How does marketing become viral?

An investigation of the dynamics in digital campaigns

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Abstract
Viral advertising might be described as a communication in a short period of time related to product or brand, which is spread by consumers. Simultaneously it is becoming an increasingly discussed phenomenon in marketing field, since traditional tools for reaching customers are less efficient. Therefore companies use viral approach to avoid contemporary uncertainty, when customers become more immune towards the influence of advertising. Viral advertising research focuses on viral strategies, psychosocial attitudes towards forwarding content and its diffusion via networks. However, it is relatively unknown how the actual campaign process is designed and unfolds. I conducted a multiple case study, which examines four viral campaigns, to answer the research questions “Which are the design factors for viral campaigns?” and “How are the design components interrelated in viral diffusion process?” In the analysis, I examine viral process in these campaigns through a holistic framework based on existing research streams. Based on a cross case analysis I suggest increased granularity of the involved factors. The thesis identifies new factors in viral diffusion such as consistency and reinforcing cycles. Furthermore, it proposes a framework for studying the process in which viral campaign occurs.

Keywords: viral advertising, marketing, digital channels, e-WOM, social media

1. Introduction
Viral advertising is an increasingly important phenomenon for organizations striving to spread their message in a digital age. Viral advertising can broadly be described as communication to potential customers through attractive content that is diffused by people in a short period of time (Dobele et al., 2007). Compared to traditional marketing methods, viral advertising has the potential to reach a wide audience at a relatively low cost (Camarero and San José, 2011). The massive expansion and usage of digital channels, especially those with elements of social networking, requires organizations to adapt to new forms of communication, since consumers are overwhelmed by information and are harder to attract for marketers (Hinz et al., 2011; Ho and Dempsey, 2008; Dobele et al., 2007).

The present research on viral advertising is focused on distinct aspects such as viral strategies (Stonedahl, Rand and Wilensky, 2010), psychosocial attitudes (Camarero and San José, 2011; Dobele et al., 2007) or modeling of viral information spreading through networks (Leskovec, Adamic and Huberman, 2007). Despite substantial research on viral phenomenon, how and why viral advertising campaigns become successful is still not well understood (Ho and Dempsey, 2008; Petrescu and Korgaonkar, 2011). One reason for this is how the constantly changing digital environment transforms the roles of companies and customers. The importance of digital communication channels has strengthened the position of customers in content diffusion at the expense of traditional actors like media due to higher accessibility of information (Nahon and Hemsley, 2013; Petrescu and Korgaonkar, 2011).
Viral advertising research explores the importance of psychosocial attitudes incorporated in messages during viral campaigns (Dobele et al., 2005; 2007) and their effect on possible success. Other research streams investigate strategies or frameworks for launching viral campaigns and pertinent phases are also investigated (Grifoni, D'Andrea & Ferri, 2012; Stonedahl, Rand and Wilensky, 2010). However the actual process and dynamics of the viral campaigns remain poorly understood.

Against this background I explored the research questions: “Which are the design factors for viral campaigns?” and “How are the design components interrelated in viral diffusion process?” To investigate these research questions, I conducted a multiple case study comprising four viral advertising campaigns. Two “placed” viral campaigns with extensive involvement of managerial control and two “random” campaigns with low involvement of managerial control. Both approaches have proved Successful and I intend to explore how this is. Besides the degree of strategy involvement, the campaigns were selected on conditions that were initiated by companies, not naturally occurred and by other criteria mentioned in data analysis section.

Data were collected from multiple online sources like official sites, interviews, newspaper or marketing websites because every type of evidence contains different opinions and concurrently in order to decrease the risk for possible biases (Yin, 2003). To analyze the process in which these campaigns went viral I develop and apply a theoretical framework based on related research. Further in the data analysis, the framework components are identified in each campaign by adopting thematic analysis. The consecutive findings are compared in cross case analysis for deeper understanding and generalization. Lastly, the discussion section concerns the implication of the findings for present and future research.

2. Related research

In this section I review related research in order to explore the notion of viral advertising and how it might be defined and understood. Moreover, I propose a framework for studying viral campaigns based on research findings.

2.1 When marketing becomes viral

Online advertising is constantly growing while the importance of marketing in traditional channels like TV, radio or printed media is decreasing, which caused a wider usage of Internet channels. This transformation has significantly changed information exchange, particularly in terms of speed (information are immediately accessible on demand) and reach (access from all over the world). Concurrently roles between company and customers also transformed, customers are more in charge in “what will be consumed” and “what will be distributed” (Petrescu and Korgaonkar, 2011). In a similar vein the everyday character of social media amplifies this shift by adding more personalization of shared messages (Camarero and San José, 2011). Thus it is not surprising that present consumers are less likely to react to advertisement because it seems “artificial” and these types of messages are less trustworthy in comparison with more personalized messages, which are consumed through social media (Eckler and Bolls, 2011). For example, studies have found that 65% of
consumers feel overloaded by too much information and that 60% of them consider advertisement as non-relevant (Hinz et al., 2011). The result of these changes is increased uncertainty for companies, when traditional marketing tools became less effective (Hann et al., 2008) and had influence in creation of viral advertising as a reaction on new rules. While viral campaign is an increasingly important tool in contemporary digital marketing, the phenomenon is not well articulated or understood. More specifically, we know little of the actual process of campaigns becoming viral, i.e. the dynamics involved when campaigns unfold over time.

Furthermore, there is the obstacle how virality might be described or understood, since there is a dichotomy in concepts as some scholars stress (Nahon and Hemsley, 2013; Petrescu and Korgaonkar, 2011). The connection of term “viral” with marketing came to awareness due to Jurvetson and Draper in 1996, when they were examining Microsoft’s marketing strategy that advertised their new email service Hotmail. Microsoft attached the message: “Get your private, free e-mail from Hotmail at http://www.hotmail.com” in every outbound email sent from Hotmail account and successfully acquired 10 millions of new users in 7 months (Lance and Guy J., 2006). Thereafter researches (Dobele et al., 2005; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011) started to talk about “viral” phenomenon as a specific form of Word – of mouth (WOM) or later on about electronic Word – of – Mouse (e-WOM). This might be understood as forwarding messages or advertisements to friends via the electronic channel (Dobele et al., 2005) and concurrently positive or negative announcement by present or former customers, which is available to various people on internet (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004).

However this definition is a bit distinct from viral advertising because WOM postulates that people talk to each other without any commercial motive. In addition conversation among people do not assume involvement of network process, while “virality” has to engage many people in massive communication. WOM also doesn’t take into account factors such as speed and reach. Thus WOM or e-WOM are important elements of “Virality”, but not a process of viral diffusion as itself (Nahon and Hemsley, 2013).

Apart from WOM and e-WOM, researchers in field of marketing describes other concepts of “virality” such as “viral marketing”, “buzz marketing” or “viral advertising”, which might differ from each other in 5 essentials criteria 1) platform 2) communication channel (traditional or Internet) 3) their objective 4) type of message and 5) orientation of the communication. This resolution of approaches provides possible tools for analysis depending on type of our empirical material and simultaneously reminds to avoid wrong application (Petrescu and Korgaonkar, 2011).

From a contemporary point of view, the concept of “Viral advertising” is the most accurate term for virality phenomenon, because it “relies on provocative content to motivate unpaid peer - to - peer communication of persuasive messages from identified sponsor using the Internet to persuade or influence an audience to pass along the content to others” (Lance and Guy J., 2006). Similarly Petrescu and Korgaonkar (2011) add that viral advertising circulating through social circles on social media based on business or consumer generated content. In addition to social networking, the other key elements are speed, spread and reach.
in terms of the number of people and the distance of information travels (Nahon and Hemsley, 2013).

The purpose of viral advertising is to influence consumers through intriguing content or various marketing tools such as viral videos, guerrilla campaigns, and community websites to start up people’s positive conversation about products depending on the type of strategy (Ferguson, 2008; Cruz and Fill, 2008).

One of the first steps in the viral process is customer identification with products, because it will form a relationship to the company (Ferguson, 2008). Since contemporary viral campaigns are online based, marketers focus on online relationship, which involve interaction, communication, dialogue and value. Simultaneously, the expanding character of social media causes development of online marketing instruments for advertisers, which allow to build more natural social relationship. Social media also enable advertisers to customize their messages and have a dialog with customers. Furthermore, the online correspondence empowers marketers to more accurate targeting on potential clients due to databases, which gather data. It enables marketers to select the right audience based on demographics and interests, such as Facebook (Miller and Lammas, 2010).

Social media is frequently examined in various research fields, however studies related to viral advertising campaign and its diffusion are rare. One of the few studies in this area was conducted by Kaplan and Haelein (2011) who propose three basic conditions in order to create viral advertising campaign. Firstly the messengers, who represents suitable individuals for message spreading, such as market mavens (individuals with prominent access to information and trust from consumers), social hubs (people with large social network) and salespeople. Secondly, the message should be memorable and interesting. In a similar vein Dobele et al. (2005) emphasize the importance of the message for capturing interested by being fun or intriguing, targeting audience and association with credible source. The last condition is environment forwarding the message as far as it is something new or delivering value. The environment also contains one of the main risk of viral campaign being that once a message is released, companies don’t have a control over consumer generated content. Thus it may occur situation of failure such as PSP and Gigli, when negative reactions of consumers destroyed campaign fast. Subsequent corrections have minor influence. From this perspective, incorrectly set viral campaigns might even cause a negative buzz around the product, ergo companies should be aware of possible risks (Miller and Lammas, 2010; Dobele et al. 2005; Kaplan and Haelein, 2011).

The findings from related research on viral advertising are presented for clarity and proper understanding in Table 1. As it shows, three main streams are linked together and address virality from distinct perspectives. Research of eWOM explores the consumer view and its psychosocial aspects, which are important in content creation and further spreading. Social media represent an important “mediator” in viral spreading due to its possibilities for mass communication and social networking. Finally viral advertising takes a stronger marketing perspective and besides psychosocial aspects it is also focused on tools or different strategies of viral diffusion.
**Table 1. Summarized findings from related research of viral advertising**

Nonetheless there is still a lack of knowledge how viral advertising campaigns work as a whole, particularly in identification of successful components of diffusion process in today’s environment (Ho and Dempsey, 2008; Kaplan and Haelein, 2011). Related studies in viral advertising have attempted to identify key factors that contribute to successful campaigns, including:

- **Empirical examples**
  - C2C information exchange
  - C2C on social media
  - Behavioural aspects of C2C relation
  - Mass communication
  - Information exchange
  - SM as an advertising tool
  - Marketing strategy
  - Motivation toward viral spreading
  - Marketing strategy
  - Interaction with consumers
  - Social media + virality

- **Source of success**
  - Positive perception of a brand
  - New and intriguing content
  - Individuation
  - Altruism
  - Dialogue with consumers
  - Brand building
  - Participation in FB groups
  - Number of nodes in social network
  - Interesting content
  - Emotion of surprise
  - Gatekeepers
  - Interested networks

- **Research field**
  - Marketing
  - Information Management
  - Innovation Management
  - Psychology
  - Communication
  - Marketing
  - PR
  - Management
  - Information systems
  - Marketing
  - Information systems

- **Main journals**
  - Journal of Business Research
  - Business Horizons
  - International Journal of Advertising
  - International Journal of Information Management
  - Business Horizons
  - Journal of Business Research
  - MIS Quarterly
  - Public Relations Review
  - International Journal of Advertising
  - Journal of Interactive Advertising
  - Journal of Internet Commerce
  - Information system research
advertising (Chiu et al. 2007; Lance & Guy J., 2006) address mainly “email virality”, which has lost significance in comparison with usage of social media in viral campaigns. In addition contemporary marketing research focused on social media marketing (Akar and Topçu, 2011; Kaplan and Haelein, 2010) explores viral phenomenon marginally and provides certain implication such as the role of Facebook groups in viral participation (Chu, 2011) or potential of social media to generate viral communication (Miller and Lammas, 2010).

For studying mentioned aspects I propose the framework in the next section, which is further applied on multiple case study in viral advertising.

2.2 Framework

Present research stresses that every viral campaign comprises some sort of message or content (Cho, Huh and Faber, 2014; Nahon and Hemsley, 2013; Cruz and Fill, 2008). Likewise in everyday communication our senses are captured by very few messages, while others are easily forgotten. How and why this happens is also discussed in research on viral advertising, which synthesised several important characteristics in emotions, motivation or personal attitudes of consumers. For instance emotion of surprise (Derbaix and Vanhamme, 2003) or motives as individuation and altruism (Ho and Dempsey, 2008) are positively correlated with forwarding message in social networks. In case of other emotions such as joy, sadness, anger, fear and disgust is necessary to take into account characteristics of targeted audience (Dobele et al., 2007). Based on mentioned findings I clarify a “message” and related psychosocial aspects as the first component in viral campaigns.

Since the viral advertising research (Lance and Guy J., 2006) refers to “virality” as a case of advertising, the component of advertising has to be also included in proposed framework. Nowadays viral campaigns are advertised mostly via social networks such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter for its diffusion potential. Nevertheless advertisement might have two forms, “random” campaigns, which emphasize on creative content and expect the bottom-up process of spreading, while “placed” campaigns use management control of expensive media placement to ensure the top-down process of diffusion, which simultaneously boost the bottom-up process (Cruz and Fill, 2008; Nahon and Hemsley, 2013). Therefore I propose “advertising” and tools promoting a message as the second component in viral campaigns.

Some researchers (Dobele et al., 2005; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011) refer to virality as case of WOM or e-WOM. However this definition does not explain the whole process of viral campaign, communication among consumers is an essential component of virality. Furthermore the nature of social media allows marketers to open dialogue and strengthen relation with consumers (Miller and Lammas, 2010). The dialogue with consumers might be supplied in two ways, with a top-down approach, where companies manage direct communication with customers via channels like Skype, Google Hangouts or indirectly via important gatekeepers. On the other hand, a bottom-up approach relies on addressing interested networks, social networking or blogs and assumes more initiative from consumer based on remarkable content (Nahon and Hemsley, 2013; Nahon et al., 2011). I propose “communication” as the third component in viral campaigns.

Finally, there is also a need to evaluate particular viral campaign whether it is really viral through tracking reach and number of consumers (Nahon and Hemsley, 2013). Similarly
Grifoni, D’Andrea and Ferri (2012) claim necessity to examine the influence of the components on outcomes. This might be analysed from various lenses, for instance financial and psychosocial in order to identify valuable elements of a campaign for customization during process or due to future strategy. Thus I propose “evaluation” as the fourth component in viral campaigns.

Having described four essential components in process of viral diffusion, mutual connection remains to be explained. Before moving on to clarification of links between components, it is necessary to mention that other components exist prior to running campaign. Grifoni, D’Andrea and Ferri (2012) present two phases before campaign unfolds, namely analysis and objectives. An analysis provides information concerning wider business context, such as situation on a market, possible competitors and internal factors of the company. Further, the objectives’ phase defines goals (cognitive, behavioral, financial) and niche audience. However the aim of the study is to examine actual process of viral diffusion and thus I present pre-phases in the framework just to remind their existence. Message and advertising component occurs as the first in the process itself, which I call campaign design. The created message is a cornerstone of attaining viral diffusion, since without message there will be no communication, nor viral spreading. The advertising decision is necessary for selecting how to spread the message, whether placed or random type. As soon as the campaign is designed and consequently launched, companies normally transfer to the communication component, which differs depending on the campaign design decision. Evaluation component passes off as last, since companies need feedback from actual running or past campaigns for attaining reinforcing cycles or adapting future campaigns.

![Viral advertising framework](image)

**Figure 1.** **Viral advertising framework**

**3. Research methodology**

I used multiple case study research methodology to examine dynamics of four viral advertising campaigns, since there is a lack of knowledge about actual process of campaigns. The case study method is suitable for the studies, which concerns mainly questions “how” and “why”. These type of inquiries explore operational connections that are necessary to
track over time and concurrently “to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (Yin, 2003). Case studies logic address to issues where the boundaries are overlapping and the context is ambiguous due to its complexity. Thus the method is used when it is necessary to focus on the contextual conditions of studied phenomenon in order to explain why it happens (Yin, 2003). As Daymon and Holloway (2002) add, the case study approach uses multiple sources of evidence such as interviews, observation and archival data to understand complexity of particular situations.

I decided for multiple case design, since more cases allows better generalization of the outcomes. Furthermore it provides identification of particular characteristics based on similarities or differences between studied cases in contrast to single case study (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). The thesis examines two “placed” viral advertising cases, Old Spice and Dove and two “random” cases represented by Scarecrow and TNT because both approaches contain particular differences in dynamics. The terms “placed” and “random” refer to Cruz (2008) distinction of two types of campaign, where the “placed” means high company involvement and “random” low involvement. The cases were also selected based on type of message, while the Dove and Scarecrow address societal challenges, Old Spice and TNT attract by fun and surprise. This distinction provides logic for two-by-two selection in multiple case study approach. Moreover, these campaigns were chosen in terms of availability of data and to demonstrate contemporary conditions in viral diffusion driven by social media.

3.1 Data collection
The data were collected from Internet sources like official websites of campaigns, social networks, news and marketing articles, since the study examines viral diffusion of digital campaigns. Simultaneously each of these sources might contain different type of information such as descriptive information, analysis, interviews or videos. As Yin (2003) adds, various online sources of evidence contain miscellaneous opinions, which are necessary to take into account during case study analysis in order to avoid possible biases. Once campaigns were selected based on criteria’s mentioned in research methodology section, I proceeded to the data collection via extensive Internet search. It was not an easy task due to the fact that campaigns occurred in the past and valuable information were hidden in Internet environment. Firstly, I focused on finding information in credible sources such as famous news or business & marketing magazines. Afterwards, I gathered data from the advertising agency articles, blogs and other sources. Since several sources provide only general or the same information, the data collection was aimed on valuable information regarding the components in the framework. This helped to avoid redundant information. Once the beneficial data were collected, they were exported into PDF and consecutively stored into Cloud folder allowing easy manipulation. The last step was to arrange them into a spreadsheet to provide overview and transparency in the data collection. All data used in further analysis section are presented in Table 2.
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<td><strong>Official websites</strong></td>
<td>Old Spice, P&amp;G</td>
<td>Dove, Dove – Real Beauty</td>
<td>Duval Guillaume</td>
<td>Scarecrow</td>
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<td><strong>YouTube video</strong></td>
<td>The Man Your Man Could Smell Like</td>
<td>Dove Real Beauty Sketches</td>
<td>A dramatic surprise on a quiet square</td>
<td>The Scarecrow</td>
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<td><strong>Social networks in advertising</strong></td>
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<td>Effie Awards</td>
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*Table 2. Sources for data collection*
3.2 Data analysis

The examination of the selected cases is based on thematic analysis. According to Holloway and Todres (2003), this approach is considered as one of the primary method for qualitative data analysis. The purpose of thematic analysis is flexible identification, analysis and explanation of patterns within examined data. Concurrently, the method might be used for insight into phenomena compromising experiences and meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis itself consists of six consecutive phases, which are described in the Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of the process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Familiarizing yourself with your data</td>
<td>Reading through the data, generating and registering of initial ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Generating initial codes</td>
<td>Production of codes from the data, highlighting and noting potential patterns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Searching for themes</td>
<td>Sorting and matching of the codes, focus at the broader level, possible usage tables, mind-maps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Reviewing themes</td>
<td>Considering relevancy of matched themes, generating a thematic map of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Defining and naming themes</td>
<td>Identifying what each theme means and clear definition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Producing the report</td>
<td>Choosing particular examples, writing final report, illustrating story.</td>
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Table 3. Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

The study applied these phases in the following way. Firstly, I acquainted with data throughout reading and I started to look for meanings and patterns, particularly for the components in the theoretical framework (message, advertising, communication and evaluation). In the case of verbal data (campaign videos) I rather took notes for initial overview. After familiarization with the data, the manual coding was performed. I used highlighting and taking notes in the computer program Preview since my data were in electronic form (Figure 1. in the appendix). This approach provided initial indication of patterns within the framework. As Braun and Clarke (2006) claim coding varies depending on the type data and whether you focus on the entire dataset or the particular feature. Further the analysis was focused on the broader context and I began to assign the codes for relevant themes. As soon as the codes and the themes were linked, I reviewed the themes again, whether they were sufficiently relevant. Lastly I defined and refined the themes in order to identify the essence, which was later on used in the report. Final themes and their relations to the framework’s components are listed in Table 1 in the appendix.

Since Yin (2003) argues necessity for the strategy in analysing cases, I decided for following two steps. Firstly, each campaign was described separately based on components in the theoretical framework. I began with the themes related to the message component and then continued with communication, advertising and evaluation in one of the campaign. The same process was repeated for every campaign. Secondly, after the components were identified in all four cases, I proceeded to cross-case analysis. There, the important findings
of each campaign were synthetized and compared between other campaigns. Further comparison of the components among selected campaigns provides more comprehensibility and their generalization for further studies.

4. Results

This section is devoted to the four viral campaigns and analysis of the components in the framework. Last subsection provides a cross case analysis to scrutiny design elements for viral campaigns.

4.1 Dove – “Real Beauty Sketches”

Dove is an international company engaged in the production of cosmetics and personal hygiene. Real Beauty Sketches is a viral campaign launched in April 2013 as a part of long-term marketing campaign for Real Beauty by Dove. The aim is to convince women about their natural beauty, since only 4% of women perceive themselves as beautiful and 54% are highly self-critic. The long-term campaign was initiated by Unilever in 2004 and comprises videos, billboards, and magazine articles with slogans such as “Wrinkled or Wonderful” or “Fat or Fab” to support self-confidence of women. The Real Beauty Sketches viral videos (shorter 3 minute and longer 6 minute) were made by famous marketing agency Ogilvy & Mather. My analysis is focused on the 3 minute version because it was the main source of success of Real Beauty sketches with 65 millions views on YouTube.

Figure 2. Dove – “Real Beauty Sketches”

Message. The video starts with introducing a long experienced FBI Trained sketcher from San Jose department. Pointing on 16 years of experience and location, character of FBI sketcher acquires authenticity and trust of viewers. The video continues with two women talking about their initial experience when they didn't know what would happen. Consecutive understanding situation and transition from state “unknown” to “known” is again source of authenticity and trust because the campaign is presented as a real social experiment. Further,
more women are describing themselves to FBI sketcher, which is drawing a sketch based on their description without seeing them, however all of them are talking about their appearance in a negative tone and pointing on imperfections (freckles, big foreheads) or mentioning critic notes from environment (mother - big jaw). After a short explanation by FBI sketcher and drawn woman, other women come to scene to describe the previously drawn women to FBI sketcher from their perspective. From this moment, the whole video turns into a positive and supportive tone, characters are smiling and talking about qualities of others. Later on FBI sketcher is showing two pictures to the drawn woman, one based on her own description and the second described by other person. Other drawn women follow, they are emotionally touched in positive way by difference between portraits and confirm this positive perspective by others.

**Advertisement.** Dove established the campaign on top-down advertising and decided to spread the message worldwide via uploading a video on their 46 YouTube channels in 25 languages. This was supported paid advertisement based on Google ecosystem. TrueView in-stream allows offering advertisement before playing video on YouTube and viewer has an option to skip it after few seconds or watch the whole. However, Dove advertisement was attractive and only from TrueView in-stream gained over 8 million views. In the US, Dove also used masthead, an ad on the homepage of YouTube, so for a whole day it was the most visible advertisement on YouTube. Finally TrueView in-search and Google search advertisements were used to reach an audience, which was actively searching for Dove related information on YouTube or in Google search. This type of advertisement might be highly beneficial for spreading the message, since it automatically targets viewers with particular interest in Dove. Apart from the main 3 minute long video, users might reach additional content such as the 6 minute version of main video or interviews with women or FBI sketcher.

**Communication.** For communication purpose tools from the Google ecosystem were selected, likewise in case of advertisement. Dove directly communicated with their audience via YouTube video responses under videos on their channel. On Mother’s day in Canada Dove organized Google + Hangouts session, when women were interviewed by FBI sketcher from the original video. Active communication on Twitter was ensured by hashtag #WeAreBeautiful.

**Evaluation.** The campaign reached tremendous number of views and shares. YouTube video (3 minute) gained 30 millions views and 7800 comments in 10 days, overall feedback was positive with 97,6%. Similarly interesting number was possible to see on Facebook, where users shared the message 660 000 times in 10 days and 275 000 users followed the campaign page on Google+. On Mashable media Dove acquired 500 000 shares in only 24 hours and an article about the campaign became TOP 10 on Buzz Feed. Business Insider pointed PR strategy of the campaign as one of the main aspect of success, since the message was distributed with world media in initial phase and boost the diffusion process. Furthermore, 15 parodies on the original video were created and the most successful one was
viewed 3500000 times. Although critical voices upbraid campaign for scientific invalidity or selectivity of women, overall buzz around the campaign was so huge that critical voices didn’t have impact on general positive perception.

4.2 Chipotle Mexican grill – “The Scarecrow”
Chipotle Mexican grill is an international fast food restaurant chain operating in USA, Germany, UK and France. The Scarecrow campaign was launched on 12 September 2013 to argue sensitive questions about food integrity. Chipotle firstly addressed to the issue in 2010 with a YouTube video “One man’s Quest for Better Tasting Pork” when the CEO of Chipotle explains his selection of natural breeding. Afterwards Chipotle uploaded the “Back to the Start” video on YouTube in the fall of 2011. The farmer in the animated video concerns the decision whether he should choose the path of processed food, symbolized by destroying nature and animal suffering or the natural way followed by cultivation of nature and happiness. In a similar vein, Chipotle tied in with The Scarecrow campaign, which illustrates a future world influenced by food processing and the difference between this approach and the natural one. Despite the fact that the stories are different, they consider consistent message.

Figure 3. Chipotle Mexican grill – “The Scarecrow”

Message. The video starts with showing “Crow foods incorporated” factory in the wasteland, thereby authors want to evoke problematic future caused by corporations. It is also possible to recognize two main characters of the video, the scarecrow and crow. After the train swirled the dust from the wasteland, disappointed scarecrow is entering the factory to work. He is grabbing his working tool and going onto assemble line as part of machinery supported by melancholic music in the background, which adds a more depressive tone. On the neighbouring assemble line are processed animals like a piece of material. Depressed scarecrow is observing this entirely sad situation such as person who is eating this type of food, grow hormones applied into chickens or imprisoned cows. However he is not taking any action against it likewise all people around. Scarecrow is several times threatened by a crow
during these situations as a reminder of corporation power. Afterwards he is leaving a train and coming back to his home, which is the only green place in a wasteland. He is plucking a pepper (similar to the one in the Chipotle logo) from his garden and the background music make a transition into joyful tone and the scarecrow is smiling. He is picking up other vegetables and moving by car to the city, where he serves organic food and people are slowly coming to his “Cultivate a better world” food stand. The video ends with an invitation for downloading iOS game, where users break Crow’s food factory and restore the natural way of farming. Generally, Chipotle is trying to target on consumers, which take care about the origin of their food or on Generation Y (Millenians) as mention USA Today or Forbes.

**Advertising.** Chipotle wanted to distinguish from traditional forms of paid advertising like Google Ads, TV commercials, since big corporations predominantly use these channels and “The Scarecrow” video is trying to address against them. Especially younger audience perceives less usage of TV commercials in advertising as more authentic. Therefore Chipotle only uploaded the video on YouTube in order to be trustworthy. They started bottom – up spreading as well as in case of their previous advertisement “Back to the Start”. No further advertising by the company has been made except publication on Chipotle’s YouTube channels for their approximately 29 000 subscribers or other YouTube viewers.

**Communication.** Since Chipotle decided for the “random” advertising approach, the campaign relied on bottom-up process of communication. Carriers of the message became mainly media as important “gatekeepers” and users themselves because the main target group of Chipotle was Generation Y. As the chief marketing officer at Chipotle, Mark Crumpacker adds, Generation Y users are more sceptical about brands, which are directly communicated by companies to consumers. Therefore their strategy relied on social messengers to communicate the brand. This is also related to the fact, that video is conceived as narrative with the aim to start the conversation about food quality.

**Evaluation.** The campaign reached 5,5 millions views on YouTube in 8 days with 95% positive reaction. Similarly on Twitter, 98% of tweets were positive and 66% praised the visuals and song used in the video (Cover of Pure imagination by Fiona Apple). The video won two Emmy awards for outstanding new approach and outstanding directing in an animated program. In USA today it was chosen as one of the best advertisement of the year. On the other hand, critical comments claim, that advertisement is not fully honest, since Chipotle products are predominantly from meat while in the video the scarecrow servers only vegetarian food. In addition, marketing professor David Steward questioned the impact of the video on sales grow because the message was too hidden according to him.
4.3 Old Spice – “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like”

Old Spice is a famous brand of personal hygiene products for males. Since 1990, the company is a part of multinational manufacturer P&G. The campaign was initiated on 4 February 2010 by Wieden + Kennedy ad agency, only a few days before Super Bowl, which is one of the most watched events of the year in USA. Simultaneously with Internet channels involvement, the campaign passed off via TV commercials. The campaign originally aimed for propagation of new body wash, nevertheless the following success persuaded Wieden + Kenny to extend the campaign to include products.

![Old Spice Ad](image)

**Figure 4. Old Spice – “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like”**

**Message.** The video starts by direct addressing the target audience (“Hello Ladies”), despite the fact that the product is designed for men. Wieden + Kennedy chose female viewers as target audience based on assumptions that women make decision about buying personal hygiene products instead of men. However, as the brand manager of Old spice James Moorhead adds, their aim was that males and females enjoy the video together. Afterwards, the main character in the video Isaiah Mustafa is quickly saying, “Look at your man. Now back to me. Now back at your man. Now back to me. Sadly, he isn’t me. But if he stopped using lady-scented body wash and switched to Old Spice, he could smell like he’s me.” This message refers to the main slogan of the campaign, that even your men could smell nice, although he does not look like as Isaiah holding the new body wash. Further the scene immediately switches from the bathroom onto the boat, where Isaiah is holding the body wash, which is transformed into the oyster with ticket, then the diamonds and again into the body wash. Afterwards Isaiah appears on the horse and connects all these “magic” situations with Old Spice, when he is saying: “Anything is possible when your men smells like Old Spice and not a lady”. Additional “I am on a horse” underlines unpredictable and quirky humor in the whole video.
Advertising. Old Spice decided for placed campaign type involving online tools, but also with TV commercial during Super Bowl in USA. Further the video was uploaded on YouTube and for the advertising was used social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Old Spice strategy relied on engagement and interaction between the main character in the video Isaiah Mustafa and social media users in order to start communication about Old Spice.

Communication. The marketers from Wieden + Kennedy and Old Spice used top – down communication in the form of interactive marketing with the main character Isaiah Mustafa. He was placed in a bathroom with technical equipment for real-time communication with audience via video responses on YouTube or messaging on Facebook and Twitter. He did 181 YouTube video responses and during 24 hours The Old Spice channel become the most watched on YouTube. The buzz around the campaign was also supported by involving celebrities like Paris Hilton and Aston Kutcher on which Old Spice responded firstly due to their network of followers and possibilities for quick spreading. This type of interactive communication acquires an audience by engagement in communication based on consumer’s decisions, which is especially important in targeting on generation Y. As Account Director of Wieden + Kennedy, Jess Monsey adds: "Without the trust on which our relationship with Old Spice is built this just wouldn't have worked."

Evaluation. The buzz around the campaign was enormous. Only in 24 hours the YouTube video reached 5,9 million views, even more than Obama’s Victory speech. In 3 days the video exceeded 20 million views. Dramatic increase of users participating on social media was mainly on Twitter with 2700% growth and Facebook with 800%. Simultaneously direct traffic on the official site of Old Spice increased by 300%. Brittion Taylor, Wieden + Kennedy Planner also mentions over billion unpaid media impressions as the main source of success, which caused the buzz around the video. Overall, the success allows Old Spice to reuse concept of similar style of content (unpredictable and quirky) even in future, for instance in ads with Terry Crews.

4.4 TNT – “A dramatic surprise on a quiet square”

A dramatic surprise on a quiet square is the campaign from 2012 created by Duval Guillaume to promote TV channel TNT, which is oriented on drama genre. The biggest question for the creators was the place for filming the video. Duval Guillaume decided for the Belgium square, which was selected in order to avoid a panic reaction of ordinary people because at the same time the gunshot tragedy in France happened. In addition a similar approach was tried by Adult Swim (TV channel) with stunts in Boston but it failed since people were immediately calling the police regarding the possible bomb attack.
**Figure 5.** TNT – “A dramatic surprise on a quiet square”

**Message.** The intro of the video begins with dramatic music in the background and a few explanation slogans referring to the facts, that creators placed a button in Belgium square without warning inhabitants. Afterwards it is possible to see surprised people in the square due to the button and the arrow with description “Push to add drama” over the button. The man on a bike and other people are pushing the button and the “drama” starts. Fights, shooting, a rugby player and even half naked woman on the motorcycle appear in the video. At the end, the poster with statement “TNT: Your Daily dose of drama” appears over one building to connect situation with the brand. The bystanders are laughing and their reaction might be described as a combination of emotion surprise and joy.

**Advertisement.** The campaign relied on a random strategy of spreading to start bottom-up communication around the message included in the video. This decision argues Marc Wellen, a managing partner at Duval Guillaume, “We had a seeding strategy to spread it that we didn’t even use” and he concurrently adds “We said we were going to write to blogs, send it to marketing blogs, but they picked it up themselves”. The advertising began when creative director of Duval Guillaume posted a link with the YouTube video on his Twitter account. Even though he has only over 1200 followers, the journalist and blogger pushed the message further due to interesting videos from the past. Besides YouTube channel and Twitter account, the video was posted on the official Facebook page of Duval Guillaume and Facebook pages of the employees in Duval Guillaume. According to Duval Guillaume, no further advertising was used.

**Communication.** Duval Guillaume decided for random strategy of campaign and thus the communication relied on bottom – up spreading. As soon as the message appeared on the official YouTube channel and Facebook of Duval Guillaume, important media channels like Mashable and users themselves shared the message.
Evaluation. The video became the second most watched campaign, when it reached 10 million views in 48 hours and afterwards 54 millions views overall. People praised the video for creativity, uniqueness and cleverness. In addition people associate the dramatic scene in the video with brand of TNT. This success allows TNT to use the same style of video and spreading in the future, when they created a drama video in Holland. Second video acquired over 15 millions of views.

4.5 Cross case analysis

Important factors in each case are presented in proposed Table 3 to provide an overview and clarification for further analysis. There I explain similarities or differences between campaigns based on logic mentioned in the method section. Factors are stated in the vertical line of the table and cases in the horizontal line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Message: Societal problem</th>
<th>Message: Surprise and Joy</th>
<th>Consistency of message</th>
<th>Connection of Brand and the Message</th>
<th>Call to action</th>
<th>Use of gatekeepers to spread message</th>
<th>Interactive marketing</th>
<th>Guerilla marketing</th>
<th>Future application of elements from campaign</th>
<th>Cycle repetition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dove (placed)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chipotle (random)</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Old Spice (placed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Spice (placed)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNT (random)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Cross case analysis

Besides the type of campaign (placed or random), the type of message significantly influences other factors in Table 3, which I explain further. Connection of brand and the message pass off in all cases, however differently in campaigns addressing societal problems and surprise and joy. While Surprise and Joy cases present brand in the video pretentiously, especially in Old Spice campaign, cases with societal message show brand moderately in order to be trustful. The cases regarding societal problems are influenced by consistency of the message. Dove launched the long term Real Beauty campaign already in 2004 and started to build confidence of their message, thus the audience perceived the message trustful, despite the fact that Dove used the placed type of advertising. The same applies for random campaign of Chipotle about food integrity, which was even consistent in selection of advertising channels (YouTube). A direct call to action was apparent only in Old Spice case,
where the main character challenges consumers to make a purchase decision of the new body wash in order to smell like a men. In this case it seems reasonable because the campaign relied on being surprising and fun, while direct call to action in societal problem oriented campaign will possible cause the opposite effect. The importance of gatekeepers exhibited in all cases, nevertheless in random campaign are fundamental for diffusion process since they are exclusive “mediator” between message and the consumers whereas placed campaigns might acquire attention directly via paid advertising. From this point of view random campaigns are riskier, while their costs are less than placed campaign. Other interesting factor, which occurred in Dove, Chipotle and Old Spice case, was interactive marketing for strengthening relation with consumers. Thus the deeper interaction with audience in viral campaigns appears as to be a beneficial tool for advertising and communication, regardless of the message type (societal problem or surprise and joy). Furthermore in Chipotle case, the interaction happened several times in the past as separate events to force message of the food integrity. The evaluation component in the proposed framework was useful too because the companies applied decomposed elements from occurred campaign in the future. Dove and Chipotle continued to capture attention of the audience through the same type of message, which is probably linked with factor of consistency referring to societal problems. Old Spice and TNT even repeated the whole cycle, when they created more videos with similar content and style of spreading, for example “A dramatic surprise” in Holland.

5. Discussion

In the following, I discuss the findings of the thesis in order to answer the research questions “Which are the design factors for viral campaigns?” and “How are the design components interrelated in viral diffusion processes?”.

5.1 Design factors in viral campaigns

As the first factor, the analysis suggests independence of emotions included in message to type of campaign. Previous studies (e.g. Ho and Dempsey, 2008; Dobele et al., 2007; 2005) suggest positive influence of emotions (surprise, joy, sadness etc.) on willingness to pass a viral message, which is relevant for both random and placed campaigns. Other campaigns such as TrueMove H: Giving or Epic Split are clear evidence of that (see appendix). However little attention has been directed towards the influence of paid advertisement in “placed” virals. Although Smith (2011; 2012) argues for less pop-up ads in digital marketing in order to reach young adults, how paid ads affect consumers’ willingness to pass on messages in viral campaign is unknown. This is tricky especially for campaigns referring to societal problem, since paid ads might decrease credibility of message. In spite of the fact that it is an extensive question for future research, the cross case analysis suggest consistency of message as an important factor for credibility. Before Dove started their “placed” viral campaign, they started to communicate a similar message of beauty in 2004 and build relations with the audience. The same applies for Scarecrow with their food integrity message, despite the fact that it is a “random” campaign. Therefore, for campaigns using societal problem consistency of message seems to be one of the basic cornerstones, both at “random” or “placed”
campaigns. On the other hand, consistency was not evident in campaigns evoking surprise and joy.

As suggested by Dobele et al. (2005) connection between the brand and the message is one of the important factors to spread a message and the same was apparent in all four cases. Simultaneously it might contribute in other areas such as revitalizing the brand and related brand awareness. In addition, the analysis suggests particular approaches for how to use the brand depending on the type of message. While surprise and joy based campaigns present the brand very visible, campaigns oriented towards societal problem toned down its visibility. In the case of Dove, the brand is apparent only at the end and in the name of the video. Chipotle connects brand via unconscious actions in the video, where the scarecrow is plucking pepper, which has the same colour and shape as in Chipotle's logo. In placed campaigns, promotion of the brand is much more direct, especially in the Dove case where the main character connects product and the message and concurrently calling to buy (call to action) new body wash. The question of connection between brand and a message might be another interesting area for further study, particularly with implication on various types of messages.

According to Nahon and Hemsley (2013) and Scott (2010), gatekeepers have a significant impact on information diffusion. In viral campaigns, gatekeepers play a role as mediators between companies and consumers, since they embrace huge social networks. In addition, consumers perceive gatekeepers as creditable sources of any kind of information. The involvement of gatekeepers was identified in all cases independently of the type of message or campaign. However for “random” campaigns, gatekeepers’ role definitely increases because it contains less advertising and communication possibilities than “placed” campaigns. Thus companies relying on “random” type of spreading have to put a lot of effort into their message to be enough interesting for gatekeepers.

Combination of viral spreading with different types of marketing was successfully used in time of email virality, when Burger King encouraged the audience via interactive website in famous Subservient Chicken campaign (Lance and Guy J., 2006). Simultaneously interactive marketing might positively affect the relation between brand and customers in established viral campaigns (Helm, 2000). Factors of interaction were present in Dove and Old Spice campaign (usage of social media) and in Chipotle (iOS game). Apart from interaction, TNT embraced guerrilla factors in their campaign. As Ferguson adds (2008) street guerrilla activities might increase awareness and buzz, which are essential for viral diffusion.

Last two factors refer to the insufficiently articulated role of evaluation in viral advertising, despite the fact that researchers (Grifoni, D’Andrea and Ferri, 2012; Miller and Lammas, 2010; Cruz, 2008) stress its importance. Campaigns are evaluated from various lenses such as financial or psychosocial and further findings might be applied into actual or future campaign. Improvements in measurement instruments are particularly obvious in social media, which gather data about user interaction and contain analysing and planning tool for marketers (Sterne, 2010). In the analysis, I found that the evaluation component positively influenced each of the selected campaign. In all cases, the future application of elements from unfolded campaign occurred. For instance, Scarecrow used the same type of advertising and communication in more campaigns. Old Spice and TNT even repeated the whole cycle and
extended the campaign with similar viral ads. Future research might examine these findings based on components in theoretical framework such as advertising and communication channel repetition in unfolded campaigns.

5.2 Relations between components in viral diffusion process

Based on the results from data analysis section, where the framework’s components were applied, I now turn to analysing interrelations between them. The viral process begins with campaign design, compromising the message and advertising component since they strongly affect each other. Companies have to consider the type of message together with the advertising approach. For example, Chipotle wanted to spread a message about the food integrity and because their content is against big corporation exploiting expensive advertisement, they decided to rely on “random” type in order to be credible. Thus the Scarecrow was only uploaded on YouTube. Once the campaign is designed (message + advertising), the launch process follows, which links the campaign design and communication component. However, the interrelation varies depending on the type of campaign. While advertising ends fairly quickly in “random” campaigns, the advertising extends into the communication component in “placed” campaigns. This relationship is apparent in both the Chipotle case where advertising ended very soon (simply uploaded on YouTube) and in the Dove campaign where several Google ads were used for a longer period of time. After the communication has occurred and the message is diffused, companies prepare for evaluation where they gather aggregated feedback from the campaign. The interrelation is the same for both “random” and “placed” campaigns because there were no registered differences in the data analysis. After the feedback is evaluated, companies might apply the elements from the campaign in future campaigns and/or even repeat the cycle. For instance Old Spice repeated the entire cycle and created several sequels, while Chipotle used particular elements (channel selection, content) in a following campaign. This was shown in the cross case analysis together with the finding that interrelation (elements application/cycle repetition) doesn’t depend on the type of campaign. These relations are illustrated in Figure 6 for both types of campaigns.

![Figure 6. Relations between the components in the viral campaigns](image-url)
6. Conclusions

Viral diffusion is becoming an increasingly applied method in the marketing field for reaching customers. Although the phenomenon has been studied from particular perspectives such as strategy, psychosocial attitudes and diffusion on networks, how the campaigns unfold is not well understood. Based on the literature review I proposed a holistic framework with four components: message, advertising, communication and evaluation. The framework was consecutively applied on four viral campaigns to answer the research questions: “Which are the design factors for viral campaigns?” and “How are the design components interrelated in viral diffusion process?”

The data analysis showed how consistency is an important factor in the campaigns addressing societal challenges since these campaigns have to be trustworthy for consumers. Another finding was identified in the evaluation component of viral campaigns, future application of elements from campaign and cycle repetition. It pointed to the assumption that viral campaigns do not have to be entirely new, but may contain elements from past campaign or to continue. The analysis also provides more detailed descriptions of the previously described factors such as connection of brand and the message, call to action, gatekeepers or combination of virality with other form of marketing. Particularly it shows how these factors act in viral process and influence the framework’s components.

Furthermore, the application of the framework on selected cases allowed understanding of relations between design components in viral process. The campaign process is launched by the message and advertising components (campaign design), which starts communication. After that companies gather feedback from consumers, which is evaluated. Based on that feedback, companies consecutively apply factors from campaign into the future one or repeat the cycle.

The framework proved its applicability and may be used for further studies focused on the process of viral diffusion or to understanding the broader context and the role of the particular components in viral campaigns.

It seems viral diffusion will continue to be a relevant marketing tool in the future, since it is highly oriented on the consumer needs and decisions. The current situation when the consumer is more in charge due to free access to global and rapid use of digital channels, only confirms this assumption. Thus it will be not surprising, that an inspiration from viral phenomenon might influence other areas of business world.
References


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Dove launched the Campaign for Real Beauty in 2004 based on the findings of a major global study, The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report. The brand ignited a global conversation about the need for a wider definition of beauty after the study proved the hypothesis that the definition of beauty had become limiting and unattainable. In 2006, when Spain banned overly thin models from its runways, Dove responded on YouTube with a compelling short film, Evolution, depicting the transformation of a real woman into a model and promoting awareness of how unrealistic perceptions of beauty are created.

The way women see themselves is dramatically different from how others perceive them. Only 4% of women globally consider themselves beautiful and 54% agree that when it comes to how they look, they are their own worst beauty critic. In 2013, Dove conducted a compelling social experiment to bring this to life. Documented in a short film, Dove Real Beauty Sketches explores how women view their own beauty in contrast to what others see.

The film, created by Ogilvy & Mather Brazil, features an FBI-trained sketch artist drawing a woman's portrait according to her own self-description. He then sketches a portrait of the same woman according to a stranger's description of her. Throughout, the artist never lays eyes on the women themselves, and neither the artist nor women know about the social experiment.

Dove Real Beauty Sketches struck an emotional chord with millions of women who recognize that when it comes to how they look, the biggest beauty pressure is the pressure they put on themselves. Aggregating views across YouTube and other platforms, the film quickly became the most viewed online video ad of all time, according to Unilever, with over 163 million global views. It is also, according to Unruly Media, the most shared video ad in over a year with over four million shares across a variety of platforms, and the third most shared film of all time.

Figure 1. Highlighting and note taking in Preview programme
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Advertising</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dove</strong></td>
<td>Beauty Societal challenge (surprise &amp; sadness) Transition Consistency Brand identification</td>
<td>Social media Paid ad Interactive marketing</td>
<td>Google ecosystem tools Direct communication</td>
<td>Results Application of past elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scarecrow</strong></td>
<td>Food integrity Societal challenge (surprise &amp; sadness) Transition Consistency Brand identification Millenians</td>
<td>Social media YouTube consistency</td>
<td>Gatekeepers Generation Y</td>
<td>Results Application of past elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Old Spice</strong></td>
<td>Smell like a man Surprise &amp; joy Brand identification Call to action</td>
<td>Social media Paid ad TV ad Interactive marketing Main character</td>
<td>Google ecosystem tools Direct communication Celebrities involvement</td>
<td>Results Application of past elements Cycle repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TNT</strong></td>
<td>Push to add more drama Surprise &amp; joy Brand identification</td>
<td>Social media Guerrilla marketing</td>
<td>Gatekeepers Duval Guillaume</td>
<td>Results Application of past elements Cycle repetition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Final themes based on research methodology*
Figure 2. Used icons from the Noun Project (thenounproject.com)
Web addresses of sources used in the data analysis

**Old Spice**

http://articles.latimes.com/2010/mar/06/image/la-ig-oldspice-20100306
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**Chipotle**

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Appendix

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Figures

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Scarecrow
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Dove
Old spice
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