

## FACTORS THAT LEAD TO INFORMATION VIRAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Nurul Syafiqah Rusli and Nurhidayah Hashim  
*Faculty of Information Management,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)  
Puncak Perdana Campus,  
UiTM Selangor, Malaysia*

### Abstract

Information viral is a cultural phenomenon where information is spreading rapidly through the Internet. The main objective of this research is to investigate the factors that lead to information viral on social media. This study will provide a better understanding on the concept of information viral on social media. It is important to understand the concept of information viral as it helps to explain why the information viral has becoming trends in the Information Age. Thus, this paper discusses the background and issues that related to the information viral on social media.

**Keywords:** information viral, social media, information sharing, factors, credibility of information

### INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of technologies, social media has become increasingly popular in the last few years as people started to form a habit of seeking and sharing information through online. Generally, social media is the platform that provides its users with the sharing features, which encourage and allow the dissemination of ideas, opinions, interests, activities, reactions as well as other forms of user-generated content for other users to consume (Kim, Lee & Elias, 2015).

The current social media can be categorized into a number of different platforms based on how users interact with them (Osatuyi, 2013) such as social networking sites, publishing sites, photo sharing, video sharing, audio sharing and interpersonal sites (Ma & Chan, 2014). This various categories of social media can be access through the electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and computers as long as the user has Internet access. The advancement of technology and the existence of internet which allows a person to get information easily and quickly cause the traditional media outlet to be gradually replace with social media platform in seeking and sharing information on the present time (Osatuyi, 2013).

Social interaction on social media is experiencing a new dynamics as people are able to share information, for instance, updates about their experiences as it occurs, with minimal effort and time (Osatuyi, 2013). As sharing online content has become an integral part of modern life (Berger & Milkman, 2012), the trends of information viral started to emerge. Information viral can be referred as a phenomenon in which the information is being share and spread rapidly on social media. It happens in when

message, news or information are continuously spread through social media like a virus (Botha & Reyneke, 2013).

Today, information viral has becoming a new trending for the information online society, however, there are some limitations in regard to the availability of its literature. Therefore, this research is significant in providing new literature for the study of information viral. Botha & Reyneke (2013) stated that the key element for information to go viral is that it must be forward to a lot of people starting with the networks in our social community. The activity that involving the message to be forward to others on social media is refers to the online information sharing activities. Since, information sharing behaviors are believed to be one of the factors that may lead to this phenomena, the literature review for this research has been focusing on the matter.

## **ISSUES**

Based on the reading and observation from the previous studies, there are still some issues pertaining to the information viral on social media. The limitations are:

- Lack of study been made regarding the information viral trends especially on general information such as news on social media.
- Lack of knowledge about the motivation, attitudes and behavior of the people who choose to forward and spread information online.
- Lack of knowledge on the criteria of information that is consider as viral.
- Lack of understanding in the complex social interaction involved in online information sharing through social media.
- Lack of knowledge on how information viral trend is relates to the rise in the existences of false information on social media.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What are the causes that made information to go viral on social media?
- Under what conditions, the information is considered as viral?
- How the habit of sharing information online could lead to information viral on social media?
- Does the credibility of information have effect on the information viral on social media?

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of this paper is to identify the factors that lead to the information viral on social media. In order to achieve this aim, the researchers had identified the sub-goals:

- To identify the factors that lead to the information viral on social media.
- To determine the criteria of information that been consider as viral.

- To find out the relationship between online sharing behaviors with the information viral on social media.
- To explore on the relationship between the credibility of information and the virality of information on social media.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

As mentioned before, there is lack of research been made involving the factors of information viral on social media. Therefore, the literature review for this paper is mostly made based on information sharing behavior as the key element for the information to go viral is that it must be forward to many people usually family and friends in order to spread.

Social media is well-known in providing the sharing features for its users as it allows people to forward news to their friends, pass videos from Youtube to their relatives, and send reviews of good restaurant to their neighbors (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Eventually, these sharing activities that conducted on social media may cause the online contents to go viral. From the previous study, it was found that people in technology era have tendency to share information online through social media, however, the actual factors that drives people to share information online is less recognized.

However, researchers had suggested a few factors that may influence people to share information online. The usefulness of information is believed to be one of the factors (Berger & Milkman, 2012). This is agreed by the recent study conducted by Kim, Lee & Elias (2015), that found the users of social media are more likely to share information that they perceived as useful and informative besides than sharing the information that have entertainment-oriented contents that perceived as enjoyable. However, Osatuyi (2013) stated that people are more likely to use social media to share sensational information such as breaking news and celebrity gossips.

Other than that, the relevancy of online contents and emotional reaction towards the contents are also one of the drivers that make people forward the information to their friends in social media (Botha & Reyneke, 2013). In this study, it stated that the content of online information and emotional contagion is possibly a key element in viral marketing.

Kim, Lee & Elias (2015) suggested that self-esteem or self-respect raised by altruistic efforts may encourage information sharing on social media. Altruistic people refers to those who more likely tend to use social media to continuously being in touch with the people who are important to them such as family, friends and clients (Ma & Chan, 2014). While, according to Osatuyi (2013), people tend to share information online in order to gain social status among their networks friends. The researcher also found that people are inclined to share information on social media with only those that their considered as close especially when the information is consider as personal. This is different with the findings of Kim, Lee & Elias (2015), as they found that people are

more likely to share information online when they perceive their ties to their social media audience to be weak.

As the social media becoming more famous in allowing people to stay connected and sharing information, the credibility of information have becoming an issues especially with trends of information viral nowadays. Osatuyi (2013) stated that one of the indicator for checking the credibility of online information that people recognized are the topic of discussion and link to the other sources. Besides, there are some other cues that researchers had suggested to use in evaluating the credibility of information found on social media.

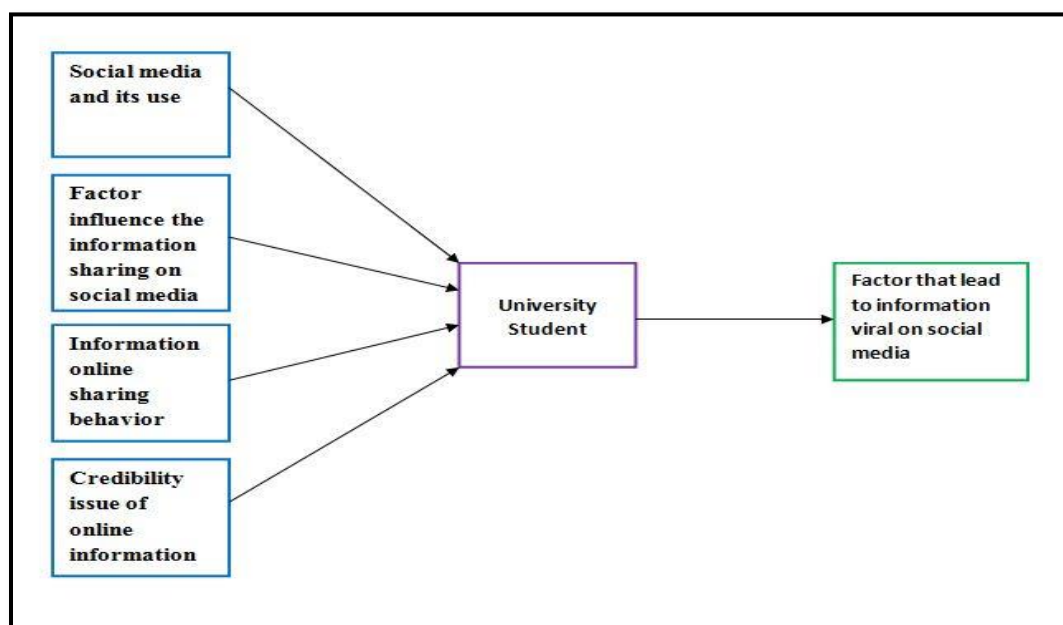


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it was found that there are many issues regarding the information viral on social media that had not been explained in academic literatures as there are limited literatures on it. However, from the previous study this paper attempts highlights some influential factor of information sharing activities in social media as information sharing is believed to be the key element for the information to go viral. Besides that, it is identified that there are several elements that people been used to measure or evaluate the credibility of information that they found on social media. Therefore, by having this research, it is hoped it could provide a new insight of knowledge on viral trend that recently been popular in social media.

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