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The new on-line marketing medium: Viral Marketing.

Analysis of the field through two case studies.

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ABSTRACT

Title: The new on-line marketing medium: Viral Marketing. Analysis of the field through two case studies.

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Key words: Word-of-mouth, Electronic-word-of-mouth, Internet, Social Networks, Viral marketing.

Purpose: This paper synthesizes the emerging literature on viral marketing through the analysis of two case studies and identifies and evaluates important factors that need to be considered when organizing a viral marketing campaign nowadays; the elements used the implemented strategy, the impact and results. The companies to be studied have been successful developing viral marketing strategies even they differ in size, sector and product offered.

Literature Review: Definition of traditional word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth is provided, as well as the concept of viral marketing and its advantages and disadvantages. For further knowledge of the topic, the main elements to develop a proper viral marketing campaign are explained as well as the different tactics to follow.

Analysis: The analysis is based on two different case studies. On the one hand, ING Direct viral marketing strategies are examined followed by conclusions of its success and impact; and in the other hand the same analysis for Dove is provided. Even the differences in size, sector or target, both companies have something in common: they are successful developing viral marketing strategies. In order to reach more accurate conclusions, a comparative analysis is made between the successful company developing viral marketing strategies (i.e. ING Direct and Dove) with traditional companies not using this methods (i.e. Santander and Nivea).

Conclusion: Viral marketing strategies are available to every company. In addition, it is now easier to get a profile on social networks and build more active and peer-to-peer relationships with consumers. Companies like ING Direct or Dove, take advantage of the opportunities that the new technological era provides making use of tools such as the SNSs

to support the viral marketing strategies. The effect obtained by the two companies is notorious and their main objectives are satisfactorily achieved. Therefore, today, there is place for viral marketing strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Looking some years back, many changes can be perceived; being the rapid growth of the technological world the most remarkable and important one, specially the Internet. These advancements in communication and technology have opened up huge opportunities for businesses to appeal to much larger markets than ever before creating and developing new companies purely working in the online area; new marketing strategies; market shifts, and therefore new customers and ways of behaving (Abed Abedniya & Sahar Sabbaghi Mahmoudi, 2010).

Traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) was originally defined as an oral form of interpersonal non-commercial communication among consumers (Arndt, 1967). However, the traditional WOM is further accelerated with the advent of the Internet; taking the name of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Electronic word-of-mouth communication refers to any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, and former customers about a product or a company via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau, P. Gwinner, Walsh, & D. Gremler, 2004).

Lars Perner (2010), a professor of the Marshall School of Business, defines Humans as inherently social animals. Individuals greatly influence each other. The WOM has been always the first source of information when evaluating the alternatives of consumers before purchasing the elected product or service. Internet's advantages of providing large amounts of information quickly and inexpensively and its growing accessibility (Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1999), has proportionate today's customer a deeper knowledge about the products or services willing to buy.

One of the fastest growing arenas of the World Wide Web is the space of so-called social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, Xanga). These sites rely upon user-generated content to attract and retain visitors, obtaining revenue primarily from the sale of online display advertising. They also accumulate user information that may be valuable for targeted marketing purposes (Trusov, Buckin, & Pauwels, 2008).

According to Social Networking Service (2013) there are over 200 Social Networking Sites (SNSs) catering to different languages and countries in the world. The popularity of SNSs varies from country to country.

The most popular SNS is Facebook without any doubt. Its popularity has grown exponentially over recent years, from 5.5 million active users in 2005 to around 1.3 billion users across the globe (statisticbrain.com, 2014). Indeed, one research showed that around 98% of the university and college students (18-24 year old) use Facebook along with other social media being the average amount of time of Facebook usage 15hours and 33 minutes per month.

In January 2010 Twitter attracted 73.5 million unique viewers, and from 2009-2010 it demonstrated an annual membership growth rate of 1,105% (TechCrunch.com, 2010). Moreover, Twitter currently has a region of 645,750,000 registered users (statisticbrain.com, 2014). YouTube, is localized in 42 countries by the late 2013 and is broadcasted in more than 54 languages.

Companies are taking advantage of the SNSs in order to use them as a powerful tool for developing marketing strategies. Marketers are particularly interested in better understanding word-of-mouth as traditional forms of communication appear to be losing effectiveness (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). Numerous companies have today a presence in these sites. According to Gartner (2011), the forecast for global social media revenue will be 29 billion by 2015. Clearly there's value to being present.

As one commentator stated, "Instead of tossing away millions of dollars on Superbowl ads, fledging dot-com companies are trying to catch attention through much cheaper marketing strategies such as blogging and word-of-mouth campaigns" (Whitman 2006).

HubSpot published an article analyzing "101 companies rocking it on social media". In the article, companies of every sector, size and target audience were identified such as Versace, IKEA, New York Times or Urban Outfitters.

It was not a coincidence that these companies decide to have a place in the online social world. The SNSs are the perfect platform to share information, target customers and create brand image and diffusion.

According to Dye (2000), McKinsey estimates that 67% of all goods and services in the United States are affected by buzz. Technological changes such as PC networking, SMS technology, and greater bandwidth are also leading to more networking and word-of-mouth opportunities. Websites such as Epinions, devoted exclusively to passing on opinions about products and services, can spread negative or positive word-of-mouth

about products meaning that, at the very least, marketers need a strategy that considers the potential effects such consumer-led sites can have on their brand's position.

Dye (2000) identifies also a number of aspects of products most susceptible to the buzz phenomenon, including unique products (such as collapsible scooters), highly visible products (Gucci baguette bags, Palm Pilots), and products that are naturally susceptible to word-of-mouth discussion (Viagra). Central to the success of these campaigns is one or more of the following: their entry timing (early), their visibility, or the simplicity of the idea.

In 2003, Sony launched a viral marketing campaign using humor through music in out-of-character situations. The viral element of the site was the "email a friend" button. The site visitor who found the content amusing enough did forward the site to friends and thus spread the message of Sony's new product to potential new customers (Dobelea, Tolemanb, & Beverland, 2005).

Several years ago Honda realized that the brand needed to communicate clearly that "a car is not a car". In the creation of the ad, it was not enough to have a "wow" factor in the advertisements the ad had to be really good to cut through the clutter, encourage a favorable attitude toward the brand, and encourage consumers not only to buy but to talk as well. The ad was initially launched on UK television at the first commercial break of the Brazilian Formula 1 Grand Prix: timed to reach those who could appreciate and marvel at the complexity of the car. Coinciding with the television launch, the "creative" was also made available on the Honda website, where those fascinated by it could download it to watch over and over. Such was the amount of interest that many shared the ad with friends and began emailing it around the world. Thus began the viral marketing campaign of The Honda Cog. In using viral marketing as part of the message delivery, Honda was able to spread its message further than traditional media would allow within the UK, resulting in record-breaking sales in the first quarter of 2004 in part to the dramatic increase in brand awareness from The Cog ad (Honda, 2004).

It can be therefore observed that as the market is shaped by the new technological era, organizations strive for new ways to achieve and retain a competitive edge in markets in which customers are becoming more discerning and demanding and competition is increasing. As a way of differentiation and retention of customers, undertakings may bear in mind the opportunities that the technological environment offers being the viral marketing an advantageous, cheap and rapid diffusion marketing strategy.

1.2. Problem

The technological change and the increasing use of internet and its on-line applications have provoked a revolution creating new challenges for marketers. Today, users generate and control communication, which results in a great promise to substantially improve marketing efforts with viral marketing campaign. These new ways of marketing strategies bring businesses tens of opportunities for relationship building between marketers and their customers.

The viral marketing, is characterized from its rapid diffusion of the message (exponential growth of the message diffusion) and as a result access to a more diverse audience at a low spending (compared with traditional marketing).

Due to all these facts, the following questions need an analysis: Are companies taking into account all the opportunities a viral marketing campaign offers? Which factors need to be considered to achieve success with a viral marketing campaign (objectives, tactics and elements)?

1.3. Purpose

It is noticeable that not only consumers but companies are shaped by the technological era, bringing the latter new ways of developing effective marketing strategies; viral marketing strategies. Although it brings companies noticeable opportunities and challenges, the topic is still under development. As it lacks published empirical studies that offer and collect a set of technical and management activities, this paper synthesizes the emerging literature on viral marketing and identifies important factors that need to be considered when organizing a viral marketing campaign.

Moreover, it evaluates through the analysis of two case studies how companies manage a viral marketing campaign nowadays; the elements used, the implemented strategy or tactic, the impact and results. Both companies have been successful developing viral marketing strategies, and even they differ in size, sector and product offered, this will result in the obtaining of rich conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter a deeper description of traditional word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth is provided, as well as the concept of viral marketing, its elements and the advantages and disadvantages of its use. Afterwards, the importance of the SNS's is explained and to have a further knowledge of the topic, the main tactics and the basic steps to develop and effective viral message is defined.

2.1. Traditional word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth

a) *Traditional word-of-mouth*

Communication between suppliers and consumers has been characterized over the centuries by an intense personal dialogue, from which a mutual trust arose with the aim of building long-term customer relationships (Meiners, Schwarting, & Seeberger, 2010). The significance of word-of-mouth (WOM) in influencing consumer decision making has been well recognized in marketing and advertising literature (Engel et al.1969; Gilly et al. 1998). WOM is defined as the act of exchanging marketing information among consumers, and plays an essential role in changing consumer attitudes and behavior towards products and services (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

According to Arndt, word-of-mouth (WOM) refers to oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator which the receiver perceives as a noncommercial message, regarding a brand, product or service (Arndt, J., 1967). Because WOM is created and delivered by a more trustworthy source of information about products and brands than company generated persuasive messages (Feick & Price, 1987),¹consumers often rely on it when they search for information on which to base their purchase decisions. Therefore this issue is of relative importance for marketers.

b) *Electronic word-of-mouth*

The major change in the market that should be mentioned first is the ever increasing supply of communication channels. If there was still a fairly manageable number of media in the 1960s (TV, radio, magazine, newspaper), by the end of the 1990s the Internet and mobile communications had become two further media competing for the attention of the consumer (Meiners, Schwarting, & Seeberger, 2010).

The second generation of Internet-based applications (i.e. “Web 2.0”) or what Shih (2009) calls the fourth revolution, in which users generate and control communication, holds great promise to significantly enhance marketing efforts with viral marketing campaigns (Thackeray et.al. 2008:2). This technology presents opportunities for relationship building, not only peer to peer but also between marketers and their customers (Harridge-March and Quinton 2009:171). The emergence of Internet-based media has facilitated the development of WOM online – that is, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defined electronic word-of-mouth (i.e. eWOM or online WOM) as ‘any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet’ (p. 39). Subramahi and Rajagopalan define electronic word-of-mouth as the tactic of creating a process where interested people can market to each other (Subramahi & Rajagopalan, 2003, p.1).

Participation in a virtual community (VC) empowers members by balancing their informational (dis)advantage and having opportunity to freely express their concerns and interact with others. As a result, consumers today do not act as passive respondents as in their previous relationship with brands, but as active members of brand communities who have the confidence to come into the brand’s “space”, having their own voice.

Therefore, the Internet has facilitated consumers to share their opinions with other unknown customer through these online WOM platforms (i.e. eWOM). Compared to traditional face-to-face WOM communications, the online WOM platform has unique characteristics that may influence the way consumers process WOM and make purchasing decisions (Lee, D.H., & Han, 2008).

One of the main characteristic of this WOM platform is its measurability. That is, consumer reviews are written and accumulated and due to that consumers can easily count the number of positive and negative opinions and evaluate the quality of products/service. (Chung Hun & Cranage, 2011). This fact entails opportunities and challenges for today’s companies. Before, the WOM of positive and negative opinions used to happen face-to-face and therefore companies could not count or measure them. Today, however, most of the opinions of consumers are stated online, physically written, and therefore companies can correct the mistake in case of negative comment or enhance and promote the positive advantages.

2.2. Viral marketing

2.2.1. Concept of viral marketing

In 1994 Douglas Rushkoff published *Media Virus*, a paper in which he develops the concept of "media virus" as a piece of information or content with a sort of "ideological code 'camouflaged behind an informative or entertaining appearance'" that expands through the networks "infecting" them. Rushkoff defends the ability of these viruses to transfer aspects underlying ideological elements of popular mass culture that camouflage the real intention of the nature and content:

The "protein shell" of a media virus might be an event, invention, technology, system of thought, musical riff, visual image, scientific theory, sex scandal, clothing style or even a pop hero –as long as it can catch our attention. Any one of these media virus shells will search out the receptive nooks and crannies in popular culture and stick on anywhere it is noticed. Once attached, the virus injects its more hidden gendas into the datastream in the form of ideological code -not genes, but a conceptual equivalent we now call "memes".

The concept of media virus has a number of features that makes it particularly interesting for business communication in their efforts going beyond the barriers of protection for consumers in advertisements, and in the years after its assumption and development within the field of marketing is remarkable.

Its original inspiration came from the pattern of adoption of Hotmail beginning with its launch in 1996. Tim Draper persuaded the company to include a promotional pitch for its Web-based email with a clickable URL in every outbound message sent by a Hotmail user. Therein lay one of the critical elements of viral marketing: every customer becomes an involuntary salesperson simply by using the product.

It must be taken into account, however, that in the year in which the concept was launched, 1996, the "social networks" did not yet revolutionized the Internet. There were services such as GeoCities and was about to open sixdegrees (1997), but the real concept won't take place until the revolution of the "bubble.com" as Friendster (2002), MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004) and Twitter (2006). The landscape of social networking today is the one that understands and substantially alters the pattern of mass distribution content.

Therefore, viral marketing is understand as: those marketing strategies that have the aim to stimulate individuals to pass on a message to other contacts in the network, creating an

exponential growth in the number of people exposed to or influenced by the viral message. As the message is passed through the online environment, the propagation speed and the extent of viral campaigns is remarkably higher than in the offline media (Cabezudo, Camarero Izquierdo, & San José, 2012).

An article on the subject, written by De Bruyn & L. Lilien (2008;1), defines what could be seen as the purpose of the using of viral marketing:

...is to use consumer-to-consumer (or peer-to-peer) communications - as opposed to company-to-consumer communication - to disseminate information about a product or service, thereby leading to more rapid and cost effective adoption by the market.

Furthermore, the authors' state that the message spread could be of either intentional or unintentional art. That means that in the latter situation, consumers are not spreading the marketing-message by intention, the spreading is more spontaneous (De Bruyn & L. Lilien, 2008)

Aiming at the purpose or goal of viral marketing, it is important to analyze and understand *why* and *how* viral marketing can be useful and effective for a company. Which are its principal mechanisms? De Bruyn & L. Lilien (2008; 2) state that it is of importance to note that the already existing literature on word of mouth differs from its electronic referrals counterparts in two ways: 1. The true nature of the viral marketing messages are electronic which basically means that there is no face-to-face communication. 2. Those referrals are usually of spontaneous character so the recipients of the messages are not really asking for information, and are therefore not keen to pay attention to them (De Bruyn & L. Lilien, 2008).

Furthermore Ferguson (2008) states that there are actual advantages with viral marketing: the very fast diffusion, the spreading message about a new product generates buzz at a very high level and leverage brand loyal persons to promote assessment and activation. Still the marketer and/or the company has to remember that building true customer loyalty efforts a connection between the viral campaign and the front end of the usual customer strategy. Though, the viral marketing nonsense, which does not have any content, will help loosing the dialogue parts, and is just as mass marketing but for the digital age (Ferguson, 2008).

2.2.2. *Social Networking Sites as a powerful viral tool*²

The growing range of communication channels and increasing mainstream media pressure, in particular the homogenization of the offered services, has had a negative impact on the existing communication model (Sankatsing, 2007).

Today the consumer is confronted more and more by homogeneous standard products, which considerably complicates his buying decisions (Markert, 2008). Especially in markets where brand profiling through product differentiation or innovation is barely possible any longer, it results, according to Bruhn (2005), to an intensely competitive advertising amongst individual providers with the aim of achieving unique communication proposition (UCP), and so obtaining strategic advantage.

The Web 2.0 social media is a potentially powerful medium for finding key consumer influencers, engaging them, and generating brand advocates. As defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61), social media are ‘a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content’.

With high levels of self-disclosure and social presence (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), SNSs have recently outpaced email as the most popular online activity (Nielsen Online, 2009), and have enabled consumers to connect with others by exchanging information, opinions and thoughts about products and brands.

Typical social networking sites allow a user to build and maintain a network of friends for social or professional interaction. In the core of a social networking site are personalized user profiles. Individual profiles are usually a combination of users’ images (or avatars), list of interests, music, books, movie preferences, and links to affiliated profiles (“friends”) [*See Anex: Illustration 1*].

Social media encompass a variety of online information-sharing formats including social networking sites (SNSs) (e.g. Facebook, MySpace and Friendster), creativity works-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube and Flickr), and collaborative websites (e.g. Wikipedia) and microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter) (Mangold & Faulds 2009) [*See Anex: Illustration 2 and 3*].

² See Technical Appendix 1: Two related concepts frequently named in conjunction with social media: Web 2.0 and User-Generated Content (UGC).

by opening the relationship to a dialogue. Social marketing technologies also permit marketers to customize their messages and have a dialogue with customers.

Due to all these facts, SNSs represent an ideal tool for eWOM, as consumers freely create and disseminate brand-related information in their established social networks composed of friends, classmates and other acquaintances (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). Moreover, as Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggested, consumers perceive social media as a more reliable source of information about brands than marketer-generated content communicated via the traditional promotional mix comprising advertising, sales promotion and public relations (p.360).

2.2.3. Advantages and disadvantages of viral marketing

In order to build viral campaigns and foster online WOM, trust must be established and subsequently reinforced in order to overcome any reluctance on the part of the would-be consumer. Online relationship marketing requires the facilitation of the processes of interaction, communication, dialogue and value (Harridge-March & Quinton 2009, p.174). As a result, companies need to move beyond “old-school” approaches to website advertising to embrace the principles of relationship marketing - building virtual environments in which customers can connect with each other to share insights and relevant information. Success in viral marketing hinges upon understanding the nature of knowledge-sharing and persuasion by influencers and responses by recipients in online networks (Subramani & Rajagopalan 2003, p.4).

Some other advantages that the emerging social media tools provide to marketers include real-time video training and webinars that can be developed to more consistent applications with the social nature of the selling relationship (Oracle, 2009) by opening the relationship to a dialogue by commenting, liking or passing along to their social connections (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2009). Through these interactions, consumers voluntarily display their brand preference along with their persona (e.g. name and picture), which can engender eWOM communication.

Targeting strategies can also be developed through the technological bases of online communication. Social networking sites such as Facebook are able to segment audiences by variables such as demographics and interests, and even to map the emergence of online communities as targets (Gillan, 2009).

The company's spending or investment for developing a viral marketing campaign is low, sometimes being inexpensive. Moreover, and as it will be explained further ahead, the diffusion rate of the ad and therefore the message if successful, it will be exponential. This means that the company would be able to reach a great part of the market at a rapid speed.

| CATEGORY | ADVANTAGES |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Financial | Inexpensive |
| Diffusion speed | Reaches audience within a short period of time |
| | Rapid, fast diffusion |
| | Boosts adoption speed |
| | Exponential |
| Peer-to-peer transmission | Voluntary transmission by sender |
| Audience reach | More effective targeting |
| | Access to diverse audience through social contacts |

Table 1: Advantages of Viral Marketing (Woernld, Papagiannidis & Bourlakis 2008)

Nevertheless, while Web 2.0 media presents communications and sales opportunities for marketers, it supposes a high-risk marketing communications technique. Viral marketing techniques require significant initial investment in the viral agent and selling. However, there is no guarantee that the campaign will 'go viral', in which case the investment will be wasted.

Of course, although positive viral marketing can spread rapidly, negative sentiments about a company can be also spread as well as potential and worrying lack of control of marketing messages (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, & Johnston, 2009).

Other major disadvantage of viral marketing is the "nuisance factor." If a marketer has decided to use e-mail as a way to drive traffic to their web site, they are competing with other people who are using the same structure. They run the risk of having their message lost among all the other e-mail messages people receive on a daily basis (Redmond, 2013).

We are all exposed to so much Internet noise that it can be difficult for people to determine which messages they should pay attention to. Being considered a spam marketer is not a good thing for any business trying to increase its web presence. The message is

likely to be deleted or ignored instead of being passed on to other people (Redmond, 2013).

Business managers must also have in consideration the ethical issues. The message to be launched must be ethically approved in grounds a privacy policy on their web site that explains exactly how the information they collect will be used and they will not sell or rent their mailing list to other companies (Redmond, 2013).

Finally, marketers need to keep in mind that the effectiveness of internet based messages is hard to measure. Viral marketing can be a hit and miss proposition, and unless the campaign is being handled by experienced individuals, it can be very difficult to determine whether it is a worthwhile proposition (Redmond, 2013).

The difficulty of measuring its impact is the reason why some marketers shy away from implementing online viral tactics such as viral videos (Ferguson 2008, p.181). Much of what happens in social marketing is little more than experimental, or simply about “insights” rather than metrics.

While many social marketers fixate on volume metrics (website traffic, hit rates, click-throughs, time spent on-line, postings etc), successful social marketing often depends more on qualitative metrics for desirable signs of the tone, quality and customer benefit of the interaction (Angel, Sexsmith & Sexsmith 2009, p.6). These may include: unique visitors, interaction rates, relevant actions taken, conversation size , conversation density, author credibility, content freshness and relevance, audience profiles, unique user reach, and so on (Fisher 2009, p.191). Such metrics not only measure whether people are engaged, but how they are engaging. However, such metrics often need to be customized for individual campaigns and need be considered in the pre-launch phase, ideally incorporated in message testing (Trusov, Buckin, & Pauwels, 2008).

How large and lasting are the effects of word-of-mouth (WOM) referrals versus paid marketing? What is the \$/ € worth of a viral marketing to an Internet social networking site? According to a research made by Trusov, Bucklin, Pauwels (2008) “WOM referrals have a strong impact on new customer acquisition. The long-term elasticity of sign-ups with respect to WOM is estimated to be .53 (substantially larger than the average advertising elasticity). The elasticity for WOM is approximately 20 times higher than that for marketing events and 30 times that of media appearances.” *[See Anex: Illustration 4]*

| CATEGORY | DISADVANTAGES |
|--|---|
| Lack of control | Uncontrollable nature, in particular loss over content and audience reach and few possibilities to measure success |
| | Total loss of control in content and timing |
| | Spam |
| | Lack of control mechanisms over distortion processes and adverse selection of customers |
| Potential negative impact | Risk of backlash and negative brand impact |
| | Negative word-of-mouth can happen |
| | Negative WOM leading to boycott, ruin, unfavorable attitudes |
| | Hate sites |
| | May lead to negative perceptions of brands |
| Consumer dependency | Consumers unwilling to provide referrals unless there is some return |
| Lack of legal and ethical standards | Consumer privacy invasion, consumer may feel exploited, cheated or used. Emerging legal and ethical issues to be considered |

Table 2: Potential disadvantages of Viral Marketing (Woernld, Papagiannidis & Bourlakis 2008)

Is then viral marketing effective and always successful for every organization? It is too difficult to assume that every company is able to develop an effective viral marketing strategy. Nevertheless, considering the advantages named before, what it is clear is that developing viral marketing strategies companies are able to spread the message rapidly and at a low cost. But, although investing low quantities of money elaborating the strategy, the effectiveness of the virality is never precise and measurable. The idea behind this type of online marketing is to provide customers and potential customers with information they will want to pass on to other people they know.

Hotmail's subscriber base grew from zero to 12 million users in 18 months, more rapidly than any company in any media in the history of the world. And it did so with an advertising budget of \$50,000—about enough for some college newspaper ads and a billboard. The online application is typically used as a secondary or personal account for communication with a close coterie of friends. There appears to be a mathematical elegance to their smooth, exponential growth curves, which can be summarized as:

$$\text{Cumulative users} = (1 + \text{fan out})^{\text{cycles}}$$

In this model, “cycles” is the number of times the message is sent in a given time period since launch (or frequency multiplied by time) and “fan out” is the number of people reached. For instance, one seed user grew to 3 users at the end of the first cycle, 9 by the second, 27 by the third, and so on. Companies with much larger “fan outs”, such as the free email list managers, have grown more quickly than Hotmail.

For a bit more accuracy, Steve Jurvetson developed the function of the exponential growth of a viral message (and its success) and the retention rate as percentages:

$$\text{Cumulative users} = [(1 + \text{fan out} * \text{conversation rate}) * \text{retention rate}]^{\text{frequency} * \text{time}}$$

Working through the variables, the ideal viral product is used to communicate with many people, converts a high percentage of them to new users, and retains a high percentage of those new users.

The function can be better understood through an example. Assume that each user gets the message that is able to communicate it to other 2 users and each of these users spread to 2 other users in period 2, etc. being the equation developed (i.e. the base "a" is = 2; being x the month or period, variable number),

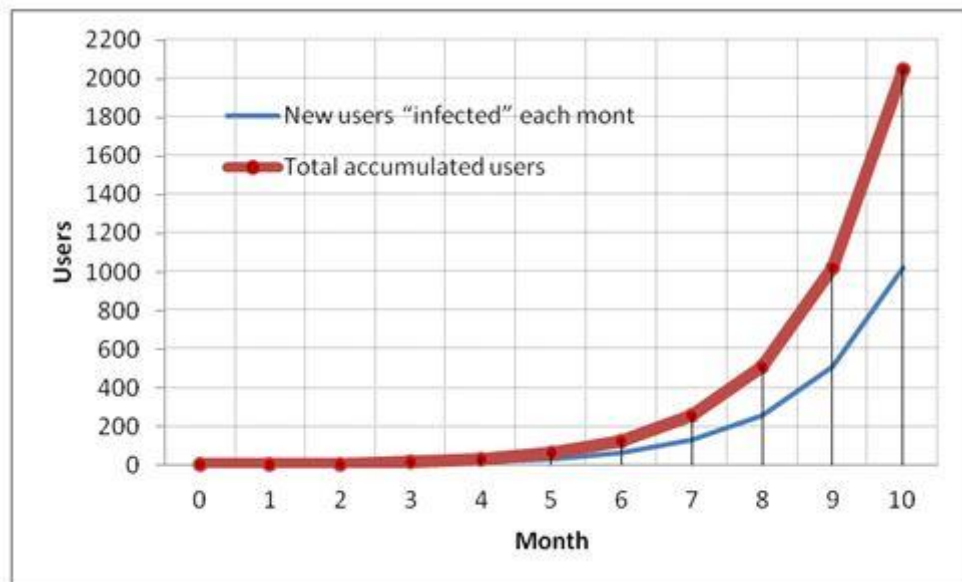
$$\text{Total accumulated users: } 2^x$$

, obtaining⁵:

| Month | New users "infected" each month | Total accumulated users |
|-------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2 | 4 | 7 |
| 3 | 8 | 15 |
| 4 | 16 | 31 |
| 5 | 32 | 63 |
| 6 | 64 | 127 |
| 7 | 128 | 255 |
| 8 | 256 | 511 |
| 9 | 512 | 1023 |
| 10 | 1024 | 2047 |

Table 4: Numerical example of Steve Jurvetson equation

The corresponding graphic of the table would be the following:



⁵ Month=cycles, period (variable); New users "infected" each month will be the result obtained by displacing the variable x by the month that correspond; Total accumulated users will be all those users infected (new and old)

Graph 5: Accumulated users and new users “infected” per month

In the graphic can be observed that the total accumulated users have increased exponentially reaching 2047 users in no more than 10 weeks. The efficiency of the viral marketing to reach consumers (i.e. users) is notorious [See *Anex: Illustration 5*].

A more accurate model would include decay functions for each variable, reflecting novelty and saturation effects. For example, Hotmail’s variables are tapering as it reaches saturation. It now has more than 60 million active users or one out of every four people on the Web.

The evidences suggest therefore that a company, if successful, in a reduced period of time can achieve and influence greatly the market. However, which are the ingredients to push a message go viral?

To be as successful as Hotmail, a company must have each element of a viral marketing strategy clear. It is not necessary to include all of them in the strategy, but the more elements are covered, the biggest triumph is likely to happen. According to Wilson (2005), the viral marketing elements are:

1. Gives away products or services
2. Provides for effortless transfer to others
3. Scales easily from small to very large
4. Exploits common motivations and behaviors
5. Utilizes existing communication networks
6. Takes advantage of others' resources

“Gives away products or services” corresponds to the first element of a viral marketing strategy. Most viral marketing programs give away valuable products or services to attract attention, being the word “free” the more powerful word of marketer’s vocabulary. Other words as “cheap” or “inexpensive” may generate a wave of interest, but not as fast as “free”. The word “free” attracts eyeballs; eyeballs then see other desirable things that you are selling, and as a result, companies earn money and the interest of the users of the products or services they sell.

Nevertheless, it must be taken into account that viral marketing practices are of long run gratification. They may not profit today, or tomorrow, but if they can generate a

groundswell of interest from something free, they know they will profit "soon and for the rest of their lives". Eyeballs bring valuable e-mail addresses, advertising revenue, and e-commerce sales opportunities. Give away something, sell something.

The message that will be spread by users must be easy. Viruses only spread when they're easy to transmit. The medium that carries the marketing message must be easy to transfer and replicate: e-mail, website, graphic, software download. Short is better. Viral marketing works famously on the Internet because instant communication has become so easy and inexpensive. Digital format make copying simple.

In order to spread like wildfire the transmission method must be rapidly scalable from small to very large. The weakness of the Hotmail model is that a free e-mail service requires its own mail servers to transmit the message. If the strategy is wildly successful, mail servers must be added very quickly or the rapid growth will bog down and die. If the virus multiplies only to kill the host before spreading, nothing is accomplished.

Companies must take into account common human motivations as a way to create messages that people really wants to transfer to their relatives. To do so, they need to find those desires to be cool, the hunger to be popular, loved, and understood; what greed drives people. The resulting urge to communicate produces millions of websites and billions of e-mail messages. Therefore, designing a marketing strategy that builds on common motivations and behaviors for its transmission the success is quite close.

It has been explained in a section before the powerful tool the SNSs could be. The time most global consumers spend on social media has grown over 250% in just the past two years. Therefore it is becoming more and more evident that companies must engage with individuals on these multiple channels. According to Gartner, the forecast for global social media revenue will be 29 billion by 2015. PWC affirms that 60% of consumers use social media to follow, discover, and give feedback on brands and retailers (Wong, 2012).

This data shows that most people are social. Social scientists tell us that each person has a personal network of 8 to 12 people in their close space of friends, family, and associates. A person's broader network may consist of scores, hundreds, or thousands of people, depending upon her position in society. People on the Internet develop networks of relationships, too. They collect e-mail addresses and favorite website URLs. Affiliate programs exploit such networks, as do permission e-mail lists. If it is well learned how to

place messages into existing communications between people those messages will rapidly multiply its dispersion.

The last positive fact to be mention is to take advantage of other resources. The most creative viral marketing plans use others' resources to get the word out. Affiliate programs, for example, place text or graphic links on others' websites. Today, someone else's newsprint or webpage is relaying the company's own marketing message and due to that fact, someone else's resources are depleted rather than the one of the company (Wilson, 2005).

2.2.5. *Tactics to develop an effective viral message*

Buzz marketing or viral marketing does not just happen. Instead, it is increasingly the result of carefully managed marketing programs. Managers, have a portfolio of marketing tactics which they assemble just the right sequence to generate and sustain buzz. The following list describes different viral marketing tactics managers could follow according to Dye (2000):

- *Seed the vanguard.* Every customer is unique, and therefore is not created equal. Some, the vanguard, have a disproportionate ability to shape public opinion. Managers, identifying these individuals and getting their products into the hands of the vanguard, can pay off exponentially in how the mass market ultimately responds.
- *Ration supply.* This tendency, also known as scarcity strategy, has been long exploited by the luxury-goods industry. Marketing strategies based on scarcity seek to generate demand, spur short term sales and increase positive perception of the brand by limiting product availability. Implementing this strategy, the company increases the ability to manage brand image for popular product. Indeed, it creates positive word of mouth. When one consumer will buy it another will get affected and they will also buy. It is well known that people often want that they—or others—can't have.
- *Exploit icons to beget buzz.* This tactic is based in the use of celebrities to promote the company's products. Thanks to ad campaigns featuring famous icons of the society (actors and actress, musicians, politicians...) a company can built its brand into a marketing juggernaut.
- *Tap the power of lists.* Lists are potent tools for creating buzz because they're effective road signs for information-besieged consumers who don't know where to focus their attention. Moreover, companies should take into account these lists to evaluate new trends and be aware of consumer taste changes.

- *Nurture the grass roots.* This tactic is quite similar to the first one—seed the vanguard. Nevertheless, there is a critical difference. The first strategy focuses all the efforts in the vanguard, the one being the first to know the product revealing exclusivity. The grassroots strategy relies in early adopters who try to convert other people, to turn them into users too.

The strategies explained before are the most common tactics used among managers in order to create effective viral campaigns. Nevertheless, there is always time for innovation.

Sanz García (2012) develops a complementary framework which describes more in deep the steps to follow when a company develops a viral marketing campaign. What it is clear, even if a company is a product or service provider, or it bases its strategies in the first or the last tactic, the following framework is always followed:

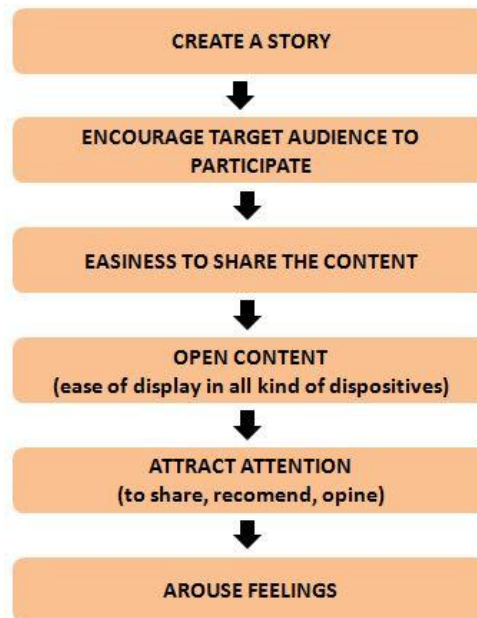


Figure 6: Steps to develop a viral campaign (Sanz García, 2012)

According to Sanz García (2012) the principal objective of the viral marketing is to “generate media coverage with unusual stories, valued as much higher budget for advertising of the poster company”. How can a company generate the media coverage? The story must be perceived by the consumer as a noncommercial message, providing customers and potential customers with information they will want to pass on to other people they know, being the spreading of the message more spontaneous. The latter could have the form of a video-clip, an interactive flash game, an image or a text.

The six steps coincide with the different elements described in the section before, indeed they are complementary.

Both theories (i.e. Dye and Saenz García) highlight that one of the most important facts to keep in mind is the content of the message. It needs to attract the attention of the target audience, and therefore needs to be unusual, innovative and shocking. The company needs to motivate the user to share it, recommend it and opine about it. Moreover, if the story arouses feelings, will be more difficult for the user to forget the message and so will be remembered for a while (Rodríguez, 2007).

In order to make it as much viral as possible, the company needs to bear in mind the openness of the format used, so that the audience can easily display the content in all types of dispositive.

3. ANALYSIS

Once all the concepts around viral marketing have been explained, now it is time to analyze the case studies.

For a more deep insight of the topic, two different case studies have been selected⁶. On the one hand, ING Direct viral marketing strategies are examined followed by conclusions of its success and impact; and in the other hand the same analysis for Dove is provided.

As can be noticed, both companies are quite different regarding size, sector or target audience; ING Direct is an electronic banking company and Dove performs in the beauty and self-care sector. Even these differences, both companies have something in common: they are successful developing viral marketing strategies.

In order to reach more accurate conclusions, a comparative analysis is made between the successful company developing viral marketing strategies (i.e. ING Direct and Dove) with traditional companies not using this methods (i.e. Santander and Nivea).

3.1. Viral marketing campaign: Two case studies of its different usage but its common success

There are multiple companies nowadays taking advantage of the opportunities a viral marketing campaign offer. As explained in sections before, a viral marketing campaign is inexpensive and if successful, it can reach large scale of audience. For instance Desigual, for the “Mom’s Day 2014”⁷, has launched a spot where a girl puts a cushion under her dress to simulate a pregnancy in the mirror and then clicks some condoms with a pin, under the slogan 'You decide'. The marketing campaign has caused controversy in social networks.

Back in January of 2012, McDonald’s tried to promote its brand and engage with customers through two promoted trends: #meetthefarmers and #mcdstories through the social network Twitter. Unfortunately for McDonald's, many Twitter users decided to post their horror stories at the fast food chain using the second of those hashtags. In essence,

⁶ For further knowledge of why and how this method has been selected see *Technical Appendix 3: Methodology used to analyze the Case Studies*

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYOAWXeH6QI>

McDonald's paid to promote a trend that showered the company in bad publicity. McDonald's later admitted that "#mcdstories did not go as planned."

In 2013, Guinness launched one of the most memorable spots of the year. Its poignant "Friendship"⁸ commercial, created by BBDO New York, features six men playing an intense game of wheelchair basketball. As they finish their game toward the end of the 60-second spot, five of the men stand up, revealing that only one of them actually has a physical disability and needs the mobility device to participate. While the six friends enjoy a few post-game beers, the voiceover says: "The choices we make reveal the true nature of our character."

As it can be noticed, companies of very diverse sectors use this type of marketing strategies to attract the audience, reach them and impress them. The selected two commercials for the analysis of this paper are; first, the financial company ING Direct and second DOVE the personal care company. Both companies elaborate their strategies following the steps explained in chapters before and taking advantages of the opportunities the viral marketing offers.

3.1.1. CASE STUDY 1: Service viral marketing campaign, ING Direct

a) Presentation of the Case Study

The first case study to analyze is the one of ING Direct, a company performing in the banking sector and therefore a service provider.

There are some facts that need explanation before beginning with the analysis of the case. First of all, it must be taken into account that ING Direct is performing in the financial sector, which was highly regulated in Spain until 1987. Before this happened, the banking companies had it difficult to differentiate one from another. They could only make use of one variable of the 4 P's of the marketing mix: the distribution, opening more offices and having more presence in the street. After the deregulation around 90's and the advances of the technological arena (i.e. Internet and SNSs) brought multiple opportunities and challenges for marketers of this sector. The new environment gives rise to more competitive sector and so companies need to find their competitive advantages exhaustibly and transmit it to consumers better and faster than the competitor does.

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ap2ikE54PrM>

Secondly, the financial sector is a service in nature which limits the development of the marketing strategies because of its characteristics, being the main characteristics: inseparability, intangibility, perishability and variability.

The intangibility is one of the main problems of the services. Consumers perceive greater risk while purchasing services and especially financial services. If greater risk is perceived, consumers tend to rely more on brand loyalty and achieve toward a relationship with the service organization. This fact instead of being a problem could be a way to differentiate from competitor if banking companies take advantage of the online networks properly to build long term peer-to-peer relationship with customers. Therefore, for banks as ING Direct, it is highly important to build loyal relationships with the consumer and meet their expectations in order to be the first choice.

Furthermore, consumers perceive social media as a more reliable source of information about brands than marketer-generated content communicated via the traditional promotional mix comprising advertising, sales promotion and public relations (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Finally, in general, the ads of the banking sector are not very surprising and aesthetically not usually have anything new regarding the advertising world. Normally, the banking sector more than surprise or impact the audience use the advertising to inform about the company's values and products. Of course, it is more difficult to develop an ad for a financial company than it is for a product provider, however, ING Direct does.

The launch of ING Direct in Spain was a milestone in the Spanish financial picture since it was a different banking model from that time: a strategy with a focus to deliver high return, no fees or fine print strategy and operating exclusively via telephone and Internet (www.afiliado.es, 2014). From it launched in Spain 15 years ago, the goal that has directed ING Direct strategy has been providing its customers with the best conditions. In order to provide the best value for money, the company has focused on a limited range of products and the use of direct channels, which has allowed consumers to be highly efficient moving their costs into savings.

The undertaking is not merely known because of the savings its customers could get when applying for an account. ING Direct is known in Spain from being the pioneer of using solely an online base strategy, developing all the transactions online with a few offices

down the street. As a result, the customer profile of the organization is to some degree digital. Its segmentation is therefore made through SNS's such as facebook, twiteer, e-mail, etc., and subsequently the target audience of the company is considerably young.

b) Analysis of the case: ING Direct and “People in Progress”

It can be said though that ING Direct has taken advantage of the new technological generation developing different ads through the online media. Indeed, the company has surprised the advertising landscape with a curious and odd TV commercial starring by the famous singer Bob Dylan.

This spot, entitled "People in Progress"⁹ serves to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the bank and it is intended to honor all those who have an attitude like the one Dylan shows in the commercial; an attitude open to challenge, creative and that defiance the status quo of the entity.



Illustration 7: ING Direct advertisement “People in Progress”

This ingenious advertising campaign has been devised by the advertising agency of Madrid (i.e. Mrs. Rushmore) and will run for about four weeks. The campaign has been presented in television, print media, radio and the Internet, to achieve as many customers as possible. The company has made use of mass media and internet based sources as a way of spreading the message of the new campaign.

Up to this point and in order to make a more clearly understanding of the case, the analysis will be based on the following questions:

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pg8ZRHn2ZKs>

- What is the company's objective with this ad?
- Does the ad have the elements to be viral?
- If so, which tactic does ING Direct follow?
- Are the objectives of the company reached?
- Is therefore the viral strategy successful?

What is the company's objective with this ad?

With the ad, the company is trying to refresh and update its image. ING Direct is not the same company as it was 15 years ago; with more than 3 million customers and a lot more authority, eventually has changed the slogan to explain the mission of ING Direct. "People in Progress" perfectly sums up the reason why every time they release a novelty, the services to their customers are improved.

Does the ad have the elements to be viral? If so, which tactic does ING Direct follow?

The entity has followed a mix of two tactics described before: exploit icons to beget buzz and ration supply. In the one hand, the company has selected Bob Dylan as the principal of the spot, being a celebrity that will hardly ever be associated with the bank's advertisement.

Has ING Direct selected the wrong celebrity then? Not at all. The objective was not other than to impact the audience. As explained before, the company's objective with the ad was to transmit the audience the new version of its mission.



Illustration 8: ING Direct new brand version "People in Progress" and the slogan used before "Fresh Banking"

The company has used Matias Prats as the main character of its ads before, a person absolutely different to Bob Dylan; traditional and inspiring security. Why has the company chosen the singer for the new spot? Probably Dylan sparks newness and is someone controversial with an attitude creatively challenging, rebellious, and that challenges against the status quo of the entity. As a result, this ad breaks with the trend seen so far of the entity.

ING Direct took a risk when deciding that B. Dylan would be the one starring the clip. It knew that was an option of polarized opinion: either you love him or hate him; but they went ahead being the ad successful. The objective is therefore reached: create a social rumor.

The spot will last just four weeks, which represent somehow a ration supply tactic. This type of strategy is well used for brand rejuvenation. That is, “when any product or image reaches the maturity stage of the Product life cycle, marketers use this strategy to filling fuel in the product for long run”. In this case, after 15 years in the sector, ING Direct wanted to change its image and make the audience aware that they are not staged; they continue improving and innovating with their people (“People in progress”).

Are the objectives of the company reached? Is therefore the viral strategy successful?

The new ad has roundly aroused feelings to the audience, those of Bob Dylan fans and ING Direct clients. The company has created an unusual story, innovative and unconventional, and has encouraged target audience to participate; talking about it and having an opinion about it.

This ad can be defined as “marketing of the rumor” that involve messages, announcements or news that may become controversial by rumors and could scratch the limits of good taste sometimes. This way, through word of mouth the campaign is carried further as the rumor spreads. This can be notices in the 244.763 views of the 30’ video, the 46.000 views of the 1 min and 30’ video. Indeed, multiple blogs and online newspapers wrote about the sport in the last weeks. The following graph shows the statistics of the video, the accumulative times the video has been watched since the 21 of April until the 11 of May of 2014:

Estadísticas de vídeo Hasta el 11/5/2014



Illustration 9: Accumulated views of the 30” “People in progress” spot ING Direct (*Source: YouTube*)

As can be observed, the virality is noticeable. The line of accumulated views is an increasing line that in less than three weeks it has achieved numerous views and it has been shared 41 times.

c) Comparative analysis: ING Direct and Santander

What does ING Direct differ from other financial companies in the sector? In order to answer this statement ING Direct will be compared with Santander. The reason why ING Direct is contrasted with Santander is because both companies perform in the same sector (i.e. a mature sector) and do operate worldwide, although doing marketing differently.

ING Direct in its country of origin, the Netherlands, has a similar image and presence as does Santander in Spain (i.e. traditional bank with many offices in the street). Nevertheless, the company’s mission in Spain is slightly different; the company performs as an electronic Bank, working solely in the on-line area.

Curiously, in the recent year, Santander has changed its slogan too from “El valor de las ideas” to “Un banco para tus ideas”. The company, as ING Direct, has launched the commercial in the TV, radio and online bases. However, the message content has nothing to do with that of ING Direct. Its message is not an unusual story, emotive neither funny. It could be characterized as “informative”.

The company with the change of slogan seeks to homogenize the emotional feeling of the group. Why or how cannot be considered the spot of Santander viral? It is true, that the word of mouth is not merely online, and therefore the impact cannot only be measured by views of the YouTube channel, but comparing the number of views of the Santander's spot and the one of ING Direct, the gap is notorious. The most popular video of Santander has 215.061¹⁰ views meanwhile, ING Direct most popular view has been seen 244.790 times in less than three weeks. The virality of the latter is clear.

Continuing the analysis of this channel, the YouTube's official canal of Santander counts with 181 subscriptions' and ING Direct with 1.659. Furthermore, the use of ING Direct of this social networking site is more current; the company posts comments in its profile, interacts with its clients and has 149 videos uploaded. Santander in the other hand has no more than 99 videos and has no interaction with its clients through this media.

More or less the same situation happens in Facebook, where ING Direct counts with much more "friends" than does Santander (207.817 against 97.267).

As a curious data, in Facebook profile of ING Direct only "848 people are talking about it" while in the case of Santander "1198 people are talking about it", what does it mean? "x people are talking about it" is a new tool developed by Facebook for those "fan pages" (i.e. ING Direct or Santander) that when someone "creates an history" in Facebook about that fan page (tag someone in the picture, comment, answer a question stated, writes a recommendation or "likes" the status or picture) counts as "someone talking about it". Of course this new tool highly benefits the companies; it is a way of measuring their influence in the social network.

Therefore, does Santander creating more eWOM than does ING Direct? The tool is not precise enough. It does not evaluate if the comment is positive or negative and therefore having more people talking about a brand cannot be taken as a positive or negative issue in this case.

Are these two companies taking into account all the opportunities a viral campaign offers? It is obvious that both companies are taking advantage of the SNSs, but not in the same way. Companies such as ING Direct, has a greater presence than does Santander.

¹⁰ Views counted from it launch 4/2/2014 until 12/5/2014. Same for ING Direct case.

Regarding the change in slogan; ING Direct has opted for launching an odd but stunning advertising, not obvious, with a clear message “they are different, and a change is in process”. The spot is starred by a rebel and challenging musician, Bob Dylan, who fits perfectly with the slogan and the new vision of the company.

Santander, on the other hand uses the traditional media and the traditional marketing strategies as a way of inform its clients and potential clients about the new version of the company.

To sum up, taking into account the evidences, we can conclude that ING Directs way of doing marketing and more precisely the last spot, is the closer evidence of a viral marketing campaign.

- d) Broader conclusions: Is ING taking into account all the opportunities a viral campaign offers? Which factors need to be considered to achieve success with a viral marketing campaign?

As explained in the sections before, it is very difficult to evaluate the success of a viral marketing campaign because of the inexistent accurate tools to measure the complete impact of the message. However, we can consider ING Direct as a company that utilizes the social networking sites in the correct manner, achieving unique communication proposition and so obtaining strategic advantage. As a result, the presence of ING Direct in SNSs is increasing in time; today it counts with more than 207.000 followers in Facebook and 15.7K on Twitter.

It can be considered then that ING Direct is taking advantages of the opportunities a viral marketing campaign offers: in financial terms inexpensive but stunning, with a rapid diffusion speed that lets the company reach audience within a short period of time. Indeed, the company achieves the success of this type of strategies through it social networking sites profiles and its active profile in them.

For ING Direct directors, the commercial of “People in progress” can be characterized as successful. Anyway, the ING Direct ad impact has just begun.

3.1.2. CASE STUDY 2: Product viral marketing campaign, Dove

a) Presentation of the Case Study: Dove

Dove performs in the beauty and personal care sector, that is, a product provider. The beauty and self care products are normally sold through: large scale supermarkets, as in the case of Dove, specialized shops or even pharmacies. Every product seems similar, however, the quality and prices of the offerings differ greatly. Even though products can be differentiated by prices and quality, the range of beauty and personal care products is wide, and so nowadays is being more difficult for companies in the sector to attract consumers and increment their market share. Indeed, the competition in the sector is therefore increasing in time and due to that fact companies in the industry need to differentiate more from each other.

Moreover, Spaniards are increasingly connected to the internet and social networks and this fact resulted in the internet being a strong vehicle to promote and support sales. There is a belief amongst key Spanish players in beauty and personal care that the internet is such a key factor in sales growth that some bloggers can positively affect the overall result.

The personal care is a private issue; everyone looks for the best product when it refers to oneself and its relatives, and therefore the election of this kind of products sometimes needs more information and evaluation before purchasing the elected product. Due to this fact, people are more sensitive to brand influences as well as opinions and comments of closest relatives. Companies in the sector need to build brand loyalty with customers and transmit that they are more than a product provider but a solution and experience to their beauty care. Dove, is the perfect example of how a company in this current and mature sector finds innovative and creative ways to impact and attract the audience.

Dove's philosophy is based on "real beauty" that is "inclusive, attainable and rooted in taking good care of one's self". The company started this campaign in 2004, designed to arouse women's emotions against dominant notions of beauty that are premised on thinness, whiteness and perfection. The development of the campaign was based on the findings of a major global study "*The real truth about beauty: a global report*"; among the finding only 2% of women around the world would describe themselves as beautiful. This finding shocked Dove.

Since then, the company has employed various communications vehicles to challenge beauty stereotypes and invite women to join a discussion about beauty, being the ads of the company regularly featured by “real” women and girls of varying ages and body shapes.

The first stage of the campaign centered on a series of billboard advertisements, initially put up in the United Kingdom, and later worldwide. The spots showcased photographs of regular women in place of professional models.

The series received significant media coverage from talk shows, women's magazines, and mainstream news broadcasts and publications, generating media exposure which Unilever has estimated to be worth more than 30 times the paid-for media space. Following this success, the campaign expanded into other media, with a series of television spots and print advertisements.

b) Analysis of the case: Dove “Real Beauty Sketches”

In 2006, Ogilvy & Mather were seeking to extend the campaign further by creating one or more viral videos to host on the Campaign for Real Beauty website. The first of these was *Daughters* followed by *Evolution*, *Onslaught* and *Amy*.

In April 2013, a video titled *Dove Real Beauty Sketches*¹¹ was released as part of the campaign. It went viral attracting strong reactions from the public and media. In the video, several women describe themselves to a forensic sketch artist who cannot see his subjects. The same women are then described by strangers whom they met the previous day. The sketches are compared, with the stranger's image invariably being both more flattering and more accurate. The differences create strong reactions when shown to the women. The tagline reads: “You are more beautiful than you think” [See *Anex: Illustration 6*].

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpaOjMXyJGk>



Illustration 10: Dove “Real Beauty Sketches”



Illustration 11: Dove “Real Beauty Sketches”

In the same way as it has been done before, in this case as well, to make a more clearly understanding of the case the analysis will be based on the following questions:

- What is the company’s objective with this ad?
- Does the ad have the elements to be viral?
- If so, which tactic does Dove follow?
- Are the objectives of the company reached?
- Is therefore the viral strategy successful?

What is the company’s objective with this ad?

Anselmo Ramos, the vice president and creative director at Ogilvy Brazil, states “our job was to talk straight to women in a more intimate, personal way. According to statistics,

only 4% of women feel good about themselves across the globe. We decided to do something that would move the other 96%. From the very beginning, we tried to look for an idea that could actually prove they are wrong about their self-image. We had several ideas, but “Real Beauty Sketches” really stood out.”

Does the ad have the elements to be viral? If so, which tactic does Dove follow?

The message of the ad is clear, emotive and inspirational. The video tries to make the viewer part of it making him/her identified with the main characters. As Dan Hilbert, president of client engagement at TBA Global states “there’s nothing more powerful than a brand really owning an emotional benefit”, and adds “it is important to represent a powerful idea that is relevant to the consumer”, which Dove does.

The company knows its consumers well and what is more important; Dove has latched on to an important facet of the female consumer in particular. According to Nora Miller, co-founder of Anderson Miller PR, “Women often select brands that they ‘believe’ in”. Therefore, advertising a clear brand mission shows customers that the brand believes in its customers’ well-being, and builds trust.

Dove is not simply selling a bar of soap; they are selling the notion of how to feel beautiful and comfortable in your own skin.

What was the tactic used by Dove in order to create this impact? The company has followed every step of creating an effective viral campaign. It first creates an emotive story, starred by current women, aging 25-40 years old, who seem honest and ordinary. Second, the bases of the story are clear and simple, but at the same time standing out a current headache of every woman: their lack of self-concept. It makes the viewer wait till the end to discover what the reaction of the women is, for afterwards, impress.

Based on a statement of Anselmo Ramos in an interview, the undertaking likes to come up with ideas that have not been done before and which they have no idea how it will be developed. “With *Real Beauty Sketches* we thought that women would probably describe themselves in a more negative way than strangers. But it was just a guess really, based on common sense and women’s nature. It could go totally wrong. When we told the idea to the clients, we said: “Listen, this is the idea. We don’t know if it’s going to work, but we think it will. The only way to find out is by doing it.” So there’s a lot of merit to the clients, because they didn’t approve a script; they approved a social experiment.”

Are the objectives of the company reached? Is therefore the viral strategy successful?

Dove found out how to arouse the feelings of the audience creating an emotive story that the audience will want to share. The company has motivated people to share it because the message of the video does not look as an ad but as a personal message.

The campaign went beyond the YouTube clip. It was shared on Facebook thousands of times, and users — including major women’s media brands — were tweeting about it or using the #wearebeautiful hashtag on Twitter [See Anex: Illustration 7]. The spot was merely spread through online based sources rapidly, but there are thousands of in-person conversations that can’t be captured online or quantified. Judging by Dove’s YouTube channel, the majority of the audience liked it. “It’s overwhelmingly positive,” says Machado, Global Brand Development VP of Dove at Unilever. “We have 90,000 likes and I think just 2000 dislikes. Not only on Dove’s Facebook (FB) page, comments about the video suggest that most find it uplifting and inspiring”.

The video created an impact among the audience either women or men, positive or negative. It went viral and has been viewed 63.000.000 times and shared by 101.771 people. Furthermore, the video was “liked” 148.822 times in YouTube and favorably or not, it has made people talk, which is perceived in the more than 17.000 comments that has been posted about the video in YouTube [See Anex: Illustration 8]. As explained before, measuring the success is not easy, neither the reaction caused. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that the undertaking has developed a new movement between women.



Illustration 12: Accumulated views of the *Real Beauty Sketches* spot by Dove (Source: YouTube)

The positive impact is somehow noticeable. Women have shared, liked, commented, written blog posts, and response videos with their personal experience with the video's message, and how they learned from the campaign. The video has been watched mom's with their daughters, and even has been played the video in some schools. Its viral affect shows that it's a win.

As every viral marketing campaign, it has created a bulk of negative reactions who criticized that the Lynx's advertising campaign of Unilever would seemingly contradict the sentiment of the one for Real Beauty. Moreover, Unilever owns Axe hygiene products, which are marketed to men using overtly sexualized women, and Slim Fast diet bars. Some others state that such criticism is totally irrelevant since when thinking about Dove, no one thinks as Unilever brand, at list for starters. Moreover, Dove's idea is not to reach teen boys who want to smell good for ladies (Axe) or people who are overweight and want to lose a few pounds (Slimfast). Each brand solves different problems and so completely different audiences.

Even if Dove missed an opportunity to reach a multicultural audience, the majority of the engagement has been positive. Either way, despite criticism, people are talking about it, said Miller. "The larger the discussion, the more people see it."

Why it went viral? Because it moves people, makes the audience think and it's based on true insight. Even its success, Anselmo Ramos is still surprised by how fast the video went viral. "We love it when something we do gets talked about beyond advertising trade publications, by magazines like *Fast Company*. We also love it when people make the concept their own, by making spoofs and parodies. The "Men: You're Less Beautiful Than You Think" spoof is really funny."

c) Comparative analysis: Dove and Nivea

What does Dove differently in contrast with its competitors of the Beauty sector? According to A. Ramos "The majority of the ads these days do not evoke any clear emotion, they just communicate a particular product or service benefit", and adds "We wanted to do something really emotional."

Nivea, performs also in the Beauty and Personal Care sector, targeting more or less same audience; women aged 18-35 with middle to high income and who take care of their skin

well for their goodness and to boost confidence. As Dove, Nivea rarely uses celebrities as brand presenter; instead it uses “current women”, but let’s say that “less current” than Dove does.

Nivea is known for the high standard of quality product that it produces. This makes it stand different among other cosmetic brands. They work in order to improve their quality of the product to gain customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Along with color and quality of the product, Nivea’s packaging is also very attractive as it comes in different shapes and sizes. The company focuses a large part of its efforts in creating a high quality and attractive product for the market.

According to Nivea’s promotion strategy, it does through different kinds of media; television, newspapers, billboards, magazines, brochures and number of stalls at popular malls and supermarkets, or what it is also called traditional marketing strategies or mass marketing. The company does not develop emotive messages in order to arouse consumer feelings and a powerful idea that is relevant to the consumer. In summary, it does not make the use of viral marketing strategies. Allsop et al. (2007) states that viral marketing needs to persuade by reason and motivate through emotion. The authors suggest that the level of personal relevancy of a message and its emotional appeals influence the likelihood that consumers will pass along the message. It cannot be consider all these facts in a Nivea’s ad.

The company gives more relevance in providing customers huge quantities of free samples of its products to taste and proof the quality of the products. They build relationship with customers on a more face-to-face way. Of course the money Nivea spends in advertising is considerably higher than what Dove spends.

Therefore, the communication strategy of Nivea tends to be content-oriented rather than media channel-oriented. The beauty and self-care company uses mass media to encourage trial and purchase in order to inspire the consumer with the content of the message of the ad.

Both companies use and are taking advantage of the social networking sites, but differently. Nivea’s use is promotional meanwhile Dove’s usage of SNSs is more intimate and personal as well as invites women to join a discussion about beauty. Nivea, has 13.887.746 fans in its Facebook fun-page while Dove doubles it (21.840.478 fans). Regarding the tool of “people

talking about it”, Nivea has 180.288 “people talking about it” and Dove counts with 521.643 “people talking about it”.

Even though Nivea’s lower SNSs presence, the company ranked fourth within Beauty Product Care globally, and has a very uniform global positioning as a mass brand. It also has a uniform website, packaging and branding across the world. It has a different approach to social media, as the brand is not present in some markets – notably in Russia, but also Kenya, where it was the leading brand in 2012. Hence, the company is not doing that bad though.

To sum up, it is noticeable that both companies use SNSs but differently; Nivea is not developing viral marketing strategies but despite of that fact it is performing well in the sector, reaching its aims. Dove, in the other hand, tries to build loyal relationship with its customers not basing in what benefits the product delivers but to inspire women an make them feel comfortable and beautiful in their own skin. The company assumes risks when launching stunning and emotive spots, but according to the results obtained until now has reached objectives.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of the paper is to synthesize the emerging literature on viral marketing and the advantages and opportunities this tactic offers to companies in order to position their product and attract its audience.

Along the paper information regarding the viral marketing strategies, its factors and elements has been explained. For its further understanding, two case studies have been analyzed regarding two companies which have been successful developing this type of marketing strategies. The results obtained permitted to have a deeper knowledge of the viral component as well as the importance of the new technologies to develop this strategies.

The products provided by the analyzed companies are characterized by being mature, poorly differentiated and in a sector that offers a wide range of similar products. Moreover, these are supplied in very competitive industries and oriented to a large market.

Either ING Direct in contrast with other banking companies or Dove against other firms performing in the beauty sector are characterized by an innovative trajectory.

On the one hand, ING Direct entered the Spanish banking sector with a differentiated behavior that had traditional financial companies at that time. Its objective did not consist on having as much presence in the street as possible by opening many offices but having a virtual presence, being the first option online.

On the other hand, Dove breaks the traditional strategies used in the sector and bets on a new marketing strategy that is not focused on highlighting the effectiveness of the product, instead, it tries to open the eyes of every woman to make them realize and feel their real beauty. As a result every woman can be user of Dove's beauty products, with no exception, since all women are beautiful.

Overcoming the risks and challenges, both companies have opted to break the traditional strategies and use methods to attract and impact the audience in a different way. They both know their consumers' emotions and motivations well, and what is more important, they know how to arouse them. The companies broke the stability of the actual offerings providing something new, something fresh, something innovative. Moreover, with the passage of the time ING Direct and Dove, have made a new bet basing their marketing strategies in the changes produced in the average Spanish consumer: the access to internet,

the increasing use of the SNSs and the eWOM made through them (i.e. bloggers, online newspapers, opinion and suggestion forums...).

ING Direct began its new campaign “People in progress” with the aim of attracting to the attention of the audience with a popular icon of the past but characterized by being disruptive and controversial, as Bob Dylan was.

Dove has done something similar launching a disruptive campaign based on the original philosophy of the company: their promotion is not based on the benefits of the product and its characteristics but to support and spread the idea that every woman is beautiful.

Both cases, ING Direct and Dove, have become viral because they did have a big impact in the SNSs; numerous views and downloads in the YouTube site, comments and sharing’s through Facebook as well as in other online social networks. As it has been mentioned along the paper, the measurability of the impact in sales or effectiveness of this type of marketing strategies is not easy, but the influence and repercussion it causes on the consumers and what is more important concerning the image of the company is notorious. For an average Spanish consumer ING Direct is a different bank, innovative and purely online. For a Spanish woman Dove is a known and recognized product offered and accessible to every woman. Both companies have achieved their objectives with the viral ad; they have aroused feelings, create a innovative and different story and have made people talk about it.

Finally, the comparison made between ING Direct and Santander as well as Dove and Nivea serves to emphasize how different initiatives have clearly different impact if they introduce a component of SNSs when developing marketing strategies (YouTube downloads, views, comments, sharing, Facebook friends, “x people is talking about it”...).

The impact of word of mouth is probably at its strongest when it originates from social contacts because the reliability is greater perceived. As explained before, this form of communication is outside the formal control of an organisation and yet its impact is such that the ability to influence or encourage word of mouth. Even these facts, the results obtained by both companies’ shows that viral marketing strategies supported by SNSs can benefit companies at a large scale.

| | | ING DIRECT | DOVE |
|---|---|---|---|
| ARE COMPANIES TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES A VIRAL CAMPAIGN OFFERS? | RAPID SPEED AND BIG IMPACT (reach audience's attention rapidly) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YouTube: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spot 30': 244.763 views • Spot 1 min: >46.000 views - Facebook "People talking about it": 848 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YouTube: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views: 63.000.000 • Shared: 101.771 times • Likes: 148.822 • Commented: 17.000 |
| | SNSs SUPPORT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YouTube: 1.659 subscriptions - Facebook: 207817 fans - Twitter (@INGDIRECTes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Followers: 16.1K • Videos: 93 • Tweets: 13.1K | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YouTube: 1.075 subscriptions - Facebook: 21.840.478 fans - Twitter (@Dove): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Followers: 118K • Videos: 191 • Tweets: 16.2K |
| WHICH FACTORS NEED TO BE CONSIDERED TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS WITH VIRAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN? | OBJECTIVES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refresh and update its image and slogan - "People in progress": every time the company releases a novelty the services to their customers are improved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4% of the women around the globe feel good about themselves. Objective: make the remaining 96% feel beauty and comfortable in their skin too. - Talk straight to women in a more intimate and personal way |
| | TACTICS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exploit icons to beget buzz: Bob Dylan, rebel and controversial. Before, Matias Prats: traditional and inspiring security 2. Ration supply: incentive customers and renovate the image. | <p>Inspirational message: Every woman is beautiful:</p> <p>Transmit a powerful idea, relevant to the consumer (know customers well).</p> <p>Make the viewer the main character of the spot</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|--|--|
| | | | |
| | IMPACT AND SUCCESS | Notorious in terms of views in YouTube, comments and likes as well as diffusion of eWOM in other SNSs. | Notorious in terms of views in YouTube, comments and likes as well as diffusion of eWOM in other SNSs. |

Illustration 13: Summary of the obtained results and conclusions

5. FURTHER RESEARCH

To finish the paper, this section includes issues that would be interesting to analyze in future investigations regarding the main topic: viral marketing.

It has been highlighted along the paper that the SNSs perform an important role in the impact of the viral marketing. These online platforms can be considered as powerful tools to segment the market but, would it be effective for all type of companies even the size of the market and sector?

As noticed, could happen that not all generated word of mouth turns positive. A further research about how do consumers process negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) and how do they react to it would be interesting to analyze. In addition, to what extend does NWOM damage positive attitudes towards a company, its offerings and purchasing confidence. Furthermore, if companies decide to respond online to the negative reviews, how a company should respond to NWOM in order to preserve its reputation and what is the most effective or appropriate way to answer would need deeper investigation.

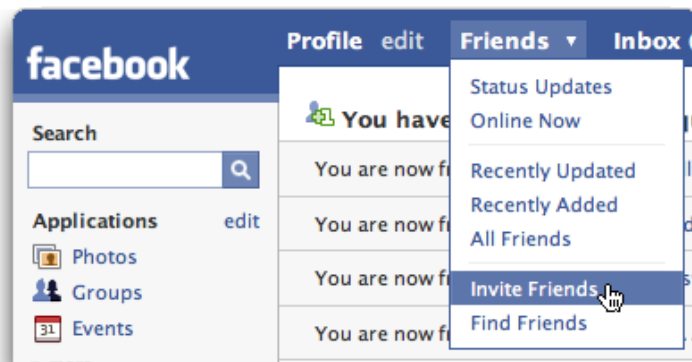
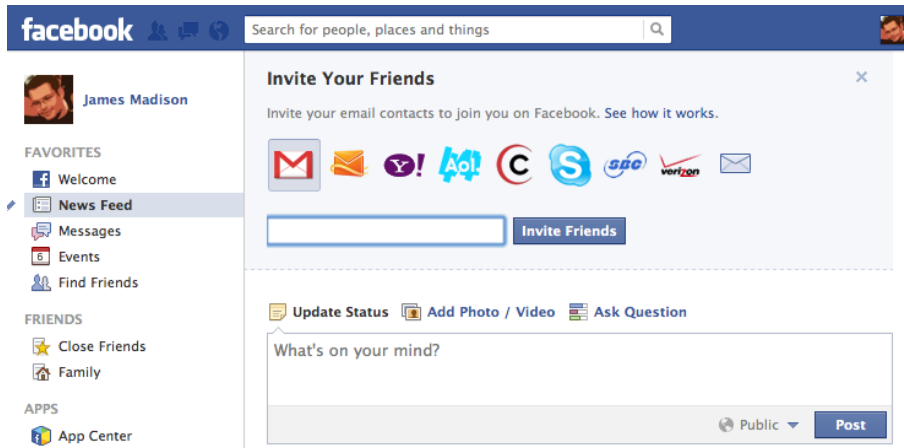
The measurability of the viral marketing is an issue to research. Finding the solution to this problem would incentive companies to develop viral strategies and campaigns. The developing of a tool that measures precisely the impact could be of relevant value to scale the degree between highly successful versus mildly successful campaigns.

In terms of overall campaign structure, a potential line of inquiry is how organizations can ensure ethical issues. Therefore, research in finding ways of addressing and developing ethical standards for viral marketing campaigns would be of vast importance.

6. ANEX, TECHNICAL APENDIX, GLOSSARY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

6.1. Anex

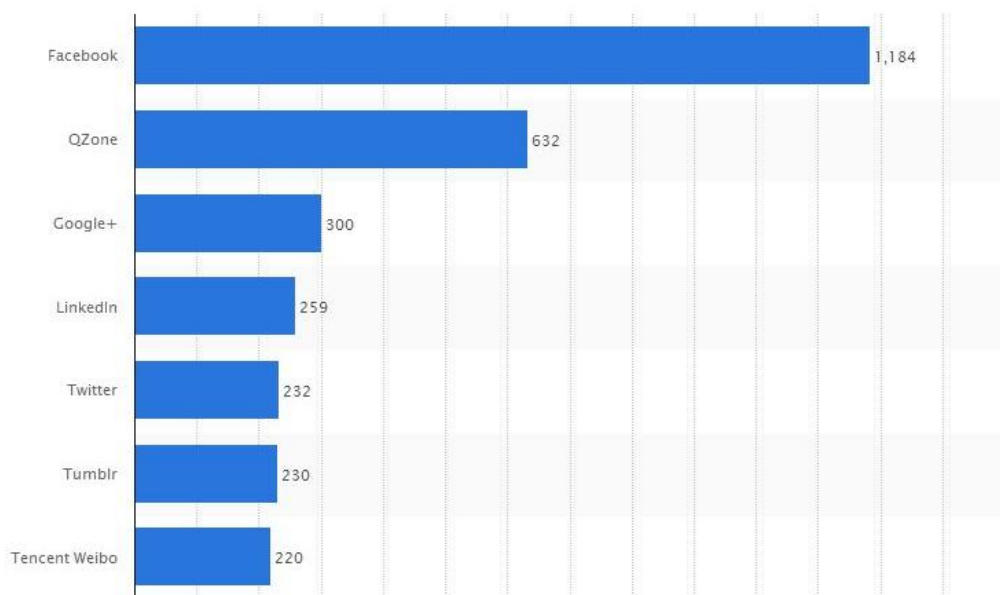
6.1.1. *Illustration 1:* Facebook mehanisms' to invite friends, add friends and share information with them



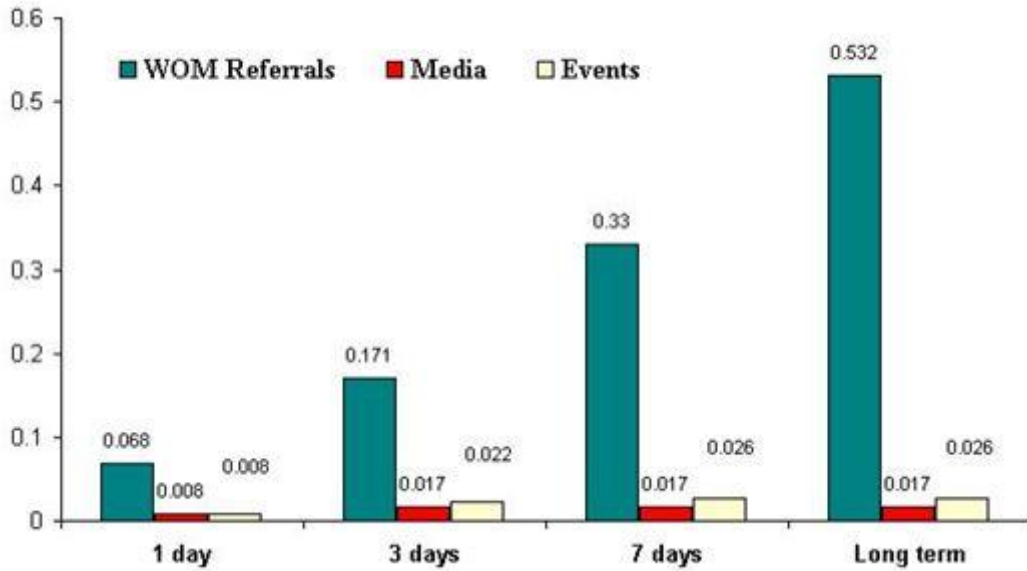
6.1.2. Illustration 2: Web 2.0 Landscape



6.1.3. Illustration 3: Leading social networks worldwide as of January 2014, ranked by number of active users (in millions) (Source: www.statista.com, 2014)

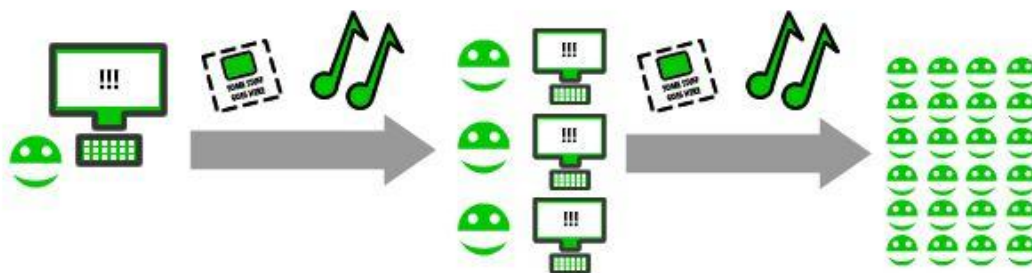


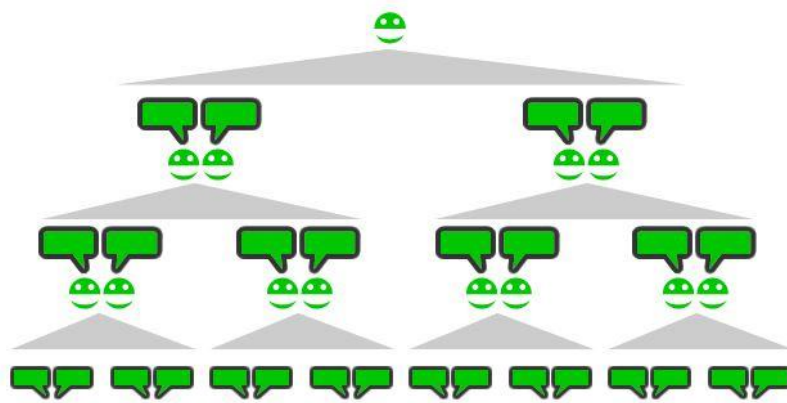
6.1.4. *Illustration 4: Short-Term Versus Long-Term elasticity of signups with respect to WOM Referrals and Marketing Activities*



6.1.5. *Illustration 5: Influence and effect of viral marketing advertising (exponential growth of users' affected) (Source: www.marketing-made-simple.com)*

VIRAL ADVERTISING





Copyright marketing-made-simple.com

6.1.6. *Illustration 6:* Dove spot “Real Beauty Sketches”





6.1.7. Illustration 7: Dove's spot effect on twitter

 **Allure magazine** @Allure_magazine 17 Apr
 So, @Dove's new ad campaign will make you cry (in a good way) on.allure.com/11wMeF4 #RealBeauty
 Followed by Emily Rogan and 2 others
 Expand

 **DailyCandy** @dailycandy 17 Apr
 Everyone should watch @Dove's latest Real Beauty video. How do you see yourself? Warning: tears ahead. dly.me/6019XzuJ
 Followed by ReadrBoard and 2 others
 View summary

 **SELF Magazine** @SELMagazine 17 Apr
 Women are their harshest critics. This is moving. Watch this video from @dove: realbeautysketches.dove.us
 Expand

 **Laura Spaventa** @Lspaventa 17 Apr
 Wow, thank you, @Dove for this reality check: bit.ly/15m0ZyY
 View media

 **SHAPE magazine** @Shape_Magazine 16 Apr
 Need a pick me up? Watch this video about real beauty by @Dove ow.ly/k80Q2
 View media

 **Glamour** @glamourmag 16 Apr
 This inspring new ad campaign from @Dove is getting @amywicks01 all teary-eyed! You too? glmr.me/110QHP3
 Expand

6.1.8. *Illustration 8:* Dove achieved more than 17.000 comments about the video on YouTube channel



6.2. Technical Appendix

6.2.1. *Technical Appendix 1¹²: Web 2.0 and User-Generated Content (UGC)*

Defining social media requires the explanation of two related concepts that are frequently named in conjunction with social media: Web 2.0 and User-Generated Content (UGC).

As previously mentioned, the term Web 2.0 is used to describe the new way in which consumers and developers have started to utilize the World Wide Web; that is, as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer published by a small group of institutions, while the end-users are merely content consumers. Rather content is a product of continuous active collaboration, participation and interaction of consumers.

While Web 2.0 represents the ideological and technological foundation, User-Generated Content (UGC) can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media. The term is usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that is created and published by end-users and which is publicly available. While UGC existed

¹² This chapter draws upon the article “Influencing and measuring word of mouth on Twitter” (Oosterveer, 2011)

prior to Web 2.0, the combination of technological drivers (e.g. increased availability of broadband), economic drivers (e.g. increased availability of tools for the creation of UGC) and social drivers (e.g. rise of a generation with substantial technical knowledge and willingness to engage online) make UGC nowadays fundamentally different.

Based on these clarifications of Web 2.0 and UGC, social media can be defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User-Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; p.61). Within the social media landscape, there are various types of social media. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) developed a classification scheme based on two dimensions: social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure.

| | | Social presence / Media richness | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | Low | Medium | High | |
| Self presentation / self-disclosure | High | Blogs (e.g. Blogspot) | Microblogs (e.g. Twitter) | Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) | Virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life) |
| | Low | Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia) | Content communities (e.g. YouTube) | Virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft) | |

Figure 3: Classification of social media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

On the social presence / media richness dimension, the social media differ based on the amount of information they allow to be transmitted, and the extent to which acoustic, visual and physical contact can be achieved between two communication partners. On the self-disclosure / self presentation dimension, the social media differ based on the extent to which personal information revealed. On the continuum of social media classification, microblogging is characterized by a relatively high self-presentation/disclosure, and a low to medium level of social presence/media richness.

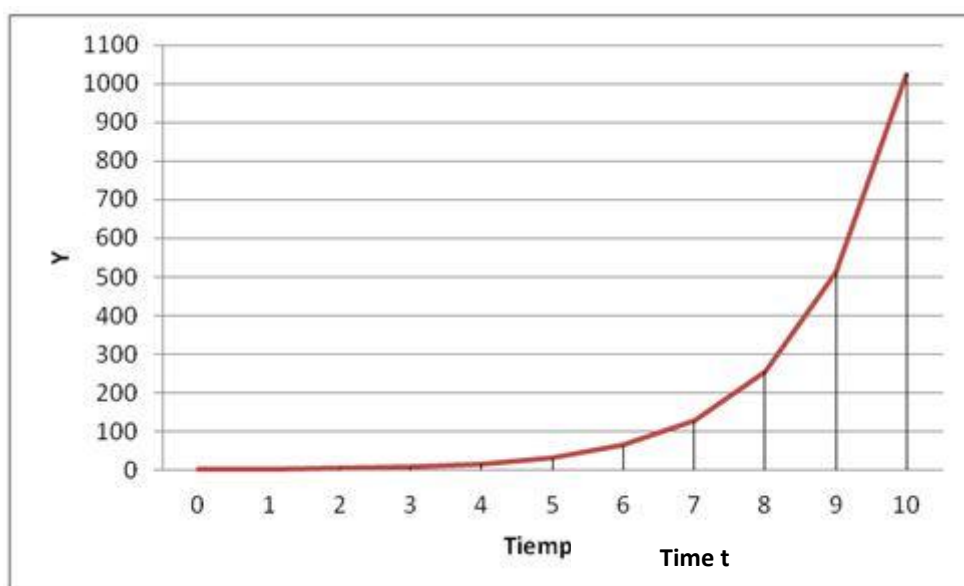
6.2.2. *Technical Appendix 2: Explanation of the exponential function based on a numerical example*

In general, an exponential function is one of the form b^x , where the base is "b" (number) and the exponent is "x" (variable that changes, “period of time” for instance) and which is characterized by a greater than proportional increase as time goes on "x".

For example: exponential function of $Y=2^t$ (where “t” is time) would be:

| t | Y |
|----|------|
| 0 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 4 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 16 |
| 5 | 32 |
| 6 | 64 |
| 7 | 128 |
| 8 | 256 |
| 9 | 512 |
| 10 | 1024 |

The graph of $Y=2^t$ is upward-sloping, and increases faster as x increases (represented as follows):



Viral marketing is well mathematically represented with this formula, because it expands rapidly in more than proportional to the time spent; it expands exponentially.

6.2.3. Technical Appendix 3: Methodology used to analyze the Case Studies

As the analysis of the paper is based on two different case studies, this method will be first described. A record of the specific type used will follow; the data collection and analysis; and last, the issues concerning validity and reliability of the method used.

Research method

Before starting the explanation of how the information gathered for the paper was obtained, it is necessary to remind which the purpose of the study is. Because of the newness of the viral marketing, there is lack of published empirical studies that offer and collect a set of technical management activities for the topic. The purpose of the writing is to synthesize the emerging literature on the subject and important factors that need to be considered when organizing a viral marketing campaign will be identified. Moreover, it will be evaluated two different companies in the success of viral marketing campaigns underlying the reasons for the suitability and unsuitability of this technique to the products they advertise through this type of campaign.

As analyzing tool Case Study is selected because of its numerous advantages. In the one hand its flexibility due to the fact that a Case Study emphasizes exploration rather than prescription or prediction. Moreover, the looser format allows to begin with broad questions and narrow the focus with the experiment progresses. In the other hand its emphasis on context, by seeking to understand as much as possible about a single subject or small group of subjects, case studies specialize in "deep data," or "thick description"--information based on particular contexts that can give research results a more human face (Colorado State University, 2010).

Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991) define case study as an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed. Therefore it refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves. This method is designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data.

A form of qualitative descriptive research, the case study looks intensely at an individual or small participant pool, drawing conclusions only about that participant or group and only

in that specific context. Researchers do not focus on the discovery of a universal, generalizable truth, nor do they typically look for cause-effect relationships; instead, emphasis is placed on exploration and description (Colorado State University, 2010).

There are several types of Case Studies, but for this specific case a critical instance case study will be developed. This model of case study examines one or more sites for either the purpose of examining a situation of unique interest with little to no interest in generalizability, or to call into question or challenge a highly generalized or universal assertion. This method is useful for answering cause and effect questions.

It is a flexible qualitative or mixed methods technique used for the study of factors, variables, or behaviors that are critical to the success or failure of an activity or event and associated outcomes (Weatherbee, 2010).

Designing the Case Study

The multi modal method has been chosen in order to obtain as complete a picture of the research as possible. Some common methods include interviews, protocol analyses, field studies, and participant-observations.

Regarding the data collection, it can be mentioned that there are six types of data collection in case studies: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and artifacts. As it is a multi-modal method a variety of these types of data collection are used; all of them as secondary data collection¹³.

The sources could come from: a writer's drafts, school records of student writers, transcripts of interviews with a writer, transcripts of conversations between writers (and protocols), videotapes and notes from direct field observations and hard copies of a writer's work on computer.

It can be said then, that cross checking data from multiple sources can help provide a multidimensional profile of composing activities in a particular setting. Sharan Merriam (1985) suggests "checking, verifying, testing, probing, and confirming collected data as you go, arguing that this process will follow in a funnel-like design resulting in less data

¹³ Secondary data includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. These can provide a useful source to start answering to the problem (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thorn hill, 1997) and they can be used in both descriptive and explanatory research. There are different kinds of secondary data that are used such as: multiple sources, survey and documentary (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thorn hill, 1997).

gathering in later phases of the study along with a congruent increase in analysis checking, verifying, and confirming.”

Data Analysis

As the information is collected, researchers strive to make sense of their data. Generally, researchers interpret their data in one of two ways: holistically or through coding. Holistic analysis does not attempt to break the evidence into parts, but rather to draw conclusions based on the text as a whole.

There are two purposes of these frameworks: to look for patterns among the data and to look for patterns that give meaning to the case study

Validity and Reliability

Once key variables have been identified, they are analyzed. Reliability becomes a key concern at this stage since it is difficult to ensure that the interpretations of the data will be both reliable and valid.

In the multi-modal case studies, it is often balanced the results of the coding with data from interviews or writer's reflections upon the research. Consequently, the conclusions taken become highly contextualized¹⁴. As is the case with other research methodologies, issues of external validity, construct validity, and reliability need to be carefully considered.

6.3. Glossary

Social Networks: Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site (Nicole B. Ellison, 2007).

Viral marketing: 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 (Dictionary.com, 2014).

¹⁴ This contextualization usually includes a detailed explanation of the researchers' theoretical positions, of how those theories drove the inquiry or led to the guiding research questions, of the participants' backgrounds, of the processes of data collection, of the training and limitations of the coders, along with a strong attempt to make connections between the data and the conclusions evident.

Buzz marketing: A buzz marketing campaign is anything which spreads like a viral among the targeted consumers creating anxiousness and excitement about the product in a positive manner which can lead to trials and generate purchases of the product. It usually involves Word Of Mouth marketing strategy (mbaskool.com, 2014).

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