



# Effects of Likeability Dynamics on Consumers' Intention to Share Online Video Advertisements

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## Abstract

Understanding how consumer evaluations of online advertisements affect their intention to share advertising content online is essential for successful viral advertising. This article examines consumer decisions whether or not to share video advertisements, in particular the role of their moment-to-moment likeability of the online ad. The study uses a theoretical memory-based framework of temporal sequence effects and unique data for 120 advertisements and more than 43,000 consumer evaluations. The authors find that high likeability at the beginning and the end of a video advertisement is important, though consistent with the memory-based framework, the ending effect is greater. A linear trend in likeability does not influence viral potential, but variance in likeability evaluations (the rollercoaster effect) has positive effects on an advertisement's virality. The moment-to-moment effects are mediated by the overall liking for an online video advertisement. Interestingly, the beginning, end and peak effects influence the viral potential even after controlling for the overall liking. The difference of the peak moment becomes important only when controlling for the overall liking, whereas the direct peak and the rollercoaster effects are suppressed by the overall liking.

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## Introduction

Online videos and advertising inserted within them are growing rapidly. According to [YouTube statistics \(2014\)](#), consumers watch more than hundreds of millions of hours of video each day on YouTube; 100 global brands have run TrueView ads over the past year, and 95% of TrueView advertisers have run campaigns across screens. Because companies appreciate the low costs and extensive reach of online video advertising, companies increasingly use online channels for advertising ([Nielsen Media Research and the Interactive Advertising Bureau 2012](#)). However, for these

efficiency benefits of online advertising to arise, consumers' attitude towards online advertisements must be positive and generate an intention to share it with others ([Huang et al. 2013](#)). In other words, consumers must like the online advertisement enough to share it. In this sense, understanding the relationship between consumers' liking of online advertisements and their intention to share them is essential for designing successful viral advertising campaigns.

Word-of-mouth research (e.g., [De Angelis et al. 2012](#); [King, Racherla, and Bush 2014](#)) suggests that higher average likeability increases the probability of consumer sharing. Studies of the virality of online content similarly show that viral potential depends on a general measure of positive emotionality ([Berger and Milkman 2012](#)). Yet, overall consumer evaluations cannot account for dynamic experiences of content. In online advertisements in particular, which combine sounds and images with a storyline ([Huang, Chen, and Wang 2012](#); [Loewenstein, Raghunathan, and Heath 2011](#)), consumer liking of the advertisement varies during its presentation ([Baumgartner, Sujan,](#)

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and Padgett 1997). Thus, we must consider specifically how likeability dynamics during online video advertisements relate to consumer intention to share them and, consequently, to their viral potential. Research already has established how likeability dynamics affect overall evaluations of video advertising in offline settings (Baumgartner, Sujan, and Padgett 1997) and how emotional dynamics during online video advertising affect consumers' zapping behaviors (Teixeira, Wedel, and Pieters 2012). However, existing findings pertaining to zapping behavior do not transfer readily to measures of viral potential. Unlike skipping decisions, the decision to share content reveals the liking of a specific online video advertisement to the recipients (e.g., friends in social networks). Sharing a video affects other consumers also and is therefore potentially a more important success factor of online advertising, as compared to other overall judgments, like overall liking or skipping decisions. Thus, to avoid negative image effects, consumers likely watch an advertisement before sharing it (Alexandrov, Lilly, and Babakus 2013), whereas they make the decision to skip an advertisement during their experience of watching it. As consumer behavior research shows, consumers' evaluation processes depend heavily on whether their decision takes place during the experience or after it (Montgomery and Unnava 2009). Accordingly, viral success demands more than non-skipping an online video advertisement, because consumers must be willing to share. Understanding the link between consumers' likeability dynamics and their intention to share the online video advertisement, determining the ad's viral potential, thus, requires specific insights. For example, should advertisers seek to enhance consumers' liking at the start, the end, or throughout the advertisement in order to enhance individuals' intention to share the ad? In addition, do the moment-to-moment effects on the intention to share that go beyond the overall liking effect?

This paper contributes to the literature by assessing the effects of likeability dynamics on consumers' intention to share online advertisements, and whether these effects are mediated by overall ad likeability. While extant research provides insights on the relationship between overall liking and the viral potential of online content (Berger and Milkman 2012), as well

as the relationship between the moment-to-moment likeability on the overall liking for advertisements (Baumgartner, Sujan, and Padgett 1997), an extended model that comprises the transmission between all three elements is still lacking. In this research, we examine the relationships between the moment-to-moment likeability, the overall liking and the intention to share, and show direct and indirect effects of the likeability dynamics that are relevant for the viral potential of online video advertisements (see Fig. 1). By this, we expand the viral marketing literature as well as advertising research on moment-to-moment (MtM) evaluations.

To investigate these relationships between MtM likeability, overall liking for an ad, and intention to share it, we rely on a theoretical, memory-based framework from consumer behavior research (Montgomery and Unnava 2009). In this framework, consumers' overall retrospective evaluations of a temporal sequence depend on which experiences they can recall most easily, which helps explain the relationship between likeability dynamics and retrospective decisions to share content. With this memory-based framework and related research as our foundation, we investigate the influence of key features related to beginning, end, and peak likeability; likeability trends; and variability in moment-to-moment likeability during an online video advertisement (Montgomery and Unnava 2009; Teixeira, Wedel, and Pieters 2012).

We develop hypotheses about the effects of these specific features on the viral potential of online advertisements and test them with extensive data, including more than 43,000 observations of 120 video advertisements for varied product categories. The results affirm the relevance of likeability dynamics for advertisements' viral potential; they also identify the key moments that drive individuals' intentions to share the ads and how these dynamic effects are mediated by the overall liking of the ad. Accordingly, our study expands emerging research on viral marketing (e.g., Berger and Milkman 2012) and reveals the mechanism by which consumers develop intentions to share online video advertisements. From a managerial perspective, these results provide novel insights for advertisers that seek to create online advertisements with high viral impact, because we specify which parts of online advertisements are

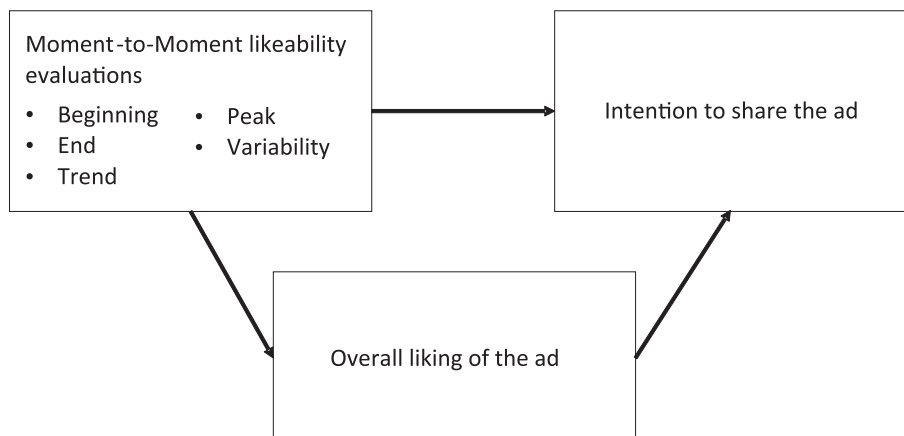


Fig. 1. Research framework.

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