

“Why are certain products talked about more than others?”

How product and buzz marketing campaign characteristics drive word-of-mouth

People often share opinions and information about products with others and word-of-mouth has an important impact on product success. But why do consumers talk about certain products more than others? In addition, companies conduct word-of-mouth marketing campaigns where they often give away free products, coupons, or gifts in the hopes that it will encourage consumers to talk about the brand. But do such giveaways really encourage buzz?

This paper examines how product and campaign characteristics drive word-of-mouth. First, the authors analyze a unique dataset of actual, everyday conversations from over 300 buzz marketing campaigns. The data are analyzed with a hierarchical model of word-of-mouth, which simultaneously reflects underlying differences across people and across products, enabling the key behavioral hypotheses to be tested above and beyond a flexible, heterogeneous model. Second, they conduct a large field experiment with random assignment across various US cities to uncover the underlying process driving the key findings in the first analysis. Results indicate which product and campaign characteristics are associated with talking and shed light on the psychological drivers of buzz.