



Impact of Viral Animals Content on Thai Online Viewers

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Abstract

The study used a quantitative method through an online questionnaire to examine how Thai viewers of Gluta Story Club Facebook page react to the use of viral *animals*' content. Briefly, the study found the viral animals' contents on online media did not impact to Thai online viewers. The viewers' perception and attitude results are at the level of neutral, and the behavior is at a some-time level. Even though the viral animals' contents do not have an impact towards Thai online viewers concerning their perception, attitude, and behavior, the study found that the participants will retrieve and consume the viral animals' contents in all type no matter what. The reason is that the participants' interest is drawn towards animals, and they consume the viral animals' content to entertain themselves. Nevertheless, the results are based on only the participants of the case sample study in the Gluta Story Club, meaning that the results from different samples could lead to different results.

Keywords: *Viral, Viral Animals Content, Online Viewers*

1. Introduction

Social transmission can be fast and important. Companies often create online advertisements or encourage consumer-generated contents in the hopes that the audiences are willing to share these contents with others; however, some of these efforts take off while others fail. Is vitality just random, as some argue (Cashmore 2009)? Companies want their contents to be viral and earn their benefits from the transmission, so spending on online media advertising on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been on the rise worldwide in the last several years (Berger and Milkman, 2012). Some brands, such as Dell, use Twitter to offer product promotions, while others, such as Whole Foods Market, use it to educate their customers. Firms spent increasingly from \$16 billion in 2014 to more than \$30 billion in 2016 (LePage, 2018). In the United States, social media spending is projected to exceed \$17 billion by 2019 (Peng, Agarwal, Hosanagar, and Iyengar, 2018). The same thing with the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, which was started in the summer of 2014 and has become the world's largest global social media phenomenon (Pressgrove, McKeever and Jang, 2017).

According to the study of Geah Pressgrove, Brooke Weberling McKeever, and S. Mo Jang (2017), millions of people uploaded videos showing they were pouring buckets of ice water on themselves, challenging friends to do the same to make donations to the non-profit Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Pressgrove, McKeever and Jang, 2017). About two weeks after the challenge has been on social media, the ALSA reported 146,000 new donors. From this example, it shows that viral contents on online media did not only impact online viewers for entertainment but could impact advertising, marketing, public relation, and campaign in the same way. The much time that general online viewers spend online, the general online viewers have probably been through so many viral animals' contents. 45% of online video are pets' video (Watercutter, 2016).

But what is viral animals content? Viral is defined as something that quickly becomes very popular or well known by being published on the internet or sent from person to person (Cambridge dictionary, 2018). So, viral animals are the content of dogs, cats, rabbits or even alligators that quickly becomes popular on the online media. There are a lot of popular animals going through the internet such as Grumpy Cat, Juniper the Fox and Tuna Melts My Heart. These animals become an influence on online viewers (Palmer, 2017). The viral animals that had seen online can make both positive impact (awe) and negative impact (anger or anxiety) to online viewers (Berger and Milkman, 2012), starting from a small dramatic situation of online viewers to the successful animals' campaign. Anyhow, the impact of viral animals' content towards online media towards Thai online viewers can be an influence on advertising, marketing, campaign, and entertainment. Nowadays, there are many people and organization that are starting to use viral animals to influence online viewers and their target audience.

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With social media becoming the cultural phenomenon and the new way of people to communicate, the platform also becomes the advertising hub. One of the interesting parts is the advertisements that reach out to people and try to persuade them to use their product/service, including cosmetic surgery companies that advertise their services using social media influence. Social media influence is a marketing term that describes an individual's ability to affect other people's thinking in an online social community. The more influence a person has, the more appeal that the individual has to companies or other individuals who want to promote an idea or sell a product (Rouse, 2011). It is important to examine the possible reasons like social, cultural, and economic behind this steady increase.

There were two example cases of the impact of viral animals' contents, Snoop the dog and Gluta Story. Snoop the dog has a viral video that shows a dog chasing a car after being abandoned a week before Christmas 2018 in England. The dog went viral after being published online by a Twitter account RSPCA and had received hundreds offer to adopt him (Palmer, 2018). Even the famous rapper Snoop Dogg and BBC journalist Andrew Neil expressed their desire to adopt Snoop. However, the RSPCA has not rehomed Snoop yet.

Gluta Story is a very famous dog Facebook fan page in Thailand, founded by Yorch Sarasart. Yorch likes to take a photo. So when he takes pictures of his beloved dog, it becomes iconic. The page owner started to build a specific online community, which is a group on Facebook called Gluta Story Club. Yorch also provided many activities such as events for the page followers to help raise awareness for the street dogs in Thailand and opened a gallery exhibition for the street dogs. The page has become more famous, and the dogs have appeared in many advertising.

Viral animals contents are becoming part of the online influencing internet group that Thai page owners, companies and organizations could use the study of this research to enhance the profit in different ways. The result of this research would enhance the information to prove if the viral animals' content will impact Thai online viewers in the ways of advertising, marketing, campaign and entertainment.

2. Objectives

- 1) To identify how Thai online viewers of Gluta Story Club Facebook page support or react the use of viral animals' content on online media.
- 2) To identify whether Thai online viewers of the Gluta Story Club Facebook page perceive viral animals' content.
- 3) To examine the action of Thai online viewers of the Gluta Story Club Facebook page after viewing viral animals' contents.

3. Research Methods

This study used quantitative research via an online questionnaire developed using Google survey to examine how Thai viewers of the Gluta Story Club Facebook page react to the use of viral animals' content. It aimed at discovering whether such viewers support or reject the use of such content, and what actions they take as a result of this. Online surveying is a widely accepted method for collecting research data (Wright, 2017). However, Wright also stated that online survey also has its disadvantage. The review shows that current online survey products and services can vary considerably in terms of available features, consumer costs, and limitations. It is concluded that online survey researchers should conduct a careful assessment of their research goals, research timeline, and financial situation (Wright, 2017). Survey participants were selected using 398 random samplings. Thai online viewers of the Gluta Story Club Facebook page were invited to participate via a post from the researcher that explained the study's objectives and attached the online survey. The survey responses were then calculated in the form of percentage and rated with the scores of 1 to 5.

The qualitative data were analyzed using Google Survey to get the results from Google survey in the suggestion section and to analyze by putting the opinion into three categories.



4. Results and Discussion

Part 1 Demographics characteristics

Table 1 Results of Part 1 Demographics characteristics

Characteristics	Items	Number (n=398)	Percentage
Sex	Male	63	15.8
	Female	335	84.2
	Other	-	-
Age	Younger than 20	82	20.6
	20-25	242	60.8
	26-30	21	5.3
	Older than 30	53	13.3
Education Level	Below high school	9	2.3
	High school	12	3.0
	Bachelor degree	333	83.6
	Higher than a bachelor degree	44	11.1
Occupation	Students	308	77.4
	Business Owner	17	4.3
	Government Officer	32	8.0
	Unemployment	9	2.3
	Other	32	8.0
Income	Lower than 10,000 Baht per month	301	6.0
	10,001-15,000 Baht per a month	24	6.0
	15,001-20,000 Baht per month	13	3.3
	More than 20,000 Baht per month	60	15.1

From Table 1, a total of 398 people had completed the online questionnaire. Female respondents comprised 84.2% (n=335) of the total sample. Most respondents aged between 20 to 25 years old (60.8%, n=242). Bachelor degree is the most education level of the respondent (83.6%, n=333). Also, most of the participant are students (77.4%, n=333), and their most income is lower than 10,000 baht per month.

Part 2, this part is the results of the question relating to the perception of Thai online viewers to the viral animals towards online media. Which are in the form of the five Likert scales. From the analysis of the results, an overall of participants' perception toward viral animals' content on online media is in neutral level with an average of 3.44, which mean that viral animals' content on online media did not impact to the participants' perception.

Part 3, this part is results of question relating to the attitude of Thai online viewers to the viral animals towards online media. Which are in the form of the five Likert scales. From the analysis of the results, an overall of participants' attitude toward viral animals' content on online media is at neutral level with an average of 3.43, which mean that viral animals' content on online media did not impact to the participants' attitude.

Part 4, this part is the results of the question relating to the behavior of Thai online viewers to the viral animals towards online media. Which are in the form of the five Likert scales. From the analysis of the results, an overall of participants' behavior toward viral animals' content on online media is at some time level with the average of 3.21, which mean that viral animals' content on online media did not impact to the participants' behavior.

Part 5, this is a suggestion part. After giving a free chance for the participants to provide the opinion back to the researcher, it was found that 13 participants responded to this part of the survey. The responses are more likely about how the animals become viral and whether the animals are forced to do anything unusual, which is most likely to be animals' abuse.

First, the respondents gave a free opinion to viral animals' contents as they interest in viral animals' content concerning animals right and animals' abuses. For example, "Life is precious, whether animals or people;



both should maintain equal rights in life,” “Depending on what the post is. If it is a cute action or living the life of a pet to share with others to watch, it is positive. However, in some cases, it is subjected to animal abuse, such as forcing pets to eat more so they will be fat and look cute but eating too much can harm animals’ health,” “The image of animal abuses is depressed when seen. Although sometimes the proposed campaign is a good campaign, I do not want to see because of being depressed,” and “I do not like to see pictures of animals that are abused because I cannot accept and keep worrying about the status of the animals that were hurt.”

Second, the respondents give free opinion to viral animals’ content as they are happy to watch viral animals’ content. For example, “Viewing viral animals’ content on the internet is interesting,” “I love bird and like to watch birds on the internet, happy when seeing birds and enjoy too when I see Gollum on this group.” and “Like to watch and see natural animal expressions.”

5. Discussion

The results of this research showed that the viral animals’ contents on online media did not impact Thai online viewers. The viewers’ perception and attitude results are at the level of neutral, and their behavior is at a some-time level. The study on Measurement of a Middle Position in Attitude Surveys Public Opinion Quarterly by Presser and Schuman (1980) pointed out that there are around 10-20% of respondents choosing the neutral (some time) item when it was provided compared to the same survey when it was not. Besides, Mead (2016) from Talent Algorithms Inc referred to neutral responses in the survey as “Usually the scoring weights are as you described and neutral gets a three scoring weight meaning more than disagreement but less than agreement.”

Even though viral animals’ content does not impact to Thai online viewers towards their perception, attitude and behavior but the study found out that the participants retrieved and consumed the viral animals’ content in all type no matter what as the participants are interested in animals. They consume viral animals’ content to entertain themselves. The neutral (some-time) results of the online questionnaire from the participants in the Gluta Story Club meant that the participants are more than disagreement but less than agreement in the perception and attitude towards viral animals’ contents on online media, and more than rarely and less than often in the behavior towards viral animals’ contents on online media (Mead, 2016). Nevertheless, the results are based on the participants of the case sample study in the Gluta Story Club, which mean that the results from different samples could be lead to different results.

The results could guide the advertising company to decide if they would like to gain more attention or gain feedback by using viral animals’ contents to reach a specific target. Further research should investigate deeper on specific demographics to seek and compare several target groups that would best satisfy to participate in the viral animals’ content.

6. Conclusion

The result of this research found that the viral animals’ contents on online media did not impact Thai online viewers. The viewers’ perception and attitude results are at the level of neutral, and their behavior is at a some-time level.

Though viral animals’ contents do not impact Thai online viewers towards their perception, attitude and behavior, the study found out that the participants still retrieved and consume the viral animals’ content in all type. The reason is that the participants are interested in animals, and they consume the viral animals’ contents to entertain themselves. Nevertheless, the results are based on the participants of the case sample study in the Gluta Story Club, which means that the results from different samples could be lead into different results.

For the future study related to this research or in the same field, the researcher should try to study the participants in other groups of people to see the different opinions towards the viral animals’ contents. Second, the researcher should try to get a response from the participants outside the online community. The research questions can be handed out personally as a questionnaire survey in the animals’ related events or animal’s clinic instead of an online survey to create more interaction between the participants and the researcher and to see the opinions of people that did not come from the online community. Lastly, the researcher should try to evaluate and analyze the deeper data for clearer results.



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