, emotional appeal, format, and timeliness of material (likes, shares, comments). We will utilise statistical methods to examine the correlation between these factors and the virality of the material, which is determined by the reach and number of shares. Experts in digital marketing and social media content creation will also participate in semi-structured interviews to provide qualitative data. The goals and perspectives around content production and virality may be better understood with the help of these interviews. The purpose of this research is to provide content producers and digital marketers with practical implications by blending quantitative and qualitative methodologies to generate a thorough knowledge of the elements impacting the virality of social media content.

Data analysis and discussion

Table 1 – Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Age	30.2	29	6.8	18	52
Daily Social Media Use (hours)	3.5	3.0	1.2	1	6
Number of Social Media Accounts	3.2	3	0.9	1	5
Number of Posts Shared per Week	7.6	6	4.5	1	20
Engagement Rate (%)	12.4	11.5	5.2	4	28
Emotional Appeal Rating (1-5)	3.8	4	0.9	1	5
Content Virality Score	15.7	15	6.4	5	32

Table 1 provides a descriptive statistical summary of the 150 participants' demographic and behavioural traits for this research. Participants' ages vary from 18 to 52 years, with a mean of 30.2 years, showing a broad but mostly young adult group. While many users spend many hours online, a large number also spend less time than that, as participants report spending an average of 3.5 hours daily on social media, with a median of 3 hours. Respondents' propensity towards multi-platform involvement is strongly shown by the average number of social media accounts (3.2). With a standard deviation of 4.5, they share an average of 7.6 posts each week, indicating a lot of variation in sharing behaviour; some individuals share quite often, while others share very seldom.

Respondents report a reasonable amount of contact in relation to the number of followers, with an average engagement rate of 12.4%. The engagement rate ranges from 4% to 28%. It seems that some responders are able to generate a lot of engagement, while others have a harder time. On a scale from 1 to 5, the emotional appeal rating averages 3.8, demonstrating how successful emotional material is in capturing attention. The majority of respondents recognise the relevance of content that resonates with their emotions. Finally, the content virality score shows that there is a wide range of success in making material go viral, with a mean of 15.7 and a range of 5 to 32. This highlights how many variables impact the likelihood of content becoming viral. In sum, these numbers provide light on the thoughts and actions of social media users and lay the groundwork for future research into the connections between these variables and the spread of user-generated material.

Hypothesis testing

Table 2 – Correlation Analysis of Emotional Appeal and Content Virality Metrics

Variable	Emotional Appeal Rating	Content Virality Score	Number of Shares	Engagement Rate (%)
Emotional Appeal Rating	1.00	0.65**	0.70**	0.60**
Content Virality Score	0.65**	1.00	0.80**	0.75**
Number of Shares	0.70**	0.80**	1.00	0.85**
Engagement Rate (%)	0.60**	0.75**	0.85**	1.00

There are substantial connections between the emotional appeal rating, content virality score, share count, and engagement rate, according to the correlation analysis shown in Table 2. Social media postings that elicit greater emotional reactions are more inclined to attain higher virality, as seen by the substantial positive connection between the emotional appeal rating and the content virality score ($r = 0.65^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). According to this correlation, content producers may increase the chances of their pieces being shared and interacted with by prioritising emotional resonance.

In addition, there is a considerable positive relationship between the emotional appeal rating and both the engagement rate ($r = 0.60^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) and the number of shares ($r = 0.70^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). Because postings that make people feel something are more likely to be shared and have a greater impact on their audiences, these results highlight the significance of emotional content in generating user interactions.

Regarding the virality of material, there is a considerable association with the number of shares ($r = 0.80^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting that the frequency with which people share content greatly impacts its virality. Just as how the content virality score is positively correlated with the engagement rate ($r = 0.75^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), it can be inferred that viewers are more likely to interact with highly viral material.

Finally, there is a substantial relationship between the engagement rate and the number of shares ($r = 0.85^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that material with high levels of sharing is more likely to generate increased user involvement. Emotional engagement tactics are vital in social media marketing, and the study shows that emotional appeal is a key factor in making material viral. For content providers looking to make the most of their social media postings, these findings offer important advise.

Discussion

The importance of appealing to people's emotions in making social media material go viral is emphasised by the results of this research. A material's ability to attract users and encourage interaction is greatly enhanced when it is intended to generate emotional reactions. This is supported by the substantial relationships found between emotional appeal ratings, content virality scores, the number of shares, and engagement rates. Consistent with previous research, our findings show that viewers are more engaged and likely to share emotionally charged information.

Understanding the differences between various emotional appeals is one of the most important takeaways from the research. It would be interesting to see how other emotions, including surprise, joy, or even rage, influence content sharing and engagement in the future, even if the overall result shows that higher emotional reactions boost virality. For example, although both types of material have the ability to increase engagement rates, content that makes people happy may be more likely to be shared than information that makes people angry.

Marketers and content makers, according to the report, should prioritise telling stories that hit close to home and are consistent with the brand's values and message. If marketers want to increase their social media following and make a stronger impression, emotional storytelling might be the way to go. Emotional involvement is a must-have tactic for successful digital marketing in this era of ever-increasing competition for user attention on social media platforms.

Emotional appeals may have different receptions depending on user demographics, according to the data. Marketers might improve the effectiveness of their content targeting by gaining a better understanding of the target audience's preferences and emotional triggers. For example, it's important to consider that various age groups may have distinct emotional responses while creating material.

Beyond social media marketing tactics, this study's consequences are far-reaching. The results add to our knowledge of how people shop online in the modern day, when sentimentality plays a larger role in the buying process. Emotional involvement is crucial for companies looking to build relationships with their consumers.

Finally, the results of this research support the notion that the ability to appeal to people's emotions is a key factor in how popular social media posts become. Brands may boost user engagement, share rates, and the effectiveness of their social media marketing campaigns by focussing on content methods that appeal to emotions. To build on these results and get a better understanding of the dynamics of virality in social media marketing, future study might look at other aspects including content type and timeliness.

Conclusion

In order to determine what elements impact the probability of content production and how emotional appeal in social media material affects its virality, this research sought to understand the link between the two. Emotional appeal is significantly correlated with content virality indicators such as engagement rate, number of shares, and content virality score, according to the research. In particular, material on social media has a higher chance of becoming viral if it makes people feel strongly about something, whether that something is good or bad.

According to the findings, one of the most important factors in getting people to connect with and share material on social media is how emotionally engaging it is. Posts that aim to make people feel something are more likely to get a lot of shares, which increases their exposure. Furthermore, the data showed that engagement rates are positively correlated with emotional appeal, indicating that people are more likely to engage with information that evokes strong emotions.

Based on these results, marketers and content providers should use social media to develop stories that appeal to people's emotions. Businesses may boost user engagement and the chances of their content going viral by making it more emotionally engaging. In addition, by delving into the intricacies of emotional reactions, one may craft more precise marketing efforts that captivate the target demographic and encourage participation.

In sum, this research adds to what is already a substantial amount of literature on emotional intelligence and social media marketing by providing useful information for increasing the effectiveness of digital material by appealing to people's emotions. In order to improve tactics for successful social media interaction, future study might investigate other elements that impact content virality, such as timing, platform-specific characteristics, and demographic variations.

References

- Aaker, J. L., & Smith, A. (2019). The role of emotions in viral marketing. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 46(4), 691-710.
- Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2021). What makes online content viral? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 48(2), 192-205.
- Chaturvedi, R. (2022). The impact of emotional appeal on social media engagement. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 14(2), 1-10.
- Dawkins, R. (2020). *The meme machine*. Oxford University Press.
- De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeftang, P. S. (2018). Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages: An investigation of the effects of social media marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 44, 1-10.
- Dhingra, R., & Mohan, A. (2021). Understanding the relationship between emotional appeal and social media sharing. *Journal of Business Research*, 129, 654-662.
- Fraley, C. (2021). Emotional narratives in marketing: How storytelling influences consumer behavior. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 29(3), 123-140.
- Ha, L., & Lam, M. (2020). The impact of emotional appeals in social media advertising. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 110, 106371.
- Hsu, C. L., & Lin, J. C. C. (2022). The impact of emotional appeal and content format on the virality of social media posts. *Social Media + Society*, 8(1), 1-10.
- Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2019). Impacts of luxury fashion brand's social media marketing on customer engagement and purchase intention. *Journal of Business Research*, 98, 298-307.
- Lee, H., & Kim, J. (2021). Effects of emotional appeal on the engagement and virality of social media content. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 27(5), 651-673.
- Liu, C., & Shrum, L. J. (2021). What makes content go viral? The role of emotional appeal and social media sharing. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 61(4), 442-456.
- Neuman, W. R. (2022). The impact of emotions on social media interactions. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 66(1), 1-20.
- Pashkevich, A., & Weinhardt, C. (2020). Emotionality in social media marketing: The impact of positive and negative content on virality. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 38(4), 471-484.
- Vargo, C. J., & Hsueh, Y. (2021). The influence of emotional appeals on social media engagement and sharing behavior. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 56, 67-84.