

## The Effect of Incongruity in Viral Advertising Design on Digital Recipient Engagement Levels

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### **Abstract:**

The viral ad is based on digital recipient engagement with it, which helps the ad reach the largest audience. In the digital context such as the social networking site Facebook, there are different levels for the digital recipient engagement with the ad (i.e., click, like, comment, and Share). Sharing the ad is the highest engagement level and the most effective behavior for the ad viral success.

By searching for why someone shares content with others, we found according to the emotional broadcaster theory that social sharing is driven by the emotional arousal that follows encountering information that challenges deeply held beliefs and expectations. And surprise which arises from expectations violation is the key for content diffusion.

On the other hand, according to schema incongruity theory, we found that the incongruent ad with recipient expectations is more stimulating compared with the congruent one and the expectedness of the congruent ad may weaken its effect.

So, we are in need to find methods for designing the ad to be incongruent with recipient expectations, and then study its effect on digital recipient engagement levels as metrics for the ad viral success.

The research depends on the descriptive approach followed by an analytical study. The results suggest different incongruity methods generating surprise from not being congruent with recipient expectations. The results also reveal that incongruity will have positive effect on recipient evaluations and attitudes toward the ad, thus it will positively affect digital recipient engagement with the ad and the likelihood of going viral.

### **Keywords:**

Viral advertising, Digital recipient engagement levels, Emotional broadcaster theory of social sharing, Surprise, Schema incongruity theory.