



Viral Marketing and content forwarding on social media

Outlining the key elements behind successful viral content creation

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<p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>Detta slutarbete handlar om viral marknadsföring och fokuserar på skapandet av viralt innehåll. Huvudpunkten för slutarbete är hur man skapar viralt innehåll och vilka nyckel-element påverkar på hur viralt innehåll sprids på sociala medier. Litteraturöversikten framställer kortfattat bakgrunden till viral marknadsföring, skapandet av viralt innehåll och hur sociala medier används när man driver viral marknadsföring. En kvantitativ studie i form av en elektronisk frågeformulär användes, samlades och analyserades av författaren. Resultaten av den kvantitativa studien samt litteraturöversikten kombinerades så att de svarade på de tre forskningsfrågorna slutarbetet presenterade. Resultaten påvisar att konsumenter sprider innehåll på sociala medier för att uppnå socialt erkännande, uppfylla sina känslomässiga behov, dela med sig endera värdefullt, utbildande eller relaterande information, uppnå personlig nytta eller för att uttrycka sina åsikter och tankar. Slutresultaten av studien indikerar att marknadsförare måste noggrant planlägga hurdana nyckel-element de väljer då de skapar viralt innehåll till deras virala marknadsföringskampanjer. Dessa nyckel-elementet konstaterades vara: Avtryckare och motiv, känslomässig komponent innehållets delbarhet.</p>	
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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>This Bachelor's thesis examines the topic of viral marketing by focusing on viral content creation. The main point of the thesis is to find out how to create content that go viral and to outline what key elements affect the forwarding of viral content on social media. The literature review presents a brief background to viral marketing, viral content creation and how social media is utilized when conducting viral marketing. The research method of the thesis is a quantitative study, collected and analyzed by the author. The results of the quantitative study and the literature review are combined in the discussion part in order to answer the three research questions of the thesis. The results show that consumers' forward messages in order to achieve social recognition, fulfill their emotional needs, share valuable, educational or relatable information, personally gain from sharing information or to express their opinions and thoughts about a certain topic. The research concludes that marketers need to carefully outline the key elements in order to create viral content for viral marketing campaigns on social media. These key elements are found to be: triggers and incentives, an emotional component and shareability.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and motivation

The demand for new marketing techniques and strategies has been rapidly growing in recent years following the technological advances and the increasing need to understand and target consumers online (Leskovec, Adamic & Huberman, 2008) There has been a significant change in how consumers are subjected to marketing messages, namely due to the fact that consumers nowadays recognize when they are being marketed to, and consciously choose to ignore those marketing messages. (Scott, 2011 p. 102)

Moreover, the creation of Internet and Web 2.0 has had a dramatic effect on the exchange of information between consumers. Social media platforms have enabled consumers to easily forward their opinions through posts, tweets, comments and reviews online, which has strengthened the interdependency between the marketer and the consumer. (Darwish & Lakhtaria, 2011, p. 213). However, this change has posed challenges for marketers, especially when managing brand reputation and the spread of negative messages. Today's marketers face the inevitable fact that if they cannot keep up and foresee the behaviors of consumers online, they will ultimately fail to adapt in online marketing environments. (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström & Freundt, 2014).

The motivation for this thesis was drawn out of the sheer interest in understanding the concept of viral marketing, as well as, knowing how to create successful marketing messages online. The author decided that the best way to approach the subject would be by inspecting the pre-existing literature of an online marketing technique called viral marketing, combined with an online questionnaire created by the author. The author has majored in digital marketing during her studies at Arcada – University of Applied sciences, and chose the topic because it is a relatively new phenomenon in the field of marketing and it has not been extensively researched in the past. Viral marketing is also a marketing technique that is easily misunderstood and hard to successfully conduct. (Scott, 2011) Therefore, the author wants to find out how viral marketing can be used as a successful marketing technique on social media in regards to how viral content is created.

1.2 Aim and significance

The research aims to outline the key elements behind the viral spread of marketing messages in order to understand what measures are needed to create viral content. The study looks into what theories, principles, techniques and tactics can be used in order to influence a consumer's decision-making to forward content online. Furthermore, the study presents theories discussing specific forwarding behavior; what makes certain content interesting to a consumer and what does a consumer want to mediate with their content forwarding. The research also focuses on the qualities of marketing messages and if they can be shaped in a certain way to better achieve virality. To gain a deeper understanding in the topic, the researcher has decided to adapt a consumer perspective in the study to gain a solid qualitative view.

The three main research questions are the following:

Q1 What affects consumers to forward content on social media?

Q2 What key elements can be used to create viral content?

Q3 Which are the most effective ways to channel viral content on social media?

1.3 Focus and limitations

The findings of the research aim to outline clear guidelines for successful viral content creation. The focus is laid on the motives and incentives of people's content forwarding in order to understand the spread of marketing messages on social media. The data collected for the research is limited, since the author is the sole person to share the questionnaire, which influences the sample size and the number of respondents. The author chose to target millennials foremost, since the author assumed that this particular age group would be best represented in the online questionnaire. The author has chosen the theories presented in the literature review based on how relevant the author regards the theories as.

1.4 Abbreviations

Viral marketing = A marketing technique that focuses on internet marketing and the exponential spread of marketing messages whenever a new consumer is added. As the new consumer interacts with other consumers, he or she will knowingly or unknowingly forward the marketing message to a new audience. (Investopedia, 2017)

Word-of-mouth = A marketing method that relies on the social interaction (e.g. dialogues) between consumers who express their opinions and promote a company's product or a service. (Marketingterms, 2017)

Web 2.0 = The second generation of the World Wide Web, which was established through a series of technological improvements linked to user interaction online. This second generation includes new features such as: social media, blogs, wikis, forums and web applications. (Techterms, 2017)

Viral content = Any piece of media (e.g. a text, tweet, post, picture, video, status update or link) that achieves viral success online. (Breakthroughcontent, 2017)

Viral buzz = The generation of excitement, publicity and information to consumers caused by an event or activity. (Martech, 2017)

Millennial = The generation of people born between the early 1980s and 2000s. More commonly known as Generation Y. (Livescience, 2013)

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research material for the literature review is mainly secondary data and obtained in the form of journal articles, digital publications, websites, books and e-books. The work focuses on online material, since the field of the research is mainly in a digital environment. The survey questions are based on the literature review, and the primary data results are analyzed and discussed with the help of the collected secondary data. The research relies on both exploratory and descriptive research methods, since the topic of the research is, as stated previously, not extensively researched in the past.

2.1 Approach and data collection

The research topic is approached by inspecting and collecting both primary and secondary data. The primary data, i.e. the online questionnaire, targeted millennials (Generation Y), who are either students or in the working life. The survey questions were chosen to correspond to the research questions presented, and were based on the literature review. The questionnaire consisted initially of 10 questions, but was later narrowed down to 9 questions, due to the irrelevance of the last question (Q10). The survey was created using Survey Monkey's official online questionnaire tool, and the author collected the data by creating a Facebook event and inviting her Facebook friends to "attend", i.e. participate in the event and answer the online questionnaire. The event was also made public to reach a bigger audience, and the link to the online questionnaire was included in the information of the event. The author also posted a picture of herself on Facebook holding a note saying "Help! I want to graduate". This picture combined with the Facebook event provided the author with 100 responses within 24 hours of launching the survey (21.12.2016-22.12.2016). The author utilized the free version of surveymonkey.com, therefore the number of respondents were limited to 100. The secondary data was collected through academic e-resources online and books during the author's research period. The sampling method for the primary data collection was non-probability sampling, since the respondents did know that they were selected in beforehand, but chose to voluntarily answer the online questionnaire.

2.2 Data analysis

2.2.1 Primary research analysis – The online questionnaire

The primary data is analyzed and approached in a statistical manner directly related to the research questions. The questionnaire results provide statistical answers to how well consumers know about viral marketing and how they experience and forward content online. The primary data is delivered in the form of tables and graphs to simplify the data.

2.2.2 Secondary research analysis – The literature review

The secondary data consists of the background and theories presented in the literature review. The secondary research presents the roots of viral marketing, content forwarding and viral content creation. It also provides the basis of the primary research i.e. the online questionnaire. The questions in the questionnaire are designed to link to the theories presented in the literature review, and is subsequently also analyzed keeping the theories in mind. The research questionnaire also included three examples of viral videos, which all differed from each other in terms of theme and target audience. The main reason for choosing the Supercell, Coca-Cola and Barbie viral ads was to see how the respondents would answer the follow-up questions after seeing each video i.e. inspecting which triggers drew the attention of the respondent. The viral videos were chosen from the digital marketing site Digital Strategy Consulting (2015), that has an integrated collection of viral videos made into brief, one-page long case studies (mainly comments and notes on what lead to the success of each viral video).

2.2.2.1.1 Previous viral video studies

The author chose to include viral case videos in her online questionnaire to exemplify and observe how the respondents' responded to each viral video. Each viral video had previously been studied on and exemplified by the company Digital Strategy Consulting (2015). The purpose of using each of the three viral videos was foremost because of the difference in viral triggers, as well as, to compare the results of the case studies to the results that the author will achieve in her research.

2.2.2.1.2 The Coca Cola viral video



Figure 1 Labels are for cans - not for people (Coca Cola, 2015)

In 2015, Coca Cola launched a marketing campaign that became a viral hit on YouTube. The video, filmed in Dubai, depicts a group of strangers sitting in a circle by a table – but in complete darkness. The video is filmed using infrared cameras in order to hide the appearance of the participants from each other. The

language used during the conversation is Arabic. The group consists of men, but in addition, there is one tattooed guy, a man dressed in traditional Arabic clothing and one man sitting in a wheelchair.

The men are asked to discuss their everyday lives with each other in order to bond. After a while of talking, the lights are switched on and people are surprised to see each other and how everyone looks like. They are then instructed to reach below the table and pick up a can of Coca Cola. To their surprise, the normal label has been removed and instead the label says “Labels are for cans, not people”. The purpose of the experiment was to make people realize that first impressions do not always define a person. Coca Cola created the campaign in order for people to try see without labels, without prejudice, but see people as they are. (Digital Strategy Consulting, 2015)

2.2.2.1.3 The Supercell case study

Supercell launched a TV spot for SuperBowl in 2015, which instantly reached the YouTube viral list. The underlying reason for its incredible success came down to Liam Neeson portraying his much known character from the 2008 film Taken. But this time, in addition of quoting the famous line “I will look for you, I will find you, and I will kill you”, he adds a cross-reference to Supercell’s mobile game Clash of Clans and brilliantly combines his character with the franchise of Clash of Clan. (Digital Strategy Consulting, 2015)

“I don’t know you, BigBuffetBoy85, but if you think you can humiliate me and take my gold, think again. Oh, I am coming for you with lots of barbarians and dragons. I can’t wait to destroy your village, while you beg for mercy, but you will get no mercy. I will have my revenge... You will regret the day you crossed AngryNeeson52” (Digital Strategy Consulting, 2015)



Figure 2 "Clash of Clans" TV Spot (Supercell, 2015)

2.2.2.1.4 The Barbie case study

The viral video “Barbie - Imagine the possibilities” launched the toy manufacturer Mattel is different in terms of how it is marketed. Rather than targeting directly young girls, Mattel decided to target the new generation of young parents. The video breaks down social norms of predominantly female business-fields and portrays young girls instead in real settings, where they pretend to be a veterinarian, a football coach and a business woman. The video ends with a little girl playing with the Barbies, pretending to be the previously mentioned professionals. (Digital Strategy Consulting, 2015)



Figure 3 Barbie - Imagine the possibilities (Mattel, 2015)

2.2.2.1.5 Choice of viral videos

The author chose the particular viral marketing videos because they differ in terms of theme, background, culture, brands and triggers. The viral video by Coca Cola mediates the acceptance of people regardless of their background, hence why the men sit in a room in complete darkness. Supercell on the other hand cleverly combines its Clash of Clans franchise with Liam Neeson’s famous – Taken 2008 line, and creates something people can relate to and find entertaining. Furthermore, Mattel’s new take on doll advertisement is meant to hit home to the new generation of young parents raising children. The ad also emphasizes that women are just as capable of working in the same professions as men are. To conclude, the author wanted to see how the respondents would answer questions

related to the viral videos and if their answers would correspond to that of the content forwarding and viral content creation theories presented in the literature review.

2.3 Data interpretation

Since the research method is a quantitative online questionnaire, the interpretation of the findings might be subjective in nature, and might be influenced by the researcher's biases. Therefore, increased effort is put in the data collection process in order to eliminate as much personal bias from the research as possible. The primary data is interpreted also in relation to the previously conducted viral case studies and compared in order to answer the research questions.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Viral marketing – a definition

Prior to the major technological advances in mass media, companies and organizations had to rely on attracting consumers by utilizing traditional marketing mediums such as; newspaper, radio and television. However, by the turn of the 21st century and with the emergence of the Internet and Web 2.0, companies and organizations soon realized that traditional marketing techniques were not as effective as before, and something had to be done in order to reach potential buyers on a larger scale. (Scott, 2010, p. 6-7) Soon enough, marketers realized the potential that word-of-mouth had in an online environment, and started contributing to the early emergence of viral marketing. (Kirby, 2004, p. 3). Viral marketing is essentially a marketing strategy that utilizes pre-existing social networks such as; social networking sites, video sharing sites, email providers, online forums and blogs. Viral marketing typically provides something free of charge and valuable to consumers, which encourages them to forward and spread the marketing message to others. (marketing-schools, 2012) Viral content typically takes its form as an advertisement in the format of a viral video, song, picture, meme or a message. (Chaffey & Smith, 2013, p.205). It also typically attracts smaller organizations and companies because it has a reputation of being effective and it is a relatively cheap alternative to traditional marketing mediums. (marketing-schools, 2012)

3.2 The origins of viral marketing

There is much debate from where the term “viral marketing” originated, and who popularized it, though one of the first scholars’ to use the term with its current meaning was Jeffrey Rayport in 1996. Rayport (1996) describes viral marketing as a form of virus marketing, and notes that viral marketing draws striking similarities to a biological virus, which usually spreads easily between different hosts and often goes unnoticed at first. One of the earliest cases of viral marketing is the case of the successful launch of Hotmail in 1997. (Jurvetson & Draper, 1997). The strategy that Hotmail utilized was simple: they attached a clickable URL tagline to every email they sent out, encouraging consumers to join Hotmail, because it was free of charge. The assumption was that the

person receiving the email would notice that Hotmail was a free email account provider in difference to many other email providers on the market. This gave Hotmail a significant advantage to other competitors, which resulted in an explosive increase of new users of Hotmail, and made it the biggest email account provider worldwide within 10 months of its release. (Wilson, 2012, p. 4)

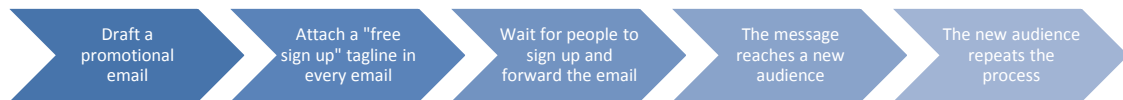


Figure 4 The Hotmail example (Wilson, 2012)

Pictured above, the Hotmail case and its basic viral marketing concept. As the figure depicts, the spread of Hotmail accounts was independent in its nature and did not rely on any traditional marketing mediums to get the word out for their new email account. (Wilson, 2012, p. 4) According to Jurvetson (2000), one of the most crucial benefits of viral marketing is that it turns consumers into salespeople simply by having the consumer use the product (in Hotmail's case sending an email). The more people forward the message, the bigger the audience becomes – and without any cost. Jurvetson (2000) also adds that another key element of viral marketing is endorsement, specifically endorsement which is implied by a close friend or someone who's opinion and thoughts are trusted. The concept of viral marketing is very similar to word-of-mouth, and according to Kirby (2004, p.4), viral marketing, or "word-of-mouse", can be seen as a synthesis between advertised online marketing messages and offline word-of-mouth. Kirby (2004 p.4), argues that viral marketing does not need to have a specific product or service in order to raise awareness, buzz or peer-to-peer spread among consumers, but rather utilizes an online communication agent that serves the same purpose without the need for continuous marketing efforts.

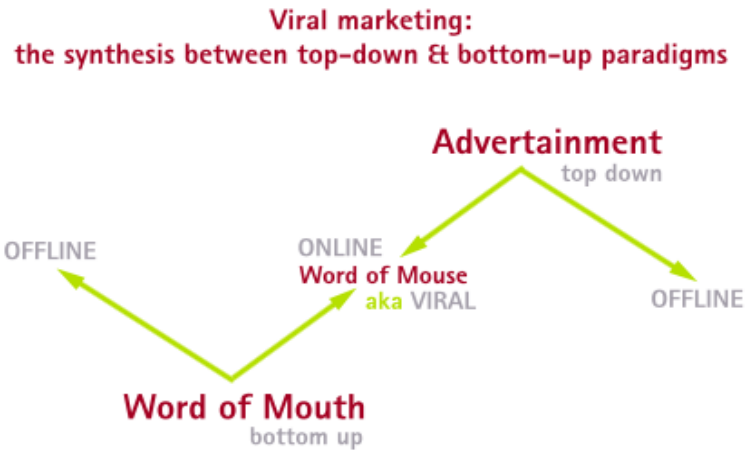


Figure 5 Kirby's depiction of viral marketing and "word-of-mouth" (2004)

Kirby's (2004) illustration above depicts the unification of offline word-of-mouth and online advertisement, which combined creates "word-of-mouth". Ferguson (2010) on the other hand, argues that viral marketing is a separate strategy from word-of-mouth marketing, and explains that there are significant differences between viral marketing and word-of-mouth. These differences are often found when inspecting the cause and effect of a marketing campaign. Viral marketing relies on building online portals, viral videos and guerilla campaigns, which typically leads to a "viral buzz" and increases awareness among consumers. A word-of-mouth campaign often relies on trial and attainment instead. The difference between these two is that viral marketing is the cause of a buzz, while word-of-mouth is the follow-up effect of a buzz. (Ferguson, 2010, p.23)

3.2.1 Wilson's six principles of viral marketing

Wilson (2012), argues that there are six principles to follow when conducting viral marketing. He recognizes that a good viral marketing strategy needs certain elements in order to succeed. These elements are essential for a viral marketing strategy – the more elements that are implemented in the strategy, the more effective it will be. (Wilson, 2012, p. 5-7)

Wilson's six principles of Viral marketing

1. It will give away products and/or services for free

Successful viral marketing strategies will thrive especially if they include the word "free" rather than "cheap" or "inexpensive". Wilson (2012), argues that in order for marketers to sell their products through viral marketing, they need to understand that selling requires giving something away for free at first. The potential of sales come later through opportunities based on (i.e the case of Hot-mail). email addresses, revenues of email advertising and e-commerce. Establishing a "free" interest will generate profit sooner or later, and the profit will thrive for a longer time, hence the potential of the "virus" that never stops spreading.

2. It will provide effortless transferring/sharing/forwarding to other people

Viral messages and content need a medium to be transferred through. This medium can vary, and the commonly used mediums like websites, emails and social media all function differently when forwarding viral content. Viral marketing works best on the Internet, mostly because the digital format of the content makes replicating and copying very simple compared to traditional marketing mediums such as newspapers, magazines and tv ads. Moreover, instant messages and communication on the Internet makes viral marketing easy and cost-effective.

3. It will scale effortlessly from small to very large

To spread continuously and unstoppably, the transmission method must be scalable from small to large. If a transmission method (for example a server) would crash, then the "virus" would have killed the host before accomplishing anything. That is why marketers need to adequately prepare their servers for rapid expanding if it would come to such a situation.

4. It will exploit common motivations and behaviors

Humans have different motivations that drive them to act and behave in a certain way. People want to be understood, loved and recognized, which has led to the success of so many different social media websites, e-mail services and electronic messages. The most successful viral marketing strategies recognizes and

takes advantage of the most basic human needs, and tries to attract people by implementing material that awakens those feelings in people.

5. It will use existing communication networks

People need and want social interaction, which can be seen throughout history: people build communities and networks, which mediates values and social norms. Social interaction on the internet work in the same manner: people socialize through social media and can even build networks without knowing the people in real life. Marketers need to understand how to advertise messages within such communities in the digital environment, in order to be able to exploit them and spread marketing messages in a more cost-effective way.

6. It will take advantage of other resources to get the message out

The most successful and inventive viral marketing strategies use other people's resources (as in programs etc.) to get their viral message out. Affiliate programs are the most commonly used programs by viral marketers, since they place the "ad" or the "message" on other websites. Once the message has been seen and shared by someone who does not receive payment for sharing the message, the message has become cost-effective, since the message requires no further input of money to be seen.

3.3 Harnessing the power of viral marketing

Viral marketing can efficiently propel a brand or a company to fame and fortune, but the task of creating a successful viral marketing campaign poses a challenge for even the most experienced marketer. Some companies even take matters into their own hands and set up fake viral marketing campaigns, where the company's own employees or compensated individuals write for example a review of the company's product. However, a strategy as such is rarely successful due to online consumers being more attentive to trickery. Worst case, the company ends up weakening its reputation and brand image by doing so. (Scott, 2010, p. 96-98)

Scott (2010) argues that there is no definitive way of creating a viral marketing campaign that is guaranteed to go viral. Although, there are circumstances such as luck and timing that play a role. In addition, including content that hits home, rather than relies on seeming slick and polished seems to work better for viral marketing. What viral marketing essentially boils down to is being able to create and combine content (a video, message, post), that is funny, amazing, ground-breaking and easily shareable, whilst adding an online presence of a social network to spark the initial fire. Viral marketing is not only created by marketers alone, but can also happen by itself. These self-made viral marketing campaigns do bring a factor of uncertainty, since there is no control over how the product or company is perceived as (in a positive or a negative light). That is why marketers need to monitor what is said about their company or products online, in order to quickly react to what consumers are talking about. (Scott, 2010, p. 97-100)

3.3.1 The Viral Loop marketing theory

Terry Lane (2017), explains the viral loop marketing theory as the “*theory where users of a product are its primary marketers*”. When companies start using viral loops in their marketing strategies, they aim to exponentially spread their marketing message to consumers with minimal cost. This aim is also supported by Wilson’s (2012) previously presented six principles. Usually small- to medium sized businesses harness viral marketing and the viral loop theory, since their marketing budgets are significantly smaller compared to bigger businesses’. (Lane, 2017)

The advantage of using viral loops is mainly derived out of its low cost – high spread factor, which exposes a large audience to a company’s marketing message. Therefore, using viral expansion loops are a convenient way to tackle the struggles marketers face when seeking out the elements of content that become viral. The most important part of the Viral Loop marketing theory is creating viral expansion loops. These loops are categorized into User Actions, Notifications and Conversion. These loops rely on users sharing and re-posting a marketing message to their own network. Below depicted and explained, the viral loop marketing theory;

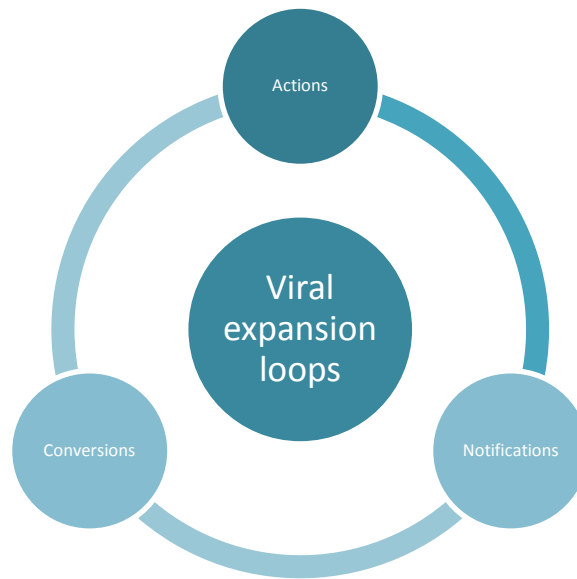


Figure 6 The Viral Loop Marketing theory

- **Actions:** Consumers buy a marketed product or service.
- **Notifications:** The notification that is sent to other possible buyer and a consumer buys a product or service. The notifications can be either synthetic in nature (i.e. automated emails or social media posts by the company) or organic (i.e. a user tags a friend in a post or posts about the product on their social media platform). The latter notification style is more prone to succeed, since it is seen as a more genuine form of notifying others of a product or service.
- **Conversions:** The sale or profit one consumer generates. If a marketing messages does not generate enough conversions, the spread of the marketing message usually halts.

Adam. L. Penenberg (2016), on the other hand, explains the viral loop theory as an “*engineering alchemy that, done right, almost guarantees a self-replicating, borglike growth.*” (Fastcompany, 2016). He argues that viral expansion loops are separate from the online viral marketing strategies, since viral loops have long existed also in an offline world. He explains that if a person would host a Tupperware party, that person would be able to possibly convert some of the attendees into future salespeople, which would then result in the creation of a viral expansion loop in an offline environment. Furthermore, he

admits that viral expansion loops are more suitable for an online environment with unlimited opportunities. The viral expansion loops do not simply create viral content – they organize viral content. This means that they provide an infinitely expandable environment that is filled with material exerted from masses of people. (Penenberg, 2016).

Ultimately, both Penenberg (2016) and Lane (2017) agree that the most sought out goal of the viral expansion loop is to create a strong user engagement, which will ultimately convert users into salespeople of a product or a service, just as in viral marketing. The better the quality of a user experience – the faster and bigger the viral expansion loop grows and spreads.

3.4 Viral content characteristics

According to David Meerman Scott (2010), successful viral content has specific characteristics. Scott explains that the ways marketers try to create viral content works similarly to how venture capitalists invest in start-up companies or how film studios make films. There is no definitive way for marketers nor venture capitalist to know the success of the investment (e.g. if the start-up company will become a large multi-millionaire enterprise or if it will just remain a mediocre company). Therefore, venture capitalists and film studios do not expect every investment or production to be a success story, but rather wait for a one hit wonder, which will pay back the initial investment or drive in remarkable sales profits. There are different theories on how to create a viral “buzz”, but as mentioned before, there is no definitive way of knowing if a content will have the viral factor or not. (Scott, 2010, p. 104-105)

3.4.1 Berger's STEPPS model on viral content creation

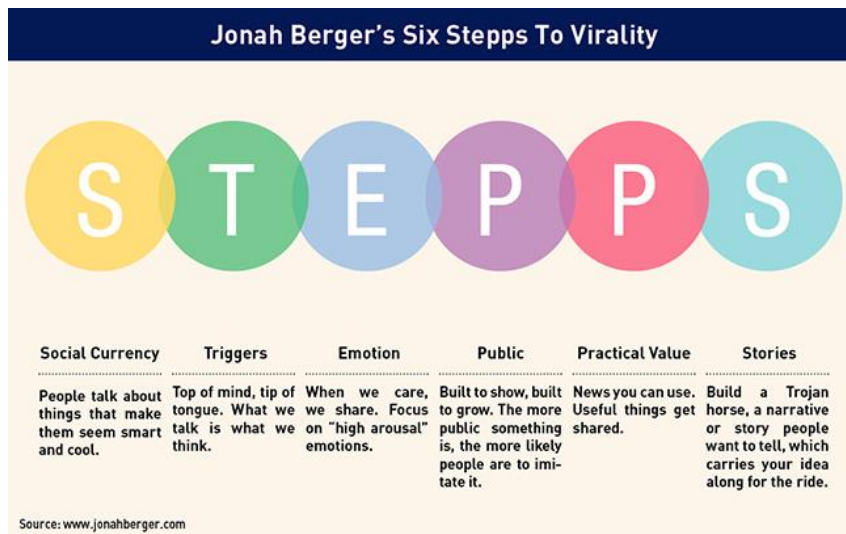


Figure 7 Berger's six STEPPS (2013)

According to Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman (2012), there is no definitive way of calculating widespread exposure of a marketing message, or to make sure that a specific marketing message goes viral. However, there are ways and actions that marketers can take in order to boost their chances of creating successful viral content. Berger's six step model (STEPPS) explains what usually triggers people to share content and what emotions a marketer should target when trying to create viral content and achieve virality. Below depicted, Berger's model including; social currency, triggers, emotion, public, practical value and stories. (Berger & Milkman, 2012, p. 194-198)

Berger's (2012) six STEPPS, explained;

1. **Social currency** = Content that is shared by many and especially to a circle of friends possess social currency, since people share it to convey a certain image of themselves. People want to come across as intelligent and interesting to improve the way others perceive them. This is also reflected in the things people share online. (Wharton University, 2013)
2. **Triggers** = Triggers are what people remember and associate a brand or a product to. Triggers ensure that the brand or product stay on top of people's minds and makes people remember a brand or a product. It is quite challenging for

marketers to create truly memorable triggers, but once they do, slogans like “just do it”, and “I’m lovin it”, instantly links to Nike and McDonald’s. (Wharton University, 2013)

3. **Emotion** = Content that includes an emotional component is more likely to be shared. One of the reasons we share content is because of the emotional affect it has on us and on other people. Engaging customers with content that evokes emotion also reaches them on a deeper personal level. (Wharton University, 2013)
4. **Public** = In order for people to share content easily, the content needs to be formatted in a way that is easily shareable to a large public. Once the content is built to “show and grow”, people will automatically share the content with more ease. (Wharton University, 2013)
5. **Practical Value** = Essentially, content needs to be relevant and bring practical value to people. (Wharton University, 2013)
6. **Stories** = To make content interesting to people, content should involve a story. People tend to remember brands and products better if they are linked to a story. (Wharton University, 2013)

3.4.2 Greenberg’s take on viral content creation

Marketers often face the issue of creating content that will certainly become viral. Therefore, many marketers try to figure out what kind of content would most likely catch on and, thus expose their marketing message to the largest audience. Usually, content that has a high acceptance rate and is shared by many, is most likely to become viral quickly. A high acceptance rate essentially means that people either click, like, share, tweet or in some other way react to the content positively. (Greenberg, 2013).

According to Greenberg (2013), there are three major classifications of content that may lead to content spreading faster and becoming viral quickly. The first classification (I) indicates that messages, which ooze positivity or optimism usually spreads significantly faster on the internet compared to their negative counterparts. Content that has a negative impact on the audience is therefore, less likely to be spread. The second classification (II), which entails informative and relatable content is more likely spread mainly due to the

nature of the content's usability. The more a person finds the content to be informative to oneself, or relatable, the more a person wants to share that content. Moreover, the third classification (III) includes sentimental messages, which are also easily accepted by people and spread rapidly. Sentimental messages are more emotional to their nature, which makes people believe in sharing those messages. This emotional aspect could be of negative or positive nature and relates to a person's past or history in some way. Below depicted, the 3 major classifications of viral content.

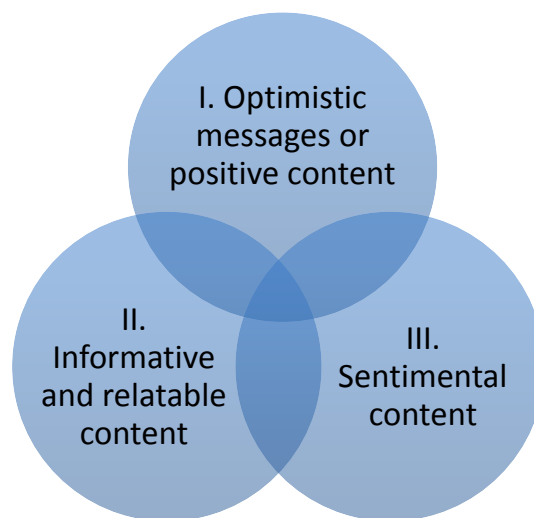


Figure 8 Greenberg's take on viral content creation

Greenberg (2013), also points out that there are several types of content online, which link to the three major classifications of viral content online. These types of content act in different ways and trigger different emotions among people. The different types of online content can also belong to more than one classification of viral content, which affects the chances of a content becoming viral. Listed on the next page, different types of content online and what classifications they belong to.

Table 1 Types of content shared online (Scott, 2010)

Content classification	Type of content	Example of content
II.	Action defining content	“How to lose 15 kg in 3 days”
I.	Popular & Best source content	“10 amazing places in the world for Holiday Trip”
II.	Research Content	“The effectiveness of onion in the summer and how it protects from heat”
III.	Controversial Content	“Racial discrimination leads to societal disturbance”
III.	Preaching Content	“Rights of Women – A comparison of teachings in Different Religions”
II.	Promising Content	“Easiest Ways to Get a Girlfriend in 14 days”
I.	Urgent & Attention Seeking Content	“Young girl needs money for heart transplant”
II.	Directory Content	“20 articles on child abuse”
II.	Trend Alert Content	“High heels over Flat Soles”

3.5 Channeling viral content on social media

3.5.1 The purpose of different social media channels online

For specific viral content to reach its targeted audience, it needs to be channeled through the right social media channels. (Scott, 2010). Consumers can easily affect social media by sharing and forwarding information, ideas, content and thoughts online, which makes it unique and separates it from mass media. (Scott, 2010, p. 38) Social media consists mainly of advanced technologies and networking tools, which provide efficient ways for consumers to express their opinions through. The purpose that each of the below social media channel serve is relevant when marketers want to target their online content to their target audiences. (Scott, 2010, p. 37). The below table simplifies the purpose of each social media channel;

Table 2 Social media vessels and content forwarding purpose (Scott, 2010, p. 37)

Social media channel	Purpose
Social networking sites	To gather a community of friends that the consumer wants to mediate information to. (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat LinkedIN)
Blogs	To share information through a personal website and build a community of active followers who comment on the author's post.
Video & photo sharing sites	To share videos and/or photos that get liked and commented on. (i.e. YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, 9GAG)
Online chat rooms	To converse through online meeting forums and participate in discussion threads (i.e. Reddit)

3.5.2 The importance of Influencers on social media

According to Singh & Diamond (2013), influencers have a significant impact on the forwarding behavior of consumers. Influencers tend to efficiently utilize either their position, profession, social media followers, or their personal circle to spread a marketing message forwards. Moreover, influencers efficiently affect the viral spread of marketing messages and should be considered when wanting to channel marketing messages on social media. It is most important for marketers to be able to identify the key online communities and their influencers in regards to the marketing messages being spread. Expert influencers affect consumers' forwarding behavior with the position or profession they hold in regards to the topic of the marketing message (i.e. A doctor that refers an article about a new experimental weight loss method) while Referent influencers utilize their followers or friends to channel a marketing message forwards. Positional influencers on the other hand rely on the loyalty of their family and friends to forward a marketing message through. (Singh & Diamond, 2013, p. 347)

3.6 Summary of the secondary research and continuation to the primary research results

The secondary research defined viral marketing and explained which forms viral marketing usually takes. The research also reflected upon the roots of viral marketing by presenting the first viral marketing example, the Hotmail example (Jurvetson & Draper, 1997). Furthermore, Kirby's (2004) illustration of the merge between word-of-mouth and advertisement online created a phenomena called word-of-mouse, which was also a contributor to the emergence of viral marketing. Ferguson (2010) on the other hand argued that word-of-mouth is a separate strategy from viral marketing and emphasized that instead, viral marketing creates a viral "buzz", that spreads. Wilson's (2012) six principles of viral marketing defined the characteristics of a successful viral marketing strategy. Scott (2010) outlined certain viral content characteristics and discussed how to successfully harness the power of viral marketing. Lane (2010) presented the Viral Loop Theory, which utilizes viral expansion loops to create actions, notifications and conversions by the consumer. Penenberg (2016) argued that viral expansion loops can also be seen as a

separate strategy than viral marketing, but agreed with Lane (2010) that viral expansion loops creates strong user engagement, which also plays an important role in viral marketing. Furthermore, Berger's 6-STEPSS model clarified which steps to take in order to draw a consumer's attention to certain content. These steps were found to be; social currency, triggers, emotion, public, practical value and stories. (Berger & Milkman, 2012, p. 194-198). Greenberg (2013), presented three major classifications of viral content online, and what their characteristics were. These classifications were linked to the specific content types further explained by Greenberg. Moreover, Scott (2010) further argued that marketers need to understand the purpose that each social media channel serves in order to determine what channel to spread their marketing message through. Lastly, Singh & Diamond (2013) argued that there are three influencer types that should be considered when spreading a marketing message on social media. To conclude, the secondary research gives a solid background to the research questions presented.

In the next chapter, the study will focus on the primary research –the online questionnaire. The sample size of 100 respondents was predetermined by the online free questionnaire tool [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). The questionnaire was online for 24 hours and managed to collect the 100 respondents in that time period. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, and the population was selected to be Generation Y (Millennials). The author shared the online questionnaire on Facebook and also posted a picture of herself urging her followers to answer the questionnaire. The sampling method for the study was non-probability sampling and the respondents participated in the study of their own free will.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Results of the primary research

The results of the primary research are presented in the following section. The collected data is visualized through statistical graphs, which have been made using the survey-monkey.com online analysis tool as well as the Canva's tool. The results are analyzed through an exploratory data analysis, which outlines the main characteristics of the data.

4.1.1 Age of respondent

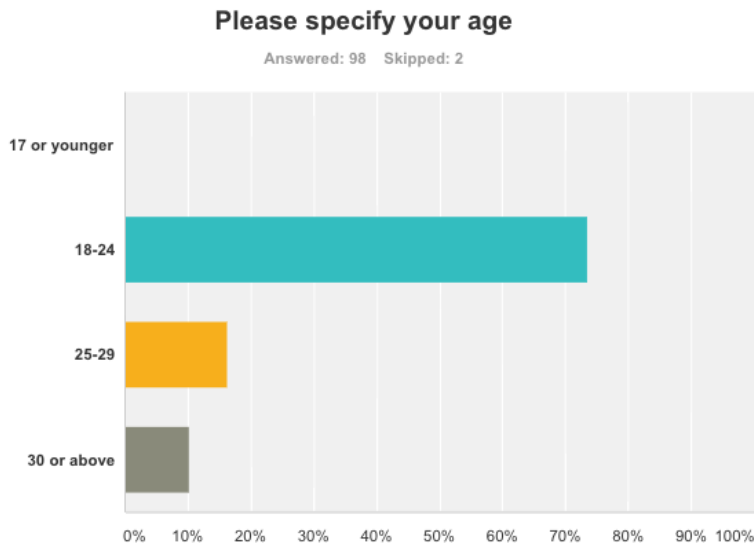


Figure 9 Age of respondent

The first question of the questionnaire asked the respondent to specify their age. The age ranges were set by the author to extend from “17 or younger”, “18-24”, “25-29” and “30 or above”. At the end, the author chose not to include the responses provided by the group “17 or younger”, since they were under-represented in the research. The results showed that most of the respondents (73.5%) belong to the category of “18-24”. Second most respondents (16.33%) were in the section “25-29”. And the least respondents were found in the category 30 or above (10.20%).

4.1.2 Gender of respondent

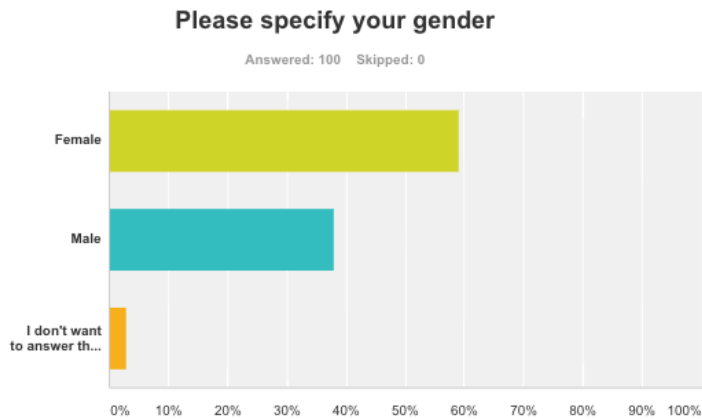


Figure 10 Gender of respondent

The second question asked the respondent to specify their gender. Of the 100 respondents, 59 defined themselves as female, 38 as male and 3 did not wish to answer the question. The above figure depicts the division of gender of the 100 respondents. Also, a third option was provided for those who did not wish to specify their gender. Of the 100 respondents, 38% were male and 59% were female, which means that the majority of the respondents were female. The division of gender between the respondents was expected due to the fact that the author's close circle of friends represents predominantly the female gender. Nevertheless, the author concludes that even if the study includes more female answers than male answers, it is not relevant to the outcome of the research.

4.1.3 What kind of content does the respondent forward?

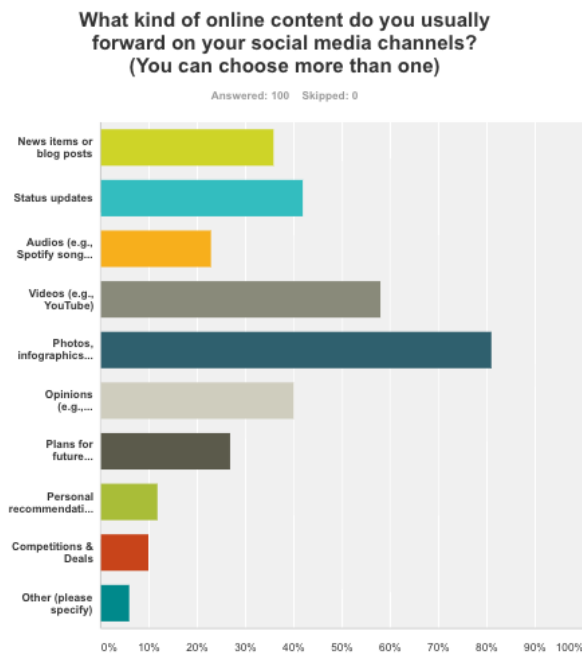


Figure 11 Type of forwarded online content

The third question asked the respondent to choose between 9 content options, which they would most likely share online. The following results were observed;

1. Photos, infographics, images, memes or illustrations (81 votes, 24.6%)
 2. Videos (i.e. Youtube) (58 votes, 17.6%)
 3. Status updates (42 votes, 12.8%)
 4. Opinions (i.e. political, social or cultural) (40 votes, 12.2%)
 5. News items or blog posts (36 votes, 11.0%)
 6. Plans for future activities (trips, holidays) (27 votes, 8.2%)
 7. Audios (i.e. Spotify files, podcasts) (23 votes, 7.0%)
 8. Personal recommendations (Yelp, Tripadvisor) (12 votes, 3.6%)
 9. Competitions and deals (10 votes, 3.0%)
- (n=329 votes, 100%)

Considering that the respondents were able to choose more than one option of content that they shared, the average respondent picked 3-4 options out of the 9 content options.

The most popular content to be forwarded were photos, infographics, images, memes or illustrations. The figure clearly depicts that there are significant differences between different kinds of content that is shared on respondents' social media channels. Since there was more than one option to choose from for each respondent, the result shows that the far most popular content to be shared (of all respondents) was "Photos, infographics, images memes or illustrations." The content that was less likely to be picked was competitions & deals, which could be explained by the general idea that respondents find the idea of forwarding the particular content to be uninteresting to them.

4.1.4 Reasons and motivators for content forwarding

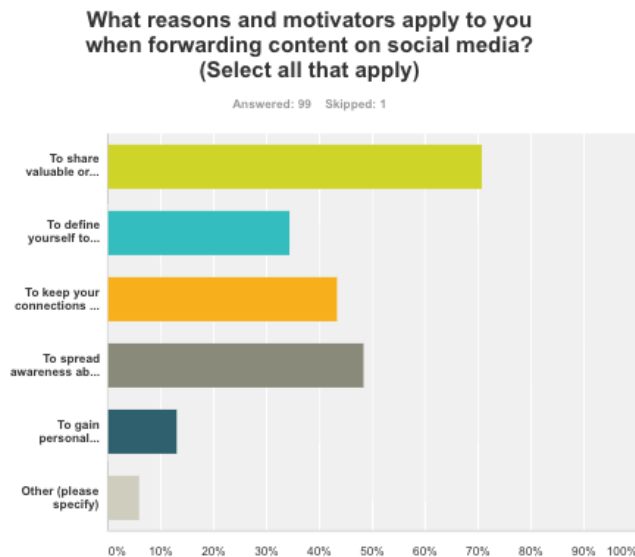


Figure 12 Reasons and motivators for content forwarding

The fourth questions asked the respondent to pick out the reasons and motivators that they think affects how they forward content online. The following results were observed:

1. To share valuable or interesting content (70 votes, 32.7%)
2. To spread awareness about a certain topic (48 votes, 22.4%)
3. To keep your connections up to date about your life (43 votes, 20%)
4. To define yourself to others (34 votes, 15.9%)
5. To gain personal benefit (i.e. like & share to win) (13 votes, 6.1%)
6. Other (6 votes, 2.8%)

(N=214, 100%)

The respondents were able to choose more than one of the reasons and motivators. The average respondent chose 2 options of the above, and the options are arranged in order of popularity. The option which received the most answers was “To share valuable or interesting content”.

4.1.5 Choice of content forwarding channel

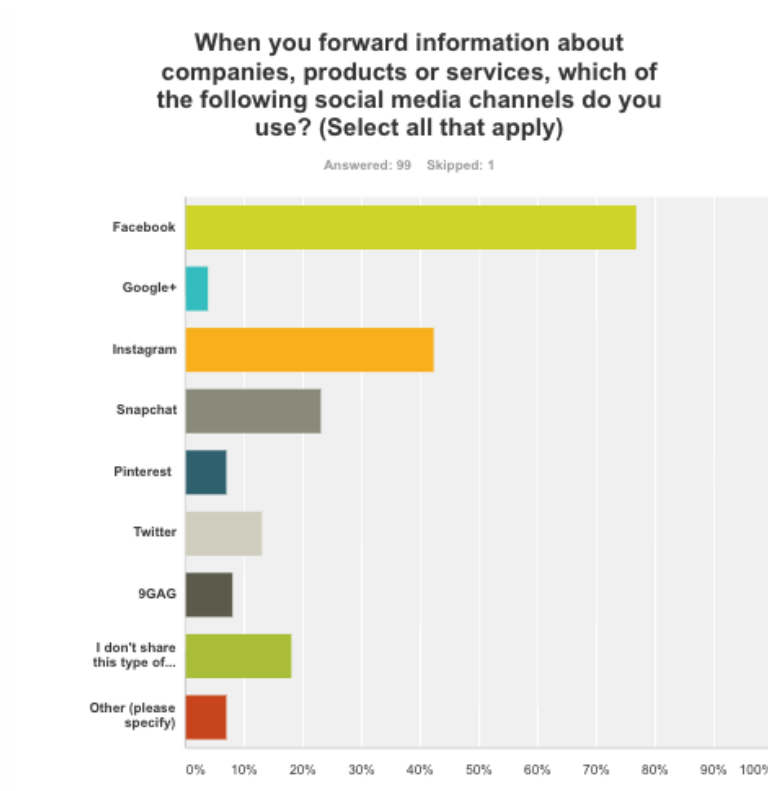


Figure 13 Choice of content forwarding channel

The fifth questions asked the respondent to specify which social media channels they forward content (about companies, brands or services) on. The following social media channels were observed:

1. Facebook (76 votes, 38%)
2. Instagram (42 votes, 20%)
3. Snapchat (23 votes, 11.5%)

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 4. I don't want to share this type of information | (18 votes, 9%) |
| 5. Twitter | (13 votes, 6.5%) |
| 6. 9GAG | (10 votes, 5%) |
| 7. Pinterest | (7 votes, 3.5%) |
| 8. Other | (7 votes, 3.5%) |
| 9. Google+ | (4 votes, 2%) |
- (N=200, 100%)

The respondents picked Facebook as being the social media channel that they use the most to share content about companies, products and services. There were also a significant number of respondents (18) who did not wish to share information about companies, products or services on their social media channels.

4.1.6 The viral case videos

The respondents were asked to watch the viral case videos by Coca Cola, Supercell and Barbie. A YouTube link was provided in the questionnaire that led the respondents to the viral case videos. The viral case videos were picked using random sampling from the Digital Strategy Consulting group's (2015) viral video archive.



Figure 14 The viral case videos, Digital Strategy Consulting, (2016)

4.1.7 Choice of the likelihood to share one of the presented viral video

The seventh question asked the respondent to choose between the options “very much likely”, “moderately likely”, “slightly likely” and “not at all likely”, as a response to the likelihood of recommending and forwarding each of the viral videos presented. The three viral videos were examples of viral marketing advertisement on YouTube. The three viral videos chosen were: Coca Cola, Supercell (Clash of Clans) and Barbie. The following results were observed:

A. The likelihood to share the Coca Cola viral video;



Figure 15 Likelihood to share the Coca Cola viral video

The above graph depicts the likelihood to share the Coca Cola viral video. It is clear that the majority of the respondents would consider forwarding and recommending the viral video. Moreover, the graph shows that the spread of answers is quite even between all answer choices. A third of the respondents indicated that they would not in any case forward or recommend the Coca Cola viral video. This can be explained by people’s difference in interests and what triggers them to forward and recommend viral videos. As a conclusion; **The results show that the Coca Cola viral video is highly likely to be forwarded and recommended on social media by millennials.** And least likely to not all be forwarded compared to the other viral videos.

B. The likelihood to share Supercell’s Clash of Clans viral video;

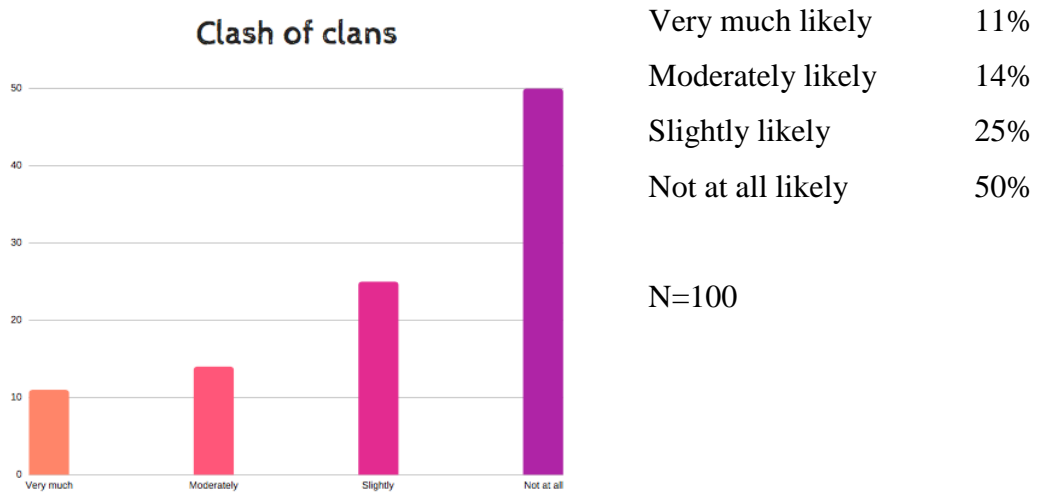


Figure 16 The likelihood to share the Clash of Clans viral video

The above graph depicts the likelihood to share Supercell’s Clash of Clans viral video. It is clear that the majority of the respondents would not at all consider forwarding and recommending the viral video. As the graph shows, the left decline of answers indicate that the Clash of Clans viral video did not excessively excite the millennials to forward and recommend the viral video and thus it failed to raise enough triggers and incentives among millennials. As a conclusion; **The results show that the Clash of Clans viral video was the least likely viral video to be forwarded and recommended by millennials on social media.**

C. The likelihood to share the Barbie viral video

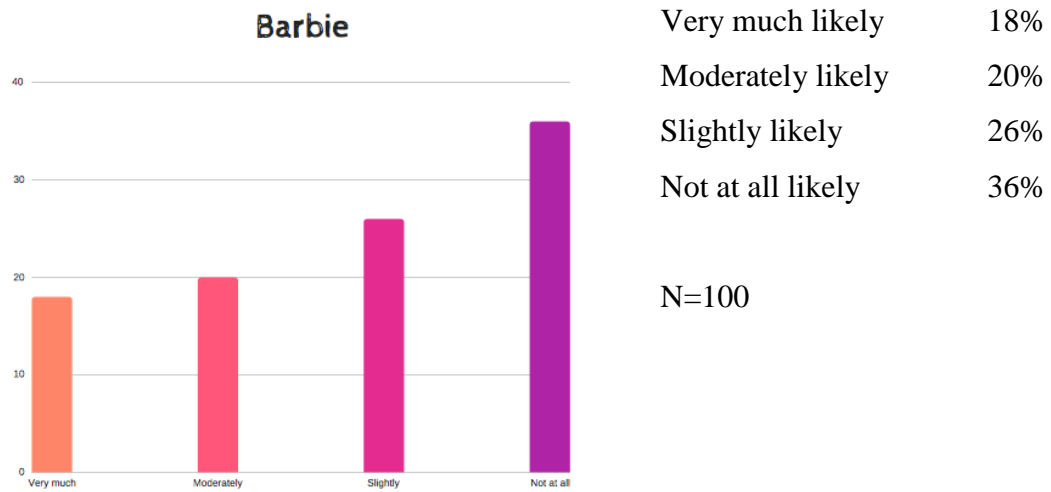


Figure 17 The likelihood to share the Barbie viral video

The results show that the division of answers for the Barbie ad lean towards the right, meaning that the majority of the respondents would not necessarily share the ad as a first choice. Although both the results for the Barbie and the Supercell ad look similar to each other, the results for the Barbie ad stays very stable on each of the options, while the Supercell ad takes the win of being the most unpopular option.

4.1.8 What impression did the viral video leave the respondent?

The eighth question asked the respondent to select what impression each viral video gave them. *The following were 6 options the respondents could choose from;*

1. It was entertaining/humorous
2. It was educational/useful
3. It was controversial/shocking
4. It challenged your views
5. It was unexpected/surprising
6. It was of no interest to me

A. The impressions of the Coca Cola viral video

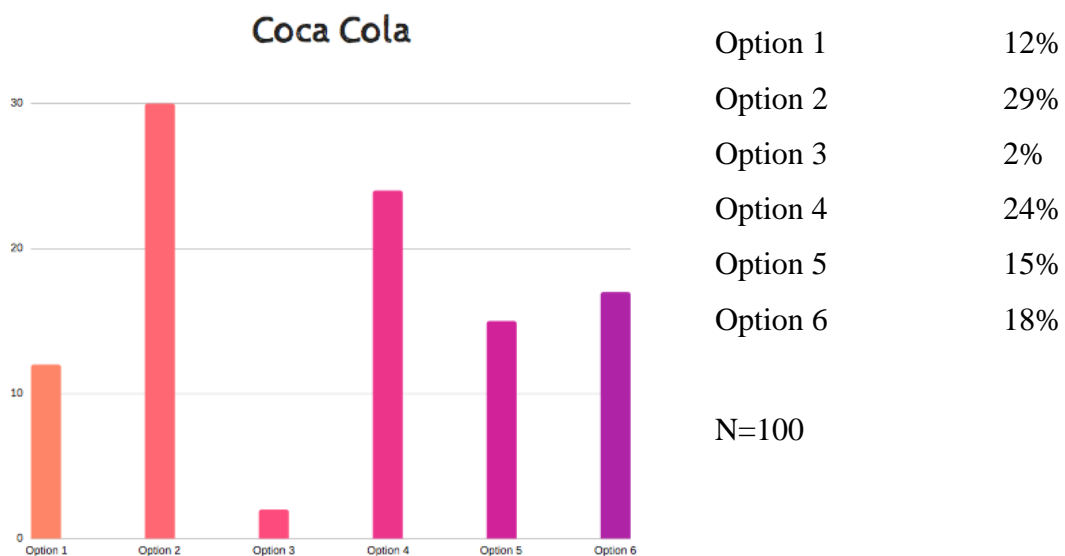


Figure 18 The impression of the Coca Cola viral video

The most popular impression of the Coca Cola viral video was option 2, which indicated that most of the respondents found the video to be educational or useful by nature. A close second was the impression that it challenged the respondents' views, which the viral video was originally intended to do as well. The least likely impression was option 3, which indicates that the respondents did not find the video shocking or controversial.

B. The impression of Supercell's Clash of Clans viral video

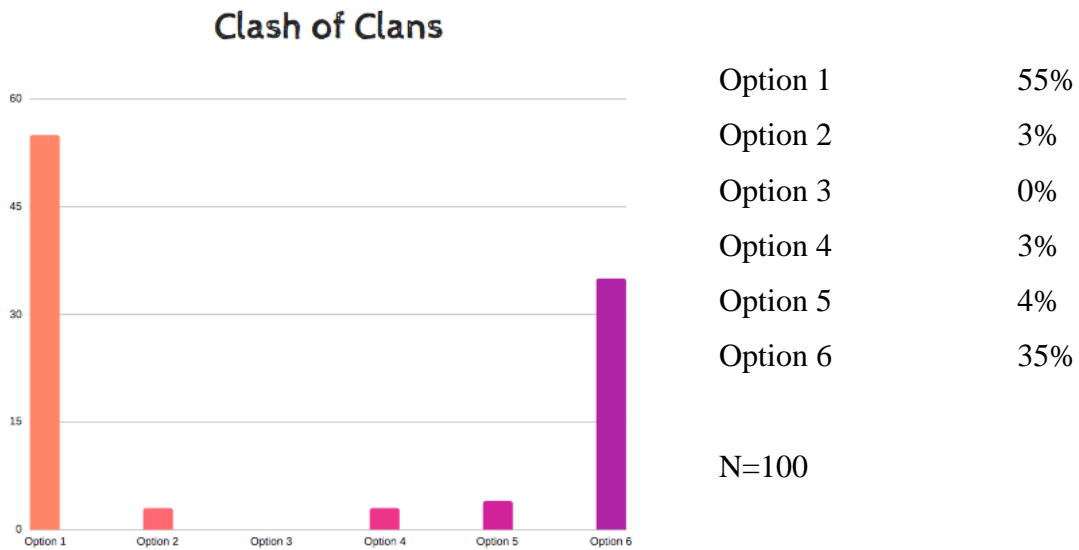


Figure 19 The impression of Supercell's Clash of Clans viral video

The results show that Supercell's Clash of Clans' viral video was very divided, which can be seen in the previous results as well. Either the millennials liked it or completely ignored it. The results tell the same; option 1 was the most popular, meaning that those who enjoyed the viral video found it entertaining or humorous, while those who did not like it (35%) chose the impression that it was of no interest.

C. The impression of the Barbie viral video

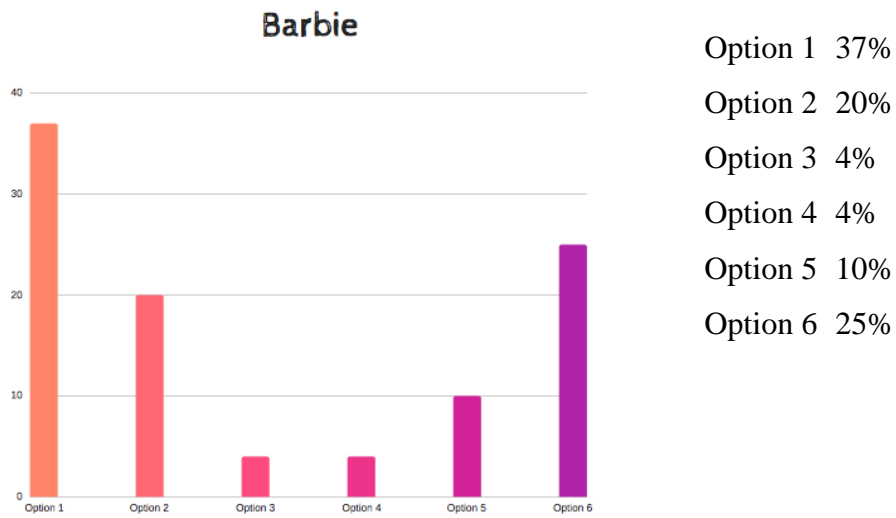


Figure 20 The impression of the Barbie viral video

The results show that 37% of the respondents considered the Barbie ad to be both entertaining and humorous. The second most popular choice was option 6, which indicated that the viral video was educational and useful.

4.1.9 Frequency of viral content forwarding by the respondent

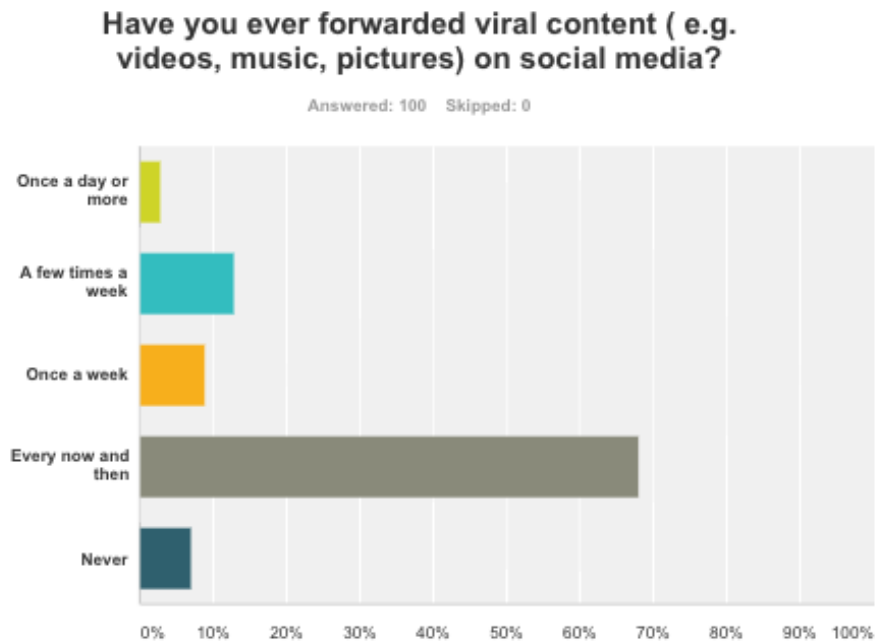


Figure 21 Frequency of forwarding viral content on social media

The ninth question asked the respondents to determine how often they share content on social media. The range was set in the order of: Once a day or more, a few times a week, once a week, every now and then and never.

The following results were observed:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| 1. Once a day or more | 3 % |
| 2. A few times a week | 13% |
| 3. Once a week | 9% |
| 4. Every now and then | 68% |
| 5. Never | 7% |

The most popular option was “every now and then” (68%) while the least likely option was “once a day or more”. (3%)

4.1.10 The effects viral marketing has on content forwarding

The last question was deemed irrelevant due to bad wording of the question asked (“Do you think viral marketing affects your content forwarding?”). This was found during the collection of the data and thus the question is not taken into consideration for this study.

4.2 Summary of the online questionnaire

The questionnaire provided insight to the content forwarding behavior of the respondents and delivered crucial information what came to the usage of different social media channels. The majority of the respondents was female and the majority of respondents was in the age range of 18-24. Photos, infographics, images, memes and illustrations was the most popular alternative when asked what type of content millennials would forward on their social media channels. Furthermore, the most popular social media channel was chosen to be Facebook. After the respondents answered the first five questions, they were asked to watch three viral case videos and provide their likelihood of sharing each video, as well as, which impressions each video gave them. The following results were observed; the Coca Cola viral video was highly likely to be forwarded and recommended on social media by millennials, that the Clash of Clans viral video was the least likely viral video to be forwarded and recommended by millennials on social media, and that the Barbie ad placed somewhere in the middle of the likelihood, but the majority of respondents leaned more towards not necessarily sharing the video as a first choice. Furthermore, the Coca Cola viral video left an impression of mostly being educational and useful, Supercell’s Clash of Clan’s viral video topped the charts at being entertaining and humorous and the Barbie ad was also deemed educational and useful. The results indicate that the Coca Cola viral video was seen in a more positive light than the two other viral case videos. Lastly, the respondents rarely fell into the category of forwarding content daily on social media neither into the category of never doing so.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following section of the study presents and discusses the findings of the literature review and the results of the online questionnaire. These are combined to answer the following research questions that will result in the outlining of the key elements of viral content creation.

Q1 What motivators and incentives trigger consumers to forward content online?

Q2 What key elements can be used to create viral content?

Q3 Which are the most effective ways to channel viral content on social media?

Q1: To examine the first research question; it is clear that consumers are affected by word-of-mouth and particularly by endorsement of a product or service from a close friend or someone whose opinion they trust (Jurvetson, 2000). When word-of-mouth is used in an online environment, it evolves into word-of-mouse and affects consumers through different social media channels, creating an online marketing medium for marketers to spread their marketing messages through. (Kirby, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial for marketers to understand how to motivate consumers in order to create alluring incentives to trigger them to forward their marketing messages. The results of the primary research show that millennials mostly share content on social media if they find the content valuable or interesting in nature (32.7%), or when they want to spread awareness about a certain topic (22.4%). They also want to keep their connections up to date about their life (20%) and define themselves to others through social media (15.9%). They would also share information to gain personal benefit (6.1%), but this was the least likely kind of content that they would share. These results are also backed up by the theories presented in the literature review; Consumers are generally motivated to forward content if they gain something from sharing content or if it is free of cost. Other motives such as spreading awareness about a certain topic that is of social, political, economical nature, as well as, educating others about a matter that the consumer stands for. Also, consumers want to keep their friends updated about their life on social media, which is a basic motive to forward content.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to choose the likelihood to forward each viral video presented in the online questionnaire. The Coca Cola viral video was the most popular option, with the Barbie viral video in second place and Supercell's Clash of Clans viral video coming in third. All of the viral videos differed in terms of triggers, background, theme, culture and target audience. The Coca Cola brand is a well-known brand world-wide, while the Barbie brand mostly target girls. Supercell's Clash of Clans video targeted consumers who know the Clash of Clans franchise and the 2008 movie "Taken". Therefore, it can be assumed that the millennials might have chosen the Coca Cola brand as the most likely viral video to forward because of its brand, reputation and message. To conclude, consumers' forward messages in order to achieve social recognition, fulfill their emotional needs, share valuable, educational or relatable information, personally gain from sharing information or to express their opinions and thoughts about a certain topic. Marketers should utilize these motives and create incentives that trigger people to forward a company's marketing message.

Q2: To answer the second research question; There are specific elements that should be utilized in a viral marketing strategy in order to create viral content. The findings of the secondary research indicate that content, which mediates social currency, can be used by the consumer to improve the way others perceive them, which enhances the content's shareability. It can also include a story or a trigger word that makes it memorable to consumers, i.e. slogans and brand logos. Therefore, it is always wise to add an emotional component to the content as well, in order to evoke an emotional response from the consumer. (Berger, 2012) Content that is of positive nature or optimistic is also more likely to be shared in comparison to its negative counterpart. Marketers can also utilize different types of content that catches the consumer's interest. (Greenberg, 2013). The primary research looked into what types of content are the most popular and most forwarded among millennials and found that photos, infographics, images, memes or illustrations are the most forwarded (24.6%). This makes sense since they are formatted in a simple way and made easily shareable on a larger scale. Other types of content that is spread online were found to be (in order of popularity); Videos, status updates, opinions, news items, blog posts, plans, audio files and personal recommendations The hardest content to get millennials to forward is competitions and deals (3%), which also correlates to the theories presented. Moreover, the respondents were also asked to choose what impression

they got out of viral videos presented in the online questionnaire. The choice for this question was to ask what emotions each viral video triggered. The results indicated that both the Coca Cola and Barbie viral video mediated an emotional response being that they were mainly educational and useful in nature. Supercell's Clash of Clans was foremost entertaining and humorous to the millennials. To conclude, the key elements of viral content creation boils down to what the content mediates (what emotions they hit), how its formatted (type of content) and how easy it is to spread (simple picture versus personal recommendations).

Q3: To answer the third question; In order to get the word out and efficiently forward viral content on social media, marketers need to understand the content forwarding behavior of consumers, and in this case millennials. Social media consists of numerous social networking sites, blogs, video & photo sharing sites, as well as, chat rooms. The purpose of social media is to provide an avenue to exhibit social communities, share information and participate in social interactions. Moreover, content should also be formatted in a way that it is easily shareable to a vast audience. (Greenberg (2013) The results of the online questionnaire signify that 68% of millennials share viral content on their social media every now and then, which means that marketers should watch out for sending out too many marketing messages in hopes of viral success on a larger scale. Millennials tend to channel content on social media mainly by using Facebook (38%) and the least through Google+ (3.5%). Furthermore, consumers can also be seen as being influenced by others when they share content on social media. These others, as Singh & Diamond (2013) depicted, can be seen as influencers, who influence consumers as experts, referents, or positional influencers. Consumers are therefore more likely to share the content if they get to know the content through someone who works in the same field of the content or if the consumer follows an influencer on social media and that influencer refers it, or alternatively if a close family member forwards it. To conclude, the most effective ways for marketers to channel viral content on social media is by understanding the forwarding behavior of the target audience, as well as, identify the online key communities and their influencers in order to expose the message to the largest audience possible.

This study concludes that the following key elements should be implemented when creating viral content on social media;

The three key elements of viral content creation;

1. To integrate **incentives and triggers** into the content that motivate consumers to forward content
2. To include an **emotional component** that generate response and action from consumers
3. To identify the key online communities and their influencers on social media, thus enhancing the content's **shareability**.

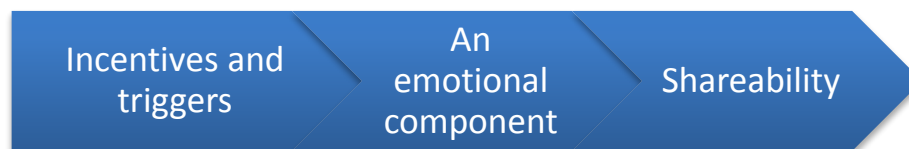


Figure 22 The three key elements of viral content creation, Hirvijärvi (2017)

5.1 Further research suggestions

The results of this research indicate that there is definitively more to be known and researched in terms of viral marketing and viral content creation. The author has merely scratched the surface of what is to be known about the topic and urges therefore that future research should be done in a larger scale compared to the author's research, which is limited in its nature due to the small sample size and demographic nature. Future research could for example be conducted in the format of a case study, where the researcher tries to conduct a viral marketing campaign on social media and measures the expand of the spread and forwarding of the viral content. The author suggests to expand the sample size to also include younger, as well as, older consumers, because this study only included consumers who are millennials. The online questionnaire could have also excluded the

viral videos to achieve the same results, which the author noticed at the end of the data collection process. The survey language was set to be English, although the author is a native Finn. The author found the use of Finnish or Swedish to be irrelevant, since most millennials have been educated in the English language primarily and most of the author's Facebook friends are foreign English speakers. The results of this study cannot therefore be generalized to the Finnish population, but provides insights into millennials from various of countries. Further research should address this problem and narrow down which countries the respondents are sampled from. The author should also have consulted her thesis supervisor before assembling the online questionnaire, since Q10 was later found irrelevant due to the bad wording and lack of logic. The research process could have been made more efficient by the author, but due to unexpected circumstances, the time period for the research process was extended. The analysis method for the primary data could also have been more scientific in nature and the use of proper statistical analysis tools are recommended for further research. All in all, the author enjoyed working with the topic and definitively gained a solid understanding in the background and processes of viral marketing and viral content creation. Since the topic is relatively new, it is hard to draw proper scientific conclusions without much data and therefore more research is needed in the future. The author assembled and outlined thus three key elements that future researchers can utilize in their studies into viral content creation. The author is satisfied with the outcome of the study and was positively surprised by the support and enthusiasm met by the Facebook friends answering the online questionnaire.

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7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1. Online questionnaire

Viral Marketing and content forwarding on social media

A Bachelor's thesis survey

This survey is conducted to investigate the correlation between viral marketing and content forwarding behaviors on social media. Your responses are voluntary and will be confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group. The overall answering time is roughly 6-8 mins.

1. Please specify your age

- 17 or younger
- 18-24
- 25-29
- 30 or above

2. Please specify your gender

- Female
- Male
- I don't want to answer this question

3. What kind of online content do you usually forward on your social media channels? (You can choose more than one)

- Audios (e.g., Spotify songs, Podcasts)
- News items or blog posts
- Status updates
- Photos, infographics, images, memes or illustrations
- Plans for future activities (e.g., Trips, plans, going on holidays)
- Opinions (e.g., Political, social or cultural)
- Videos (e.g., YouTube)
- Personal recommendations (e.g., Yelp, Tripadvisor, customer reviews)
- Competitions & Deals
- Other (please specify)

4. What reasons and motivators apply to you when forwarding content on social media? (Select all that apply)

- To share valuable or interesting content
- To define yourself to others
- To spread awareness about a certain topic
- To keep your connections up to date about your life
- To gain personal benefit (e.g., "like & share to win something")
- Other (please specify)

5. When you forward information about companies, products or services, which of the following social media channels do you use? (Select all that apply)

- Facebook
- Google+
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- 9GAG
- I don't share this type of information online
- Other (please specify)

6. Please watch the following viral marketing videos (5 min)

- "Clash of clans: Revenge (Official SuperBowl commercial)"



- "Barbie - Imagine the possibilities!"



- "Coca Cola - Remove labels this"



7. How likely would you forward and recommend each video on social media?

	Very likely	Moderately likely	Slightly likely	Not at all likely
Clash of Clans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Barbie	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coca Cola	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What impression did each viral video give you? (Select the most relevant one)

	It was entertaining/humorous	It was educational/useful	It was controversial/shocking	It challenged your views	It was unexpected/surprising	It was of no interest to me
Clash of Clans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Barbie	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coca Cola	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Have you ever forwarded viral content (e.g. videos, music, pictures) on social media?

- Once a day or more
- A few times a week
- Once a week
- Every now and then
- Never

10. Do you think viral marketing affects your content forwarding?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

Done