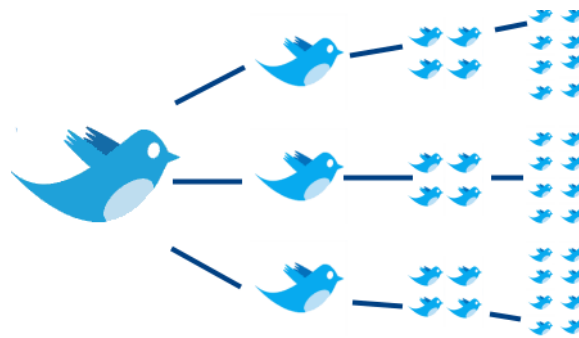


Viral Marketing in Today's Global Village

by
Lieneke Paalman



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ES4-4F

Supervisor: W. van Dam
School of European Studies

Executive summary

Technology has been evolving rapidly throughout the years and the Internet has become a dominant marketing tool. Traditional media has been losing ground because of new media channels. Information can be shared globally through the use of social media. In today's global village, viral marketing is becoming an important strategy in terms of online advertising. The central research question of this report is: "What is needed to create an effective and successful viral marketing strategy?".

Research for this report included a review of various articles, reports, infographics and videos from social media blogs and other websites. In addition, field research was conducted by interviewing professionals from the field. The report consists of an explanation of the concept viral marketing, an internal analysis of the tools, an external analysis of the viral marketing environment, case studies and a SWOT analysis and Confrontation Matrix.

Viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages people to share information with others and thus creates the possibility of exponential growth. The six principles of viral marketing are: using incentives, effortlessly transferring, rapidly scaling, exploiting motivations and behaviors and using existing communication networks and resources. It is important to take these factors in consideration. For instance, Starbucks' viral marketing campaign failed because of the inability to expand when the response was larger than anticipated.

The main tools used for a viral marketing strategy are social networks. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are suitable tools because of the large reach, global character and its features such as the option to embed videos or pictures. Viral marketing is about encouraging people to share information. Three factors have to be optimized before people are able to share messages, namely exposure, awareness and motivation. This means exposure of the communication channels, awareness of the messages and motivating the users to share the messages. Opinion leaders can be used to optimize these factors. The external analysis showed some threats that have to be taken into consideration, for instance, demographic factors to determine whether or not the target group is accessible via the Internet and the increasing concern of online privacy and Internet censorship.

Some of the strengths of viral marketing are the availability of the resources and the high credibility through recommendation by friends. These strengths enable companies and organizations access to new markets and new consumers and to raise awareness. A viral marketing campaign can reach millions of consumers, but it can be hard to keep control which can cause negative consequences, such as reaching the wrong audience or damaging the image. It is important to keep up with the changing social media environment. In the end the audience decides what goes viral.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

Since the early 90's, Internet marketing has been gaining ground. The amount of Internet users has been rapidly growing over the last 15 years and is now exceeding 2 billion users worldwide (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2012). There are many ways to promote and advertise by using the Internet as a tool. An upcoming way of advertising on the Internet is viral marketing. Viral marketing uses the help of the audience to spread the message. As described by Doctor Ralph F. Wilson (2005), an e-commerce consultant, on his website Wilsonweb.com: "Viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence" (Para. 3). These messages are often spread with the use of social media.

Traditional media is losing ground in a world where millions of people have access to the World Wide Web anywhere and at any given time. For example, newspapers can be read online. By the time a newspaper is published, the news has already been all over the Internet. There is no escaping or ignoring viral marketing; it is everywhere. In the last couple of years, social media has rapidly been gaining ground. With the use of social networks companies can go viral. There are many companies which have successfully launched viral marketing campaigns, but there are also many companies which have miserably failed. The central question of this research paper is: 'What is needed to create an effective and successful viral marketing strategy?'

1.2 Methodology

In order to be able to answer the central question there are various factors that need to be researched.

- The first part of the report will describe the concept of viral marketing and its principles.
- The second part will explain the background of viral marketing.
- The third part will consist of analyses of the tools used for viral marketing. There are numerous tools that can be used in a viral marketing strategy. Therefore, an inventory of important tools will be made. Subsequently, the most valuable tools for viral marketing will be chosen to be analyzed further.
- The fourth part will be an external analysis of factors that influence the viral marketing environment.
- The fifth part will consist of analyses of several cases studies of successful and unsuccessful viral marketing campaigns.
- In the last part of the report, all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a viral marketing strategy will come together in a SWOT analysis and Confrontation Matrix.

A combination of desk and field research will be conducted to collect the data. The desk research will contain research found on the Internet, such as scholarly reports and articles from online magazines as well as newspapers, blogs and databases. Printed sources from newspapers will also be used. Books will only be used for theories about marketing itself and not viral marketing, because the social media landscape is constantly changing. Therefore, books about this topic can be somewhat outdated. Field research will be done by the use of interviews with professionals, who either work in the social media industry or have a lot of knowledge about social media.

To gain more knowledge about the topic, webinars from the HubSpot website, a marketing software company, will be used. Webinars are spoken PowerPoint presentations given by professionals from the industry. For instance, "How to use Twitter for marketing & PR".

2. Viral Marketing

2.1 Definition

Viral marketing, also referred to as buzz marketing, is an upcoming marketing strategy. Viral marketing can be seen as the online version of word-of-mouth marketing. Therefore, the description word-of-mouth might be more suitable. Going viral is about creating a buzz and reaching as many people as fast as possible. Marketers encourage Internet users to share the (marketing) message with other users. It is called viral marketing, because it works like a virus. It uses a host (resources of others) and multiplies quickly. These hosts are often social network websites such as Facebook or Twitter or the video sharing website, YouTube. Users of Twitter and Facebook can re-tweet or share a message and within a short amount of time millions of users can be reached. Viral marketing can increase brand awareness and exposure for companies and organizations. It can be used by both new and existing companies as well as private or public organizations. Smaller companies, which do not have a large advertising budget, can also benefit from it, because viral marketing does not require a large budget.



(“10 tips voor een virale marketing campagne, 2010)

2.2 Principles of viral marketing

There are some factors that have to be taken into consideration when going viral. There are many articles about the principles of viral marketing, but the most popular and appreciated are the six principles of Dr. Ralph Wilson, one of the early pioneers of viral marketing and e-commerce consultant. According to Dr. Wilson (2005), the six principles that lead to a successful viral marketing strategy are:

1. *Give away free products or services*

People are drawn to free things. Everyone loves to get something for free. It is very common for marketers to give away free products. For example, many companies set up a Facebook page and have contests where free products are given away to one of the users that likes and shares the page. The free products that are given away are often things like iPads, e-readers and other products that appeal to the public. By giving away products, profit is not created, but there is a fair chance that the consumer will return later. A classic

example of a free service is Hotmail, a free email service. At the end of every email sent with a Hotmail email-address is a promotional link: "Get your private, free email at <http://www.hotmail.com>", which encourages the receivers to subscribe as well (Lloyd, n.d.).

2. *Provides for effortless transfer to others*

It needs to be effortless to share the message. As described before, it is called viral marketing, because the message is spread like a virus. It does not take effort to spread a virus. The formats need to be easy to work with. People need to be able to share the content on their websites or social networks. This means avoiding the use of special software or a registration before consumers are able to share the content ("5 basic principles of viral marketing", 2010).

3. *Scales easily from small to very large*

Marketers need to be prepared for the strategy to be a success. The example of Hotmail applies here as well. When Hotmail first launched its free e-mail service, 12 million people subscribed within 18 months (Lloyd, n.d.). If Hotmail was not prepared to expand their mail servers, the 'virus' would have destroyed the host and all the work would have been for nothing. Scalability means being ready to expand when necessary.

4. *Exploits common motivations and behaviors*

It is in the human nature of people to communicate and to want to be liked and understood. The strategy needs to be based on the motivations and behaviors of people. As Dr. Wilson (2005) states: "Design a marketing strategy that builds on common motivations and behaviors for its transmission, and you have a winner" (para. 8).

5. *Utilizes existing communication networks*

Research has stated that an average person has up to 12 people in their close network of friends, family and work associates. The broader network of people can consist of 100 or even 1000 people (Wilson, 2005). Also, with social network websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, it has become easier for people to build and maintain a social network. When utilizing these networks, millions of people can be reached.

6. *Take advantage of other's resources*

This means using the resources that are already out there. For instance, authors giving others access and permission to copy articles (with the appropriate source and link). Another example of using other's resources is affiliate marketing, a type of Internet

marketing, where companies advertise on other, related websites. The partner will be rewarded, if the new client was recruited through the advertisement or link on their website (Wilson, 2005).

Furthermore, there are some other factors besides the 6 principles of Doctor Ralph Wilson to take into consideration when setting up a viral marketing strategy. One is simplicity. When going viral a large audience can be reached. The majority of people does not care about complex messages or will not understand it. According to David Meerman Scott, a marketing & leadership strategist, people are overloaded with information, so keeping the message simple is the key to get their attention. As Scott (2008) stated in his e-book, *The New Rules of Viral Marketing – How word of mouse spreads your ideas for free*:

We are bombarded with overproduced TV commercials all the time—so often that we usually just turn off our minds when they come on. An authentic and interesting video (rather than a slick and polished one) in which your personality shines through can make people notice. (p.23)

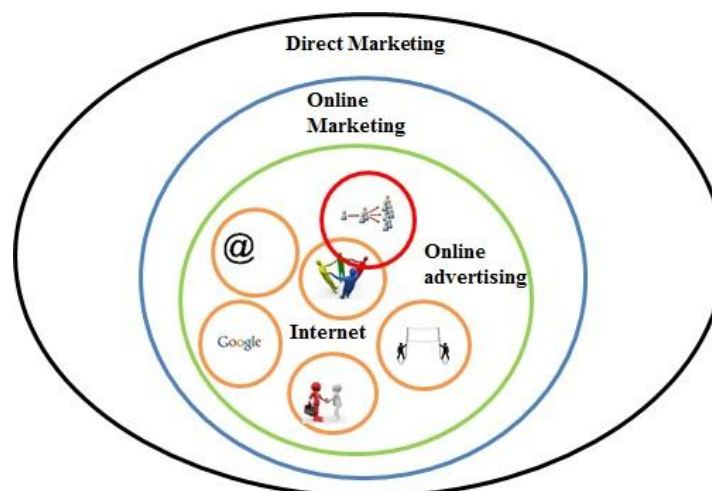
The last factor that is worth taking in consideration is to include some humor. People are drawn to humorous content opposed to serious messages and are more willing to share these kinds of messages.

3. Background of Viral Marketing

To determine where viral marketing fits in the whole concept of marketing, the following terms are important: marketing, marketing strategy and the integrated marketing mix. Marketing can be defined as: “managing profitable customer relationships” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p. 37). The goals of marketing are attracting new customers by promising superior value and keeping current customers by delivering satisfaction. A marketing strategy is: “the marketing logic by which the business unit hopes to create customers value and achieve profitable customer relationships” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p. 79). The marketing strategy is guided by the integrated marketing mix, which is made up of the controllable factors: product, place, price and promotion. The four P's concept is only looking at the seller's view of the market, not the buyer's point of view. The four C's concept show the buyer's point of view and looks at buying as a solution to a problem. It is important that the marketing mix is well thought over and planned before thinking about the viral strategy (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p. 83).

4 P's	4 C's
Product	Customer solution
Price	Customers cost
Place	Convenience
Promotion	Communication

Online marketing, marketing products and service over the Internet, is one of the fastest growing forms of marketing because of the changing marketing landscape. A form of online marketing is online advertising. Online advertising happens while consumers are surfing the web. For example, email marketing, search engine optimization, affiliate marketing, banner advertising or social media marketing. Viral marketing is also part of online advertising (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p. 460-477). As illustrated in the image below, viral marketing (red circle) overlaps with social media marketing, because in a viral marketing strategy social media is used to share the message.



3.1 The changing marketing landscape

The marketing landscape keeps changing. It is important, therefore, to have the ability to adapt to these changes. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2009), the four major developments of the marketing landscape are the digital age, rapid globalization, the call for more ethics and social responsibility and the growth for non-profit marketing (p.58). The technological developments have been important in the rise of viral marketing. Therefore, the evolution of the digital age will be explained.



Digital Age

The first signs of Internet marketing were seen in the early 90's. Before, not many people had access to the Internet. At first, the Internet was mainly used for emailing; it was not yet seen as a medium to reach consumers and market products and services. It took until 1994 for marketers to realize that the Internet had great potential as a marketing tool. In 1994, Netscape Communication Corporations, a software company, developed the web browser Netscape Navigator that made it easier for people to use the Internet. The browser was easy to use and also free, which made it very popular. Companies started to develop simple websites to share product information, but many people were still skeptical about selling products over the Internet. So when Jeff Bezos announced his plans to launch Amazon.com, an online bookstore, critics were sure that the public was not ready to buy over the Internet and that Bezos' plan would fail. Even though the company started off slowly, it did eventually become a success and made Jeff Bezos a well-known netrepreneur (Internet entrepreneur) and a billionaire (Vidar, 2011). Later on, other companies started to use the Internet as a marketing tool. According to Linda Himelstein, the company Bristol-Myers Squibb.co, a drug company, was one of the first companies to launch an Internet marketing campaign. In 1997, the company launched a campaign for the drug Excedrin during the tax season of the USA. Bristol-Myers advertised on financial websites with a free sample of the drug Excedrin. In order to receive a sample, people had to give their name and address. The campaign, which ran for 30 days, was a huge success. Himelstein (1997) stated in *BusinessWeek*:

The response was as good as any elixir. In just one month, Bristol-Myers added 30,000 new names to its customer list—some 1,000 per day and triple the company's best-case scenario. What's more, the cost of obtaining those names was only half that of traditional marketing methods. (para. 2)

The period from 1995 to 2000 was seen as the dot-com bubble. The amount of Internet users increased rapidly; in just 5 years the amount of users increased from 16 million to over 350 million (Miniwatt Marketing Group, 2012). At the same time, many Internet-based companies were created. As in all hypes, there was also a downfall, which is marked as the dot.com fallout. It started in the beginning of the year 2000, stocks went down and several Internet-based companies had to file for bankruptcy (Hudson, 2010). Even though Internet-based companies were experiencing a fallout, the new era brought some huge developments for the social networking websites. In 2002, Friendster was created, which is considered the first modern social network. After the creation of Friendster, other social networking sites were launched, such as MySpace and LinkedIn in 2003, Facebook, the most popular of all the social networking sites nowadays, in 2004, and Twitter in 2006 (Chapman, n.d).

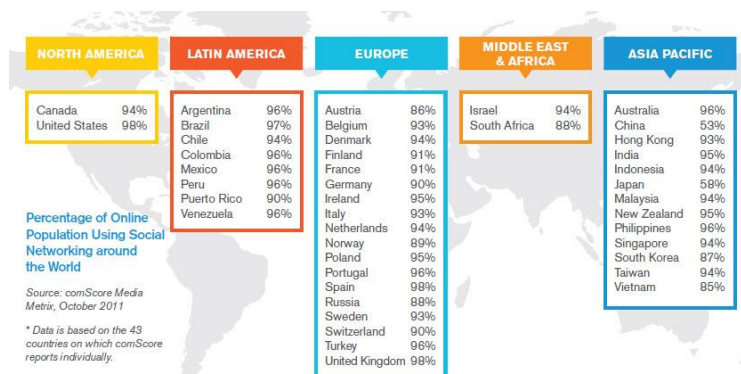
All these developments together with the increase of Internet users gave way for the Internet to become a dominant marketing tool. As seen in table 3.2 below from the Internet World Stats website, the amount of Internet users went from 16 million in 1995 to over 2.2 billion in 2011. Within a decade the Internet transformed immensely and nowadays there is hardly a company which is not present on the World Wide Web.

3.2 Date	Number of Users	% world population	Source
December 1995	16 million	0,4 %	IDC
December 2000	361 million	5,8%	Internet World Stats
December 2005	1.018 million	15,7%	Internet World Stats
December 2011	2.267 million	32,7%	Internet World Stats

(Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2012, para. 6)

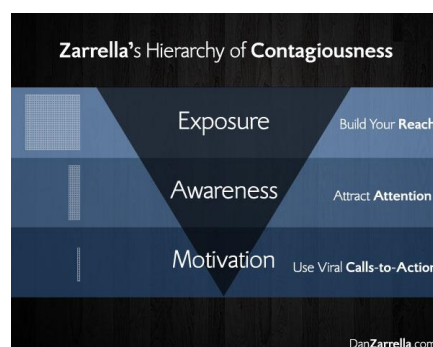
4. Tools of Viral Marketing

To implement a viral marketing strategy, existing resources and networks are used to spread the message and create a buzz (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p.468). To achieve this, communication tools are needed. These tools can be forums, mailing lists, blogs or websites, but the main tools are social networks. It is important to have a home base. This can either be a blog or website. The content such as videos, articles or infographics should be placed on the home base. To get the information out there, social networks are needed. After publishing the content on the home base, the content needs to be distributed via social networks. Social media is the key to success in viral marketing (Bullas, 2011). Social media has been and still is evolving rapidly and more and more networks are emerging. As can be seen in the image below, social networking has become a global phenomenon. Social networks transcend cultural and religious differences (Comscore, 2011, p.5). Many people have unlimited access to social networks with their smartphones. Nowadays, 1.2 billion people worldwide have access to social networks. As stated by Comscore (2011): "Social Networking is ranked as the most popular content category in worldwide engagement, accounting for 19 percent of all time spent online. Nearly 1 in every 5 minutes spent online is now spent on social networking sites" (p.4).



Zarella's Hierarchy of Contagiousness

Viral marketing relies on people to share and pass on the message via social media. According to Dan Zarella, social media scientist at HubSpot, before people can share messages, three basic conditions must be met. Zarella describes these conditions in his hierarchy of contagiousness (Zarella, 2011).



First of all, people need to be exposed to the content, for example, by being a follower on Twitter or a Facebook fan. Secondly, people need be aware of the messages and read the tweets or watch the posted video. Thirdly, people need to be motivated to share the message. The best results will be reached by optimizing all three levels (Redsicker, 2011).

- **Exposure**

The exposure is determined by the amount of followers, so by increasing the amount of followers the exposure will be expanded.

- **Awareness**

The awareness is about the users reading the content. There is so much information flowing through the networks that the message needs to be interesting and grab the users' attention.

- **Motivation**

The content needs to include something that makes the users want to share the message.

4.1 Tools Analysis

There are numerous social networking websites. The most valuable ones that can be used to go viral are analyzed in this chapter. The selection is based on several factors, namely the amount of active users, the type and aim of the social network and the rank on the list of global top websites from Alexa.com. Alexa measures the traffic on websites (page views, time spent on site, reach etcetera.). The complete list of tools can be found in the appendix on page 35. The tools that were chosen to analyze further are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (figure 4.1). The features, aims, target group and strength and weaknesses of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter as well as how to use it to go viral are described in this chapter.

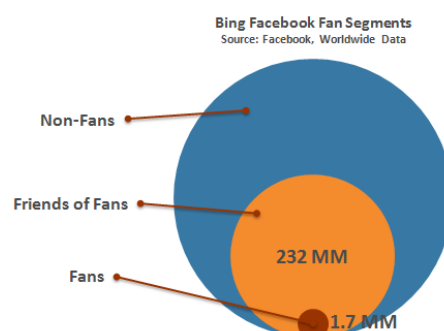
4.1 Type	Name	Amount of active users	Aim	Rank top global websites (Alexa)
Social Connections	Facebook	845+ million	General, personal relationships	2
Multimedia sharing	YouTube		A video sharing website. YouTube has 800 million visitors per month.	3
Social Connections	Twitter	380+ million	A micro blogging website, text based posts 140 characters (tweets)	9

4.2 Facebook

Facebook has over 845 million users and is the largest player of all social networking websites. Furthermore, it is also the third largest web based property right behind Google and Microsoft. Founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and some college classmates, Facebook was first intended to be exclusively for Harvard University students, but was soon expanded to other Ivy League students. Later on, Facebook launched a high school version and gave some employees of companies such as Apple and Google memberships. In 2006, access was granted to anyone aged 13 or older with a valid email address. Facebook is, in a fast majority of countries, the number one social network (Comscore, 2011, p.8). Facebook is a general social network that focuses on personal relationships. Users can update their status, leave a post on their friend's wall (profile), post and share pictures, like messages and pictures, chat with friends and play games, among other things. Users can arrange their friends in specific groups such as close friends, acquaintances, family, high school classmates, college classmates etcetera. Throughout the years, Facebook has been updating and expanding its possibilities. Recently, Facebook introduced timeline. All messages, photos and events are now organized on a timeline.

Viral Strategy

Companies, organizations, public figures and other entities can create a Facebook page instead of a user profile. A Facebook page is visible for everyone and all the users of Facebook can 'subscribe' to the page by liking it. Users who like a Facebook page are called fans. There are some things companies can do to encourage users to become a fan. The page should be attractive and interesting. Besides having an attractive page, as mentioned in the six principles of viral marketing from Dr. R. Wilson, what also works is adding an incentive. This is a regular occurrence on Facebook. Companies give free products away to some of the users in return for liking and sharing the page or a message. It is important to gain fans, because the fans make Facebook a social marketing tool. A recent study shows that: "The "Value of a Fan" can be assessed in three primary ways: increasing the depth of engagement and loyalty among Fans, generating incremental purchase behavior, and leveraging the ability to influence Friends of Fans" (Lipman, Mudd, Rich & Bruich, 2011, p.2). The actual network of a company is therefore bigger than just its own fans. As the image portraying Bing's network illustrates, the scope is bigger than the actual network (Lipsman. et al., 2011, p.6). Besides the actual fans, there is a possibility that friends of fans may also be exposed to the messages.



The Fans are very important for companies in order to build a network and create exposure on Facebook, but ever since Facebook introduced the 'unlike' button fans have been quick to unsubscribe from these commercial pages. According to *ExactTarget* (2011), the main reasons fans unsubscribe or unlike a commercial page are:

- Company posted too many messages
- Overload of marketing messages on the newsfeed
- Only 'liked' the company to take advantage of one time offer
- The posts were too promotional

It is important to keep the fans interested and engaged, for example, by publishing valuable content and finding a natural balance for publishing frequency to keep the fans from 'unliking' the page (p. 13).

Strengths and Weaknesses

S	W
Good tool for customer communication	Possibility of Fans ignoring or 'unliking' companies
Easy exposure through sharing and liking buttons	
Actual network bigger than own fans	
Possibility of embedding videos and pictures	

4.3 YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing website created in 2005 by three co-workers. People can upload, share and watch videos on YouTube. To be able to upload a video or watch videos which contains content for people over 18, users need to have an account. Other videos can be watched without having an account. Since its launch in 2005, YouTube has been growing fast. Over 800 million unique users visit YouTube every month and over 4 billion videos are viewed everyday ("Statistic", n.d.). Users can create a profile to save favorite videos, make playlists and subscribe to other users. As of 2006, YouTube has belonged to Google. In 2007, YouTube introduced the 'Partnership Program'. Some (popular) users have a partnership with YouTube, who rewards the partners for uploading videos. The users need to make original videos on a regular basis and have a steady amount of viewers to be eligible for the program. In the same year YouTube changed its advertising strategy and started the 'invideo' ads (YouTube, 2012). YouTube is a great tool for uploading and sharing videos, but if the video does not stand out, it will be lost in the whirlpool of uploaded material, seeing as every minute 60 hours of material is uploaded ("Statistics, n.d.).

Viral strategy

Videos are often used in a viral marketing campaign. Videos have a great impact on the SEO rankings, therefore, creating more exposure. Kevin Allocca, YouTube's trend manager, spoke at the TEDYouth conference in January 2012 about the reasons why videos go viral. According to Allocca (2012), the main reasons are tastemakers, community participation and unexpectedness. Tastemakers are key individuals with a high level of credibility and the ability to influence other people. These individuals, sometimes also referred to as opinion leaders, often have a large amount of followers. The two step flow theory of mass communication states that the message is first spread to opinion leaders, who in turn spread the message to the public. An example of how tastemakers have influence over the amount of views is the "Double Rainbow" video. As



illustrated in image 4.3 from Allocca's (2012) video, the video had been uploaded for a while and suddenly the amount of views skyrocketed. That particular day Jimmy Kimmel, a popular American comedian and television host, tweeted about the

"Double Rainbow" video. Kimmel encouraged people to watch the video, because his friend declared it the funniest video in the world (Allocca, 2012).

Another example of the influence of tastemakers is the new phenomenon of 'Beauty Gurus'. This is a fairly new trend where mostly girls and young women create make-up or hair tutorials and (video) blogs about other beauty and fashion related subjects. Some of these gurus gained a lot of popularity and viewers. A number of gurus are actually making a living out of creating YouTube videos. For instance, the sisters Elle and Blair Fowler, who are originally from Tennessee, started creating make-up tutorials from their bedrooms and uploading it to YouTube a couple of years ago. Since then, the sisters have been on Good Morning America, featured in magazines such as Seventeen and Teen Vogue and moved to Los Angeles. Furthermore, Elle and Blair have their own web shop, cellphone cases line, reality show and are writing a book. Both sisters have a large amount of followers and were even nominated for a Teen Choice Award in the category 'Choice Web Star' in 2011. The Fowler sisters have a lot of influence over their followers. As stated in the *Financial Times*: "The Fowlers' influence can be powerful. Coach, for example, sold out of a handbag that Blair featured as one of her favorites" (Jacobs, 2011, para. 7). Allocca's second reason is community participation. People start talking about newly discovered videos and do not just watch, but also participate in the 'madness'. The participation happens in forms of parodies of popular videos or the creation of fan pages for particular videos or campaigns. People enjoy being involved and being able to participate and be a part of a community. When uploading a video, a company cannot sit back, relax and expect viewers to find the video. The company needs to participate in the communities. The last reason is unexpectedness. As mentioned before, because of the huge amount of uploaded material every minute, a video needs to be different, unique and unexpected to stand out (Allocca, 2012).

Strengths and Weaknesses

S	W
Millions of viewers every month	No control over content and quality
Excellent tool for uploading videos	High amount of uploaded material, video can be lost quickly
YouTube partner program	
Videos have great impact on SEO rankings	

4.4 Twitter

Twitter is a micro blogging website, one of the newest kinds of social media. Even though Twitter was launched in 2006, it took some years until it gained worldwide popularity and acknowledgement. Twitter works with text based messages (tweets) with a maximum of 140 characters. Users can add videos and pictures with their message. The videos and pictures are automatically embedded in the tweets. The simplicity of the short text based messages distinguishes Twitter from other social networks. Users of Twitter can follow other users. Users connect to one another based on shared interests instead of personal relationships. People can share opinions and have conversations about shared interests. As stated by Comscore (2011): "In 2011, Twitter was used as a central means of communication during events of worldwide and national significance, ranging from political uprisings in the Middle East to disasters, such as the earthquake and tsunami in Japan" (p.10).

Going viral

Using Twitter as a tool to go viral involves having a large amount of followers and motivating the followers to retweet (duplicate and forward) the messages. It is important to be involved and participate in order to attract followers. This includes completing the profile, balancing personal, funny, and informative tweets, respond to tweets, retweet interesting tweets and using hashtags.

The top four reasons of how people decide who to follow are (Solis, 2012):

1. Suggested by friends (69%),
2. Online search (47%)
3. Suggested by Twitter (44%)
4. Promotions (31%).

The top six reasons of what motivates users to retweet a message can be seen in the infographic from *Infographic Labs* in the appendix on page 36 (Solis, 2012). The three most important ones are:




1. Interesting content
2. Humor
3. Celebrity status

Hashtags in messages can be used to categorize tweets. Users can click on the hashtags to find similarly-themed topics. For example, when users want to tweet about the TV show the Voice of Holland, a tweet would end with #tvoh. Hashtags increases the chance for tweets to become a trending topic. Trending topics are identified as immediately popular topics and helps people discover news breaking stories.

Strengths and Weaknesses

S	W
Excellent tool for customer communication	Sometimes difficult to reach target, because there is so much buzz (tweets)
Exposure by retweets	Trending topic can be forgotten as quickly as it came up
Simplicity (short text based messages)	
Possibility of embedding videos and pictures	
Possibility of enormous exposure and attention by becoming a trending topic	

4.5 Comparison Facebook, YouTube and Twitter

			
Amount of users	845+ million	800 million visitors every month	380+ million
Kind of network	General social network, personal relationships	Video hosting service	Micro blogging website
Rank Alexa	2	3	9
Average age (Chapell, 2011)	Average age between 13-44 years.	Average age between 18 -54 years.	Average age between 18-54 years.
Gender (Chappel, 2011)	Women (48, 2%) Men (51, 2%).	Women (52%) Men (48%).	Women (58%) Men (42%).
Geography	Popular in North America, Europe, Australia	Popular in Latin America, Europe and Malaysia	Popular in North America, Europe, Australia and Brazil
Profile	Businesses can create a page which is public to everyone.	YouTube channel, personalize background	Small biography, personalize background
Text update	Yes	No	Yes
Picture update	Yes	No	Yes
Video update	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ability to like a post	Yes	No	No
Ability to share a post	Yes (share)	No	Yes (retweet)
Possibility of posting comments	Yes	Yes	No
B2B (Solis, 2010)	Yes (77%)	Yes (43%)	Yes (73%)
B2C (Solis, 2010)	Yes (83%)	Yes (30%)	Yes (45%)
Search element	Search by company name	YouTube search bar	Tweets can be categorized with hashtags # users can search via hashtags
Trending topic/recommended video	No	Yes	Yes
Smartphone app	Yes	Yes	Yes

5. External Analysis

It is important to look at the external factors of the environment to find the opportunities and threats of a viral marketing strategy. The dimensions of the external environment are demographic environment, social-cultural environment, technological environment, global environment and political-legal environment.

5.1 Demographic environment

The demographic environment consists of factors such as age, gender, occupation, heritage etcetera. These factors are important in learning whether or not the target group is accessible via the Internet. The analyzed social networks in this report, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, all have a wide range of users, therefore using these tools in a viral strategy means reaching a large audience. There are also social networks that focus on specific target groups. For example, the users of Pinterest, the social media hit of 2012, consist for 97% of women (Wasserman, 2012).

The knowledge gap theory states that media increases the gap between lower and higher educated people. The gap between information-rich and information-poor people could cause a digital divide, which is the inequality between people who have access to the Internet and those who do not. The digital divide can be caused by different demographic factors such as income, age, education and location. Persons who do not have a high education are statistically less likely to own a computer and have the knowledge of how to use it compared to people with a high education (Kishan Tissu, 2009, p.235-236). Another factor that can cause a digital divide is age. There are three large generation groups, namely:

- Baby boomers, born between 1946 – 1964
- Generation X, born between 1965 – 1976
- Generation Y (millennials), born between 1977 -2000

In general, the millennials (generation Y) are the most digitally connected and spend more time on social networks than the older generations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p.100-105). However, that does not mean that the other generations do not use social media. Research from *Emarketer* shows that social networking is not just reserved for the younger generations; baby boomers and generation X are also increasing in number when it comes to using social media. As the table in the appendix on page 37 shows, 46% of the baby boomers and 61% of generation X maintained a social network presence in 2009 versus 30% and 51% in 2007 (Van Grove, 2010). When going viral, a large audience can be reached. Nevertheless, marketers still need to think critically whether or not a viral strategy will reach the right target group. Businesses can also use viral strategies as

an opportunity to see where the market lies and which users are interested by tracking which groups are sharing the message.

5.2 Social-cultural environment

"The sociocultural environment includes the customs, mores, values and demographic characteristics of the society" (Griffin & Ebert, 2006, p.42). The Internet, as well as social media has become a global phenomenon. Businesses can reach millions of people from all over the world when going viral. The three social networks that are analyzed in this report, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, have users from all over the world. However, there are some differences in social network use per country. For example, the micro blogging websites Tencent Weibo and Sina Weibo are very popular in China (Russel, 2011). Furthermore, Facebook, and Twitter are disabled in China by the government. Therefore, if marketers want to reach the Chinese market it is also recommended to include these specific networks. It is possible to reach many different societies and cultures when going viral. As a result, new consumers can be attracted.

5.3 Technological environment

The technological environment changed and still is changing rapidly. The explosive growth and development of telecommunications and information technology brought new opportunities for companies in terms of communicating and bringing value to the customers. The Internet links businesses and customers closer together (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p. 58). Businesses started with developing corporate websites to share information with consumers. Even though social networks were first developed to maintain personal relationships, there is almost no business or organization these days that does not have a social network profile. Technology synchronized mass media and communication channels. Mobile phones developed into smartphones and computers into laptops and tablets. These inventions gave way for people to be active on social networks not only at home, but everywhere at any given time. Therefore, messages can be distributed quicker than ever. All these developments give businesses the opportunity to communicate directly to the consumers and build and increase consumer retention. In addition, by actively participating in the online social community, businesses are able to raise brand awareness.

5.4 Global environment

Marshall McLuhan, a communication theorist, foresaw the impact of the technological innovations and created the concept of the global village; a new interconnected world with a collective identity facilitated by new communication and information technologies (Kishan Thussu, 2010, p. 58). Before globalization, media corporations were operating in distinct areas of business. This changed over time with the privatization of broadcasting together with the development of new methods of delivering media and communication content (Kishan Thussu, 2010, p. 98). Globalization in

combination with the development of technology gave companies and organizations access to new markets and new consumer groups.

5.5 Political-legal environment

The Internet made it possible for people to share information, stay connected, search for information and shop online among other things, but it also raised concerns about privacy issues. For example, when purchasing something online, personal data such as name, address and credit card information is needed. According to Kelly Noble, owner of the Stellar Media Marketing Blog, social media will continue to evolve, but there will eventually be a strong push for more online privacy (K. Noble, personal email, February 27, 2012). Concerns about online privacy have been gradually increasing over the years. The European Union commissioner of Justice and Human Rights, Viviane Reding, proposed new rules concerning how businesses should handle personal data. Reding wants companies to permanently delete personal data when requested. Reding (2012) tweeted: "We leave digital traces with every move we make. We need a robust set of data protection rules in this brave new data world" (Laanen, 2012). Companies such as Google or Facebook store large amounts of personal data. Even though Facebook profiles can be deleted, the information is still on the Internet. Users of social networks have been more careful when it comes to protecting online profiles. As can be seen in the infographic in the appendix on page 38, the percentage of social network users untagging photos, deleting comments and unfriending someone increased. Furthermore, more users have set profiles to private or partially private (Palis, 2012). In addition to the privacy issues, some social networks are banned in certain countries. China is known for its Internet censorship. Facebook and Twitter are not accessible for Chinese people and the government regularly deletes post or comments on social networks such as Tencent Weibo. The Chinese people have found ways to evade the censorship by using pictures or slang, but the government ordered Weibo to require users to register with their real names starting in April 2012 (Flock, 2012).

6. Case Studies Viral Marketing Campaigns

There have been many attempts from companies to launch viral marketing campaigns, some successful and some unsuccessful. In this chapter, four case studies are analyzed to find out why it was successful or why it was not.

6.1 Successful Cases

6.1.1 Case 1: Kony 2012

At the end of February 2012, the nonprofit group Invisible Children uploaded a video about Joseph Kony. Kony, a rebel leader from Uganda, is known for abducting children and using them as soldiers in his Lord Resistance Army. The LRA is very brutal and forces the child soldiers to rape and kill civilians. The LRA originated in Northern Uganda, but is now active in the Democratic Republic of Congo. About two weeks after the video was finished, Invisible Children launched the viral campaign by uploading the documentary on YouTube. Via the website www.kony2012.com, Invisible Children encouraged people to watch and share the video. The aim of the campaign was to make Joseph Kony visible and famous as the world's worst war criminal and to eventually bring justice by arresting Kony. The Invisible Children group encouraged people on the website to do three things, namely purchase a kit with promotion material (posters, bracelets etcetera), make a donation and share the message (Invisible Children, 2012).

Success

On March 5th 2012, the campaign was launched on YouTube. It only took 6 days, before the campaign received over 100 million views, which makes it the fastest growing viral marketing campaign to surpass 100 million views (Visible Measures, 2012). The documentary featured the director of Invisible Children, Jason Russel, his 5-year-old son, Gavin and Russel's friend from Uganda, Jacob. Jacobs' brother was killed by the Lord Resistance Army. The video was successful, because it had a compelling and simple narrative. In the video, Jason Russel explains to his son that Kony is bad man, who needs to be captured. By using the innocence of Russel's 5-year-old son, the video played into the emotions of the viewers. People are encouraged in the video to raise awareness by simply sharing the message. The Invisible Children group used tastemakers to spread the message faster. Users were able to send messages via the website to two groups of tastemakers, namely the culture makers and the policy makers. The first group consisted of famous and influential people such as Oprah Winfrey, Mark Zuckerberg, Ellen Degeneres and Angelina Jolie. The second group consisted of people with a political function such as Ban Ki-Moon, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. The message users could send to the tastemakers included the hashtags #kony2012 and #stopkony. By using these hashtags, the campaign quickly became a trending topic on Twitter (Tsukayama, 2012). The success of the campaign did not only raise awareness about

Joseph Kony. Organizations started to question the authenticity of Invisible Children, especially, in terms of how the budget was allocated. In 2011, Invisible Children spent over 8 million US dollars and only 32% went to direct services. The rest was spent on salaries, travel expenses and film production. The documentary was also criticized for simplifying the issue and portraying a misleading impression of the situation. Moreover, the Kony2012 campaign has been accused of promoting slacktivism. Slacktivism is the idea that sharing or retweeting a message will help solve a problem across the social web (Fox, 2012).

To conclude, the Kony2012 campaign was very successful in terms of creating awareness of the issue. The main factors of success were involving tastemakers and playing into people's emotions. The campaign is not a solution to the problem, but the main goals of raising awareness and making Kony famous as the world's worst war criminal were definitely achieved.

6.1.2 Case 2: Old Spice - "I'm On a Horse": Old Spice's Success Story

Old Spice is a men's hygiene product that has been around since 1938. On July 14, 2010, Old Spice launched one of the fastest growing online viral video campaigns with over 6 million views, 22,500 comments and 180 response videos, all within 48 hours of their starting point. The original Old Spice commercial, "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like," starred Isaiah Mustafa, a former NFL wide receiver, aired during the Super Bowl in February 2010. Marketing agency Wieden and Kennedy created the commercial, which took three days and 57 takes to shoot (CBS News, 2010).

Success

The commercial was effective, because it was comical, short, simple, powerful and it appealed to both men and women. Even though the commercial is for a men's product, Mustafa talked directly to the women. The message of the commercial was 'The Man Your Man Could Smell Like', therefore, playing into the fact that women have an influence on what products men buy. Another reason of its success was audience involvement. Old Spice engaged in a unique follow-up strategy of advertising practices, namely their online responses in order to further reach out to the consumers. Old Spice's marketing agency, Wieden and Kennedy, worked with Isaiah Mustafa for three days from July 12 to July 14, 2010 to create the video responses. In these videos, Mustafa engaged directly with his own fans and consumers of Old Spice. Fans and consumers were encouraged to send in comments or questions through social media websites. The audience was used to create the content for the videos. An example of how the question or request/ response videos worked is the 'proposal' video. The request came from a man asking Mustafa for help to propose to his girlfriend. Mustafa made a response video for this man and proposed in name of the man. The response videos were a success, because Old Spice integrated the aspects of viral marketing and the opinion leaders of the two-step flow theory in the campaign. Old Spice did not respond to the comments of just anybody. Opinion leaders were purposely targeted and invited to

participate in the campaign. Celebrities such as Alyssa Milano, Demi Moore, Ashton Kutcher, Ellen Degeneres and Perez Hilton participated and tweeted to Mustafa, who made response videos for all of them (Reiss, 2010). The 2010 campaign was extremely successful and since then, Old Spice has managed to keep its place as the most viral brand by renewing the campaign and introducing a new character. As stated on the website *Ad Age digital*:

Old Spice became the most-viewed brand in online video for the second consecutive year, primarily on the strength of three campaigns: "New Old Spice Guy Fabio" and "Old Spice Man is Back," both released in 2011, and "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like," the 2010 campaign. (Delo, 2011, para. 2)

To conclude, Old Spice did all the right things to create a successful viral campaign. The commercial appealed to a large audience, because it was funny, simple and short. Interacting with the audience through social networks, made people feel closer and more involved in the campaign. The targeting of opinion leaders increased the visibility and popularity of the campaign and Old Spice was therefore, able to reach a wide range of consumers and make the campaign a success.

6.2 Unsuccessful Cases

6.2.2 Case 1: Starbucks - "Try your coffee"

Back in 2006, Starbucks sent out coupons for a free grande (medium sized) beverage by email to its employees and partners in Atlanta and encouraged them to share it with their families and friends. The coupon could be used on a specific day to get any grande beverage the customer wanted. Starbucks wanted to encourage consumers to try a different beverage than their normal order. The email was quickly spread through the whole country and even ended up on EBay. In reaction, Starbucks said that the coupons were not valid anymore, because it was spread beyond the original intent (Dilworth, 2006). This gave Starbucks some negative press, as people were not happy with the way the problem was dealt with.

Failure

Starbucks did not anticipate for the coupon to spread beyond its intent. Control can be lost quickly with viral marketing which is what happened in this particular case. Starbucks should have thought about the consequences, before emailing the coupons and encouraging people to share it. Companies always need to have a plan for when the response is larger than anticipated. Another thing Starbucks failed to do was to provide a proper solution. Instead, Starbucks declared the coupons not valid, making customers feeling angry and causing a lot of negative publicity. Competitor Caribou Coffee took advantage of Starbucks' refusal to honor the coupons. Caribou accepted the Starbucks coupons for one day and gave the customers a free iced coffee (Svaldi, 2006).

6.2.2 Case 2: Cisco – “Ted from Accounting”

Whenever something is successful, there are always people who will try to be just as successful by copying the idea. This happens a lot and it can work out in a positive way, but it can also work out negatively. Cisco, a company that sells networking equipment, tried to replicate the Old Spice campaign by introducing ‘Ted from accounting’. Cisco posted a blog post about two weeks after the responses campaign of Old Spice that stated:

We were so impressed by the Old Spice Social Media campaign, we decided to have some fun and work it Cisco-style. So, send us topics via Twitter to #CiscoSPice or comment on our blog <http://bit.ly/az8bUG> as we'll be creating and posting videos throughout the day on our blog based on your inputs. (Webster, 2012, para. 1)

Unfortunately, Cisco did not receive many responses. 24 hours after the launch of the campaign, Cisco made 18 response videos and received a mere 2,750 views, whereas Old Spice received millions of views.

Failure

Cisco's copycat did not work for a couple of reasons. First of all, ‘Ted from accounting’ was not properly introduced. Cisco introduced him on the first day of the campaign, so no one knew who Ted was. Old Spice introduced the Old spice guy in February during the Super Bowl and started the campaign in July and thus created popularity before the start of the campaign. Secondly, the Twitter campaign was not optimized. Cisco used three different Twitter accounts instead of one main account, which confused people. Thirdly, Cisco should have used more aspects of the Old Spice videos. By neglecting this, the videos just became a bad copy of the originals instead of a funny parody (O'Neill, 2010).

7. SWOT analysis & Confrontation Matrix

7.1 SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
Low costs	Uncontrollable
Resources easily accessible	Unpredictable
Large reach (global)	Short attention span
High credibility	
(Suitable for many types of businesses)	
Opportunities	Threats
Attract new consumers	Reach the wrong audience
Potential of exponential growth, velocity	Turn into SPAM
Access to new markets	Damage for image
Create brand awareness	Censorship
	Privacy

Strengths

- **Low costs:** Viral marketing does not require a large budget. Using the tools is free and when the strategy starts working, the message will spread itself without much help.
- **Resources easily accessible:** The resources already exist (social networks) and the access to social networks is free and easy.
- **Large reach (global):** Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are globally known and used. Facebook alone has more than 800 million active users in over 70 countries ("Company info", 2012).
- **High credibility:** Recommendation from friends is believable. People are more willing to share something a friend likes than a stranger. As described in the section concerning Facebook, fans are valuable because of the ability to influence friends.
- **Suitable for many types of businesses:** Viral marketing can be used by small and large businesses from all countries. It is suitable for commercial companies as well as NGO's. Old Spice promoted its product and as renewed its image, but a viral strategy can be just as well used by NGO's, as Invisible Children proved with the Kony2012 campaign.

Weaknesses

- **Uncontrollable:** When something goes viral, it can be hard to keep control. This happened with the Starbucks coupon promotion. Starbucks did not anticipate the large response and failed to think about the effects that the encouragement of sharing the coupon could have.
- **Unpredictable:** There is no guarantee that the campaign goes viral, but success in advertising can hardly ever be guaranteed.
- **Short attention span:** When something goes viral, it can be forgotten as quickly as it became popular. Kony2012 was a huge success and received many views in a short amount of time, but a couple weeks later and the topic was hardly mentioned anymore. To

keep the consumers interested and engaged, new updates and messages are needed. For example, Old Spice created a new dimension to its old campaign by introducing a new character.

Opportunities

- **Create brand awareness:** The reach of the audience is very large when something goes viral which can result in brand awareness. Since so many different people in terms of location, age, sex and education can be reached with the use of social media, brands have the opportunity to increase brand awareness.
- **Attract new customers:** New customers can be attracted through recommendation by friends or because of the awareness and attention during the viral campaign.
- **Access to new markets:** The global nature of social networks and the Internet gives companies access to new markets.
- **Potential of exponential growth:** A viral strategy works like a virus and if the strategy works, the message will exponentially grow. The large amount of users of social networks in combination with the development of technology makes it possible to spread messages at a fast rate. Users can be active on social networks via smartphones or tablets at any given time. It only took Kony2012 six days to top 100 million views (Visible Measures, 2012).

Threats

- **Reach the wrong audience:** It is hard to keep control when the message goes viral, therefore, it is possible that the message reaches the wrong audience. For instance, MacDonald's started a Twitter campaign with the hashtags #McDstories and #MeetTheFarmers, to draw attention to the brand's guarantee of using fresh products. Unfortunately for MacDonald's, people started sharing their negative experiences and stories (Polis, 2012). According to Elise Harleman, communication professor, the hashtag with the word story encouraged people to share their experiences, both positive and negative. (E. Harleman, personal interview, March 14, 2012).
- **Turn into SPAM:** A viral strategy can lead to SPAM threats.
- **Damage the image:** If the viral strategy does not work or the campaign gets negative attention, the image of the brand or company can be damaged. As happened in the Starbucks case, customers were not happy with the decision of Starbucks to declare the coupons not valid which resulted in negative press for Starbucks.
- **Privacy:** More and more users of social networks are becoming aware of issues concerning privacy. This results in changing the privacy settings and being more careful

with giving away personal data. Marketers often use incentives to collect personal data, so this might get more difficult in the future.

- **Censorship:** In some countries the government censors the Internet. Therefore, reaching certain markets might be difficult.

7.2 Confrontation Matrix

	--very threatening - threatening 0 neutral + promising ++ very promising	Opportunities				Threats				
		Create brand awareness	Attract new customers	Access to new markets	Potential of exponential growth	reach the wrong audience	damage brand image	Privacy	Censorship	Spam threats
Strengths										
3	Low costs	++	+	+	++	+	--	0	-	-
3	Resources easily accessible	0	++	++	+	0	0	-	-	0
-2	Large reach (global)	++	+	++	+	-	--	-	--	-
7	High credibility	++	++	0	0	+	0	+	0	+
Weaknesses										
-7	Uncontrollable	0	-	-	-	--	--	0	0	0
-4	Unpredictable	0	0	0	0	--	--	0	0	0
-1	Short attention span	-	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0
		5	5	4	3	-2	-7	-1	-4	-1

1. Use strengths to take advantage of opportunities

The large reach of viral marketing in combination with recommendation from friends and the credibility that comes from the recommendations give companies the opportunity to attract new consumers, access new markets and create a high level of brand awareness.

2. Use strengths to avoid threats

Recommendation from friends or tastemakers creates credibility and can be used to avoid reaching the wrong audience or turning into SPAM.

3. Take advantage of opportunities to overcome weaknesses

The message needs to be appealing, because viral marketing is very uncontrollable and if the campaign is perceived negatively, it can harm the image of a company or organization.

4. Minimize weaknesses and avoid threats

The short attention span can minimize the treats of reaching the wrong audience and damage the brands' image.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

As described in the chapter 3, the Internet plays a big role in today's global village and information society. Social media and communication via the Internet are daily recurrences. The central question of this report: "What is needed to create an effective and successful viral marketing strategy?"

Firstly, it is important to develop a good concept which appeals to the consumers. When developing the content and strategy, the six principles of viral marketing from chapter 2 (using incentives, effortlessly transferring, rapidly scaling, exploiting motivations and behaviors and using existing communication networks and existing resources), have to be taken into consideration. It is important to maintain synergy between the principles in order to optimize the strategy. For example, Starbucks did not think about the ability to expand and lost control over the campaign.

Furthermore, tools to spread the message are needed. In order for the information to go viral, the content needs to be spread via social networks (existing resources). Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are suitable tools because of the large reach, global character, and its features such as the option to embed videos or pictures. Of course, it is important to look at the external factors before deciding which social networks will be the most useful or whether or not the target group is accessible via these social networks. Censorship can make it harder to go viral in specific regions or countries. As described in the external analysis, it is also important to keep the online privacy concerns in mind.

In addition, the conditions exposure, awareness and motivation from Dan Zarella's hierarchy of contagiousness are important. Without exposure the message will not be noticed. This means acquiring fans on Facebook, followers on Twitter and subscribers on YouTube. Incentives can be used to encourage users to like, follow or subscribe. After acquiring exposure, it is important to make people aware of the message. To increase the visibility of the message and the potential of exponential growth, the users need to be motivated to share the message. The optimization of these three factors will increase the chance of the message going viral. Exposure, awareness and motivation can be increased by using tastemakers as was proved in the case studies about Kony 2012 and Old Spice.

Viral marketing can create massive brand awareness and popularity. Aside from that, it can also create opportunities for companies to reach new markets and consumers. However, the social media landscape and technology are constantly changing. It is important to be on top of these developments. There is no certainty as to whether or not something will go viral. In the end the audience determines what goes viral and what does not.

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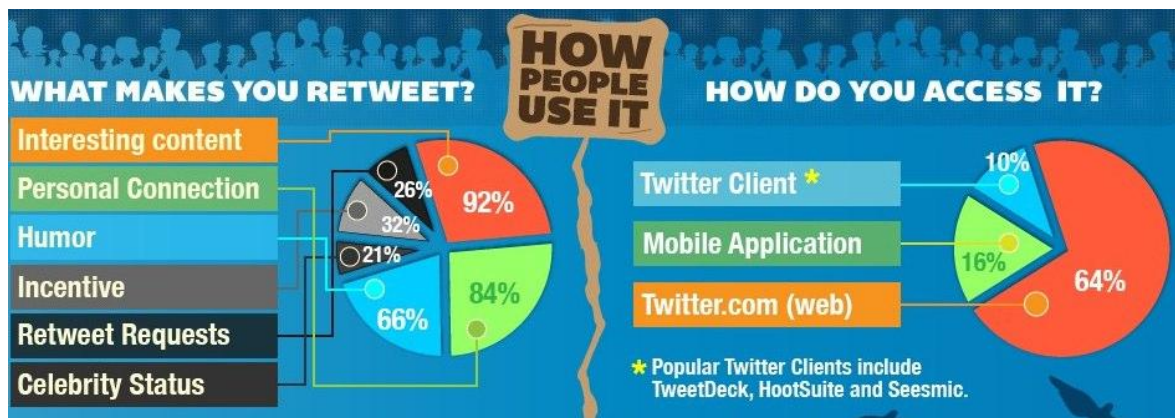
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10. Appendices

10.1 Inventory of Social Networks

Type	Name	Amount of active users	Purpose	Rank (Alexa)
<i>Social connections</i>	Facebook	845+ million	General, very international	2
<i>Social connections</i>	Qzone (part of qq)	536+ million	General, popular in China	10
<i>Social connections</i>	Twitter	380+ million	A micro blogging website, text based posts 140 characters (tweets)	9
<i>Social connections</i>	Windows Live	330+ million	Group of software applications such as Msn, Mail, Mesh (file sharing), Moviemaker etc.	7
<i>Social connections</i>	Tencent Weibo (part of qq)	310 million	A Chinese micro blogging website, text based post 140 Chinese characters	10
<i>Social connections</i>	Habbo	230 million	General, aimed at teenagers, virtual world	17.071
<i>Social connections</i>	Skype	200 million	Communication and instant message service	166
<i>Social connections</i>	Vkontakte	145+ million	General, aimed at Russian speaking people	43
<i>Social connections</i>	Badoo	121+ million	General, meeting new people	115
<i>Social connections</i>	Bebo	117+ million	General	3.570
<i>Professional networks</i>	LinkedIn	100+ million	Aimed at professional relationships	12
<i>Social connections</i>	MySpace	100+ million	General	159
<i>Social connections</i>	Google +	100 million	Google	76.266
<i>Social connections</i>	Friendster	90 million	General, popular in Asia	9.300
<i>Multimedia sharing</i>	YouTube (belongs to Google)		A video sharing website. YouTube has 800 million visitors per month.	3
<i>Professional networks</i>	Classmates	50 million	Relationships based on school and college	4.365
<i>Multimedia sharing</i>	Flickr	32 million	A photo sharing website	47
<i>Multimedia sharing</i>	Picasa		A photo sharing website	1.653.616
<i>Multimedia sharing</i>	Pinterest	10 million	An online pin board	52

("List of virtual communities...", 2012) (Alexa, n.d.) (Costine, 2012)

10.2 What makes you retweet?

(Solis, 2012)

10.3 Table social networking generation groups

US Internet Users Who Currently Maintain a Social Networking Site Profile, by Generation, 2007-2009 (% of respondents)

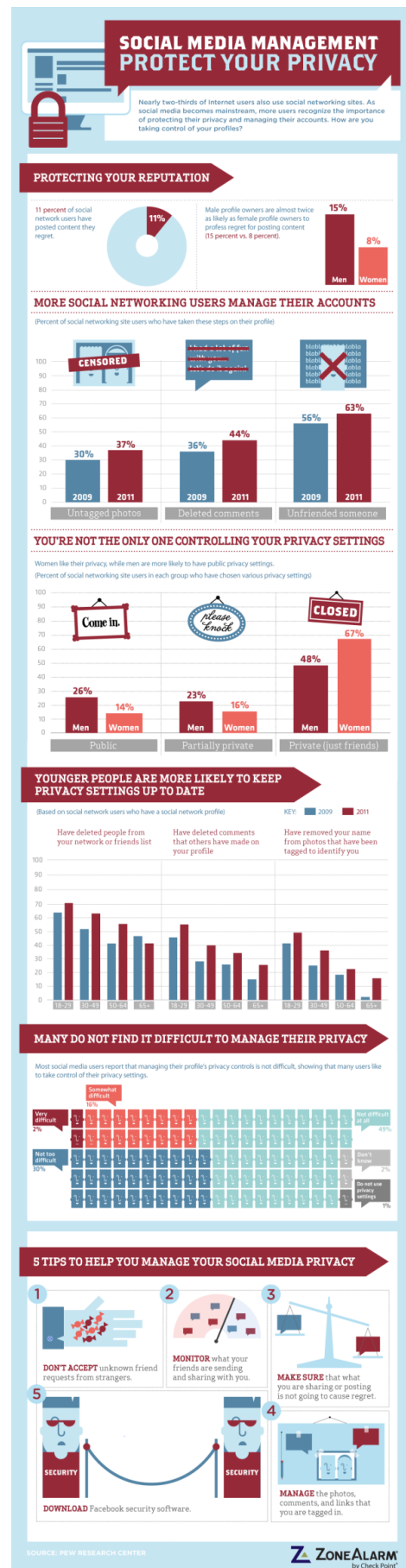
	2007	2008	2009
Millennials (14-26)	71%	76%	77%
Generation X (27-43)	51%	57%	61%
Boomers (44-62)	30%	31%	46%
Matures (63-75)	10%	14%	36%
Total (14-75)	45%	48%	57%

Source: Deloitte, "State of the Media Democracy Fourth Edition: Select U.S. Highlights," provided to eMarketer, December 15, 2009

110110 www.eMarketer.com

(Van Grove, 2010)

10.4 Infographic Social Media Privacy



(Wasserman, 2010)

10.5 Interview Kelly Noble, personal email, February 27, 2012**Interview via e-mail with Kelly Noble, owner and creator of Stellar Media Marketing.**

Stellar Media Marketing specializes in helping small to medium business succeed with social media and internet marketing. www.stellarmediamarketing.com

Q 1. What made social media so popular? What is its power?

I believe that the user made it popular. Once people found a great tool that made sharing and broadcasting their stories over the net to an audience of friends and family (along with the vast public) it really took off. Sure Facebook has become known as the social network that put social networking on the map but really there were so many before Facebook that started this hot trend off with a bang. To it's credit MySpace really started the madness off with its user content sharing. Once brands discovered that people were using it to talk about the products they use, ask for referrals and connect with other users they started to see the potential. At first brands didn't really see a huge value out of it because they felt it was just a bunch of kids talking to each other but after companies like Dell and Best Buy started to show results other businesses followed suite and the rest is history. As for the power, it really is a great communication tool allowing brands and consumers to talk to each other, collaborate and build strong referral and relationship based businesses.

Q 2. Is engaging in social media a necessity for businesses in terms of marketing?

It really depends on your business, but really there is value there for just about any brand trying to communicate with customers, get brand recognition and build online influence and SEO. Every social network, like every company is different, so businesses need to consider who they are trying to target and what their goals are before they dive into all the networks at once.

Q 3. Would a combination of several social media websites be the best for a company or is better to concentrate on one of them?

Like I mentioned in Q2, defining your goals and target audience is key to figuring out what social networks are going to work best for you. Where Facebook is great for B2C companies LinkedIn is really turning into the best network for B2B. Each network has a different use that can be of value depending on your goals.

Q 4. What is your perspective on the future of social media? increase or decrease of popularity, arise of new tools?)

Like any communication tool (the telegraph, the phone, the fax the email and now social media) this technology will continue to evolve. Social Media allowed users to be more social and stay more connected. I believe that mobile is the next big thing however there will probably eventually be a strong push for more online privacy.

10.6 Short summary of the interview with Elise Harleman, communication professor at The Hague University, March 14, 2012**Q 1. Which factor made social media so popular?**

The user itself made it popular, social media gave them a chance to voice their opinions. It has become easier with these social media networks for people to say what is on their mind.

Q 2. Do you think that engaging in social media a necessity for businesses in terms of marketing and communication?

No, it depends on the company or organization and the culture of the specific company or organization. It needs to fit with the company, for example, the average age of the employees play a role in deciding whether or not to use media.

Q 3. What can companies achieve by actively engaging in social media?

Social media is the online word-of-mouth; therefore, it can help companies to promote their brand or products. For nonprofit organizations it is a great tool to raise awareness, for example, Kony 2012.

Q 4. What are the biggest risks of becoming involved in social media for a company?

There are many companies that are not ready and do not have enough knowledge, but do get involved in social media and just think that their profit will increase. Companies open accounts on popular networks and feel that is enough, but it is not.

Q 5. What is the best way to increase your popularity on social networks?

It is important that companies and organizations participate and talk to other users without the intention of immediately selling something. Balancing the amount of post is very important as well, too many messages will 'scare' users and it can cause a decrease in credibility.

Q 6. What is best way to encourage participation on social networks? (For example, sharing or linking or retweeting a post)

Content is very important, the messages need to be interesting and funny. Participating is important, just sending out messages is not enough. People are more willing to retweet a message when the content is interesting or funny even if it is a commercial message.

Q 7. Companies use viral marketing to increase their popularity, but sometimes it works negatively. For example, Macdonald's started a Twitter campaign and they got a lot of negative responses. What can companies do to avoid these negative consequences as much as possible?

In the case with Macdonald's the problem was that they used the hashtag #McDStories which

encouraged people to share their experiences with MacDonalds, both negative and positive. It is hard to avoid negative consequences, just as it is hard to predict hypes. It is important for companies to acknowledge their weaknesses and think about them before starting a campaign.

Q 8. What is your perspective on the future of social media? Increase or decrease of popularity, arise of new tools?)

Social media and technology will continue to develop and the power of social networks will only increase in the future. Companies will have to change and adapt their structure to keep up with these developments.